



GWERNYFED COMMUNITY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2023 / 2024



Contact Email address: clerk@gwernyfed.co.uk

Website: <https://www.gwernyfed.co.uk>

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1. Chair's Introduction

This past year has been one of significant progress and adaptation for the Gwernyfed Community Council. We successfully implemented hybrid meetings, ensuring greater accessibility for all councillors and residents. The launch of our new council logo competition, which has been recently designed by a local student, was a highlight, showcasing our commitment to community involvement. Despite challenges such as maintaining quorum and managing unexpected costs, we have navigated these issues effectively. Looking ahead, we aim to further enhance community engagement and environmental sustainability.

2. Council Structure

The Gwernyfed Community Council (GCC) is composed of dedicated members who work together to serve the local community. The current council structure includes the following seven councillors and the clerk:

- Cllr. Mike Bugler (Chair):
- Cllr. Nick Pritchard (Vice Chair):
- Cllr. Will Lloyd (County Councillor).
- Cllr. Graham Day
- Cllr. Peter Varcoe.
- Cllr. Chris Jones
- Cllr. Rachel Harding
- Mrs. Keren Bender (Clerk).

3.Meetings

The Gwernyfed Community Council holds regular hybrid meetings, which are conducted both in person at Felindre Village Hall and online via Teams. This hybrid approach ensures greater accessibility and participation from both councillors and the community. Meetings are typically held on the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM.

Hybrid meetings have allowed us to maintain high levels of engagement and ensure that council business continues smoothly, even when physical attendance is not possible. They are intended to allow both councillors and residents to attend meetings usually in our case using Microsoft Teams to listen to and view Council meetings taking place in real time. Councillors will take full part in the meeting while residents only if invited by the Chair.

Agendas and minutes are posted on the GCC website as well as notice boards at the following locations: Old Railway Line Garden Centre, bus shelters near Glasbury Garage, Gwernyfed Estate in Three Cocks and Felindre.



Figure 1 - Felindre Village Hall

4. Role and Responsibilities

The Gwernyfed Community Council serves as the first tier of local government, representing the interests of the residents of the Gwernyfed ward. Our primary responsibilities include:

- **Community Representation:** Acting as the voice of the community in local government matters, ensuring that residents' concerns and needs are heard and addressed.
- **Local Services and Amenities:** Providing donations to local causes in managing and maintaining local amenities such as parks, community spaces, and public facilities. We also collaborate with county authorities to address local issues such as road maintenance, waste collection, and public safety.
- **Planning and Development:** Reviewing and providing feedback on local planning applications to ensure that any development aligns with the community's best interests and preserves the local environment and heritage.
- **Community Engagement:** Encouraging community involvement through various initiatives, including supporting local newsletters, social media updates, and public meetings. We strive to foster a sense of community and enhance the quality of life for all residents.
- **Financial Management:** Overseeing the council's budget, ensuring that funds are allocated effectively and responsibly to benefit the community. This includes setting the annual precept and managing expenditures for community projects and services.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Supporting projects that enhance local biodiversity, sustainability, and environmental well-being. This includes tree planting, clean-up events, and promoting eco-friendly practices within the community.

The council is committed to working collaboratively to achieve our strategic goals, enhance community well-being, and ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for the Gwernyfed ward.

5. Councillors and Their Roles

Cllr. Mike Bugler (Chair): Mike Bugler has been a dedicated member of the Gwernyfed Community Council since 2017, currently serving as the Chair. Previous voluntary involvement as a Councillor (and Chair) at Talybont on Usk Community Council 2007 to 2017 and Chair of Talybont Energy from 2001 to 2013. Mike is a Chartered Management Accountant starting as a trainee accountant with the North Thames Gas Board in 1965 and served as Managing Director in various businesses since 1977 until retirement as well as a member for 6 years of the CBI Council for Wales and other industry trade Associations. Mike oversees council meetings and represents the council in official matters. He is passionate about reducing dependence on hydrocarbon energy, improving the Community, enhancing community engagement and ensuring transparent decision-making processes. Mike also leads initiatives related to infrastructure improvements and public safety within the community. Previously also involved in grant aided projects including one to improve employment in the Heads of the Valley (£1.25m), replacement of Children's play area equipment, exercise track and bike Hub at Talybont (£250k), and resurrection of electricity production at Talybont from the compensation flow out of the Dam (£113k). Currently he is determined to assist Three Cocks achieve completion of a project to provide landscaping and facilities for children and adults in the Gwernyfed Park area and establish a new Community Hall for Three Cocks and Glasbury (SE of the R. Wye).

