

Tai Tarian Storyboard: Sustainable Planet

**December 2023**



**SUSTAINABLE  
PLANET**

---

# Introduction

**Throughout the year we assess our performance and the difference we are making not only for our tenants but across our communities too.**

**Our Storyboards have 4 key themes:**

- Sustainable Homes
- Sustainable Communities
- Sustainable Planet and
- Our Business

All are aligned closely to our Corporate Plan. For each theme, local outcomes have been developed with key stakeholders including our staff and tenants. We work with an independent group of tenants and associate members known as the Academy to review the outcomes of our work and provide feedback through several Storyboards.

**The local outcomes for all four themes, as decided by the group are:**

- We deliver value for money to make the best use of our resources
- We are accountable to our customers
- Customers have opportunities to make a choice

**We act on our customers' feedback and are committed to continuously improving our services:**

- We understand our customers and deliver services that meet their needs
- Our tenants and members are able to influence decision making and shape our services

The Academy felt these local outcomes should be a 'golden thread' throughout all Storyboards and should be visually prominent within each.

**This Sustainable Planet Storyboard captures work we are doing in our communities and has three local outcomes:**

- 1.** We make the best use of our assets.
- 2.** We will work to become carbon neutral.
- 3.** We use local resources in our activities where possible.



## **We make the best use of our assets**

### **Introduction**

---

**As a business one of our priorities is ensuring we invest in our homes and open spaces. Our asset management plan helps keep us on track with our progress across key areas such as, business intelligence and decarbonisation, capital investment, property and land services and development.**

**Our County Flats development continues to be a fantastic example of where we have made new and existing homes sustainable.**

**We have also continued to build on our biodiversity programme. Changing our approach to how we manage our land, alongside working with schools and the local community to benefit nature.**

### **Academy Evaluation**

---

**The Academy were pleased with progress made against the asset management plan and planned work for the next year. They were also pleased with completion of phase 1 of County Flats, in particular the level of sustainability that has been introduced and the fact that they were able to visit and see for themselves the high standard of the project.**

**Many new members of the group found value in the explanation behind our biodiversity aims and felt continued communication would be beneficial to give tenants and the wider community a good understanding of the 'why'.**

# County Flats

County Flats in Sandfields has been a huge focus for our Development Team in recent years, the project involves the transformation of 72 flats and the creation of 55 new homes.

Phase 1 was completed earlier this year with existing homes upgraded with a series of environmentally friendly features including thermal upgrades, solar panels, battery storage, insulation and double-glazed windows.

The newly built properties have also benefitted from air source heat pumps, a system that absorbs heat from the outside air and used it to heat not only the homes but hot water too.

As a result, all have an EPC A rating, the most energy efficient property type. Phase 2 is already underway.

## Tenant Feedback:

“

“In the 7 months since I moved into County Flats my energy bill totalled just £340, less than £50 a month.

“The flat is fantastic, bright, and spacious and all this new technology helps make things a little cheaper, which is a lovely bonus. I’m delighted.”

”



County Flats

# A planned approach to our work



**Our asset management plan is regularly reviewed, overseen by our Asset Management committee with regular updates to our Board.**

It allows us to reflect on previous years to set meaningful priorities for the year ahead.

## **Key areas of the plan:**

- Business Intelligence and Decarbonisation
- Capital Investment
- Property and Land Services
- Development



**Talking plans**

# Asset Management Plan progress

## Business intelligence and decarbonisation – achieved



- ✓ Slight reduction in our carbon footprint, reflecting work completed on homes
- ✓ Development of the annual 30 Year Business Plan (£390 million)
- ✓ Partnering with Bee1, a school's initiative where children learn about carbon
- ✓ Introduction of electric vehicles into the fleet
- ✓ Procurement of new materials contract

## Planned work

Begin the new materials contract, ensuring a review of usage and quality

Make sure our paperwork meets the industry standard

Review what contracts we need to maintain our homes

Further electrification of our fleet of vehicles (20 out of 60)



# Asset Management Plan progress



## Property and land - achieved



- ✓ Continued adherence with statutory compliance of our homes, including gas, electrical, fire, asbestos and legionella
- ✓ Improved use of technology for works ordering and management
- ✓ Reviewed and implemented a new structure for delivering the repairs service
- ✓ Began a review into damp, mould and condensation (DMC)
- ✓ Delivered biodiversity training to our staff in partnership with NPT Council

