



NEATH PORT TALBOT PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD
WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT



CULTURAL CHAPTER

WHAT IS CULTURAL WELL-BEING?



In Wales, 'cultural well-being' is listed in the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 as one of the areas that public bodies are to improve.

The Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language Well-being Goal contained within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 describes Wales as:

"A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation."

The More Equal Wales Well-being Goal describes Wales as:

"A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances)."

Cultural well-being contributes to the achievement of these goals as it encompasses values, shared beliefs, customs, behaviours and identity. These sometimes intangible qualities help shape, define and make Neath Port Talbot (NPT) the place it is.

A number of national well-being indicators are associated with 'cultural well-being', including those relating to: participation in arts, culture and heritage activities; Welsh speaking ability; sense of belonging to the local area; the protection and accreditation status of heritage assets; and participation in sports (Welsh Government, 2019). Other national indicators associated with cultural well-being in Welsh Government publications include those relating to individuals' perceived influence over local decisions; volunteering rates; and the status of natural assets and ecosystems. There is clear evidence that heritage and culture is integral to people's sense of identity and sense of belonging, which in turn impacts positively on people's health and wellbeing. Heritage and culture also contribute to the economy supporting paid employment, helping to attract inward investment and generating value through voluntary action.

WHAT DO WE CURRENTLY KNOW ABOUT THE STATE OF CULTURAL WELL-BEING IN NPT?



The following section provides an analysis of what we already know about the state of cultural well-being in NPT. The evidence used to inform the assessment includes sources of research, national indicators provided by the Welsh Government, other performance information, evidence collected to inform the Council's Local Development Plan and other statutory/national/local assessments that have been undertaken. Currently there are limited measures available at a national level to support an assessment of cultural wellbeing. However, there is a wealth of information available to us, too much to capture, through individuals and communities in NPT who are passionate about their local environment and heritage.

Through our Let's Talk campaign, local people have told us that their local environment, the Welsh Language and our heritage and culture matters to them.

They want us to:

- Keep the past alive, promoting and celebrating our heritage to strengthen our sense of identity and sense of belonging ;
- Help to protect, preserve and maintain our historic and heritage sites for present and future generations;
- Promote our Welsh language, traditions and culture;
- Help all generations to connect with our natural environment, heritage and culture;
- Help our community and voluntary groups to sustain and further develop their important work.

Cultural well-being can be broken down into 5 sub-themes:

Heritage &
the Arts

Welsh
language

Sports and
physical
activity

Volunteering

Community

HERITAGE & THE ARTS



HERITAGE

The borough of Neath Port Talbot is abundant with history and heritage that reflects not only local and Welsh history, but is a microcosm of the history and development of Britain and the world.

It is unquestionably an area rich in culture and history. Saints, poets, singers, martyrs, scientists and pioneers: many key contributors in the world have their roots firmly placed in the borough.

The built environment of Neath Port Talbot is varied and distinctive, with important features from all periods of history including Bronze Age Cairns, Iron Age hill forts and evidence of Roman military occupation at Cwrt Herbert, Tonna and Banwen. There are medieval buildings including 2 abbeys, a castle, churches and farmsteads from Baglan to Ynysmeudw.

The town of Neath retains the character of a traditional market town, developed around the Norman castle and is home to the oldest fair in Wales dating back to 1280. Many of the streets that form the town centre are great examples of Victorian architecture and town planning, Queen street was the first planned commercial street in the town built in 1837 leading directly from what was then the Merra (later Victoria Gardens) to the market.

Other towns and villages in the borough emerged from the area's industrial development: coal mining, metal working and the oil industry crucial to the development of Llandarcy village. There is evidence of industrial innovation that powered the Industrial Revolution at the Neath Abbey Iron works and the development of copper smelting at Aberdulais when a new method of smelting copper was perfected by royal command of Queen Elizabeth 1st.

We have not 1 but 3 canal networks crucial to the development of so many villages from Glynneath to Briton Ferry and across to Swansea and part of the Swansea canal from Ystalyfera through Pontardawe.

There are aqueducts, viaducts, farms, mills, docks and railways, prominent engineers and scientists including worked here including Isambard Kingdom Brunel who engineered the Briton Ferry docks and Alfred Russel Wallace, the world's leading naturalist who lived in Llantwit cottage and founded the Mechanic's Institute in Neath before co-publishing the theory of evolution by natural selection with Charles Darwin.

The County of Neath Port Talbot boasts:

- 393 Listed Buildings
- 93 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- 6 Conservation areas
- 6 Listed Parks

6 Museums / Heritage Centres including:

- Cefn Coed Colliery Museum
- Pontardawe Heritage Centre
- Margam Stones Museum
- South Wales Miners Museum
- 1940s Swansea Bay
- Aberdulais Falls & Visitor Centre

Margam Park is registered grade I as a multi-layered site of outstanding historical importance.

It includes prehistoric and Cistercian abbey remains, and has Tudor, eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century garden and landscaping phases. Of particular importance are the very fine walled deer park, the banqueting house facade, the outstanding Georgian orangery, the Citrus House and the nineteenth-century gardens with their fine collection of trees and shrubs. The late 1940s garden by Ralph Hancock at Twyn-yr-hydd is a delightful and well preserved period piece within the park. The registered park and garden shares important group value with the scheduled monuments and the many listed buildings of historic significance to the Margam estate.

We have produced actors, artists, composers, and sporting heroes representing their town and country nationally and internationally. Folk legend and Welsh martyr of the Merthyr Rising Dic Penderyn is buried at St Mary's Church in Aberavon and we can't forget Oliver Cromwell's march through Aberavon in 1648 and his attempt to steal the town's charter, cunningly hidden in a chopping block. Lord Nelson once stayed at the Castle Hotel in Neath where incidentally The Welsh Rugby Union was formed later in 1881.

We have been visited, written and sung about by some of the most notable characters in British history. Our landscape has attracted artists such as Thomas Horner (1785-1844), William Weston Young (1776-1847) and J.M.W Turner (1775-1851 and more recently Banksy in Taibach.

Acclaimed expressionist painter Will Roberts lived in Neath and Port Talbot's own Andrew Vicari became known as "the king of painters and painter of kings" after being commissioned to paint heads of state and Arabic royalty.