Cllr. Nick Pritchard: Nick Pritchard joined the community council in June 2022. He brings extensive experience in a variety of specialisms from his 15 years of working for Natural Resources Wales in Flood Risk Management at both an operation and strategic level. Outside the day job, Nick is a governor at Gwernyfed High School and has recently (Sept 2023) become a governor at Ysgol Mynydd Du primary school in Talgarth. Nick is also the chair of Three Cocks Matters Community Group which has been fundamental over the last 2 years in revitalising the community of Three Cocks. Other groups Nick is involved in include being the Vice chair of the environmental group On the Verge, Vice chair of the Talgarth Walkers are Welcome group which are responsible for delivering the annual walking festival in Talgarth. In being involved in these groups, Nick is able to bring an insight across the community and helps in driving community projects and environmental initiatives aimed at preserving and enhancing the local environment. Nick has successfully led several projects, including the designing of the green spaces and play areas in Three Cocks as well as taking forward the ecology assessment work across the community. His commitment to sustainability is evident in his efforts to promote eco-friendly practices within the community.

Cllr. Will Lloyd Will Lloyd really enjoys getting out and speaking to lots of residents in our area as our local county councillor. Will loves to listen to what people think and want to see locally. Will recognises what a fantastic area we live in and wants to continue working with everyone here to make it an even better place to live and work. Will lives' locally and have shown that he is willing to put in the work, getting things

done for our residents. Will does this by supporting several different clubs and groups, such as a junior football club, local community group, a hall committee and a wider regeneration group as well as two Community Councils and he is also a Powys County Council Member, too. Will has recently commissioned a three-centre Play Sufficiency Assessment for the wider area with support from the two Community Councils and an environmental group in my area and he is working towards creating a Place Plan for our area.

Cllr. Graham Day: Grahame's working life experience includes 21 years in the entertainment industry, both in the UK and abroad, 17 years as a trainer, lecturer and schoolteacher in 11yr to 19yr secondary schools and colleges of further education. He has also worked in the hospitality industry locally for 12 years and has been a community councillor for both Gwernyfed CC and Glasbury CC for approximately 18 yrs. Grahame has a desire to bring together some of the community councils, in order to facilitate more integrated and further reaching projects for development. As the national government has a similar wish to reduce the number of community councils, this may in fact come to pass.

Cllr. Peter Varcoe: Peter Varcoe has been a member of Gwernyfed Community Council since March 2022. He is a retired director of a UK wide national children's charity, having worked previously, at a senior management level, in London and Midlands local authority social services departments. A qualified social worker and having a master's degree in management and corporate ethics, he is well versed in legal, HR and training matters relating to charities, local authorities and charitable trusts. He leads on HR and training matters, and, as a member of the Finance Committee, he assists in Council finance and budget related matters, the preparation of its annual budget, monitoring of expenditure, and in ensuring that financial resources are allocated effectively to the benefit of the community. As a resident of Felindre, he is the dedicated lead on bringing local issues to the attention of Gwernyfed Community Council.

Cllr. Chris Jones: Chris has lived in Three Cocks for over 40 years and has established a wealth of local knowledge. Chris has served Gwernyfed Community Council since 2022. For the last 16 years, Chris has been an engineer for Ted Hopkins in Brecon. Outside of work, Chris has been heavily involved in Three Cocks Vintage Society having taken on roles such as Vice Chairman and Chair and remains a director for over 7 years. Chris is also involved with the committee of Three Cocks Matters Community Group which is focused on re-vitalising the local community. Chris has helped various groups in the area with health and safety issues due to an extensive knowledge on this topic and continues to keep updated in any related changes in legislation. Additionally Chris has also been the father Christmas for the foster care association.

Mrs. Keren Bender (Clerk): Keren has served as the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for Gwernyfed Community Council since April 2019. She holds an Honours

Degree in Business and Finance. Has worked in the finance departments and learning & development department within the Steel Industry and is a Past President of Community, the Steel Trade Union. Prior to joining the Community Council, she was the Executive Member for Education for Blaenau Gwent Borough Council. For the Community Council she is responsible for handling a wide range of administrative tasks. Her role requires her to prepare agendas and minutes for council meetings, managing correspondence, and maintaining accurate records. Keren also oversees financial management, including budgeting, invoicing, and compliance with audit requirements. Her organisational skills and attention to detail ensure the smooth operation of council activities.