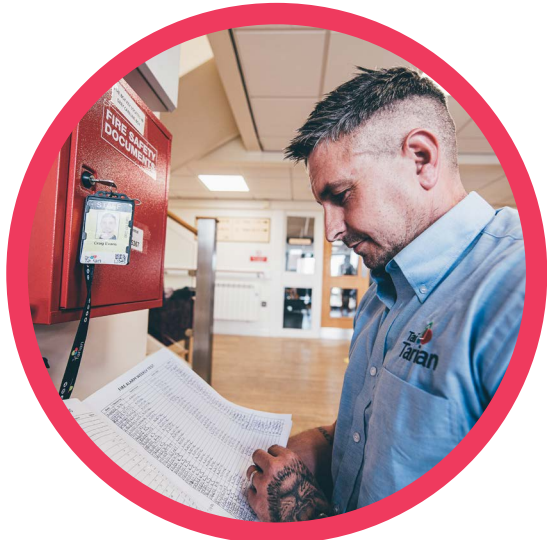
## Planned work

Deliver a programme of upskilling operatives for example more multi trades

Review our out of hours service

Continue to work on damp, mould and condensation (DMC)

Introduce a co-design approach with tenants to service charges



# Asset Management Plan progress

## Major works - achieved



Delivery of the annual investment programme, including:

- ✓ Component replacements
- ✓ Special projects
- ✓ Retrofit of 45 Green Voids
- ✓ Works of adaptation completed to over 700 homes
- ✓ Completion of over 5000 stock condition surveys



## Planned work

Continuing with the Optimised Retrofit Programme (ORP) which includes:

Green Voids - where we're upgrading homes to be as energy efficient as possible for new tenants.

Trial heating solutions

Special projects such as, Coed y Pergwm Glynneath.

Preparing for new ways of working e.g. PSA 2035

Over £11 million investment for the year



### What is PSA 2035?

PSA 2035 is a specification for what is called 'whole-house' or 'whole building' retrofit. This is an approach to the installation of energy efficiency measures taking into account the requirement of the entire building, both from a technical standpoint and tenant comfort.





# Asset Management Plan progress

## Development - achieved



- ✓ Identified eight potential development sites
- ✓ Completed development at Tŷ Copr and phase 1 of County Flats
- ✓ Started work at Eaglesbush, Pant Celydd and Eagleshouse, 95 new homes in total
- ✓ Drawn down over £5 million of grant funding

## Planned work

Continue to progress the sites identified

Research work with Welsh School of Architecture at County Flats

Progress with planning applications

Complete work at Pant Celydd

Tender for Heol Crwys

Continue works on current sites



# Transforming our verges

## Creating a habitat 'For Them':

Not just bees and butterflies  
but all wildlife including:

- invertebrates
- amphibians
- birds
- reptiles
- mammals



Cutting our grass less often is one of the simplest ways to allow flowers to grow and provide food for pollinators and other wildlife, something we have been doing for almost 2 years. If managed appropriately it can create a network of wildflower rich grassland, 97% which has been lost in the UK since the 1930's.

### Why do we care?



We are living in a climate and biodiversity emergency and as an organisation we want to do all we can to protect the planet. That's why we have a Sustainable Planet strategy.



Our wildlife is decreasing, and biodiversity is declining globally at rapid rates.



1 in 6 species assessed in Wales are at risk of extinction. Over 130 species have already been lost in the last 500 years.



Welsh Government is encouraging all of us to let it grow, and reduced grass cutting on our land is creating a better habitat for bees, butterflies, invertebrates, birds, small mammals, amphibians and reptiles.



With many hectares of land throughout Neath Port Talbot, changing our approach is making a big difference.

From April to October this year we have created wildflower meadows in some areas of the Borough, resulting in us spotting things like, bird's-foot trefoil, marguerite daisy, sea mayweed, smooth hawk's-beard, heal-all, common mouse-ear, rough hawkbit and red clover. None of these would have been seen if we had cut the grass as normal.

