

Rhondda Fach
**WATER RESILIENT
COMMUNITIES**



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Chris Jones

Chief Executive, Welsh Water

As a not-for-profit company – we are committed to earning the trust of our customers in everything that we do, every day. That means that we shouldn't just be working on behalf of customers – but in true partnership with them.

After we started a major investment programme in the Rhondda Fach area, in the South Wales Valleys, to replace and cleanse the water pipes, we have worked hard to reach out more to our customers, and get them more involved in our work and how we carry it out.

The result is the Water Resilient Community project – which represents a fundamental shift in how we work. It has been an opportunity to reach out to people about more than just spades in the ground – but to work with them across the whole range of support we offer.

It has meant we can encourage more people who may genuinely struggle to pay their bills sign up to one of our social tariffs; we have also used it as a chance to get more people to register on our Priority Service Register, to understand what extra support they may need. We have offered free lessons to all schools in the area to educate our future customers, as well as providing free water efficiency audits to all homes in the area.

While we're working in customers' communities, we have been working closely with community groups and organisations who have helped us identify who these people are and have helped to get the whole community working with us for everyone's long-term benefit.

We've had great initial engagement with community groups – and the feedback we have had so far is very encouraging. Our biggest challenge is to maintain this over the long-term. We want to work better with communities, provide a better service for our customers – but to leave a lasting legacy in the area once we've left.

I want what we've started in the Rhondda Fach to be a blueprint for how we work elsewhere to create a truly sustainable relationship and a lasting legacy in the areas we work.



£23 MILLION INVESTMENT IN THE RHONDDA FACH

After we started a major £23 million investment programme in the Rhondda Fach area, in the South Wales Valleys, to replace and cleanse the water pipes, we have worked hard to reach out more to our customers, and get them more involved in our work and how we carry it out.

Introduction

As one of Wales' largest companies we make a significant (more than £1 billion) contribution to the local economy, we provide a vital public service and are an environmental guardian.

Sitting alongside one of our largest investment programmes (£23 million), the Rhondda Fach Water Resilient Community pilot project aims to maximise the benefit of our presence in some of Wales' most deprived communities – focussing key areas of our work on a comparatively small geographic area with the intention of leaving the legacy of a "water resilient community."

The success of the project is dependent not only on the collaboration of departments and projects across our business, but also on the co-development of our strategy and its implementation with the customers, stakeholders and residents of the area.



Background and context

As outlined in Welsh Water 2050, our long-term strategy to tackle some of the biggest challenges we face, we have set ourselves an ambitious mission, “to become a truly world class, resilient and sustainable water service for the benefit of future generations”.

Underpinning this long-term mission are 18 “strategic responses” to address our most pressing challenges. One of these strategic responses outlines our ambition to work with customers and communities to help achieve our mutual goals. The Rhondda Fach Water Resilient Community pilot has challenged our normal way of working – to maximise

the impact we have on communities we are working in, while working towards our long-term vision.

The Rhondda Fach is situated in the South Wales Valleys, we have 9,748 household accounts in the area and around 21,000 people.



**RHONDDA
FACH**

Maerdy
Ferndale
Tylorstown
Porth

Cardiff

Challenges

A socio-economic report of the area was commissioned by the project and produced by Dr Mark Lang, of Cardiff University, who co-developed the 'Deep Places' approach to economically, socially, culturally and environmentally sustainable communities. The report highlights the challenges the Rhondda Fach faces, including the levels of deprivation, child poverty and unemployment.

