In order to tackle social exclusion, high unemployment, and poor levels of health and education in the most deprived ward in the Caerphilly County Borough and the 9th most deprived ward in Wales, it is the lowest ranked ward on the education domain and the fifth lowest ranked ward on the health domain. The Council adopted a multi-agency partnership approach, with the full engagement of local residents, to develop a £20 million Regeneration Strategy for the community of New Tredegar.

The innovative Strategy includes land reclamation works, a new Primary School and Community Resource Centre, a by pass, 20 new business units, an integrated Childrens Centre, community safety routes and village centre improvements.

The establishment of the New Tredegar Communities’ Partnership, as part of the Welsh Assembly government’s Communities First programme has been the catalyst that has enabled Caerphilly County Borough Council to work with and bring together all factions of the community in the regeneration of New Tredegar.

The White Rose Way Information and Resource Centre is one element of the overall Regeneration project. It was completed at the end of October 2004. It is operated and managed primarily by the New Tredegar Communities Partnership and provides a base in the heart of the community for the development and support of community led Life Long Learning for all.

A whole range of initiatives have been developed by various departments of Caerphilly County Borough Council and its partner organisations over the last 5 years to raise community awareness and involvement in the Regeneration Strategy. In all of the work the commitment is to a partnership approach to planning and delivery of services involving organisations and communities – to achieve sustainable social, economic and environmental improvements and equitable access to services. Making the connections with different agencies and most importantly the community is a fundamental element of the partnership.

The Communities First Partnership - a voluntary organisation, manages the White Rose Information and Resource Centre on a daily basis. Funding for the running costs of the Centre are also brought in by the Partnership. The Community Partnership has been and continues to be involved in all aspects of the project. The White Rose development provides a wonderful example of the types of projects that can actually be achieved by Community Partnerships and
gives other community partnerships throughout Caerphilly and Wales something to aspire to.

The **key challenges** for developing the services and facilities to meet community needs and ensuring that the benefits realised could be sustained.

This was development of the facilities and services were informed by a study commissioned by the Partnership and undertaken by Cardiff Business School in 2002. The study included a two month consultation with potential service providers and focus groups from the wider community. These recommendations were incorporated in the development of the centre. The report also made recommendations that the management of the centre should be via an **inclusive management committee**, and is possible, efforts should be made to achieve integrated management (and other information links) with the four community centres in the area.

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**The services at the centre include:**

- Healthy Living Centre;
- Information Resource Centre (Library);
- Rhymney College Outreach training courses;
- Venue for Top Tots, adventure play sessions etc;
- Credit Union Collection Point;
- Food Co-op;
- Job Centre Plus point (free helpline);
- New Tredegar Youth Sub Group;
- Conference, training and meeting facilities and equipment for businesses, statutory and voluntary organisations;
- Advice and support from Communities First Offices;
- Community Education delivery of Adult Community Learning initiatives including Family Learning;
- Rock school , music project.

The focus of the Centre has enabled the Communities’ Partnership to develop strong links and working relationships with Communities First, Education, Libraries, ICC, Healthy Living Centre, Gwent Police and Tourism.

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**The facilities at the centre include:**

- An activities hall – suitable for exercise classes, large group sessions, entertainment, meeting, talks and lectures, conferences;
- Lounge – for small groups, counselling sessions, staff meetings, informal meetings, interviews, relaxation;
- Kitchen – for cookery sessions, buffets, working lunch meetings;
- Offices – for Centre Manager, Communities First Co-ordinator & Support Officer and one allocated to Caerphilly Local Health Board;
- IT training suite with 12 computers and 10 lap tops – for computer classes, college outreach training courses, meetings;
- Storage rooms – for equipment and materials;
- Shower, baby changer and toilet for disabled, public toilets;
- Exhibition/foyer space.

These modern facilities are available for hire to statutory bodies, voluntary groups and businesses throughout the borough and South Wales.
Making a difference

• The White Rose development has led to a range of other successful community development projects being undertaken with the wider community, in an attempt to raise awareness about the centre and to encourage a sense of ownership. These have included, traffic signage competitions, digital stories, environmental consultations, community videos, website and newsletter development, BBC Wales Radio events, health impact assessment projects and a Communities that Care pilot project etc. The New Tredegar Communities’ Partnership has assisted with all of these and has been the very adhesive that has enabled Caerphilly County Borough Council and Partner agencies to work with and bring together all factions of the community;

• The construction of the White Rose Primary School and Information and Resource Centre was the first time that Caerphilly CBC had ever undertaken a Partnering Contract with private sector partners. This process enabled the professionals and local people to gain a better understanding of the difficulties both faced during the construction period. It aided communication, enabled some difficult situations to be resolved and developed the spirit of trust and co-operation, which led to a very successful partnering contract.

The White Rose Project has been recognised as a demonstration project by Rethinking Construction in Wales;

• Valuable base in the Upper Rhymney Valley, which is centrally located with good communication links;

• Since opening attendance has increased steadily and awareness of the facility is growing rapidly. Approx 50 adult learners per week;

• Monitoring and Evaluation of the centre and its projects are undertaken in the Communities First Co-ordinators 6 monthly monitoring reports to the WAG;

• The Community Audit of New Tredegar Community (2005) endorsed the service provision of the centre. For example 45% of the respondents said that they would like to be more involved in education and training activities. 55% of respondents said that they would use the proposed Healthy Eating Café. The project has increased the profile and number of visitors to New Tredegar enormously – it has helped ‘put New Tredegar on the map!’ In addition an event held recently called “New Year, New You”, over 300 people attended the centre where partners lay on taster sessions to engage the residents in a wide range of activities.

Future Developments

• WAG funding will continue each year, reducing in amount, until the centre becomes self-sustaining;

• the Centre manager and Partnership will actively seek funding to deliver more projects and initiatives within the centre;

• an element of sustainability is to recruit and train community volunteers;

• Provision of the police station to address community safety;

• Lottery funded Integrated Childcare Centre (part of school but allows parents to access training in the resource centre and employment and is affordable);

• Provision of a Multi Use Games area, new Bowls Pavilion and improvements to football and rugby pitches to encourage healthy living through an increase in
Lessons Learnt

Significant learning outcomes of the White Rose Way project for all partners have been:

- consultation and identification of the key needs are fundamental to the success of the project;
- effective engagement with all stakeholders;
- joint initiatives are pursued wherever this is likely to be more effective rather than a solo effort;
- priorities and planning are agreed;
- resources are focussed on priorities instead of being spread.

- Safe routes to school and community to improve accessibility and encourage all the communities in New Tredegar to use the facilities (Phillipstown, Brithdir, Tirphil and Cwmsyflog);
- the Partnership will continue to work in partnership and seek to develop effective relationships with service providers;
- the introduction of the cyber café will provide more local employment and continue to promote the healthy living agenda.