To bolster this our Neighborhood Team have created hedgerows, planted shrubs, fruit trees and flowers on verges across the Borough, further enhancing the space and attracting biodiversity.

An area which has flourished has been Bryncoch. Large parts of a verge in the village have been left to nature, creating a meadow with a pathway, making it accessible for local people to enjoy.

[Here is what Simon from our Neighbourhood team had to say:](#)



“

A Bryncoch resident said:  
“I walk my dog here every day, being able to stroll through the meadow and enjoy everything that nature has to offer has been really refreshing.”

”

### New Machinery means more training!

After securing funding for cut and collect equipment which will allow us to create diverse meadow areas on our land, training on the machinery is now underway with our Neighbourhood Team.



## **We use local resources in our activities where possible**

### **Introduction**

---

**With the Foundational Economy at the forefront of our minds we ensure that by investing in our homes and building new ones we will be able to support our local communities with skills, training and other opportunities.**

**We support our contractors to source their materials and products from the local supply chain and encourage them to be innovative in their approach to being sustainable.**

### **Academy Evaluation**

---

**The Academy were impressed by the impact County Flats has had on the local economy, by working with a local contractor and creating job opportunities for local people. Also, how community benefits are built into all contracts and the big difference this is having to our communities.**

**They also saw huge value in continuing to invest in our Copper Foundation, employing local people and upskilling them to enhance outdoor spaces at tenants' homes.**



#### **What is the Foundational Economy?**

**The foundational economy is made up of basic services and products that all people and communities rely upon to survive, thrive and stay safe. These include housing, energy, construction and health and care services, the food we eat, the homes we live in, the energy we use and the care we receive.**

## Continuing to have an impact with Copper

Launched in 2017, the Copper Foundation aims to give people struggling to find work a route back into employment, by offering them a 12-month contract to work with us. During this time, they receive training, skills and experience on things like groundworks, drainage, fencing, bricklaying, concrete works, grounds maintenance, carpentry, safe use of tools and safe working practices. This gives them the best chance to go onto find further employment once their contract ends with us.

## Opportunities for people of all ages

One of our tenants was made redundant after 15 years of working in a factory. At the age of 60 he had given up hope of finding a job.

However, he saw that we were recruiting for Copper, applied and is now part of the team.

“

“This job has given me hope for the future, huge thanks to Tai Tarian for creating this opportunity and for the training and support I’ve had so far.”

”



**6** years



**12** intakes



**84** recruited



**56** completed 12 months



**39** gone into further employment

## Biodiversity in the community

Our Economic and Social Regeneration and Neighbourhood teams, identify open spaces on our land and then work with community members or project partners to enhance it for biodiversity.

Encouraging volunteers and community ownership of these projects is key and funding comes from in-house budgets, community benefit donations, or project funding.

### Tenant takes the lead

A tenant from Skewen passionate about biodiversity asked to lease a small plot of land near to his home, to encourage nature to thrive in the area.

He has been supported by our Neighbourhood Team who provided native wildflower seeds which he has planted to enhance the space. Already, it has attracted more bees, butterflies, birds and other insects.

## Developments keep things local

County Flats is a great example of how we are making the best use of our assets and using local resources.

Contractor Hale Construction and their sister company Seven Oaks Modular are both based in Neath.



Engagement with the local supply chain is high, all are small or medium enterprises and...

**90%** are residing within a Neath or Swansea postcode.



**100%** of the contract value for County Flats has been re-invested in Wales through wages and business investment.



In addition, **73** local employment and training opportunities, have been created.

Keeping things local



This will continue across the 2nd phase of the development.

[You can catch up on the progress of two trades employed by Hale as part of the development here:](#)



# Challenge complete

With help from staff volunteers and our contractors we have made a difference with our Community Challenge initiative.

This year saw Glynneath Training Centre and Blaenbaglan Primary School benefit from improvements after applying for the project, which is now in its 11th year.

The initiative gives community groups and not-for-profit organisations the chance to apply for a day of free building or maintenance work and sees us working with our contractors to deliver the project.

The first project of the year was to brighten up the Glynneath Training Centre, run by a small independent charity, to make it more inviting for local learners.

