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PRIME MINISTER

**COMMUNITY INVESTMENT: AN INITIATIVE FOR THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS**

I am writing to let you and colleagues have the details of the initiative I shall be launching in the Welsh Day Debate on Monday, 3 March to stimulate substantial improvement in the environments of South Wales Valleys communities and thereby to promote employment opportunities. I enclose a copy of the detailed paper which I shall be publishing.

My aim is to liberate the initiative of the communities by challenging their leaders and the private sector to take advantage of the support I am offering and to co-ordinate and focus the many existing mechanisms to achieve what is needed. While this initiative is designed to meet the special needs of the Valleys, it is wholly consistent with the general thrust of initiatives in other parts of the United Kingdom aimed to combat urban decay.

I will carry out the initiative within programmed resources.

/ I am sending copies of this minute and of the enclosed paper to members of E(A) and Sir Robert Armstrong.

27<sup>5</sup> February 1986

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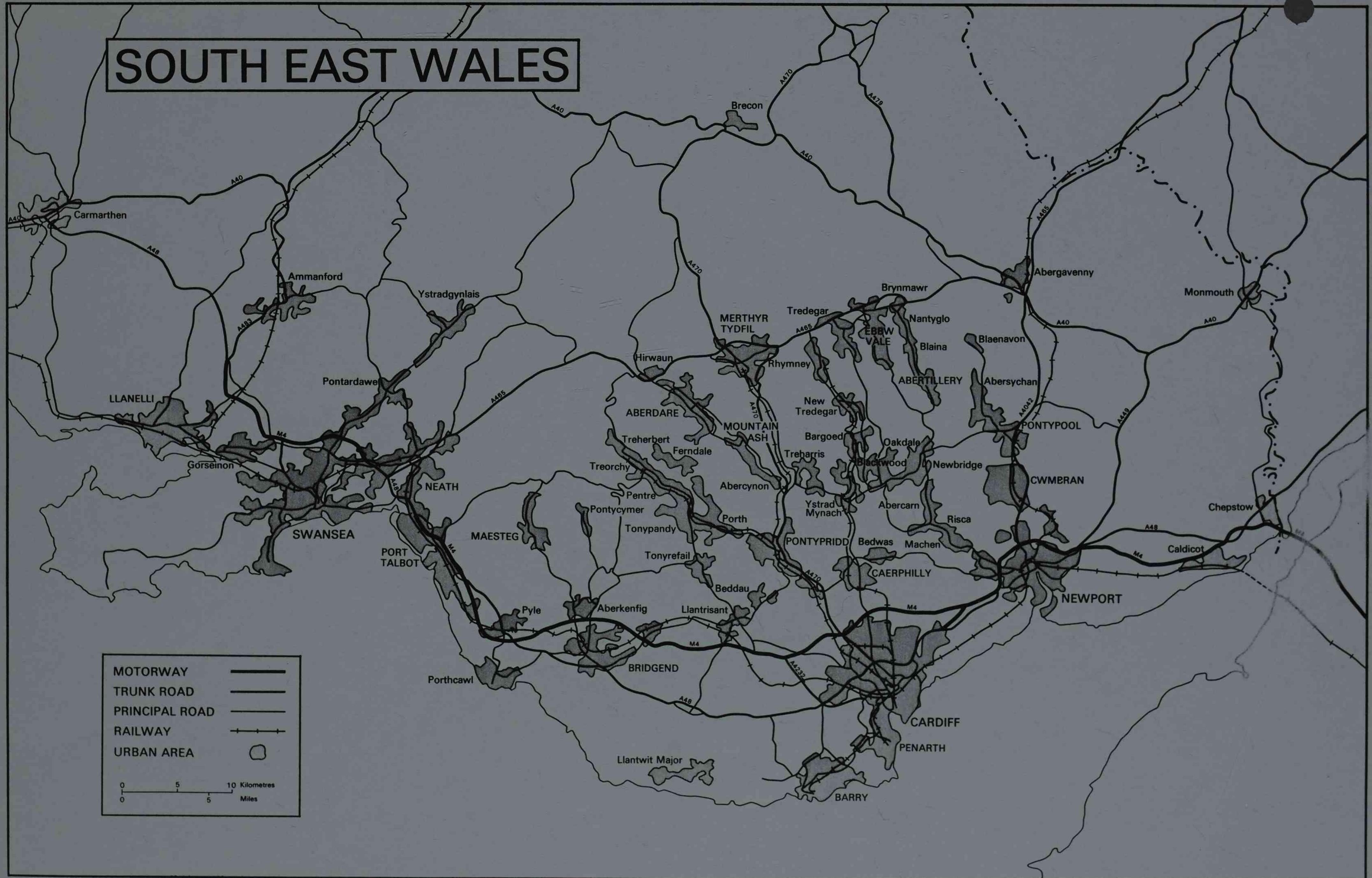


