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**Natural  
Resources  
Wales**

# Town Tree Cover in Blaenau Gwent County Borough

Understanding canopy cover to better plan and manage our urban trees



## Foreword



Emyr Roberts



Diane McCrea

Introducing a world-first for Wales is a great pleasure, particularly as it relates to greater knowledge about the hugely valuable woodland and tree resource in our towns and cities.

We are the first country in the world to have undertaken a country-wide urban canopy cover survey. The resulting evidence base set out in this supplementary county specific study for Blaenau Gwent County Borough will help all of us - from community tree interest groups to urban planners and decision-makers in local authorities and our national government - to understand what we need to do to safeguard this powerful and versatile natural asset.

Trees are an essential component of our urban ecosystems, delivering a range of services to help sustain life, promote well-being, and support economic benefits. They make our towns and cities more attractive to live in - encouraging inward investment, improving the energy efficiency of buildings – as well as removing air borne pollutants and connecting people with nature. They can also mitigate the extremes of climate change, helping to reduce storm water run-off and the urban heat island.

Natural Resources Wales is committed to working with colleagues in the Welsh Government and in public, third and private sector organisations throughout Wales, to build on this work and promote a strategic approach to managing our existing urban trees, and to planting more where they will deliver the greatest benefits.

**Dr Emyr Roberts**  
Chief Executive

**Diane McCrea**  
Chair



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*Ebbw Vale*

## Acknowledgements

### **Fryer, Dafydd CMLI (NRW) Urban Forest Architect – Main Author**

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) would especially like to thank the following people:

Anglezarke, Barbara, (NRW) Communities and Regeneration Team Leader

GIS & Spatial Services Team (NRW)

Hume, David, AECOM (TCWTC Phase 3 Consultants)

Jaluzot, Anne, Green Infrastructure Planning Consultant

Lush, Claire, Exegesis SDM (TCWTC Phase 1 Consultants)

Negi, Poonam, RMSI (TCWTC Phase 2 Consultants)

Special thanks go to the Welsh Government for funding Phase 3 and Richard Morgan from the Welsh Government's Forestry Policy Team, Land, Nature and Forestry Division.

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Images - Dafydd Fryer (©NRW),

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Published by: Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government Offices, Rhodfa Padarn, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3UR

The updated national 'Tree Cover in Wales' Towns and Cities' report and associated summary are available online at the Natural Resources Wales website.

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# 1. Introduction – Wales’ canopy cover study

The ‘Tree Cover in Wales’ Towns and Cities’ study is the first nationwide study of a whole country’s urban area to be undertaken anywhere in the world. To compliment this 22 county reports provide specific local focus to the canopy cover findings. For Blaenau Gwent County Borough this offers details for its six towns.

**Start here to understand the context, objectives, audience, and future prospects of this work:**

1.1 The economic, social and environmental value of trees in our towns

1.2 Why a ‘Tree Cover in Wales’ Towns and Cities’ (TCWTC) Study?

1.3 Who is this study for?

1.4 How was the study developed? An overview

1.5 A portrait of Wales’ and Blaenau Gwent County Borough’s urban tree canopy

1.6 The way ahead. What we can all do



## The 'Tree Cover in Wales' Towns and Cities' study – providing the context for Blaenau Gwent County Borough's canopy cover findings

### 1.1 The economic, social and environmental value of trees in our towns

It is now widely accepted that trees and woodlands in and around towns and cities have a vital role to play in promoting sustainable communities. In the last few years a growing body of research has demonstrated that trees bring a wide range of benefits both to individual people and to society as a whole.

As the most important single component of green infrastructure, trees can contribute to improved health and wellbeing, increased recreational opportunities, and an enriched and balanced environment that ultimately boosts a town's image and prosperity.