The work was carried out by our contractors Joyners and involved clearing, jet-washing, building planters, planting them up and painting doors and benches. A bin storage area was also constructed.

A few weeks later we transformed Blaenbaglan Primary School by sprucing up the outdoor play area for the youngest pupils in the school.

Working with our contractors Jefferies Ltd and PPG Johnstone Paints, brand new planters and a wooden stage were created for the pupils, while the team also brightened up a shed and walls and created some floor games. New mini goalposts and a storage shed were bought and installed too.

Applications for the 2024 Community Challenge will open in the spring.

## Community Benefits:

Community benefits are built into every tender to ensure that our contractors give back to our communities.

Whether that's providing training or employment opportunities for local people, helping with community projects or providing financial contributions to community groups.

They ensure that everyone can benefit from the work we do.

## Special project underway

Thanks to **£17,000** of Welsh Procurement Alliance funding and support from our contractor **ASW Property Services...**

we are in the middle of renovating a community hub in Trebanos. The special project will see the facility undergo a full rewire, decoration and be fitted with a new kitchen to maximise its use within the community.

## Feedback:

“

Amanda Ellis Centre Manager at Glynneath Training Centre was thrilled with the work:

“The community challenge is a very important step on our journey to make this a welcoming place for our local community.

“As a small charity we simply do not have the funding for this kind of work and it's not the kind of project that it is easy to access funds for, so we are delighted.”

”

Community Challenge in action



## Talking Biodiversity with kids

With education key to people having a good understanding of what can be done to improve biodiversity in our communities, our local primary schools have continued to embrace our education programme.

The session involves a classroom-based presentation on biodiversity and then planting or building bug hotels to enhance nature at the school.

As a bonus the pupils have a special visit from our bee mascot Barnabee.

Roxanne from the team said:

“

“We are in a climate emergency so it is important that we are all aware of what we can do to help nature. I love going into schools and talking all things biodiversity with the children.

They are so knowledgeable and passionate about the environment; it is a joy to work with them.

Working with our contractors, we also donate gifts to the schools, whether that is some bee-friendly flowers and plants for their outside areas, a bug hotel or gardening equipment. They can then put into practice what they have learnt.”

”

## Garden competition winners

We had a great response to our garden competition again this year, judging proved very tricky, but our worthy winners were:

Best grow your own  
**Roseanna Wilson, Pontardawe**

Best Wildlife Garden  
**Aimee Marie Littler, Pontardawe**

Best Overall Garden  
**James Tovey, Glynneath**

Best Haven Garden  
**Michaelstone Court**

All received a £50 gift voucher to spend at Zoar's Ark, Neath.

### Tenant action

Consider community garden and front garden categories for next year.



Schools engagement



## Community clean up

---

Through community research which identified fly tipping hot spots, we have started to hold 'community clean up' days to help tackle this.

Thanks to our community benefits, contractors have donated several mixed waste skips to be used for tenants to clear their homes and gardens of unwanted items.

The first event took place in Fairyland, Neath in October. Litter pickers, bags, hoops and gloves have also been provided to their residents group Forward for Fairyland, creating more opportunities for residents to get together to keep the community clean.

## Lend, Mend and Tend at Sandfields library

---

We are working in partnership with Neath Port Talbot Council, the Open University, Linc Housing Association and community members to create a shared garden in the grounds of the library.

We will support this project with our contractors who will provide us with materials and resources to create a flower garden at the entrance of the library. Members of the community will also be asked to get involved in the planting event and promote the space to neighbours.



Community clean up time



## **We work to become carbon neutral**

### **Introduction**

---

**We are committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and are focused on changing our behaviours today, for the generations of tomorrow.**

**As one of the largest housing associations in Wales we have the power to make a change, whether that be thinking smarter about the way we work, changing our fleet, making our homes more energy efficient or exploring new technology.**

### **Academy Evaluation**

---

**The Academy recognised the challenges involved with retrofitting existing homes but were pleased with the progress made on the Optimised Retrofit Programme and Energy Performance Certificate ratings since 2011.**

**Having seen first hand modular units in situ at County Flats, they were impressed by the approach to the development and how new innovative and sustainable methods of construction are being explored.**

**The Academy requested a visit to Seven Oaks Modular for several reasons:**

- 1. To see it transformed from what some members knew as the Metal Box**
- 2. To see modular pods being built in a factory setting and**
- 3. To explore the research lab exploring sustainable and innovative methods of insulation.**

# Making homes greener - the Optimised Retrofit Programme

The Optimised Retrofit Programme (also known as ORP) is a Welsh Government (WG) initiative where funding is provided to help social landlords like us to transform the quality and sustainability of existing homes.