What other borough produces Hollywood movie stars and international greats such as Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins, Michael Sheen, Ivor Novello, and Ray Milland? The first line ever spoken in Coronation Street was by Maudie Edwards, who was from the Melyn in Neath, The story of Peggy Entwistle, an actress born in Port Talbot, inspired the recent Netflix documentary 'Hollywood', and Pontardawe's own Mary Hopkins, famous for her hit 'Those Were the Days' was the first artist to be signed to the Beatle's Apple label.

It's these stories and achievements that make up the rich cultural tapestry of Neath Port Talbot. They invoke real pride promoting ambition and aspiration within our communities.

VOLUNTARY GROUPS / HISTORICAL SOCIETIES



In Neath Port Talbot we have a very strong volunteer network who work tirelessly to preserve, protect, discover and promote the rich heritage of our borough. This is evident with the amount of societies and groups set up entirely dedicated to culture and heritage. NPT has a dedicated forum that was set up by the Cultural Services department in the early 2000s.

The Neath Port Talbot Heritage Network meet quarterly to encourage engagement and cohesion between these societies. It acts as an information exchange, sharing ideas, society news, events and good practices.

The societies and groups vary in activity, some are proactive who physically maintain sites of historical importance, and actively seek funding for projects to engage, preserve and maintain facilities such as visitor centres and private museums, canals and sites of significance.

Other societies are exclusively for research, most hold monthly meetings with talks, events, exhibitions and projects engaging with their community and beyond to ensure our heritage isn't forgotten.

Most societies produce publications either as reference books, magazines or online. All have an online presence with a website and / or Facebook page actively engaging not only with their local community but visitors to the area and worldwide audiences too.

Local History Societies & Members of the NPT Heritage Network:

- Bois Afan Choir
- Cwm Dulais Historical Society
- Dic Penderyn Society
- Dyffryn Clydach and Bryncoch Historical Society
- Friends of Aberdulais Falls
- Friends of Cefn Coed
- Friends of Margam Park
- Friends of Neath Abbey Iron Company
- Friends of Talbot Memorial Park
- Glynneath and Cwmgwrach Historical Society
- The Historical Association, Swansea Branch
- The Neath Antiquarian Society
- Neath Railway History Society & GWR Retired Railwaymen
- Neath & Tennant Canal Trust
- Pontardawe Heritage Centre
- Port Talbot Historical Society
- Resolven History Society
- Rich History Project (Skewen & District Industrial Heritage Association)
- Skewen Historical Society
- South Wales Miners Museum
- Swansea Valley History Society
- Swansea Canal Society
- Treftadaeth Brynaman Heritage
- Welsh Transport & Memory Lane Museum

The Let's Talk campaign provoked a passionate response from residents around the subject of heritage and history. These are some of the things that were important to people :

- Continued development and support for the Heritage centre in Pontardawe
- Restoration of buildings structures of historical interest (the Dulais Rock, the Ivy Tower, memorial gates Tennant Park, Bandstand Taibach memorial park, Aberdulais aqueduct, Criag Gwladys drift mine)
- A museum
- Fantastic ideas for walking trails, including a 'Dic Penderyn' trail, 'Mynydd Dinas' historic Landscape trail

According to the National Survey for Wales, in 2019 64% of people living in NPT reported participating in arts, culture or heritage activities at least three times per year, just below the Welsh average of 71%.

To compare this regionally, in 2019 the Arts Council for Wales ran their annual survey to investigate public engagement with and attitudes towards the arts in Wales. In the South West Region 83.8% of adults reported participating in at least one artform during the year which was the lowest out of the Welsh regions. The south west was also one of the lowest reporting participation in the arts at 42.2% which also showed a decrease since 2017. Across Wales the most frequently attended artform is the cinema, followed by live music events.

In Neath Port Talbot there are a number of groups and venues that promote and deliver arts related activities including the three centres– Pontardawe Arts Centre, the Princess Royal Theatre and the Gwyn Hall.

PONTARDAWE ARTS CENTRE



Originally built in 1908 as a Public Hall and Institute, set in the heart of the village, Pontardawe Arts Centre opened in 1996 following extensive refurbishment funded by the local authority. The Centre has the broad remit to deliver opportunities for engagement in the arts in order to provide a strong cultural offer within the County Borough.

Pontardawe Arts Centre has developed a distinctive programme in the years since its inception and established a successful programme, which responds to changing need. The programming commitment is to deliver professional shows encompassing drama, comedy, Welsh language, music, and children's theatre. The strands of programme have been systematically developed over the years with an emphasis on the quality of the product in order to develop a niche market by means of differentiation with a regional emphasis.

In addition to the professional programme of live events, films, both mainstream and specialist are screened; amateur shows are presented, including the in house Pantomime. In addition, the gallery space is provided for workshops and exhibitions.

A significant area of activity is participation with numerous classes and workshops presented across art forms and delivered to a broad cross section of the community. Education underpins much of the activity within the centre with many opportunities for formal and informal learning. Through engagement with partner organisations including The Chamber of Trade, Pontardawe Town Council, Mentier Iaith, youth service, Mess up the Mess, Bespoke Community Connecting team, Rising Stars, Agility, adult learning Wales, PASS and Think Family Partnership, the venue actively supports many community projects.

The Arts Centre is proud to support many companies to develop creative work at the venue including developing in house productions to tour in Wales and the UK.

The Centre supports better health and well-being by offering opportunities for enjoyment and participation, which provide important self-fulfilling experiences and a sense of wellbeing. Currently over 300 young people per week take part in classes which support Core Aim 4 of the Children and Young People's Plan. Additionally there are around a 100 adults who participate in classes including, a choir and art and craft. The latest adult group to make its home at Pontardawe Arts Centre after losing their building are the senior citizens group. Since the closure of the Day Service in the town, the displaced adults with additional needs are now taking part in activities at the ARTs Centre on four days each week.

The venue is committed to working closely with partners and applying principals of social inclusion and equality of opportunity. An emphasis on quality and best practice goes hand in hand with an emphasis on equality of access. The service has a wide user base including all those who live, work or are educated within the County Borough and beyond, all visitors to the areas and partner groups who may be involved in special projects, and /or externally funded initiatives. The service seeks to engage with all ages but in order to broaden access, specific areas require a targeted approach, including, children, teenagers/young adults, disenfranchised young people, areas of deprivation, the elderly, families and people in the local community.

Pontardawe Arts Centre seeks to enrich people lives through their engagement in the arts. A place where people from all backgrounds feel welcome and safe, where they can be inspired by the arts, socialise and grow as individuals/communities and celebrate the unique and bilingual culture of our County.