# **Community Investment: An Initiative for the Valleys**



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An Initiative for the Valleys**

# SOUTH EAST WALES



MOTORWAY	
TRUNK ROAD	
PRINCIPAL ROAD	
RAILWAY	
URBAN AREA	

0 5 10 Kilometres  
0 5 Miles

## FOREWORD

Although much has already been achieved in the Valleys of South Wales to remove the industrial dereliction of the past and improve the environment in which people live, much more still remains to be done.

The moment has come when there are good reasons for thinking that the reputation of the Valleys as places in decline can be totally reversed and the Welsh Office wants to begin this process of change.

The purpose of this paper is to invite discussion and encourage the submission of ideas by the responsible local authorities, the voluntary sector, the business community and people living in the South Wales Valleys for the regeneration of their local community. It suggests a foundation from which innovative schemes can be launched. Additional resources will be made available to encourage this process. The objective is to bring about substantial and visible improvement in the environments of the town centres and the areas that immediately lead to them. It is not intended that projects should be designed and imposed by those who live outside; rather that ideas to revitalise and improve should come from the communities themselves. To achieve the success that is possible will require initiative and an enthusiastic response from those who are involved in the day-to-day life of the community.

The Welsh Office will be prepared to back up to 6 projects initially which hold out the promise of local communities making real progress in the revitalisation of their areas.

## COMMUNITY INVESTMENT:

### AN INITIATIVE FOR THE VALLEYS

#### The Historic Problem

1. The cities and the ports on the South Wales coast, and the industrial communities in the valleys, were created together. Each developed as an essential part of the same economic community, providing services that were entirely inter-dependent. The ports were built to ship the coal and metal products of the valleys to the world: the cities to provide the commercial, social and entertainment facilities. Public buildings, art galleries, universities, hospitals and parks were built in those cities out of the wealth of the mines and foundries, and they served the whole area. The canals, roads and railways linked the scattered urban complex together, though the steep mountain ridges separated valley communities.

2. During the long period of industrial change and decline in which the South Wales coalfield lost its competitive position in world markets and steelmaking moved to new flat sites close to the sea many of the old links weakened. Despite determined efforts by successive governments to provide incentives for new industry to establish itself in the valleys or at their heads, much of the most modern industry has concentrated along the M4 and the main railway system. New shopping centres and a great deal of the more attractive housing has also developed on the plain rather than in the valleys.

3. Despite very substantial public investment and the not inconsiderable private investment that has also taken place in the South Wales valleys to improve the environment, to promote job opportunities and to make them better places in which to live, they have suffered from economic decline and have also had to bear the burden of urban decay. The present, often rundown, appearance of some urban centres militates against the valleys together being seen from outside as places where people want to invest or live. Increasingly an attitude has developed that the valleys are separate and somehow detached from the rest of industrial Wales; that there is a special problem to be tackled in isolation; and this attitude has sometimes been responsible both for an unfortunate feeling of rivalry and a sense of

pessimistic defeatism. Success by local authorities, or Government agencies, in attracting new industry to locations outside the valleys is often seen as a threat to or even a defeat for the valleys. It has sometimes been suggested that development should be discouraged or prevented in the areas where access is easiest in the hope that it will be forced to move into the existing valley communities, despite a shortage of suitable industrial sites or the facilities that are needed.