It embraces a test and learn approach to decarbonising homes and uses a combination of building fabric improvements, low and zero-carbon technologies like solar panels, battery storage and heat pumps and environmental monitoring sensors.

## Our progress so far:

### ORP 1: 107 Homes

 **54** fabric improvements  
(42 External Wall Insulation (EWI)  
and 12 mansard roof upgrades)

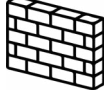
 **53** performance monitoring  
systems

 **3** solar panel arrays

 **3** battery installations

WG ORP Grant = £409,332.00

### ORP 2.1: 77 Homes

 **55** fabric Improvements  
(43 EWI and 12 mansard roof  
upgrades)

 **22** solar panel arrays

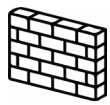
 **22** battery installations

WG ORP Grant = £638,969.00

ORP Progress



## ORP 2.2 195 Properties



**150** fabric improvements  
(120 EWI and 30 mansard roof upgrades)

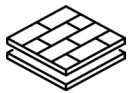
45 green voids which included:



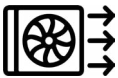
**28** fabric improvements



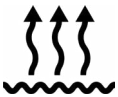
**45** solar panel arrays and battery installations



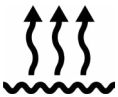
**14** floor installations



Improved ventilation to all properties



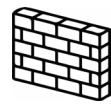
**1** air source heat pump



**1** hybrid heating install

WG ORP Grant = £2,100,000.00

## ORP 3 161 Properties

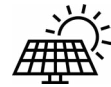


**110** fabric improvements  
(80 EWI and 30 mansard roof upgrades)

20 green voids which included:



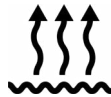
**20** fabric improvements



**20** solar panel arrays and battery installations



Improved ventilation to all properties



Special project of low carbon heating to **10** properties with solar panels

WG ORP Grant = £1,711,572.00

## The next steps

ORP 3 is for the financial years of 2022-2025. The main focus on this programme is affordable warmth, decarbonisation and understanding the best pathway to better energy efficiency for each individual home, and the tenants that live there.

### ORP 3 (2022 – 2023):

WG ORP Grant = £1,711,572.00 our current programme of works.

### ORP 3.2 (2023 – 2024):

WG ORP Grant = £1,996,834.00 bid has been submitted being reviewed by WG prior to award.

### ORP 3.3 (2024 – 2025):

WG ORP Grant = £1,996,834.00 currently establishing properties and projects for the bid.

# Knowing our homes with EPC

An energy performance certificate gives information about a property's energy use and typical energy costs. It includes recommendations about how to reduce energy use and save money.

We have EPC ratings for all our homes. EPC gives a property an energy efficiency rating from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient) and is valid for 10 years.

In 2020 we lodged new EPCs for 90% of our homes. This was based on accurate property data which gave us information on energy performance.

Due to investment, there has been year on year improvements with 79% of our homes at or above the national average.

This visual below shows the progress made:

## Our EPC standings

<b>Tai Tarian average:</b>	<b>National average:</b>
EPC = C	EPC = D
SAP = 72	SAP = 60
CO2 = 2.32 tonnes	CO2 = 6 tonnes

# ORP TO EPC A

A three-bedroom, semi-detached home in Neath has been part of the programme which is now home to Karl and his children. It has benefitted from new windows, doors, roof, solar panels and battery storage, loft and floor insulation, a new heating system, together with a new kitchen and bathroom. The energy rating has gone from a D to an A, meaning a much more comfortable, energy efficient home for the family to enjoy.

## Tenant Feedback:

“It’s got all the mod cons, which can only help with two teenagers!”