THE PRINCESS ROYAL THEATRE



The Princess Royal Theatre is located in the centre of Port Talbot and was opened in 1996. The Theatre provides quality affordable theatre experiences for the people of Neath Port Talbot. It also brings revenue into the area by attracting visitors from outside of the County Borough.

THERE ARE THREE DISTINCT STRANDS TO THE ACTIVITY:

- Theatre Programme – professional shows commissioned by the Theatre.
- Private Hire Events/Shows – facilities which are available to community groups and local businesses and organisations alike to run amateur productions to conferences and seminars.
- Internal Hire – for conferences and seminars.

THE GWYN HALL



The Gwyn Hall is located in the heart of Neath Town Centre and has been an integral part of Neath's history since it was built in 1887 and re-opened in March 2012 after an extensive refurbishment.

Open seven days a week, the venue has a 384-seat theatre which offers a varied programme including music, light entertainment, children's shows, comedy, music and dance. The Gwyn Hall has been developing its live programme over the past 10 years including local amateur groups, schools, library events and the annual Wales International Film Festival which the Gwyn Hall is a key partner. As part of the educational links with schools the Gwyn Hall is working in partnership with Cerdd NPT Music to perform The Sound of Cinema as an annual project for schools in the County Borough. The Gwyn Hall is also working with Cefn Saeson School on a Welsh Government extracurricular project 'Rhythm of the School Day'.

The Gwyn Hall is solidifying its reputation and establishing a pattern in programming which is encouraging audience growth. Customers have learnt to place their faith in the venue programme as is evident from the growth in repeat bookings.

Live and cinema events are tailored to the audience to create a sense of place, distinctiveness and uniqueness.

Partnership working is a key element with links with the The Shakespeare Schools Festival, BFI, Theatr Na N’Og, UK Cinema Association and Wales International Film Festival all having contributed towards the cinema and live programme. Partnerships are also key to audience development with strong links with Neath Port Talbot College, Neath Little Theatre, numerous youth groups and the Amateur Musical Theatre Societies who stage their performance in the centre. Neath Amateur Musical Theatre Society also working with the venue to deliver an annual community pantomime.

The Gwyn Hall encourages involvement from groups and individuals to participate in arts and cultural activities – local schools and community groups are encouraged to hire the theatre for concerts and performances to fully appreciate a professional production experience. The theatre is also used as a first release cinema showing the latest blockbuster films as well as screening the hugely popular National Theatre Live and The Royal Opera House as part of the Event Cinema Programme.

The Cinema POD offers a designated cinema screen with 73 luxurious seats and intimate surroundings. The Studio Cinema is the newest addition to the Gwyn Hall and is situated on the 3rd floor adjacent to the POD. This cinema has a maximum capacity of 90 seats including 2 wheelchair spaces.

A range of accessible screenings are offered to provide a great cinema experience to all guests.

Relaxed Screenings at the Gwyn Hall - making sure cinema is accessible to all. People may experience many barriers when considering a trip to the cinema, and it’s our intention to break down these barriers and welcome everyone into a relaxed atmosphere. At a relaxed screening, the soundtrack volume is reduced, and low lights are left on. It’s fine to make noise, move around or leave the cinema. We also provide a designated “quiet” area outside the POD, should things become a bit too much or a little break is needed from the film. There are no adverts or trailers before the film so that customers can fully enjoy the main feature.

Subtitled screenings - Not being able to hear the dialogue doesn’t mean Gwyn Hall customers can’t enjoy a great movie. These screenings are open to everyone but are subtitled for those who are hard of hearing. No other changes are made to the screening. Where possible we aim to screen at least one subtitled performance of our main feature where a subtitled version of the film has been made available to us.

Almost all new release cinema screenings have audio description enabled for blind or visually impaired customers.

The Place at the Gwyn Hall is a licensed café bar in the attractive glass atrium and provides a welcome place to meet and relax. With free wi-fi it’s the perfect place for informal meetings, catching up with friends, or just some quiet time to yourself, while you watch the world pass by.

The Gwyn Hall is proud of its family friendly and accessible facilities on every floor. Disabled seating is available on request in the main theatre, studio cinema and cinema POD.

The venue aims to attract additional visitors to the town and improve the visitor experience, an example of which is securing the Welsh International Film Festival, to be hosted at the venue for a further 2 years at least, which attracts visitors from all over the world. This in turn has a positive effect on the hospitality sector in the community and surrounding areas.

VISION

“To Provide exceptional, affordable theatrical and cinematic entertainment for all, within a safe, professional and welcoming environment.”

MISSION STATEMENT

“The Gwyn Hall will engage, inspire and entertain our current and new audiences through live performances, cinematic experiences and participatory opportunities which will increase confidence, community engagement and give our audiences a venue to be proud of. Providing a programme that will evolve and grow alongside our audiences which will encourage loyalty and a sense of ownership to be passed from generation to generation.”

The Covid-19 pandemic has obviously had a profound effect on theatres and cinemas across Wales.

This is demonstrated by the figures in the table below and it is unclear at present how long it may take for numbers to reach pre-pandemic levels.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Theatres							
The Princess Royal Theatre	50,781	41,718	54,242	42,368	47,148	3,565	12,995
Pontardawe Arts Centre	62,796	55,343	58,052	59,200	53,951	10,496	7,634
Pontardawe Arts Centre	104,363	117,842	137,367	137,913	126,567	2,428	19,202

Figures for 2021/22 are currently April to September

Research carried out by The Audience Agency during November 2021 shows that plays and musicals have seen the largest drop in attendance since the start of the pandemic. Attendance to artforms has picked up during 2021 particularly to heritage sites, gardens and cinemas. However 40% of those surveyed in Wales said they were still not comfortable or not interested in attending an arts event and a third of those who said they would be ‘happy to attend’ said they are still worried about falling ill with Covid-19.

COMMUNITY FESTIVALS AND EVENTS



In addition to the three main centres that deliver arts related activities in NPT, the number of community festivals and events held has grown over the last few years. Examples include the Neath Food and Drink Festival which started in 2009 and has since established itself as one of the premiere events in the town's calendar. Over the past few years, the festival has highlighted the variety of high quality Welsh produce that is available locally and focused on the range of products available from award winning suppliers in the Town's Victorian market and surrounding area. The festival is a true celebration of local produce and Neath's historic market town atmosphere.

