

CILYMAENLLWYD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2024 – 2025

1 Introduction

This annual report provides a summary of Cilymaenllwyd Community Council's activities and achievements during the financial year 2024-25, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Democracy (Wales) Act 2021.

The Council has had a productive year, working closely with the community and partners to deliver on key priorities outlined in this report. Our focus has remained on improving access to local green spaces, supporting community organisations, ensuring financial transparency, and maintaining community engagement.

2 The Council

The composition of the Council remained unchanged throughout 2024–25, with nine Councillors representing Cilymaenllwyd. A total of six meetings were held during the year, beginning with the Annual General Meeting on 4th June 2024. Meetings took place at Caffi Beca at 7.30pm on the last Tuesday of every other month. Councillor Russell Davies served as Chairperson, succeeding Councillor Tudur Lewis, while Councillor Anthony Eynon held the position of Vice Chairperson. Attendance at all meetings was consistently strong. Councillor Dorian Phillips attended these meetings, providing regular updates on a range of local matters, including road repairs, potholes, hedge cutting, and winter gritting; addressing fly-tipping and waste collection concerns, particularly at Ynys Fach and supported initiatives for improved community broadband. All meeting agendas and minutes were prepared by the Clerk and made publicly available on the Council's website.

3 Activities and Achievements of the Council in 2024-25

The Council's work continued to focus on supporting and improving the community as set out below.

3.1 Cilymaenllwyd Public Footpaths Restoration Grant Project

The Council successfully completed its Footpaths Restoration Project in January 2025, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Sustainable Communities. This £57,138.96 project significantly improved accessibility along key local routes, supporting community wellbeing, heritage, and biodiversity. Key achievements of the project included:

- restoration of multiple public footpaths in the Wenallt Valley, including challenging wet and wooded areas, with bridges and drainage installed. A total of 5,722 metres of paths were restored, linking the communities of Login, Efailwen, and Pantycaws
- monthly community walks to promote engagement
- establishment of the Cilymaenllwyd volunteering scheme, with volunteers actively helping to clear and maintain sections of footpath

- purchase of a heavy-duty strimmer and safety equipment
- formation of a local history group, now meeting regularly at the Cardi Bach Heritage Centre
- biodiversity training and events delivered in partnership with Ramblers Cymru and the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre (WWBIC)
- installation of 10 bat boxes in collaboration with the Vincent Wildlife Trust to support local Barbastelle bat habitats
- creation of a kiosk information hub in Login
- a well-attended official opening event, attracting 60–70 community members and partner organisations

The project has strengthened community wellbeing by reconnecting people with the natural beauty and biodiversity of the Wenallt Valley, while also sparking renewed interest in its rich cultural heritage. Restoring these historic public rights of way has not only enhanced local access but also deepened appreciation for the landscape's ecological and historical significance.

3.2 Financial Support to Local Organisations

In 2024–25, a total of £7,289 was distributed to various charities and organisations under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. This provision enables the Council to allocate funds to activities and charitable purposes that are considered to benefit the local community directly. Expenditure under Section 137 was significantly higher than the £3,590 spent in the previous year, reflecting a strong commitment to supporting local initiatives. Organisations supported included Ysgol Beca and its PTA, Cylch Meithrin Ffynnonwen, Ffynnonwen Social Centre, Y Cardi Bach Welsh-language magazine, Wales Air Ambulance, the 2024 Carmarthenshire All Wales Ploughing Championship, the Twm Carnabwth Sculpture Fund, Tir Dewi mental health charity, and Llanglydwen Church. This funding supports a broad range of cultural, educational, and wellbeing-focused activities that help strengthen community life.

To help distribute financial support more effectively and fairly, the Council has introduced a new process for charities and organisations to request support. As part of this, applicants are now asked to complete a Financial Support Form, available on the Council's website, to be submitted for consideration at the Council's November meeting. This approach, already adopted by many other community councils, provides a clearer and more transparent framework, ensuring fair evaluation of all requests while giving the Council greater control over its Section 137 expenditure and annual budgeting process.

4 Financial Summary

Community Council activity is funded through the Council Tax, with each council setting an annual precept to cover its planned expenditure for the benefit of its residents. In 2024–25, following a budget forecasting exercise, the precept was set at £8,500, an increase of £500 on the previous year. The opening balance at the start of the financial year was £2,710.51, and the closing balance as of 31st March 2025 was £2,571.81. Total income during the year amounted to £53,833.27,

comprising the £8,500 precept and £45,333.27 received through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) for the Footpaths Restoration Project.

Total expenditure for 2024–25 was £53,972.40. This included:

- £39,333.27 spent on the delivery of the SPF-funded project
- £1,398.80 in Clerk's salary
- £200 in room hire
- £1,962.95 for public lighting
- £1,092.00 in Councillors' remuneration (annual allowance)
- £2,130.60 covering audit costs, website management, One Voice Wales membership, insurance, and a new noticeboard
- £7,289.00 allocated under Section 137 to support local charities and organisations

An outstanding VAT reclaim of £565.79 remains to be submitted and will be processed during 2025/26.