Karl and his daughter Sophie in their new home

2011/12		2014		2020		2021		2022		2023	
A	0	A	0	A	19	A	40	A	70	A	116
B	1	B	1	B	84	B	119	B	88	B	88
C	1698	C	4870	C	6937	C	6966	C	6967	C	6971
D	5020	D	2078	D	1384	D	1396	D	1871	D	1881
E	902	E	119	E	15	E	15	E	22	E	23
F	31	F	0	F	0	F	0	F	0	F	0
G	26	G	24	G	0	G	0	G	1	G	1
Average		Average		Average		Average		Average		Average	
EPC	D	EPC	C	EPC	C	EPC	C	EPC	C	EPC	C
SAP	62	SAP	70	SAP	72	SAP	72	SAP	72	SAP	72
Co2	3505	Co2	2638	Co2	2373	Co2	2371	Co2	2364	Co2	2332

# Low carbon heating at Llwynon

Llwynon is one of our over 55's Haven schemes, consisting of apartments and bungalows.

The heating for communal spaces and people's homes was provided by a central gas boiler, for which the tenants paid a fixed charge.

There had been ongoing issues with the system, replacement parts were difficult to source and when a continuous water leak caused a water pressure drop, it was time to consider alternatives.

This was an opportunity to look at a low carbon, renewable energy system with the aim of achieving an EPC A rating. Whilst ORP funding was available for the install, we needed to be mindful of running costs as it would be tenants paying the ongoing bills.



## The hot water solution

### Santon Aquaheat

- ✓ Small capacity cost effective unvented water heater
- ✓ Suited to handwashing, food preparation and dish-washing
- ✓ Able to utilise existing space within kitchen cupboard or adjoining storeroom
- ✓ 15 litre storage capacity
- ✓ Designed, engineered and manufactured in the UK
- ✓ Instant hot water



## The heating solution

### Dimplex Quantum electric storage heater.

- ✓ Up to 27% cheaper to run than a standard storage heater
- ✓ Up to 47% cheaper to run than an electric convector heater
- ✓ Able to take advantage of low-cost off-peak energy tariffs



## Solar power

- ✓ Electricity demand is complimented by solar panels
- ✓ Each property has its own dedicated system
- ✓ No user interaction is required
- ✓ In built monitoring of power consumption and generation
- ✓ Electric storage heater can effectively be used as a heat battery

## Keeping tenants informed

Talking to tenants throughout the process was key. We minimised disruption by timing the works over the summer months, reducing the need for heating and changed all showers to electric early on so hot bathing facilities were available.

We ensured tenants could benefit from lower cost energy tariffs and trained colleagues to answer queries on the new system.

As a 'test and learn' project we will continue to monitor performance to guide similar future work.



## Factory built homes

Modular construction is a process where buildings are constructed offsite at a factory cutting construction time on site in half. This creates greener, quality housing which matches customer expectations and market requirements. They will provide better energy efficiency and structural strength.

We saw the benefit of this as part of our County Flats redevelopment with 3 modular pods being built at SevenOaks Modular, in Neath, the timber frame manufacturer we have partnered with.

Twelve more pods will form part of phase 2 of the redevelopment.



# Exploring more modern methods of construction (MMC)

We have carried out 4000 fabric upgrades in the last 8 years. WHQS 2023 has stipulated that all social housing properties must benefit from EWI by 2029, placing huge demand on the sector at a time when contractors and materials are already difficult to source.

In addition, the process of carrying out EWI can be a challenge, wet Welsh weather often means it can take up to 12 weeks for this work to be completed on a typical property.

But our approach to building homes in a factory has made us consider if we can do the same with other energy efficient programmes.

## EWI fitted in one day?

We have started a research and development project to create a MMC retrofit solution.

Exploring new technology, 3D laser scanning and a design prototype.



## Offsite approach

Identified 3 properties as part of a trial.

The EWI would be built in a factory setting and transported. There is scope to create 10x3m wide panels, affixing 2 panels together on a gable end of a property.

There would need to be preparation work to the home, known as an enabling contract, so the panels can be dropped and fixed in a day, making the process much more time effective.

## Innovation with insulation

Working closely with Sevenoaks we have accessed grant funding to explore new sustainable ways of insulating our homes.

After exploring the use of natural products we are carrying out a research and development project in this area.