Another example is Neath September Fair – an annual historic open air event, in the centre of Neath. It attracts crowds from far afield and is recognised as the fourth largest chartered street trading fair in the UK. This annual event has been held in Neath for many hundreds of years and is a huge favourite across the locality. The fair we know today with its stalls set up through the streets and its vibrant fairground rides are very different to the original fairs of 700 years ago. Traders from the UK, and more recently Europe, attend this four day event.

The 'Margam International Kite Festival' that takes place over the Late May Bank holiday weekend is the longest running kite festival in Wales dating back to the early 1980's. It attracts professional and amateur kite flyers from all over the UK and is known as the 'kite flyers festival'.

It is hoped that both these festivals will resume this year after being cancelled in the last two years due to Covid-19.

MUSIC DANCE AND DRAMA



There are a number of choirs in Neath Port Talbot which range from traditional Male Voice Choirs to Ladies, Welsh and mixed choirs. There are also a number of gigging bands.

A festival of music and dance has been held every August in Pontardawe since 1978 and attracts musicians and artists from all over the world.

Over recent years several mini music festivals have been held in NPT featuring local artists, and this June, Margam will host the In it Together festival which is set to attract 40,000 people, five stages of world-class, multi-genre music, and three days of rich entertainment and cultural enlightenment. This will be the biggest festival of its kind to be held in Wales.

There are a number of dance groups in the area and a number of amateur dramatics and operatic societies across the County Borough including the West Glamorgan Youth Theatre Company which is a youth theatre providing performance experiences for young people aged 13-21 in the West Glamorgan area. The aim of the work is to broaden students knowledge of dramatic text by focusing on less traditional, 'popular' youth productions. The Theatre prides itself in creating work for a variety of venues across the counties, ranging from Arts Centres to schools and outdoor spaces.

LIBRARIES



The are 8 council run libraries in NPT and a further 7 community managed libraries. So much more than a resource to borrow books libraries are playing an increasingly important role in community connections. The cultural activities and experiences that libraries offer reach people who do not normally participate in arts and culture, helping them to develop a love and appreciation for them. Libraries are perfectly placed to help arts and culture organisations to reach these communities.

As well as providing essential digital support to residents, libraries in NPT offer activities for all ages including Family Story Time, Song and Rhyme groups, Lego Club, craft and history sessions.

Council budget reductions have resulted in library closures, some of which continue to be run by community volunteers. Sustainability can be difficult and unpredictable which will result in the continuity of these resources being at risk in the future.

NATURAL HERITAGE



Natural and cultural heritage are inextricably interwoven. Our natural heritage is our gift from nature and what previous generations have bequeathed us. That heritage shapes and melds us – informing who we are and where we are. As noted above, our towns and communities have developed around strategic transport routes linking south Wales and also the natural resources that the area provides, notably coal. Notwithstanding its industrial image, the county boasts an incredible variety and quality of biodiversity.

It's important to recognise that our natural heritage is not static – but is a living thing. In the same way that we derive benefits from nature, the way that we live of itself has an effect on nature – both positively and negatively. We can see this acutely from our recent past where the growth and prosperity that we derived from our industrial progress came at a significant environmental cost and we saw widescale deterioration in the condition of the natural environment.

Whilst we have seen a significant transformation over the latter half of the 20th century, in particular with improvements in local environmental quality, we are seeing a worrying decline in our biodiversity exacerbated by a climate change. Both crisis have shared causes and you can read more about this and the implications for our wellbeing in our environment chapter.

We are also seeing changing public attitudes. For all the negatives of the pandemic, Covid and the lockdowns have made us more aware of our local places, improved community cohesion and have rekindled our interest in the nature on our doorstep. It has also perhaps recalibrated how we think and function, notably in the context of how we work.

In 2020 the PSB carried out an online survey to assess the impact of Covid -19 on our communities. 61% of respondents said they placed higher value on accessible green space during lockdown. 38% said they were more concerned/aware of nature and 23% had changed their behaviours to make them more environmentally friendly.

As well as providing raw materials for manufacturing, our natural and cultural heritage provides many other job opportunities, particularly in the tourism sector. NPT is well known for its waterfalls, country parks, seafront and recreational activities such as glamping and mountain biking. The accessibility of these resources throughout the County Borough provides opportunities to improve health and wellbeing, for example through walking and other outdoor activities.

Recognising these contrasts, a new visitor facing place brand for Neath Port Talbot has been developed. The Dramatic Heart of Wales place brand reflects our heritage as a place of performers and innovators alongside the unique contrast of industrial and valleys landscapes, rural and urban, beauty and grit! The place brand also positions Neath Port Talbot at the centre of south Wales.

The concept of this brand is based on four pillars:

- Centrality – NPT is well connected, at the centre of South Wales and located equidistant to major destinations and attractions in the region (i.e. Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire, Cardiff etc).
- Contrast – Our industry exists alongside tranquil and beautiful valleys landscapes. The mix of rural and urban, Welsh and English are some of the factors which create extreme contrast within the area.
- Creativity – The passion for performance and creativity which lies at the heart of our communities. From amateur dramatics to internationally recognised actors. Industry innovators, designers and artists who lead in their fields are present in Neath Port Talbot.
- Community – the inherent sense of belonging present within our local communities.

The Dramatic Heart of Wales place brand and associated marketing activities will help us to challenge outdated perceptions of Neath Port Talbot and enable visitors (and residents) to see more clearly the amazing landscapes and heritage which makes us who we are.

CLIMATE CHANGE – CULTURAL HERITAGE



The effects of Climate change will be felt across society, including by our built and tangible heritage assets. The relevant risks and opportunities are outlined in the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3).

The main current risks to cultural heritage relate to extreme weather fluctuations including increasing temperatures (heatwaves or fires), precipitation and flooding, coastal processes, and from unintended consequences of climate mitigation and adaptation measures within the heritage sector and across other sectors. In particular, coastal heritage sites are at threat from a combination of hazards; sea level rise leading to increased flooding and coastal erosion; driving rain and landscape character changes.

Examples of how climate related pressures impact heritage assets include waterlogging of archaeological sites, damp problems and water ingress issues at historic properties, changes in groundwater levels affecting historic gardens, new pest species threatening heritage landscapes, damage to assets caused by wildfires and flooding and heat risks to collections and archives. It is important that we are aware of these risks and put in place preventative measures to protect our heritage assets where we can.