#### **A Positive Approach**

4. A much more productive approach has been to improve the infrastructure, the communication links and industrial sites in or near the valleys without in any way discouraging the modernisation and transformation of the rest of South Wales. That approach offers the only realistic prospect for improving social and economic conditions in the valleys. Industrial South Wales should be seen and its problems tackled as an integrated whole. An analogy that illustrates this approach is to think of the area in terms of a human hand in which the fingers link to the knuckles and the palms, and the whole hand works effectively as a complete instrument. If the fingers are cold or lose their sense of feeling then the cure must be to improve the circulation. Such an approach suggests the possibilities that exist for regeneration and provides the answer to those who despair about the future of the valleys.

5. Firm foundations have already been laid. Great successes have been achieved in the transformation of the South Wales industrial base which, no longer dependent on the old basic industries, is far more diversified with a good and rising proportion of the fastest growing service and technology sectors. Wales has been strikingly successful in attracting a large share of inward investment to the United Kingdom, about 20 per cent of the total over the last three years. The two great steelworks, Llanwern and Port Talbot, which have and continue to receive massive investment, have transformed their competitive performance. The coal industry, after many decades of decline, has had to face the closure or merger of 11 pits; but this has been followed by a dramatic increase in productivity so that the South Wales coalfield has moved from heavy loss-making close to break even and is now attracting substantial investment, particularly on new coal face equipment. An announcement has recently been made of new workings at Carway Fawr at a capital cost of £29 million. The industry is facing the

future with increasing confidence that it can follow the same path of industrial modernisation pursued so successfully by the steel industry with which its fortunes are linked. Gwent, and particularly Cwmbran, has been successful in attracting new industry. The same is true of many places along the M4 strip with a particularly heavy concentration around Bridgend. The refurbishment of part of Newport's shopping centre has been started. The heart of the City of Cardiff has already been transformed into one of the most attractive shopping areas in the country and a major regeneration of South Cardiff is now underway. Important and successful urban renewal is taking place in the Swansea Valley, based on the enterprise zone, and in the maritime quarter of Swansea. Important public and private sector initiatives are having a real impact in the Neath Valley. The work of successive governments and local authorities has led to a great deal of success in attracting new industry and preparing industrial parks in Blaenau Gwent.

6. The preference frequently expressed by incoming industry for coastal plain or valley mouth locations - which usually stems from a requirement for large level sites and immediate proximity to the motorway and inter-city rail networks - must be respected. In the face of intense competition for such mobile investment it would be wholly counter-productive to seek to steer such projects to valley locations against the wishes of their promoters. That said, the encouragement of industrial development within the valleys proper has to be pursued vigorously. The availability of a committed and demonstrably versatile labour force, factory premises on landscaped industrial parks and a maximum measure of regional industrial support (most valley communities have Development Area status) have an undoubted appeal to some investors. Efforts by WINvest and others to secure such projects will continue. But there are three other vital elements in the strategy of industrial regeneration; the modernisation of existing plants within the valleys; the creation and fostering of an enterprise culture out of which will emerge new businesses and new jobs; and the creation of an environment which is attractive to investors, whilst at the same time enhancing the quality of life for existing communities.

7. Considerable assistance and advice can be obtained towards schemes of modernisation. The Industry Department of the Welsh Office and WINtech - the technology arm of the Welsh Development Agency - will continue to work with the managements of valleys firms in identifying and carrying through projects that will underpin the technological capability and competitiveness of such firms.