KEY FINDINGS

Rhondda Fach Welsh Index Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)

■ 10% MOST DEPRIVED ■ 10%-20% MOST DEPRIVED ■ 20%-30% MOST DEPRIVED ■ 30%-50% MOST DEPRIVED

	WIMD	INCOME	EMPLOYMENT	HEALTH	EDUCATION	ACCESS TO SERVICES	COMMUNITY SAFETY	PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	HOUSING
FERNDALE 1	697	706	512	530	854	1811	596	1868	262
FERNDALE 2	540	699	430	373	372	1026	857	1640	585
FERNDALE 3	393	450	199	349	302	1603	1130	1101	1091
MAERDY 1	97	118	40	123	157	971	128	1802	1025
MAERDY 2	60	45	26	81	96	503	630	1873	1046
PORTH 1	794	920	528	836	590	1717	316	942	1107
PORTH 2	1166	1154	995	355	1119	1853	1325	1688	1377
PORTH 3	482	435	440	628	425	714	362	1026	1011
PORTH 4	374	423	279	270	419	1338	287	740	1075
TYLORSTOWN 1	5	4	8	16	20	574	101	1843	506
TYLORSTOWN 2	214	289	248	211	109	566	685	1747	294
TYLORSTOWN 3	131	184	77	178	80	1201	371	1880	373
YNYSHIR 1	127	189	71	222	101	607	441	696	616
YNYSHIR 2	691	695	586	543	520	1697	867	546	1440

Well-being

As well as the socio-economic report, a well-being assessment and plan was produced for the wider area by Cwm Taf Public Service Board, a statutory requirement for public services under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

The assessment identified three key objectives for the well-being plan for the area, and it was agreed at our first stakeholder event to launch the Rhondda Fach pilot, that the Resilient Communities project would align with these objectives and would aim to work with and enhance current initiatives in the area to avoid duplication.

THESE OBJECTIVES WERE:

1. TO PROMOTE SAFE, STRONG, AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS AND BUILDING ON OUR COMMUNITY ASSETS
2. TO HELP PEOPLE LIVE LONG AND HEALTHY LIVES AND OVERCOME ANY CHALLENGES
3. TO GROW A RESILIENT LOCAL ECONOMY WITH INFRASTRUCTURE THAT ATTRACTS PEOPLE TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY IN CWM TAF

The alignment to these objectives has supported the project to keep alignment to our £23 million investment in the drinking water network between Maerdy and Pontypridd.



OUR CWM TAF
CWM TAF
WELL-BEING PLAN
2018-2023

Working with our customers

As part of our Customer-led Success ethos, we're increasing the amount of customer involvement in our business planning and on day-to-day decisions - through working with, and listening to, our customers. Ofwat's "Tapped In" report highlights the importance of involving customers and the principles of moving them from "passive recipients to active participants".

The pilot has looked to harness the knowledge and creativity of customers living in the area to maximise the impact we have, as well as support our business priorities - like customer behaviour changes in our Let's Stop the Block campaign and for water efficiency, as well as working with customers to understand barriers they may face that prevent them paying their water bill, or falling behind with payments. The ultimate aim of the pilot has been to jointly-deliver our plans

to create a water-resilient community - and to leave a legacy once we physically leave an area.

This approach requires significant input from customers and stakeholders, as well as an open mind and receptive culture within the business. To this point, we have worked with 20 different local organisations and groups to gain feedback and jointly produce our plans for the area - as well as key messaging and marketing materials for the local area.



"Customers and communities have knowledge, skills and creativity that can solve problems and help find ways to innovate."

Ofwat, Tapped In



Who we work with

We identified key stakeholders that should be involved to help develop our plans for the area. Cynnal Cymru were commissioned by the project to help identify and connect with local stakeholders, ensuring we had the right people involved from the beginning was a crucial step in the success of the project.

After identifying stakeholders, we held a workshop to share views and ideas with the group to gain feedback. Stakeholders included:

- Interlink RCT (the County Voluntary Council for Rhondda Cynon Taf)
- Trivallis (the main housing association for the area)
- Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCT CBC)
- Office of the Commissioner for Future Generations
- Cwm Taf Public Service Board (Cwm Taf PSB)
- Cwm Taf University Health Board
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

The workshop highlighted some of the challenges faced in this area as well as the strong sense of community spirit. Seven themes (listed below) emerged from the discussion, bringing to life the information presented in the socio-economic report for the area:

- Communication and community spirit
- Health and well-being
- Business
- Mobility and transport
- Education and employment
- Environment
- Income

Stakeholders identified a large number of potential groups to work with which helped shape an action plan supporting us to begin building relationships in the local area.