The annual accounts for 2024–25 will be available following approval and will provide a detailed breakdown of all income and expenditure.

As part of its commitment to transparency and accountability, the Council published its audited 2023–24 accounts in accordance with Audit Wales requirements, making them available at Glandy Cross Store, Ffynnonwen Community Centre, and on the Council's website and Facebook page. These accounts were reviewed by an internal auditor and externally audited by Audit Wales.

In 2024–25, Audit Wales conducted a basic audit of the Council's accounts. All reports issued by the Auditor General for Wales are publicly available on the Council's website, in line with Regulation 15(5) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.

In addition, the Council adopted updated Financial Regulations based on the One Voice Wales model. These have been published on the Council's website to ensure ongoing effective financial management.

5 Councillors' Remuneration

In accordance with Section 147 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the guidance issued by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, the Council was required to make annual allowance payments of £156 (£3 per week) to Councillors for the 2023–24 financial year. These payments were issued during the 2024–25 financial year. Eight Councillors accepted the allowance and chose to donate it to local community causes; one Councillor declined the allowance. All remuneration complied fully with statutory requirements. The allowance for the 2024–25 financial year will be issued in 2025–26.

6 Biodiversity Summary

The Council continued to implement its Biodiversity Action Plan in line with the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Part 1 – Section 6, reaffirming its

commitment to protecting and enhancing local biodiversity. Biodiversity remains a standing item on Council meeting agendas, ensuring regular monitoring and discussion. In 2024–25, biodiversity was a key theme of the Footpaths Restoration Project, which included three training events delivered in partnership with Ramblers Cymru and the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre (WWBIC) to build local knowledge and engagement. The project also involved collaboration with the Vincent Wildlife Trust to monitor rare Barbastelle bats in the Wenallt Valley, with habitat boxes installed to support their conservation. Following storm-related damage, fallen trees were intentionally left in place to benefit local wildlife habitats. The project strengthened working relationships with biodiversity officers from Carmarthenshire County Council and WWBIC. As a result, the Council has updated its Biodiversity Action Plan and is preparing a progress report, which will be published on the Council's website in December 2025.

7 Health & Safety

Health and Safety remained a standing item on the Council's agenda throughout the year, providing regular opportunities to identify and address potential risks. Both the Risk Register and Asset Register were reviewed and updated to reflect activity associated with the Footpaths Restoration Project. Clear signage was displayed in project areas to restrict public access while contractors were on-site, ensuring public safety. Health and Safety considerations were discussed and monitored at Council and subgroup meetings, and volunteers received appropriate safety briefings prior to undertaking any work. In addition, volunteer teams routinely walked the restored footpaths to identify and report any hazards such as unstable trees or trip risks.

8 Training and Policy Development

During 2024–25, Councillors participated in a few training sessions delivered by One Voice Wales, covering key areas such as local government finance, biodiversity, and governance. The Clerk also undertook relevant professional development, including a biodiversity reporting webinar and training in financial governance. The Council is currently developing a formal training plan to outline future training priorities for both Councillors and the Clerk. This plan will help ensure that all members are well-informed and confident in carrying out their roles.

In terms of policy development, the Council adopted a Social Media Policy and an ICT & Digital Inclusion Policy during the year, with further policies on Risk Management and Safeguarding currently in draft.

9 Community Engagement

The Council remained committed to strengthening community engagement by communicating through a range of platforms to reach as many residents as possible. The Council's website saw a steady increase in users during 2024/25. Visitors were particularly drawn to the news section and project updates, including coverage of the Local History Group and promotion of biodiversity training events. The Council's Facebook page was used to share updates and advertise community events. To enhance access to information for those not online, a new noticeboard was installed at Glandy Cross Shop.

10 Looking Forward to 2025–26

Looking to the year ahead, Cilymaenllwyd Community Council will continue to review and update its core documents and policies to ensure robust governance and transparency. Key priorities for 2025–26 include:

- ongoing implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan and the development of a dedicated biodiversity section on the Council's website, helping to promote environmental awareness and engagement
- ensure all activities continue to meet health and safety requirements, reflecting its duty of care to the community
- cultural and community engagement will remain central, with plans to further develop the Local History section of the website to encourage broader participation across all age groups
- support the local appeal committee for the 2026 National Eisteddfod – Eisteddfod y Garreg Las – contributing to community fundraising efforts to reach the £7,000 target through local events and initiatives
- further develop its training plan to ensure Councillors continue to build relevant knowledge and skills
- seek external funding and grant opportunities to support and enhance community activities
- focus on increasing engagement with residents to gather views and feedback on what they would like to see prioritised in the community

Through these priorities, the Council will continue to work in an open, safe, and inclusive manner, responding to the needs and aspirations of Cilymaenllwyd's residents.

3rd June 2025

Signed by Chair 2024-25:

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Signed by the Clerk:

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