8. The nature of the traditional industries and in particular the fact of their being so capital intensive has for too long served to dampen the spirit of enterprise within the valleys. For many generations the vast majority of young men had no alternative but to follow their fathers to the pits or to the steel, tinsplate or other metal plants. The influx of many new firms over the past 40 years has provided thousands of jobs for both men and women, including some high quality professional and management posts. Opportunities to exploit acquired knowledge and skill in newly formed businesses have undoubtedly grown as the industrial base of the valleys has diversified; but it is only in very recent years that this growth has started to blossom, and it still requires much encouragement and support. The many steps taken by the Government to improve the climate of enterprise are as relevant to the valley communities as to other parts of the country. These measures have been backed up by the efforts of local authorities (particularly through the provision of workshops, often with urban programme support); local enterprise agencies (the Neath Partnership is an especially good example of what can be achieved, but others are fast developing); BSC (Industry) and NCB (Enterprise), both of which are offering invaluable assistance to individual projects as well as to local enterprise agencies; the Manpower Services Commission through its Enterprise Allowance Scheme and training schemes; the Wales Tourist Board which has vigorously backed imaginative efforts to develop tourism facilities in the valleys; and the Welsh Development Agency in a variety of ways (the Small Firms Counselling Scheme, factory and workshop provision and investment funds including some initiatives that are particularly relevant in the start-up situations). With banks and other financial institutions also increasingly alert to the needs of the small businessman and with university colleges, the Polytechnic of Wales and other institutes of higher education seeking collaboration with businesses large and small, the climate for enterprise has never been better. It is vital that the valley communities should take full advantage of all these opportunities.

9. The traditional industries have not only affected attitudes to work but have also left their scars upon the landscape in the form of spoil heaps and redundant buildings. The large-scale reclamation of this legacy was triggered by the Aberfan disaster in 1966, and most of the early work concentrated on colliery dereliction. By the mid-seventies its scope had widened to include dereliction on railway land, factories and metalliferous waste. Since the WDA took on responsibility for grant-aiding and co-

ordinating this work in 1976 it has approved the reclamation of 1,900 hectares in Gwent, Mid and West Glamorgan at a cost of £62 million. In addition, a wide variety of small scale schemes to improve the environment in these counties has been approved at a cost of over £2 million. Reclamation has not only improved the quality of life for residents and the perception of the valleys to incoming industrialists, but has also provided much-needed sites for industrial and commercial development, housing, schools, leisure and amenity. Paradoxically its success is measured in the unobtrusiveness of the end result - for example the tips on Cilfynydd Common are the only major colliery scars visible from the A470 south of Merthyr, but much remains to be done, and the Agency's current programme includes over £21 million worth of work in the three counties which has either been completed or will be finished over the next few years. The WDA is currently drawing up a new programme in conjunction with the local authorities.

10. Crucial communications improvements include the opening of the new road between Cardiff and Merthyr, the major road improvements at Rogerstone and Risca and the construction of the important new access roads into the Rhondda Valley. British Rail are undertaking, in partnership with the County Councils, a major development programme for the Cardiff Valleys network. This will involve the replacement of the existing rolling stock together with new stations and other major improvements to services and facilities. This will further strengthen what is one of the most comprehensive commuter rail services in the whole of Britain. With other major road schemes planned to further improve access to the Valleys, the opportunity exists to launch a fresh initiative designed to ensure that the Valleys share in the regeneration that is underway elsewhere in South Wales.

#### **Community Initiatives**

11. In spite of the inheritance of industrial dereliction and adverse social conditions, many of the valleys are attractive places which are not only the subject of deep loyalty and affection among those who live in them, but are also places to which others - who do recognise their inherent advantages - come in order to settle or retire. Even the most industrial areas adjoin some of the most beautiful countryside in Britain; and as the industrial dereliction is cleared away they will become more and more

attractive places in which to live. One of the major disadvantages at present is the appearance of many of the urban centres and the lack of amenities which ought to be the hub of social and even economic activity. For example, disused and run-down buildings such as Miners' Institutes, which are often environmental eyesores could, with refurbishment, provide visually attractive and much-needed social or, perhaps, craft-related industrial amenities. Ill-maintained buildings and the generally drab environment of some of these old town centres sell short the enormous attractions which the valleys have to offer.

12. These deficiencies can only in part be remedied through financial injections. The conditions arise partially from the industrial dereliction and economic decline; but they also stem from the absence of any co-ordinated action by local communities and the responsible agencies and authorities to work together with sufficient imagination and drive to make the very best use of the potential that exists.

13. The Government does not believe that it would be productive to seek to tackle these deficiencies, either wholesale or by selecting areas for treatment, purely on the basis of central government selection. A key component for success must be local initiative and the self-confidence that flows from it. The prime objective of government must be to seek to bring about co-ordination, commitment and drive.