"In August, I was invited to a Welsh Water meeting to provide insight into the communities of the Rhondda as Community Advice and Support Coordinator for the Rhondda. The impact of that meeting was fundamental in the way they rolled out their programme in the Rhondda. Welsh Water used the information to start engaging in the community, realising that their customers were the community. Alongside the traditional letters and information bus they also started attending community meetings and events. This gave them insight to their customers managing to save them money and also improve communication."

Interlink RCT



Involving our customers

To date, we have involved and worked with communities in a number of ways including:

- Using existing networks to gain feedback and become trusted partners to share our messages with customers
- Local "social prescriber" – a health professional who can refer people to local, non-clinical services – and health and well-being coordinators to get involved with health and well-being groups
- Inviting local customers to open discussions around our plans for the area
- Visiting local community venues to talk to customers, raising awareness of the services we are offering in the area
- Working with the Welsh Government's Valleys Task Force who have been working with communities in Ferndale and more widely throughout the area
- Co-development of local marketing materials
- Working with Jobcentre Plus in Porth with customers who are receiving benefits and may be eligible for social tariff support
- Taking part in the Facebook Live event where customers had the opportunity to get updates on work in the area – including the investment in the drinking water network and additional work to build resilience in their community. A total of 1,900 customers tuned in and the video has had over 4,000 views
- Through the Education team, we have also worked with our future customers by providing free lessons to all schools in the area, providing information and raising awareness of the investment in local drinking water network and the importance of water efficiency and how they can be more water efficient at home





Case study Rats in Penrhys

Through one of our customer involvement events, we discovered there were growing concerns over the number of rats on the Penrhys estate. Customers were concerned about the risks to their children, especially as officers from the council's Environmental Health team had been called to the local primary school several times. Customers had raised their concerns to several organisations but the situation was not improving.

A meeting was held with the Penrhys Partnership (a charity run by local people to support those living in Penrhys), Trivallis and Rhondda Cynon Taf Council to look at how to best tackle the situation. Our colleagues in Wastewater Services surveyed the Penrhys wastewater network. A large part of the estate was demolished

over 12 years ago and the surveys uncovered the 'abandoned' part of the network, which had not been capped off and could be used by rats to access the 'active' part of the network.

Two meetings have been held to agree a plan of action created with the Penrhys Partnership, Trivallis, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and Welsh Water. It has been agreed all organisations will work in partnership to resolve the issue as quickly as possible – to improve the living conditions on the estate.

Work on the network began in July 2018 – and highlights the benefits of partnership working with an action plan developed, agreed and delivered within eight weeks.



Welsh Water

We have provided the survey of the wastewater network, reduced costs of the work on the network from £35,500 to £5,500 by working with our partners to find the most cost-effective solution, and arranged a community information event which took place on Friday 20 July in Penrhys.



Trivallis

Trivallis have agreed to pay for the work on the wastewater network and will use their communication channels to let their tenants know about the work taking place on the estate – Trivallis own a large proportion of the properties in Penrhys.



RCT CBC

RCT have agreed to investigate and cost the baiting options once the work on the network has been completed, they will also support the community event by providing customers with information on recycling and providing food recycling caddies, which may also support with the reduction of rats.



Penrhys Partnership

Penrhys Partnership are the link to the community and will promote the work through their social media pages and word of mouth.



Case study Community co-development

We worked with 32 customers in Ferndale, Penrhys and Tylorstown to understand how we could improve our messaging around the offering of a free water efficiency audit in their home.

Our original leaflet had messaging many customers found confusing. For example, many didn't know what a 'water saving house audit' meant. After explaining what a water efficiency audit would mean and the benefits it could have, all customers said the selling point for the water audit was that they could save money on their bills. It was agreed this would be the headline message for the leaflet.

Customers also felt the Rhondda Fach wasn't necessarily an area they would make an instant link to – and if we wanted to grab people's attention we should use the local town name such as Ferndale or Penrhys as people felt a strong connection to the place where they live, rather than the area as a whole. It was also suggested using landmarks specific to the local valley would strengthen the local messaging.