However, it is inevitable that we will not be able to save all our assets. Risk management of cultural heritage sites may need to include consultation and engagement with affected communities to accept inevitable loss of heritage sites to climate change hazards.

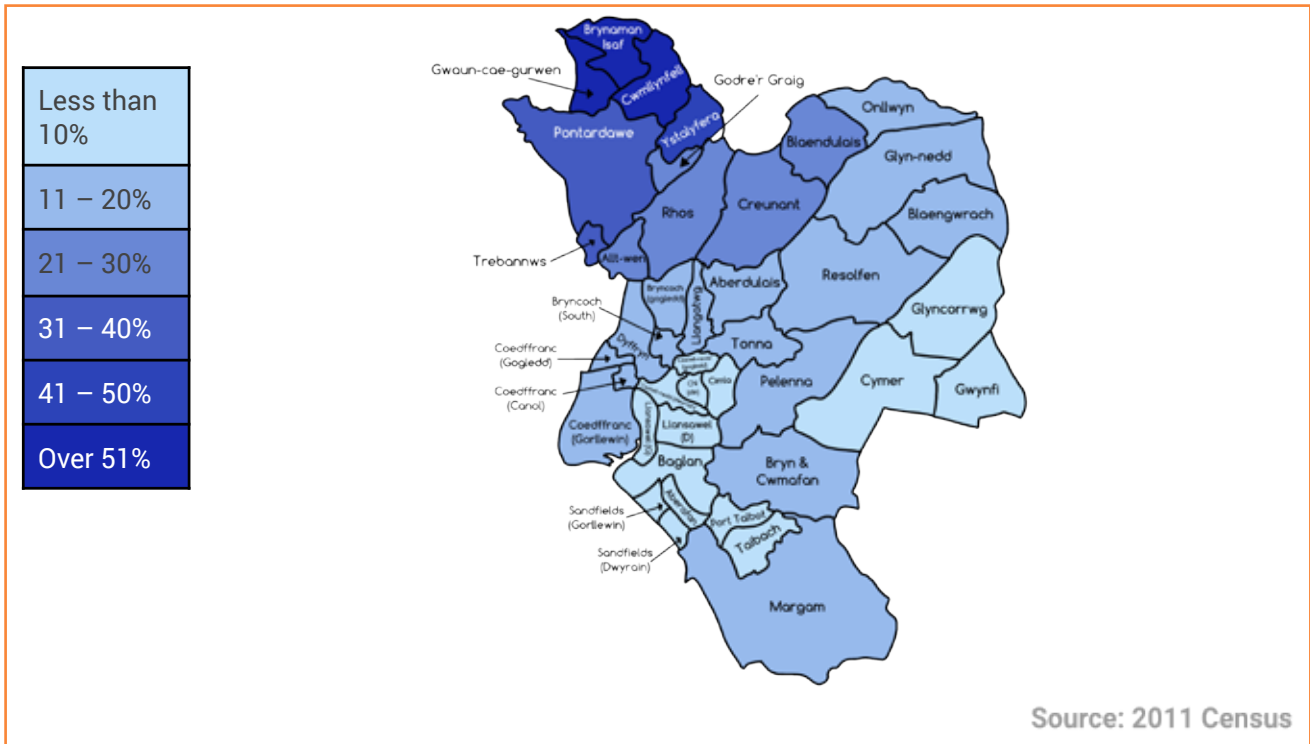
While our cultural heritage faces large risk from climate change, there are some potential opportunities for cultural heritage through the indirect effects of climate change, such as rising temperatures leading to increased visitor footfall and boosting the local economy. Although we must also recognise that increased visitors can also lead to erosion of heritage sites.

WELSH LANGUAGE



Menter Iaith produced a language profile of NPT in 2021 which has informed this assessment. This is based on the 2011 Census statistics; Language Use Survey 2013-15; Annual Population Survey 2019-2020; and the Welsh Government's survey on the impact of Covid-19 on the use of Welsh in the community in 2020. An updated version will be produced once the 2021 census data is available.

Neath Port Talbot has 20,698 Welsh speakers which is 15.3% of the county's population. The vast majority of these speakers are in the upper Swansea Valley and Amman Valley, with some communities such as Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen, Cwmllynfell and Lower Brynamman among the highest percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales.



At the beginning of the 20th Century nearly half of the population in Wales spoke Welsh. The percentage of Welsh speakers however, decreased throughout the 20th Century to as little as 18.7% in 1991. While it increased to 20.8% in 2001, principally owing to the growth in the teaching of Welsh as a second language in schools. In Wales, we saw a decrease in the number and percentage of Welsh speakers between 2001 and 2011. In Neath Port Talbot, there has also been a decrease, with a significant decrease in the areas where the numbers of Welsh speakers are high, in Cwmtawe and the Amman Valley.

Five of the eight community areas in NPT have a higher percentage of Welsh speakers compared to the County Borough figure of 15.3%.

There are areas within the County Borough where the language is an integral part of the social fabric and which contain very high levels of Welsh speakers. The Amman and Swansea Valley areas are the stronghold of the language, with the Pontardawe area and Dulais Valley also containing communities where more than the Welsh average of residents speak the language. These Valley communities are where Welsh language skills are highest with a high percentage of people who can speak, read and write Welsh. However, these traditional Welsh speaking communities have witnessed a marked reduction in percentage terms and numbers of Welsh speakers between 2001-2011.

The Annual Population Survey collects quarterly information on respondents' ability to speak Welsh. Historically, the Annual Population Survey estimates of people's ability to speak Welsh are higher than those produced by the Census.

People 3 years old and over in Neath Port Talbot (2016-2020)					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Population	135,100	136,300	136,300	135,800	136,200
Can speak Welsh	31,400	28,800	33,100	30,700	29,500
Can't speak Welsh	103,500	107,600	103,100	105,100	106,500
% who can speak Welsh	23.3%	21.1%	24.3%	22.6%	21.7%
Source: Annual Population Survey					

The information in the table above shows that the number and percentage of Welsh speakers in Neath Port Talbot has remained fairly constant over the last five years (within 3.2%).

Welsh language education has a strong influence on the vibrancy of the language both through Welsh medium schools and via adult learning classes. Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of learning in Neath Port Talbot. The Council's draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-2020 (WESP) recognises that language and culture are critical parts of an individual's identity and details how the Council plans to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities.