14. The Government is anxious, therefore, with the co-operation of local authorities and the communities they represent, together with private interests that have commitments and ideas, to help to bring about substantial and visible improvements in the valleys and the environment of town centre areas and the areas immediately leading to them. The Government is not proposing to impose solutions: that would be counter-productive. It will seek to trigger a series of co-ordinated initiatives by local bodies, including those from the private and voluntary sectors. Where communities bring forward ideas and demonstrate willingness to back them, the Welsh Office will focus existing mechanisms of assistance and will also make available additional resources to meet the challenge, particularly where that would help to promote the contribution which is necessary from the private sector. It has already been convincingly shown in South Cardiff and in Swansea what can be achieved. The opportunity is there for the valleys as well; the next step must be for the communities

within them to come forward with realistic proposals which the Government can support and which could lead to a transformation of the towns that provide the focus of valley life.

15. Among the places which provides scope for such initiatives are Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare. **Appendix 1** to this paper sets out some outline suggestions produced by Welsh Office professional staff on measures which could be taken to improve the town centres and the approaches of Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare. These are given at this stage **merely as illustrations** which can be amended and modified and which could stimulate similar proposals for other valley towns. Although the schemes set out in **Appendix 1** have been prepared merely as examples and without discussions with the local authorities involved, they clearly demonstrate what would be possible given local commitment and the resources to back it up.

16. **Appendix 2** to this paper contains information about specific public investment, sometimes linked with private investment, benefiting the two communities of Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare since 1979. The information is approximate and is not exhaustive but it gives a clear indication of the considerable extent of public investment in the areas. It has to be recognised however that, despite the solid achievements that this investment has brought about, much of the resultant development has been ad hoc and unco-ordinated. The rest of this paper sets out details of the initiative which the Government is now proposing. It has been designed as a pilot scheme, the object of which is to help make selected South Wales valley communities more attractive places in which to invest, live and work. If it is successful it can be developed and expanded.

#### **The Initiative Described**

17. Objective. The object is to focus private and public energies and investments to enhance the environment of South Wales valley communities in order to promote direct and indirect employment opportunities.

18. The Means: General. The scheme will work through local bodies and private investors with Welsh Office financial sponsorship geared to promote co-ordination and commitment by these and other local interests. It is a requirement of the scheme that the local communities must demonstrate to the Welsh Office by competitive bid that they have the commitment and the

capacity, with whatever guidance and assistance the Welsh Office and its agencies can provide, to deliver the desired improvements. The Government will use all the existing mechanisms of financial and practical assistance. The Welsh Development Agency, the Land Authority for Wales, CADW and the Wales Tourist Board will all have a part to play. The primary instruments will include urban development grant, the urban programme and the enveloping and block repair of private housing. They will be used to ensure that the public sector plays the role that is required alongside the private sector, and to encourage civic and voluntary interests to participate fully. The WDA is ready to provide a low cost consultancy service on property matters to authorities and private sector interests participating in the initiative and will ensure that its facilities in property, in land reclamation and investment are all deployed in the selected areas.

19. Resources. As already indicated, very substantial public sector resources have been and are already being used. For example, the WDA has approved expenditure of over £17 million on derelict land clearance in Mid-Glamorgan since 1979 and urban programme expenditure in that area and the eastern valleys of Gwent tops £33 million. The totality of specific government grant assistance and aid from the European Community going into individual communities in the area is also very large. Appendix 2 shows the considerable sums of specific public financial injections that have been made in Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare since 1979 quite apart from rate support grant. The key programmes relating to this initiative are, however, not those concerned with industrial assistance, but those relating to land reclamation, housing, transport, the urban programme and Manpower Service Commission programmes, and the programmes of organisations like CADW, the Sports Council and the Welsh Water Authority. The objective is to ensure that such expenditure is concentrated to the best possible effect in the period ahead.

20. The programme of Priority Estates projects which aims to demonstrate the benefits of day to day management and repairs being run from an office on each estate will also be very relevant to the initiative. New projects are about to be launched on council estates in Merthyr, the Rhymney Valley and Pontypool, and there is already a project at Penrhys in the Rhondda.