It was also felt the text needed to be broken up to make it easier for customers to understand as well as quickly locate the information they were interested in, such as 'what will happen'.

Original leaflet

Customer feedback on our original leaflet:

The title didn't grab their attention

The wording was confusing

Too much text



Free water saving house audit with Welsh Water's Rhondda Fach Project

Save water, energy and money.

Although rain falls freely from the sky, we put a lot of work, energy and time into getting water to you. That's why it is important you use water as carefully as possible and therefore we are offering every household in the Rhondda Fach area a totally free water saving house audit.

One of our friendly engineers will visit your home and check that your water appliances are as efficient as possible. We will then give you a summary of what we found and offer you a selection of free products which will help save water and money, especially if you are on a water meter.

Visit our website www.dwr.gov.uk/water/efficiency for more information. Or email us on water@ferndaleandtylorthstown.dwr.gov.uk to book an audit for your home.

Alternatively, if you complete the following section, we will get in touch to organise your free audit:

Name: _____
Address: _____
Telephone number: _____

dwr.gov.uk

Leaflet co-created with customers

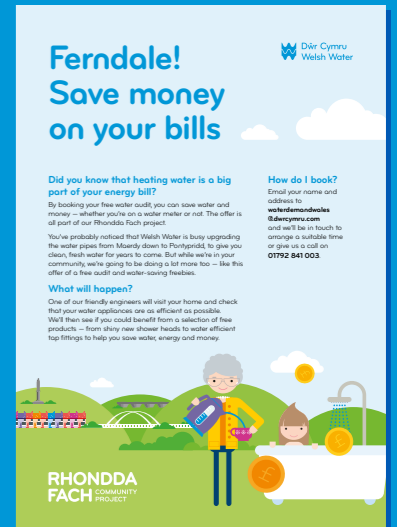
The changes we made as a result of working with our customers:

Hyper-local messaging

Simpler headings

Clearer explanation

Featured local landmarks



Maintaining engagement

Making sure we kept our engagement with the local community has been key to its success, making sure groups and organisations are kept in the loop and customers know how we are using their feedback.

To maintain their involvement we have held smaller meetings with important partners like Trivallis, Interlink and the Valleys Taskforce to ensure our work is aligned with other initiatives in the area and maximises our impact. For example, we held a meeting with Trivallis and their communications team to share best practice, understand their communication channels and how we could work more closely to share messages with tenants – as well as understand how we could communicate differently.

As a result of this meeting, we raised awareness of the project in Trivallis, used their channels by including information on the project and wider investment in the drinking water network in the quarterly tenants magazine.

As well as holding our own meetings with individual organisations and groups, we have attended community events and meetings to reach a wider audience. We believe this has helped to increase the trust and engagement in our messaging by showing joint working with already-trusted groups.

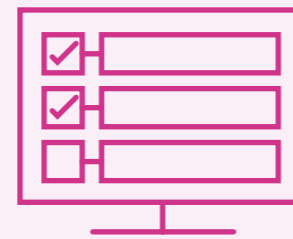


Case study Trello

To maintain engagement we have also explored new ways of sharing information with stakeholders. It isn't always possible for all stakeholders to attend all meetings, which may result in them missing key updates and slow down the progress of the project.

It was agreed with the external stakeholder group we would test a free, online project management tool, Trello, as a way of sharing information among the group.

The Trello board enabled the internal team to upload key information and documents to their section of the board where they felt this might be relevant to the wider group. External stakeholders also shared upcoming events and information relevant to the project which identified a number of opportunities which might not have otherwise been identified.



Impact

As well as positive feedback, we have achieved several outcomes in the first six months through working with communities differently, these are listed opposite.



Case study Maerdy paddling pool

As part of a wider request from paddling pools in Rhondda Cynon Taf, we filled up Maerdy paddling pool at no cost to local groups – supporting Trivallis at the launch event by providing 100 free water bottles, education activities on the day and some bottled water.

We also used the event to further raise awareness of the support available to customers in the area such as the water efficiency audits, social tariffs and our Priority Services Register.