Currently in Neath Port Talbot there are 50 primary schools, 3 middle schools, 4 secondary schools, and 2 special schools. Of these, there are 9 Welsh-medium primary schools, 1 20 Welsh-medium middle school, and 1 Welsh-medium secondary site.

Table 10: Numbers on the register at Welsh-medium schools in NPT in 2016-20

School Name	Name on the Register		
	2016	2019	2020
YGG Blaendulais	102	104	107
YGG Castell-nedd	384	415	419
YGG Cwmllynfell	108	87	84
YGG Cwmnedd	175	125	150
YGG Gwaun-cae-gurwen	190	183	176
YGG Pontardawe	351	347	336
YGG Rhosafan	360	365	381
YGG Trebannws	118	102	101
YGG Tyle'r Ynn	239	226	230
Ygg Y Wern (CLOSEDCAU)	149	-	-
Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalfera Bro Dur (Primary)	-	159	157
Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalfera Bro Dur (North)	1046	1,000	938
Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalfera Bro Dur (South)	-	226	343
Source: Data from NPT County Council Education Department			

The above data shows that numbers in a number of schools have remained fairly constant over recent years. In 2016, 3,222 pupils received Welsh-medium education in Neath Port Talbot. By 2020, this number had increased to 3,422, an increase of 200 children, or 6%. Looking at the full picture of education across the county, however, in 2016 there were 15.5% of children receiving education through the medium of Welsh. In 2020 this had increased to 16.1%. It is a good sign of a change in parents' attitudes towards Welsh-medium education, and the Menter hopes to see another Welsh-medium primary school open within the county in order to support the new secondary site at Bro Dur. With the new campus at Ysgol Bro Dur, it is projected that more children will continue with their education through the medium of Welsh, which in turn should stimulate interest in primary education. The southern site currently only teaches up to year 10.

Ysgol Ystalyfera Bro Dur is a Sixth form provider, so there are a number of pupils studying post-16 education there. That provision is currently only available on the Northern site, in Ystalyfera. Further Education provision is also offered by NPTC Group of Colleges.

The Swansea Bay Region Centre for Learning Welsh leads all post-16 Welsh language learning provision in the community in the area. It works in partnership with a many organisations very successfully, such as providers, schools and colleges, the Mentrau, and Welsh and Welsh-language institutions to offer a wide choice and dynamic, flexible and exciting learning experiences. The National Centre for Learning Welsh publishes data on national numbers here. Overall, between 2017-18 and 2018-19, there was an increase in the number of learning opportunities

Neath Port Talbot Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-2020 states:

“Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of the learning offer in Neath Port Talbot. We believe that all children should benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and understand their lives through the medium of Welsh. The authority underpins this principle by ensuring universal access to this provision. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council recognises that language and culture are critical parts of an individual's identity and is committed to promoting and celebrating Welsh language learning across all phases and sectors.”

SPORTS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Sport is a big part of our culture and heritage in NPT. Our rugby and football clubs continue to thrive and well as being centres of sport they are also often focal points in our communities providing entertainment and acting as meeting places.

Aberavon Beach has always been an excellent surf spot popular with locals and also people from further afield. This has expanded in recent years with a number of surf schools operating on the beach providing lessons and equipment hire. There are now several groups that meet regularly on our seafront to take part in the increasingly popular cold water dipping. The link between mental well-being and physical activity has become more evident partially due to the long periods of time we have spent in lockdown over the last two years. We have also seen outdoor yoga sessions taking place on our beach with almost 100 people taking part at one time!

Activity and physical and mental health were important to all age groups that participated in the Let's Talk campaign. Younger people were somewhat more likely to mention issues such as leisure activities and facilities (including those intended for children), and socialising, while physical and mental health and wellbeing issues were important for the 50+ age group.

SPORT WALES SURVEYS



The most recent Sport Wales School Sport Survey took place in 2018. 118,893 Year 3-11 pupils took part in the survey and 1,055 teachers completed a School Sport Survey provision questionnaire. This was an increase on the numbers taking part in 2015 – remaining the largest UK survey of young people and sport. Whilst in 2015 the results of the survey showed an increase in young people taking part in sport or physical activity three or more times a week, in 2018 this was unchanged at 48%.

In 2018, the percentage of children and young people (3-11 years) engaging in at least three occasions of activity per week in NPT was 49.6% - higher than the national figure of 48% but down slightly from 2015 which was 54.7%.

94.8% of children and young people in NPT said they enjoyed their PE lessons. The most popular sport played by children and young people in community clubs in NPT was football, closely followed by swimming and rugby.

37.6% felt 'very confident' about trying a new sport which is higher than the Wales average at 34.9%

Sport Wales teamed up with Savanta ComRes to get an insight into the nation's activity habits and behaviours during the Coronavirus pandemic. Surveys have been undertaken at 4 points throughout the pandemic.

- Overall participation in sport and physical activity in Wales kept to roughly the same levels during lockdown, despite no structured sport taking place.
- Children, older adults (55+) and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tended to take part in less sport and physical activity during lockdown than they had done previously.
- Usually around 10% of the adult population volunteer in sport every year, but during lockdown 30% said they want to volunteer in sport.
- When leisure facilities reopened most people that accessed them said that they felt comfortable using them.

The National Exercise Referral Scheme is funded by Public Health Wales and sits within the Local Authority. Referrals are received from GP's and health professionals for anyone over the age of 17 who passes the inclusion criterion. Typical medical issues to be addressed are weight management, mental health issues, joint and muscular problems respiratory and cardiac problems and a supported 16 weeks of exercise sessions in local gym's and community Centres is offered.

The service is in high demand with 1471 referrals received in 2018/2019, and 1242 during 2019/2020 until it was suspended due to the pandemic.

Neath Port Talbot hosts a number of sport and leisure facilities catering for all ages. From world class mountain bike trails in the Afan Valley, the adventure golf, skate park, aqua splash play pool and the adventure playground on Aberavon seafront, horse riding opportunities in the Amman Valley and a range of walking trails through woodlands, parks and alongside canals.

Celtic Leisure has managed a number of leisure centres across the County Borough since 2003. They provide a wide variety of services including fitness classes, fitness and health suites, weights rooms, swimming pools, racquet sports and outdoor team sports to suit all ages and abilities. It has recently been agreed that Celtic Leisure will be brought back under local authority management.