21. Additional Resources Initially, in 1986/87, the Welsh Office will make available up to £2 million of capital allocations for expenditure on housing by local authorities, and £1 million of urban programme resources. The additional funds will reinforce existing expenditure programmes for the areas concerned. Inevitably, the bulk of developments under the initiative will fall in later financial years and the focusing of existing finance and the level of additional resources will be determined in the course of future public expenditure rounds in the light of the proposals that are brought forward.

22. Selection of projects. This paper has already made clear that the initiative for local projects must come from the communities concerned. At this stage, therefore, the number of projects to be selected has not been decided; but the Government has it in mind to back up to SIX projects in the first phase, if they are of sufficient quality and offer the prospect of substantial improvements to the environment of the areas concerned.

23. The Welsh Office is seeking initial bids by the end of June 1986 with a view to work starting on at least some of the selected projects by the autumn of this year. The bids should be made on behalf of identified communities and should demonstrate community commitment; but it is envisaged that, initially, local authorities will take the lead in preparing and submitting bids to the Welsh Office.

24. Possible Projects. Appendix 1 illustrates the nature of the problem in two areas and the kind of work that might be undertaken. As indicated in paragraph 15 above, the assessments contained in Appendix 1 have been carried out entirely within the Welsh Office. They are, therefore, purely illustrative and the local authorities and other organisations and private concerns in the communities could very well have alternative proposals which they would prefer and which might be more cost-effective and offer greater scope for improvement. Other communities in the valleys may come forward with schemes that should have a higher priority or that offer equal opportunities. The publication of Appendix 1, therefore, does not indicate that the Welsh Office will give preference to the areas or the proposals described or that any decisions of any kind have been taken about them. The success of the initiative will depend on the enthusiasm and wholehearted co-operation of everyone involved in both the public and private sectors and, while the Welsh Office will give guidance and provide resources, the revitalisation of the valley communities must depend very substantially on the efforts of those communities themselves.

## A Brighter Future

25. Conclusion. Much progress has been made in environmental improvement to the older industrial areas of South Wales. Much remains to be done but the potential is enormous. For far too long industrial South Wales and particularly the valley areas have been seen as places in decline with a bleak prospect. The moment has come when there are very good reasons for thinking that that process can be completely reversed: and that building on the enormously important and encouraging developments now taking place in Cardiff, Swansea and elsewhere, major progress can be made towards revitalising all these closely integrated communities, so that they become increasingly attractive places in which to live and work, and magnets for future industrial and commercial development. The opportunities are there: the Government looks for a positive response to this initiative so that these opportunities can be taken and developed further in the future.

FEBRUARY 1986

THE WELSH OFFICE  
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**COMMUNITY INVESTMENT: AN INITIATIVE FOR THE VALLEYS**

## 1. MERTHYR TYDFIL CENTRAL AREA AND APPROACHES

1.1 Merthyr has an attractive setting near the northern end of the Taff Valley. Parts of the town occupy exposed hilly slopes or sheltered valleys giving it a great variety of environments. Much of the town is enclosed by the A470(T), the A4060(T) and the A465(T) Heads of the Valleys roads. Seen from these roads the potentially attractive landscape is blighted at present by the existence of too many rundown, ageing buildings and some drab modern buildings set in an environment where there are still areas of dereliction and ill-used land.

1.2 The approach to Merthyr Town Centre from the Heads of the Valleys road is inevitably influenced by the somewhat bleak scenery and exposed nature of the road. While it is not easy to grow a great variety of trees in these conditions, much could be done by planting shelter belts and removing some of the more unattractive eyesores on the northern fringe of the town. The WDA has started discussions to determine in what form improvements could be made to the road corridor of the Heads of the Valleys road.

1.3 Completion of the A470 dual carriageway to Pentrebach makes the need for a more attractive approach from the south even more apparent. There is scope for improving the appearance of the Hoover factory and its environs by painting and planting; to improve the untidy commercial areas to the north and clear unsightly development. The appearance of houses, public buildings and open areas on the south of the town centre could be improved by tree planting, screening, painting and, perhaps, the large scale method of housing improvement known as 'enveloping'.

