Chairman's AGM – Report 2024

Comrades.

Another year has passed and our presence here in the Taff Bargoed valley continues to grow, albeit a little slower than many of us would like to see. However, it is important that we maintain our focus on the original goals that we set out to achieve. Contributing to the economic regeneration of these communities was and remains our primary aim. Little has been achieved economically, in recent years, in these communities to make a telling and lasting difference to the lives of so many of the people herein. Nevertheless, Taff Bargoed Development Trust has been key to the developments that have occurred to date. It was us who introduced the concept of Adventure Activities, as an economic driver, to this valley with the development of our Centre and the Welsh International Indoor Climbing Centre almost 30 years ago. Many other organisations and community groups across South Wales have pursued similar ideas with some being very successful.

History will record our failure to capture opportunities and prosper due to the trust and dependency we placed on others who failed us in so many ways and left us in a very precarious position. Nevertheless, we are still here and getting stronger as we secure a sustainable platform from which we can grow. We have seen and witnessed initiatives driven by others to regenerate these communities – some more successful than others, yet nobody hails any of them as out and out examples of success, that have effectively changed the prosperity and life chances that our citizens deserve. The idea that a profitable business would feed further development remains a model that we aspire to but alongside that we must recognise there are more ways to explore how we can help people, especially our younger population, to have aspiration and ambition that will help them achieve personal and co-joined goals to secure their futures here in these communities or further afield.

A revised Taff Bargoed Regeneration Board is imminent and led by MTBC. I am hoping that we will be involved as a key player in any initiatives that emerge which dovetail with our aims and objectives. I hope that our presence and limited resources are not going to be viewed as a means to achieve other outcomes that are equally important for

these communities but outside of our ‘Economic’ agenda. I sincerely hope that progress can be made on all fronts and I wish this revised initiative every success.

Our position remains vulnerable even though we have secured a healthy reserve to underpin our estate and its financial activity. The world changes very quickly as we have witnessed in recent years and should we be unprepared then our existence will be at risk. In establishing our current healthy situation there have been many who have contributed and therefore I must offer our grateful thanks for the parts they have played. At Taff Bargoed Centre we have several Tenants of various elements to the estate: Rock UK has been with us for many years and continue as our main tenant whilst Gibbons Travel, Hawthorne Tree Services, Thornacre Ltd. and MRAG Comms are our other tenants. Their commitment and cordial relations are welcomed and we thank them all for their presence and contribution. Each one of them is an employer of local people which we hope will continue.

We received a grant from MTBC to facilitate new LED lighting and new water heaters in each of our rental units thereby improving standards and cutting costs for our tenants. A further grant was received from Transport for Wales that allowed us to plant trees around the estate to enhance appearance and contribute to the national initiative against global warming. A further small grant was received from Welsh Water in support of our work in the community. We are very grateful for these awards.

Whilst it is always beneficial to receive grant funding it is always a pleasure to be able to offer grant funding. Our Helen Thomas Community Fund, developed through the installation of our Solar Array has continued this year with funding being afforded to: The Taff Bargoed Food Bank, Treharris RFC, Treharris Boys and Girls Club in their centenary year, The Trelewis and Bedlinog Neighbourhood Watch Activities Group and Treharris Together. We hope that our contributions have facilitated some of their activities to help and support different groups in the community.

Community is really the essence of what we are endeavouring to achieve alongside these groups and the ability to do so will enrich the

way we are perceived by our citizens. Membership of the Trust now stands at 1800 plus and we now have a regular presence on social media to promote our achievements and activities that promotes the Trust and encourages new members.

Of course, none of this just happens. It has to be managed and driven by somebody on the ground. In Howard we have a great asset who has steered the ship for many years. His frugal, careful approach has ensured our stability and I'm sure that the Board will echo my gratitude for his ongoing commitment to our cause. For the past 18 months or so we have also had Sioned on board to assist Howard and learn the many facets of being a landlord. Sioned is also responsible for our social media and is doing a great job of managing that. Thank you Sioned.

The Trustees of Taff Bargoed Development Trust are a dwindling number – last year we lost Alan and none of us are getting any younger. Without Trustees we cannot function, so I am, as always, grateful for your commitment and ongoing support.

Over the years I have used many analogies in my annual chairman's report to reflect where we were at. I think that the stability we have achieved through a successful business plan now reflects less need for analogy as inspiration should dominate our future and we should challenge and assist the young people of these communities to find their own goals and ambitions.

Jon Rees

Chairman TBDT