- Aberavon Leisure and Fitness Centre.
- Neath Leisure Centre.
- Neath Sports Centre.
- Pontardawe Leisure Centre.
- Pontardawe Swimming Pool.
- Vale of Neath Leisure Centre.

PLAY PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Play, for all children, is important for their health, happiness and wellbeing. Neath Port Talbot's Play Sufficiency Assessment considers the quality and quantity of play opportunities for children and young people aged 0-17 years, and those factors which may impact on children's ability to access those opportunities, such as traffic, community, and availability of provision.

In Neath Port Talbot there are a number of designated play spaces:

- 156 parks (made up of 2 country parks, 1 paddling pool, 11 teen shelters and 142 urban and ornamental parks and gardens and playgrounds) which contain facilities such as children's play areas, bowling greens, sports pitches, skateboard ramps and areas of open space.
- 44 Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA's) and wheeled sports areas, the number has almost doubled since the last well-being assessment.
- 70 outdoor sports facilities, 69 of these belonging to schools.

In addition there are a number of spaces with potential for play:

- 509 amenity green space (informal spaces, village green).
- 2,056 natural and semi-natural green space (common land, grass/scrub land, woodland).

All of these are show an increase since the last assessment took place. 88% of outdoor play space in Neath Port Talbot is accessible to children of all abilities, however, only one park (The Gnoll) has equipment specifically for children with disabilities.

Artificial pitches also make a key contribution to getting people active. In Neath Port Talbot there are two, full size 3G pitches (in 3G the artificial grass 'blades' are supported by a thin base layer of sand and an infill of rubber crumb). There are also four sand filled, dressed or water filled artificial pitches and 10 smaller artificial pitches or 5-a-side/carpeted courts.

WHERE ARE WE NOW



The 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessment identified supervised play opportunities at:

- 56 childminders
- 12 holiday clubs
- 4 wrap around providers
- 26 full day care centres
- 13 after school clubs
- 2 creches
- 21 youth clubs
- 5 breakfast clubs

CHALLENGES



The assessment identified a number of challenges and gaps that impact on children's access to play:

Geographical Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perception that rural areas are under served. ● 2 wards have no registered childcare provision. ● 22 wards have no youth service provision. ● The average play score in Afan Valley, Amman Valley, Dulais Valley and Swansea Valley is lower than the average across the County Borough. This suggest quality outdoor provision is harder to find in rural areas.
Diverse Needs Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Only one designated play space has equipment for children with disabilities. ● Limited availability of supervised play opportunities for children with diverse needs.
Access Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not all children, young people and families are aware of local play opportunities. ● Perception that play areas and facilities are hard to access. ● Suggestion that public transport doesn't support access to play. ● Only a limited number of designated play spaces are lit, which reduces the time they are available to play.
Age Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Level of provision for children aged over 13 years of age does not reflect the proportion of the population. Young people of this age "may not want to go the park but we do need things to do."
Type Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of affordable summer play schemes. ● Supervised play provision specifically for children with additional needs and disabilities. ● Overall play value and average play value has reduced since the last assessment.
Workforce Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Childcare providers, schools and youth services are key to the play workforce but don't always think of themselves as such. ● Providers prioritise on mandatory training and development, and take up of wider programmes is limited
<p>Note:- The Play Sufficiency Assessment is due to be updated later this year (2022)</p>	

VOLUNTEERING



In Wales, it is estimated that approximately 938,000 volunteers contribute a total of 145 million hours of their time each year. Volunteer time has an estimated value of £1.7 billion. As of 2017-18, this was estimated around 3.1% of Wales' gross domestic product.

Volunteering also plays a significant role in producing other forms of value that cannot be defined in monetary or easily countable terms, such as: social cohesion, inclusion, economy, regeneration, and the development of social capital.

The pandemic has had an effect on volunteering in NPT with an unprecedented amount of people coming forward to offer support during the first wave.

The Volunteering Wales Digital Platform has 40,657 volunteers registered (Dec 2021) with 27,404 of these registering since 1st March 2020. 17,667 signed up between 01/03/2020 and 31/05/2020 which is when there was a drive for volunteers, there was another smaller spike in January 2021 again directed by media interest.

Overall 4.9% of all opportunities on the site cover heritage, arts, culture and 2.8% sport & recreation. However we know that these tend to be more formal volunteering opportunities rather than the informal volunteering that takes place through sport groups and faith groups.

With support from Neath Port Talbot CVS, NPT Council set up the NPT Safe and Well service during the pandemic as a humanitarian response requested by Welsh Government to ensure the Extremely Clinically Vulnerable were shielded from the Coronavirus. Close to 700 volunteers signed up offering their support to ensure residents had support with shopping, prescription collection and wellbeing check-in calls.

The NPT Safe and Well Partnership was developed to undertake contingency planning for forthcoming waves of Coronavirus. Neath Port Talbot CVS took the lead in mapping out volunteers across Neath Port Talbot to ensure that volunteers were able to respond should they be needed. Neath Port Talbot CVS also developed a 20 week training programme which was attended by over 90 volunteers. Topics included COVID-19 response, safeguarding, wellbeing, helping people to shop online and bereavement awareness.

80 Safe and Well volunteers are still currently available to support residents who need it along with befriending support for those totally isolated from their communities and feeling extremely lonely. The befriending support has been provided via telephone and doorstep visits during restrictions and will return to home visits when it is safe to do so. Full training for volunteers to support with home visits is currently being arranged in readiness for this.

During January and March 2021, the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership was given a grant from the Welsh Government to look at how volunteering can be sustained across Swansea and Neath Port Talbot post pandemic. As a result, a number of volunteering resources have been developed including a toolkit aimed at Friends of Parks groups and another around Green Recovery.

Neath Port Talbot CVS promote the Third Sector Support Wales resources that support organisations to attract Welsh speaking volunteers and how to promote the Welsh language through volunteering. We know that some individuals choose to volunteer in Welsh speaking organisations so that they can practice/improve their own Welsh speaking skills.

Many community assets, particularly in the valley areas of NPT are now run by volunteers. There is a risk of these arrangements becoming unsustainable and the people may be unable to continue this level of support.

“It worries me that every community centre, the swimming pool, the gym, and the library, are social enterprises. Every year they have to fight for funding to keep them open and to maintain the building. And that they expect volunteers to run these centres” (Afan Valley In-depth Interview).