1.4 Merthyr's commercial centre is reasonably attractive and prosperous. Parts of High Street have been pedestrianised and there is scope to extend this, particularly to streets near the bus station. The existing pedestrianised area could be further improved with provision of seating and planting while the appearance of upper floors of many town centre properties would be improved by repair and redecoration. This is

particularly required in areas at the northern and southern ends of High Street where the physical condition of shops falls dramatically and where more properties are vacant. Here the Borough Council has declared Commercial Improvement Areas to improve shopfronts and structures - particularly roofs and chimneys using Urban Programme funding. The northern area would benefit from pedestrianisation - at present it carried a fairly heavy traffic flow - and treatment of its waste land sites.

1.5 To the north west of the main shopping area, the bus station is particularly bleak and unwelcoming. It is exposed to wind and weather, and could be brightened up by painting and landscaping. The poor quality bus station buildings also need refurbishment. The unattractive rear elevations of adjacent properties could be improved by some clearance, reconstruction and redecoration. Links into High Street and other streets could be signposted and pedestrianised.

1.6 West of the bus station sites have been identified by the Borough Council as having potential for commercial development. At present the areas are open grassland which could be readily improved by tree planting, and other landscaping to screen or shelter the bus station and improve views west from the town centre towards the Technical College.

1.7 The appearance of the large car park at the Technical College could be broken up by more planting and landscaping, and there is scope for flower and tree planting on both sides of the River Taff to create attractive walks along the Avenue de Clichy. The large slag tip behind the Technical College is particularly ugly and needs clearance or at least landscaping by shaping and planting.

1.8 Public offices north of the town centre bear little relationship to each other in terms of position or design. They could be painted in more sympathetic colours and their environs softened by planting and better means of enclosure. Castle Square might be screened by planting or building on the west, and provision of a feature to attract people into what is now simply a windswept open area.

1.9 Further north a large public car park could be tidied using better fencing, by landscaping its approaches and tidying the banks of Nant Morlais which are now litter strewn and overgrown. The recently constructed access to a culvert does little to improve the area. It could be redesigned using more sympathetic materials and fencing.

1.10 The Railway station is an unattractive flat roofed building. It could be improved by painting, cleaning and soft landscaping such as provision of flowers. A mural painted by pupils of a local school occupies a wall facing the Station. It is only fleetingly glimpsed and could be relocated in a more prominent position.

1.11 East of the station most buildings and structures have been cleared from a large area once used as a railway goods yard. The site has considerable potential for development, something which would also remove what has become an eyesore between the town centre and the Thomastown Conservation Area to the east. The Borough Council has granted outline planning consent for a major shopping development here. Even if the future of the area remains uncertain it could be immediately improved by clearance, surfacing, refencing and use for car parking to take advantage of its location offering good access to the town centre. To the east of the station yard site, long ribbon car parks along Tram Road Side North could be improved by landscaping such as tree planting and enclosing. John Street, the main pedestrian access from housing areas east of the centre, could be improved by pedestrianisation.

1.12 The area around St Tydfil's church is one of the main approaches to the town from the A470. The surroundings of the church could be made more cheerful; it is severed from the pedestrianised shopping area; the southern parts of High Street, although run down, are attractive and have the potential for improvement. Much of the area of southern High Street and the church environs lies within a Commercial Improvement Area. There is scope to improve appearance of the southern part of High Street and areas between it and the railway. There is also scope to landscape the area north of Court Street and east of High Street by planting and providing improved means of enclosure to screen and enhance buildings. South of St Tydfils church the area around the Robert and Lucy Thomas Fountain could be improved to take advantage of its prominent position on the main southern approach to the town centre. The impact and value of the fountain

is considerably devalued by its poor quality environment. The redesign of seating and openspace areas, is desirable. Alternatively the Fountain could be resited in a more central location in the town shopping area.