New Councillor Mrs Rachel Harding Rachel recently joined the Gwernyfed Community Council mid-way through the year. Rachel moved back to Wales and into the area over 15 years ago to be closer to her family nearby. With a keen passion for all things community related she was involved in the development of the play park in Glasbury (Radnorshire) securing funding of over £45,000, all whilst working full time and managing a small family. Having worked in Wales since moving home, first in the public sector and in the last 9 years in the charity sector, Rachel brings a host of skills into her new role, from governance to project management through to strategic planning. She's proud to represent Glasbury (Breconshire) on the community council and looks forward to the year ahead.

6. Committees and Their Responsibilities

Gwernyfed Community Council only has one committee at this time.

1. Finance Committee

- Purpose: The Finance Committee is responsible for overseeing the council's financial health, preparing the annual budget, monitoring expenditures, and ensuring that funds are allocated efficiently. The committee also reviews financial policies and procedures to ensure compliance with regulations. This committee meet only once in late September to prepare the annual budget.
- Members:
 - Cllr. Mike Bugler (Chair)
 - Cllr. Nick Pritchard
 - Cllr. Peter Varcoe
 - Cllr. Chris Jones

7. Gwernyfed Community Council Aims

In July 2023, the council decided to draft its own aims to help steer its strategic direction. These were developed by all councillors before being agreed in the September.

N.	Theme	Aim
1.	Administration	To have a clear financial plan with future commitments
2.	Biodiversity	Help identify and deliver protected or enhance Biodiversity across our communities
3.	Communication	To have a Communication & Engagement Strategy with Action Plan
4.	Communication	To have an updated or upgraded website for GCC.
5.	Community Asset	To support the creation of a dedicated community space for Three Cocks.
6.	Community Assets	To support / lead the regeneration Glasbury Primary school site
7.	Community Assets	To support the survival of Felindre hall and use of the recreation field
8.	Community Assets	Support the regeneration of community green spaces and play areas
9.	Events	To offer or coordinate events for training to local residents
10.	Events	GCC to attend and support a few local events
11.	Local Economy	To encourage community shops and services to local areas where lost
12.	Local Economy	Encourage local initiatives and Innovate business to the area
13.	Local Economy	To support and encourage sustainable Housing development across Gwernyfed
14.	Local services	Assess and promote the Well-being of residents across Gwernyfed looking at services and facilities
15.	Local services	Encourage and support the improvements GP services in and around area.
16.	Resources	To have a full complement of Councillors
17.	Services	To have sufficient gritting services across the ward.
18.	Travel	Support the active travel route from Hay via Llanigon and Talgarth
19.	Travel	Increase the active travel across communities where possible
20.	Travel	To support the management and use of public footpaths and highways across Gwernyfed area
21.	Flood Risk	To support residents with ongoing flood risk within Gwernyfed area.

The council has progressed some of these. However, the council recognises more needs to be done around these aims.

8. Achievements and Activities

During the period of 2023 / 24 Gwernyfed Community Council have achieved several different activities. These are detailed below with links to the relevant Aims and Theme.

- **Projects:**
 - **Logo Competition:** Engaged local High School Gwernyfed in designing a new council logo. Launched in October 2023.
 - **Broadband Installation:** Completed installation at Felindre Village Hall to support hybrid meetings.
 - **Relief of Flooding** at the Gro (2nd Year)
 - Work to reduce impact on Felindre residents of **HGV activity** especially that caused by local Timber felling.
 - **Training** of existing and new councillors especially on recent legislation.
 - **Development of IT** used by councillors particularly Microsoft Teams incorporating Hybrid Meetings
 - **Assisting 'Three Cocks Matters'** in achieving their objectives particularly improving the village of Three Cocks notably development of Community Action, landscaping, clearing and improving roadsides. (*Links to Aims; 2 Biodiversity, 10 Community Assets*)
- **Events:**
 - **Three Cocks Matters Summer Fete:** Participated and supported local community event. (*Links to Aims; 12 Events*)
 - Attending **One Voice Wales Quarterly Meetings (Brecon & Radnorshire community councils forum)**
- **Challenges:**
 - **Maintaining Quorum:** Addressed through improved scheduling and communication. Bring the Council membership up to its quota of 10 councilors. This has increased by one over this period. (*Links to Aims; 14 Resources*)
 - **Continual Flooding at the Wye side Cottages in Glasbury:** this results in the Gwernyfed Community Council deploying local contractor at the cost of our budget to over pump the surface water that put local residents at risk from flooding.
 - Pollution problems in the R. Llynfi and R. Wye as they impact the Gwernyfed Community