COMMUNITY



Cultural well-being in communities can be expressed through a number of features, including community participation in events, shared rituals, volunteering and heritage, and interactions with the built environment. Many of these things can be expressed and understood through the role of intangible cultural assets. These include traditional activities and practices, language and cultural expression, and cultural knowledge and skills that are an important part of people’s lives.

According to the National Survey for Wales

- In 2018 55% of people agreed that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect, this is slightly higher than the Wales figure of 52%.
- Only 17% felt that they were able to influence decisions affecting their local area.

More than half of ‘Let’s Talk’ respondents (54%) felt that there was more community spirit in their immediate neighbourhood as a result of the pandemic, while a further quarter (25%) felt it had stayed the same. In general, respondents were more likely to observe a positive impact in their immediate neighbourhood, than they were across a wider area (that said, more than a third – 36% - felt community spirit had improved across the wider local area, and more than a quarter – 28% - felt it had improved across the whole county borough).

SOME RESIDENTS SUPPORTED A MORE COMMUNITY LED APPROACH:

“I wish people would look after 'their patch' more and take responsibility for the way things look - instead of waiting for 'the council' to sort things out...let's appreciate what we have and make the most of it”

When respondents were asked to identify things that could be done to improve life for residents, the most common themes included: more funding for the community e.g. to support community events/projects; cleaner and better-maintained streets, green spaces, beaches etc; measures to address crime and anti social behaviour; investing in and/or providing more, or cheaper, outdoor facilities, and more support for young people.

As part of the Let's Talk campaign, a series of online focus groups and in-depth interviews were held with 30 residents of the Afan, Amman, Dulais, Neath and Swansea Valleys.

Participants mostly spoke very positively about their local areas. Community spirit was generally said to be very strong across all of Neath Port Talbot's Valleys, with residents looking after one another and the provision of many community-led activities such as Christmas events, carnivals, and fundraising sessions at local community-led halls and clubs. Most participants also spoke warmly about the natural beauty of the area, praising Aberavon Beach, the Brecon Beacons, local forests, and public parks. The 'Welshness' of the area was also celebrated by a small number of participants.

There were also many things participants would like to change about their communities, most commonly the provision of better transport links and mental health support. Other desired improvements were around reductions in antisocial behaviour, substance misuse, unemployment, and general deprivation.

We often think of communities as geographical areas. This is how we have defined our community areas for the purpose of assessing well-being in NPT. However, there are other forms of community to which people can be said to belong, including sub-groups within populations based around employment, shared characteristics or interests. Each of these will have an impact of the well-being of individuals.

It is interesting to note how community groups have found new ways to keep in touch during the pandemic. Social media has become a huge communication tool and one of the ways in which communities increasingly connect. Even the most reluctant new starters have been persuaded to join during what has been period of isolation and loneliness for many. One male voice choir group, unable to meet in person for a significant amount of time, told how they have discovered 'WhatsApp' as a method of keeping in touch as a group, and that this has been a revelation for many members who have thoroughly enjoyed the chats and the swapping of jokes etc. One member of the group observed that the period of lockdown had brought home to him how being part of the choir was far more than just a hobby but an important part of social integration and integral to well-being.

The majority of those living in Wales were born in Wales; this number is decreasing slowly over time and this is likely to have an impact on culture locally. In NPT, there was a decrease in the percentage of people born in Wales from 90% in 2001 to 87% in 2011. It is expected that 2021 Census will show a further decrease.

It is important to note as we celebrate our culture and heritage here in NPT, that we are becoming increasingly diverse and our local culture and traditions are becoming richer as a result.

A community profile of Black Minority Ethnic communities was carried out in 2018 by NPTCVS, the BME Community Association and NPTCBC. Some of the findings are included below.

- The total population of Neath Port Talbot is 139,812. There are 3763 individuals from a BME background, which is 2.7% of the total population.
- At a ward level, the percentage of the total population mirrors that across the county with a few notable exceptions:
- Port Talbot ward – 7% of the population comes from a BME background (396 people out of 5641)
- Aberavon – 5.3% of the population comes from a BME background (287 people out of 5452)
- Sandfields East – 4% of the population comes from a BME background (276 people out of 6895)
- Godre'r graig – 1% of the population comes from a BME background (16 people out of 1644)
- Glyncorrwg – 0.6% of the population comes from a BME background (7 people out of 1096)

As part of the profile a survey was carried out amongst members of the BME community. 116 people responded that they were happy living in Neath Port Talbot, 12 people were not happy living in Neath Port Talbot.

There are 59 different languages and dialects spoken in schools across Neath Port Talbot, 722 pupils out of 20764 speak languages other than English and Welsh as a first language.

RELIGION

In NPT there was a decrease in the percentage of people identifying themselves as Christian from 72% in 2001 to 58% in 2011. During the same period there was also a noticeable increase in people declaring that they had 'no religion', from 19% in 2001 to 34% in 2011. This is similar to the picture across Wales. It will be interesting to see what has changed in NPT when the 2021 Census information is released, however we are anecdotally aware that we are becoming more diverse in terms of religion in the borough.

HOW WILL CULTURAL WELL-BEING BE AFFECTED BY FUTURE TRENDS?



ARTS & HERITAGE

Participation in the Arts has been badly hit by the pandemic and there is uncertainty around when and whether this will return to pre-pandemic levels due to the effect on public confidence.

Due to budget cuts over the last decade some assets are at risk of decline. Many community focal points are now run by volunteers and reliant on grant funding. There is a risk of this being unsustainable.

It is positive that people feel so strongly about preserving our heritage and making better use of our natural environment. The link between these things and our well-being seems clearer than ever. However we must recognise that our natural environment is under threat and take steps to preserve it and reverse damage done.

WELSH LANGUAGE



Whilst we are aware that the number of Welsh language speakers in the borough has decreased, it is also encouraging that there is an increase in children attending Welsh medium schools and in general more learning opportunities for Welsh are becoming available. The Wales Future Trends report predicts a rise in Welsh speakers across Wales in the next decade as indicated by the Annual Population Survey. We must continue to monitor the situation and provide more opportunities for people in NPT to speak Welsh.

COMMUNITIES



Communities have pulled together and helped each other during the pandemic and a revival in community spirit has been seen. It is evident from the findings of the Let's Talk report that residents have felt very positive about this resurgence and that this is something they would like to see more of in the future. We need to find ways of supporting our communities to engage in shaping their own futures.



NEATH PORT TALBOT PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD
WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT



CULTURAL CHAPTER