1.13 There is considerable scope for other improvements throughout Merthyr particularly by landscaping areas of poorly used land which sometimes link attractive features, finding new uses for old and abandoned buildings, improving the structure and physical environment of older housing areas by enveloping and other schemes and by rehabilitating industrial areas. An important consideration should also be restoration, conservation and management of the remaining stock of buildings, and other features from the town's industrial past. This would improve the environment and create employment directly in the restoration work and indirectly in the service and tourist trades. There is a need to act swiftly to preserve remaining structures from destruction by new development or natural deterioration. Many have already either been lost or encroached upon by development, and it is essential to recognise the longer term potential which these assets could provide for the town's economy and environment. Work is already in hand to restore Dowlais Stables and other Schemes are planned. The sort of projects undertaken at Ironbridge Museum in Shropshire could be repeated with the prospect of equal success in Merthyr.

## 2. ABERDARE CENTRAL AREA AND APPROACHES

2.1 Aberdare, serves a smaller population and hinterland than Merthyr. The town centre is smaller, more compact and has seen less redevelopment. Completion of the by-pass has opened up new views of the town and its approaches. Many properties not previously seen at close range are now exposed and the general appearance of the approach could be improved by planting, screening, building repairs and renovation. Similarly a more attractive approach from the bypass to the main commercial area would be a major improvement. The area east of the bypass near the railway station would benefit greatly from sensitive landscaping and planting. If, passenger rail services were reintroduced thought could be given to improving pedestrian access to the station.

2.2 The area between the bypass and Duke Street is being redeveloped. A new police station is proposed on the southern section while a new bus station and commercial/entertainment facilities are proposed on remaining

areas in accord with the adopted local plan. The design of buildings for these sites will be crucial for the future of the town because they occupy such a prominent position on the approach to the centre. It is important that they are of the highest possible quality. There is also scope to improve the western side of Duke Street. Improved property around Aberdare Market is particularly attractive, some of it undertaken using Urban Development Grant money, and further commercial development should be encouraged on the Western side of Duke Street. A rear access to Tesco and the market should be considered.

2.3 Market Street offers offers scope for pedestrianisation and a particularly attractive area could be created using the street and triangle of land alongside Aberdare Market as an open market. Here, too, tree planting and shop refurbishment could achieve much.

2.4 The pedestrianisation of Commercial Street is in hand. Paving and appropriate furniture will be used to make the street more attractive, while improvement to the appearance of shops is also vital. The local plan proposes pedestrianisation in Victoria Square. This could be linked with shop refurbishment - and redesign of the areas around the Memorials at each end of the "square" to produce a much more attractive area in the town centre.

2.5 Further west off Victoria Square the Rex Cinema and its surroundings could be redecorated, cleared and redesigned to complement St Elvan's, a particularly fine church being cleaned and repaired. The area could be tidied, trees and shrubs planted and the immediate environs enhanced. The view from Commercial Street and Canon Street would also be improved by clearance of some untidy development and treatment of the large paved area at the junction of these streets to create a more pleasant sitting and meeting area.

2.6 There is scope to improve the appearance of Cardiff Street by painting buildings, repairing, and refurbishing as appropriate and by redeveloping or using the now disused buildings of the Church in Wales Infants School in Cross Street. The area at the southern end of Cardiff Street presents considerable scope for upgrading, while nearby houses may be suitable for enveloping or block repair.

2.7 Canon Street contains small shops with facades and upper storeys in need of repair and repainting. The facades of large buildings on the street are also in need of repair and refurbishment. There may also be opportunities to envelope or carry out block repairs to houses to the north of Canon Street.

2.8 Along Bute Street, which runs parallel to Cardiff Street there are rows of terraced houses most of which seem to be in some disrepair. It might be worth enveloping these properties.

### 3. SUMMARY

Even a brief examination of the approaches and central areas of Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil indicates that, although there has been substantial and worthwhile public and private investment, there is considerable scope for environmental improvement and for greater co-ordination of effort and targetting of resources in community centres. The suggestions made in this Appendix are illustrative only and are offered as examples of the type of environmental improvements which could make Merthyr, Aberdare and other valleys communities more attractive places in which to live and invest.



