

WELSH ST DONATS COMMUNITY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

Organisation of the Council:

In 2024-25 the Council comprised Natalie Bosworth (Chair), Emma Hall (Vice Chair), Tim Rich (co-opted) Philip Popp (co-opted), Ann Thomas, Nigel England (co-opted), Kay Davies (co-opted) and Cheryl McNamee-Brittain.

Residents are well represented geographically.

During 24-25 we held ten Council meetings in the Village Hall with the option of holding the meeting remotely if requested.

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission Review has completed its review and we wait to see if the Welsh Government will confirm a merger of Welsh St Donats and Pendoylan community councils in May 2027.

Representatives:

Vale of Glamorgan Council Community Liaison Committee – Ann Thomas

One Voice Wales Area Meetings – Natalie Bosworth

Welsh St Donats Hall Committee – Natalie Bosworth

Community Review representative – Ann Thomas

Environmental Cluster Group – Emma Hall

Key Contact information:

Clerk: we were very sorry to see our long-serving Clerk, Victoria Pearce retire in March 2025 after many years of dedicated service to the Community Council. We are currently operating with a locum clerk but hope to appoint a permanent clerk shortly. The Clerk's email can still be used to contact the Community Council on clerkwsd@gmail.com

Website: www.welshstdonats.co.uk

Financial information:

Income:

Precept 2024-25 was set at £7,000.00, representing no increase in the precept on the previous financial year.

The balance carried forward from 2024-2025 was £4,187.01 and the balance carried forward to 2025-2026 is £4,818.

Expenditure:

The running costs of the Welsh St Donats Community Council have taken up the bulk of expenditure over the year, however, within our budget, projects are constantly under consideration and discussion.

The running costs include the Clerk's salary and expenses, audit fees, Community Council liability insurance, Councillor allowance, One Voice Wales (the body representing Town and Community Councils in the Welsh Government) membership fees, grass cutting and maintenance and training fees. A donation is given to the Church for mowing the churchyard. The accounts and annual summary giving more details will be posted on the website following approval and audits.

Reserves and assets: a Clerk's Gratuity Fund (£1,132.29 at 31.03.2025) is held in reserve and the assets consist of three benches situated around the community area.

Audit of accounts 2023-2024 were scrutinised by both internal and external auditors. Wales Audit performed a full audit and the opinion was unqualified (dated 13 November 2024). No recommendations were made.

The accounts 2024-2025 will be audited under a basic audit and have been prepared for approval at the AGM.

Relationship with Vale of Glamorgan Council

The Community Council is signed up to the Charter between the Vale Council and Town and Community Councils.

The Charter is currently under review.

We are represented on the Community Liaison Committee by one of our members and use this platform to raise local issues of concern with the Vale Council. Ann Thomas is a representative on the Community Review

Our County Councillor, Michael Morgan, reports to the Community Council at meetings which he regularly attends and is active in raising our concerns at principal Council level.

Community council reports:

At the AGM the Community Council reviews the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct, Register of Assets, Social Media Policy, Training and Biodiversity Plans and performs annual Health and Safety and Financial and Administrative Risk Assessments.

Annual Biodiversity and Training reports and plans are considered at the AGM.

All these and reports on site meetings are on the website.

Activities undertaken and plans to engage with its community:

It is a priority for the Community Council to keep residents informed, report their concerns and seek advice when required. The Community Council makes every effort to engage with the community through our website and notice board and on occasion through village WhatsApp groups. A section 'Have your Say' on the website notifies residents of consultations and surveys in which they can take part. A community update is produced monthly and 'About the Council' on the website gives an insight into the role of the Community Council.

Cowbridge and Llanblethian Placemaking Plan – due to our proximity and dependence on the facilities Cowbridge provides, we have a vested interest in future plans for the town and will be active in representing the views and needs of those living in Welsh St Donats Ward at every opportunity.

Hensol Forest is an important and valued resource for the community and is appreciated as such by local residents and visitors alike. Site meetings through the year are held with Natural Resources Wales to discuss the management of, and operations in, Hensol Forest. Summaries of the meetings are available on the website and Councillors keep residents notified of work being carried out in the Forest, why it is necessary and long-term plans. We are encouraging Natural Resources Wales to display noticeboards with information on wildlife and vegetation to further enhance understanding of this resource and are considering whether to fund them. Work to improve flood control at Psygodlyn Mawr is now complete and a permissive path linking two footpaths has been created to provide a circular walk in and around the Forest.

The Village Hall was threatened with closure in December 2023 as bookings had declined during the pandemic. It is now under new management. Councillor Nigel England has taken it over and is breathing new life into what is a great asset for the community. The Community Council will support the Hall by continuing to hold meetings there.

Signage for Tair Onen. At the request of the Community Council, and in conjunction with Natural Resources Wales and the Vale Council, a plan is underway to improve signage to a small but widespread part of the community with one postcode. This will help to prevent confusion for deliveries and emergency services and generally be of great assistance to those visiting the area. With the assistance of the Vale Council we hope to move this forward in the following months with Councillor Cheryl McNamee-Brittain leading the work on this project.

Road safety for all road users in the Ward is a constant concern for Councillors. There have been a number of pet deaths due to collisions with motor vehicles in Welsh St Donats in the last year. The introduction of the 20mph speed restriction has been limited, affecting just three short stretches of highway in the area. Disappointingly, despite repeated requests, the 30mph in Welsh St Donats has not been reduced. There are no footways in the village which is used as a short cut between two A roads, so we will continue to put pressure on the Vale Council to improve signage and speed restrictions to make our narrow lanes safer for all users.

The Community Council is responsible for maintaining small areas of grass and a pond in the Ward. We rely on advice from Natural Resources Wales on how to maintain and increase biodiversity in the pond. Councillor Natalie Bosworth has planted some of the grass areas with a variety of spring bulbs and care is taken to mow these areas after July.

The Community Council received 15 planning applications over the last year. The plans are carefully scrutinised by Councillors and input from residents is encouraged and considered. A final draft is formulated and submitted. Members of the public can view these on the Vale Council website.

South Wales Police. We have recently signed up to a new community messenger service, South Wales Listens. It gives communities the opportunity to give feedback on their concerns and receive updates relevant to their specific area and other important information. The Clerk receives relevant emails and these are forwarded to Councillors and any advice or suggestions communicated to residents through the Community Updates.

Achievements:

After months of negotiating with the Vale Council and landowners, a new swing gate was successfully installed on footpaths 24/27 and 34/29 to allow a circular path to be accessed in Hensol forest.

Key Council objectives for the year:

- Continue to improve community engagement and explore ways to use social media and promote the function of the Community Council and its Councillors.
- Respond to all concerns and issues raised by members of the public and provide prompt feedback.
- A sizeable portion of the community area is forest, owned by the Welsh Government and maintained by Natural Resources Wales. Maintaining a good working relationship with Natural Resources Wales remains a priority.
- Liaise with the Vale Council PROW to improve the state of our footpath network.

- Consider residents' views on all planning applications received from the Vale Council and submit detailed and informed comments when necessary.
- Continue to put pressure on the Vale Council to make our roads safer for all road users. To include speed limits, signage and condition of the highways.
- Raise awareness of biodiversity and protecting the natural world
- Promptly report areas of flooding, put pressure on the Vale Council to keep culverts and drains clear and, where possible, adapt our practices to changes in our climate.
- Ensure Councillors can access the appropriate training to keep up-to-date and carry out their roles effectively.

May 2025.