9. Financial Summary

2023 / 2024	Budget	Actual
Income	£14,170	£15,746.03
Precept		£14,170
Reclaimed VAT		£873.76
Contribution from Topographical survey		£583
Reserve Account interest		£118.74
Expenditure	£14,170	£15,776.93
Support for local Organisations	£4,950	£4,828
Donation - Brecon Advice Centre	£200	£0
Donation - Felindre Village Hall	£750	£0
Donation - LOVE Glasbury	£1,000	£0
Donation - Penyrheol Chapel	£250	£300
Donation - St Peters Church Hall	£750	£750
Donation - Dial A Ride	£500	£500
Donation - Wales Air Ambulance	£400	£500
Donation – Felindre Focus		£150
Donation – Skip, Community Clean Up		£378
Donation - Topographical survey (£583 contribution)		£2,100
Donation - Other/Contingency	£1,000	0
Community Hall Hire	£100	£150
Central Costs	£4,170	£5,238.40
Audit	£300	£445
Internal Audit	£50	£50
Expenses	£100	£0
Insurance	£270	£300
Advertising	£100	£0
Councillors' expenses	£100	£1,050
Teams Meetings & Microsoft	£150	£130.55
One Voice Wales	£150	£0
Hall Hire & heating		£275
Training	£300	£146
Flood Relief Costs	£2,500	£2,052
Broadband & Website Hosting	£150	£587.50
Stationery		£75.63
Employment	£3,650	£5,102.04
Clerk's Salary	£3,500	£5,000.04
Payroll service	£150	£102
Equipment	£1,400	£608.49
Notice Board	£400	£488.92
Defibrillator and Pads		£73.59
IT and Scanner (including cables)	£1,000	45.98
Surplus/Deficit from annual finances		-£30.90

- **Income and Expenditure:** Over this period the council has continued to support local groups and venues that benefit residents. The key groups to receive our support have been.
 - St Peters Church, Glasbury
 - Penyrheol Baptist Church
 - Dial a Ride – Hay
 - Wales Air Ambulance
 - Felindre Focus
 - Three Cocks Matters (Coronation Hall hire, Three Cocks skip day & Topographic survey)
 - Felindre Focus Newsletter

While our central costs and salary costs remain the main part of our budget. Our greatest challenges remain the flood relief costs which have cost us £2,052 over the last year. We are looking to resolve this through discussions with Welsh Water, Natural Resources Wales and Powys County Council.

- **Financial Health:** A key aspect of the Gwernyfed Community Council budget has been to create a sustained reserve. This has gone from £10,937.98 at the begin of April 2023 to £10,907.08 at the end of March 2024. The purpose of this reserve is to cover any unforeseen expense as well as be able to invest into local projects brought forward to the council. This will be detailed further in the next annual report from the council.

10. Community Engagement

- **Initiatives:**
 - **Newsletters:** The community council to date hasn't issued any local newsletters. However, this was proposed in September 2023 but was agreed that a new logo was needed first. The aim is following the launch of the new logo in July 2024 an annual newsletter will be distributed to inform residents of council activities.
 - **Social media:** Over this period the council has enhanced its presence on Facebook to engage with the community.
 - Attending Three Cocks Summer Fete June 2023. The community council ran the tea & coffee station for the fete. This helped raise the profile for the council and offered any opportunity for residents to raise any concerns.
- **Feedback:** Summary of community feedback and how it has influenced council decisions. This will be established on the updated website in late 2024.

11. Environmental Initiatives

- **Biodiversity Projects:** Initiatives to enhance local biodiversity, including tree planting and developing wildflower areas is one of the Community Council's aims.
 - Over the last year we have supported groups like Three Cocks Matters who have delivered a community skip day event to which the Council has provided a 30% donation towards the costs. Powys County Council provided 60% of the funding alongside Three Cocks Matters 10%.
 - Three Cocks Matters have also commissioned ecological assessment work which was presented with the initial findings to us in March 2024. The final report from all the survey work will be shared in late October.

This is Exemplar work carried out in Three Cocks sets a great precedent of how this can be done to inform future improvement of biodiversity for the community. In time the community council will aim to develop an action plan to support such work.

12 Future Plans

The future aims of Gwernyfed Community Council will be based around the Strategic aims that were set in 2023. These will be reviewed and updated in July 2024 with more of a focus on actions to deliver these over the coming year.

Gwernyfed Community Council remains open to suggestions or issues being raised from residents. These will always be considered against these aims and the limitations of any current precept.