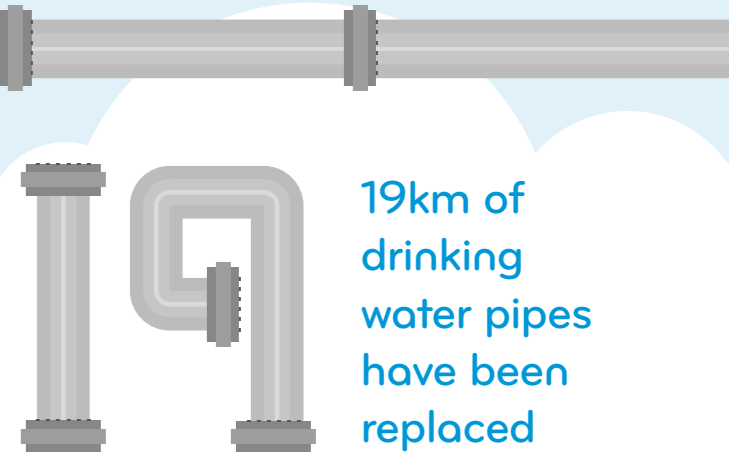
We've helped customers save over **£67,000** through lower bills



2,000 children have received one of our lessons



20 groups and organisations have worked with us to change the way we do things



19km of drinking water pipes have been replaced



£10,000

Community groups have received **£10,000** through our Community Fund



6

local customers joined Prince's Trust 'Get Into Construction' programme



Community Fund

The Community Fund was launched in September 2017, and offers grants of up to £1,000 to non-profit groups and organisations across Wales, with those who have Welsh Water work taking place in their local area being given higher preference. Groups are able to apply for one-off costs for projects, equipment etc. that will bring benefit to their local community.

The project has enabled us to further promote the Community Fund to local groups in the area. We have worked closely with Interlink RCT which is closely linked to many of the groups in the area and provide information and training on bid writing. Interlink RCT has promoted our Community Fund to these groups which has seen a significant number of applicants coming from the area.

A breakdown of the Rhondda Fach in comparison to Wales can be found below.

Despite having fewer than 10,000 households, the Rhondda Fach has received over 30% of the funding from the total of the Community Fund. This further highlights the benefits of working with trusted partners to ensure key messages reach local customers.

	NUMBER OF GROUPS	AMOUNT AWARDED
RHONDDA FACH	28	£10,100.00
PAN-WALES	102	£32,015.00
RHONDDA FACH AS % OF TOTAL	27.45%	31.55%



“Welsh Water has built up a strong partner relationship with Trivallis – working with us to engage with our customers to provide the minimal disruption to their everyday lives while works have been going on in the area. We believe that the partnership is an active demonstration of both our organisations values and commitment to our customers. In addition to these obvious benefits of great partnership working, we have successfully worked together to offer a variety of positive publications to communicate with customers.”

Trivallis



Case study Providing financial governance expertise to Tylorstown Welfare Hall

Interlink RCT came to us for support for Tylorstown Welfare Hall, who had been successful in getting an award of Big Lottery Funding to improve services available at the hall. They were looking for a trustee to volunteer an evening a month who had experience of financial governance and large sums of money. Peter Bridgewater, Financial and Commercial Director for Welsh Water, has agreed to fulfil this role – which will add great value to their board of trustees.

Future Plans

The Rhondda Fach Water Resilient Communities pilot project has been ambitious, challenging the way we work not only internally, but also with external partners and customers in a community where we have a large, disruptive investment taking place. However, in the first six months, we have learned a great deal about what works, what doesn't work and further areas we would like to explore.

As a result of the successful start to this project, Welsh Water has already committed to working in this way with at least five different communities between 2020 and 2025. Locations for future projects are still to be confirmed, however we will run one of these projects each year throughout next investment period. Project locations will be identified by analysing data from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, our social tariff

uptake – and cross-referencing it against our major investment schemes.

We believe the Water Resilient Community project represents an important first step in changing how we work in communities – and we are looking forward to using what we've learned to improve communities around the areas we serve, together with the people who live there.



"we are looking forward to using what we've learned to improve communities around the areas we serve, together with the people who live there."