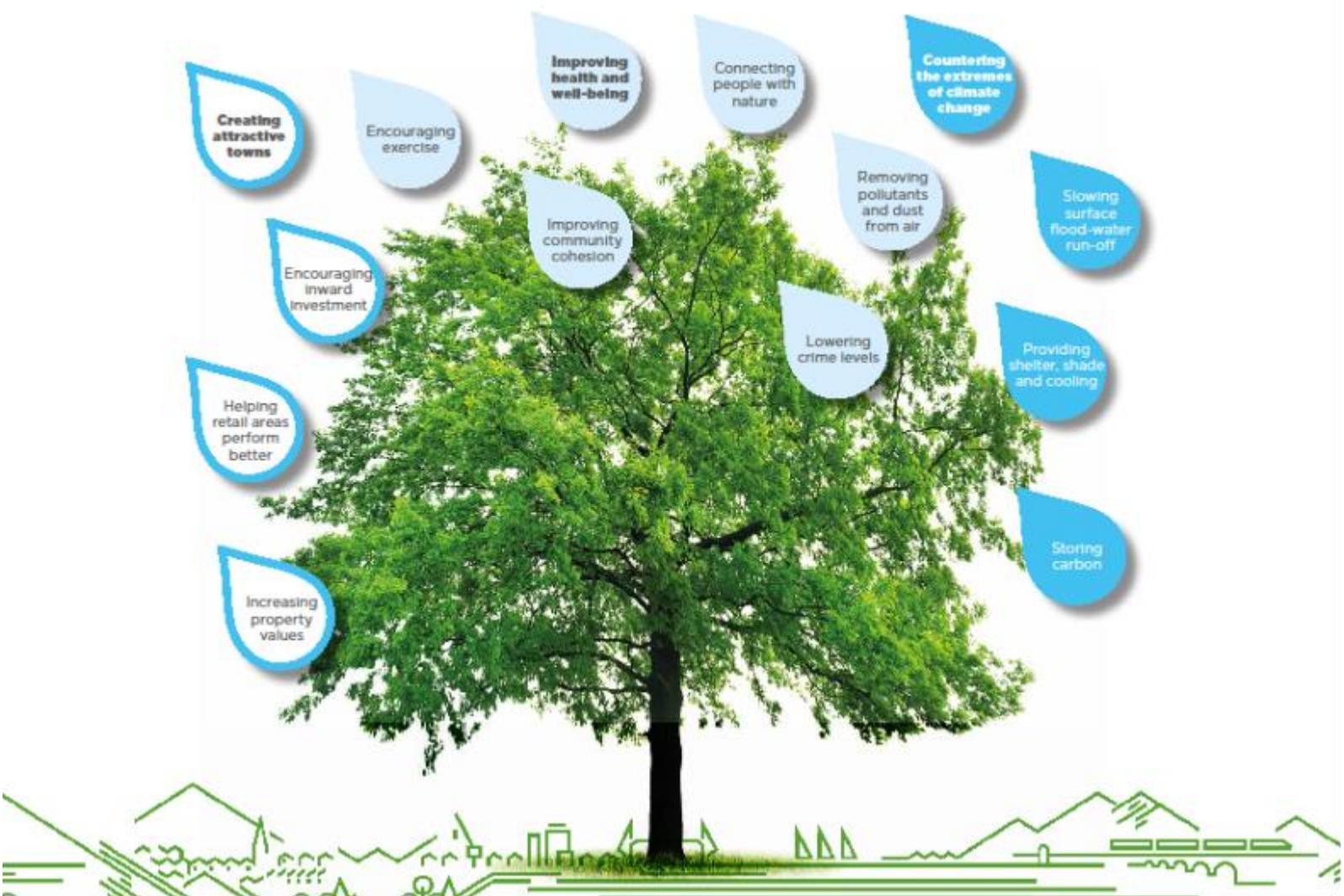


Figure 1: Trees are powerful and versatile natural assets

## 1.2 Why a 'Tree Cover in Wales' Towns and Cities' (TCWTC) Study?

Trees are a shared resource and are amongst the most versatile natural assets planners, policy makers, businesses and communities can use to cost effectively raise the quality of Welsh towns and cities.

In spite of this potential, very little is known about Wales' urban tree resource. Nobody knows how much there is, where it falls, and whether current provisions are adequate to effectively support the sustainable growth, health and wellbeing of Welsh urban communities. Despite their multi-purpose benefits to society the urban environment places considerable pressure on trees, with the reasons for their potential removal and loss of cover varied.

## 1.3 Who is this study for?

The Tree Cover in Wales' Towns and Cities (TCWTC) study was designed to help address this knowledge gap and **provide decision-makers around the country, including Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, with the baseline information they need to strategically plan and manage Wales' urban tree resource.**

The TCWTC study makes a significant contribution to building understanding and capacity for effective national coordination of urban green infrastructure delivery. Its findings will be of interest to both policy makers and practitioners, particularly those in the Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales and their Public Service Board representatives, local authorities such as Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Registered Social Landlords, e.g. Tai Calon Community Housing and other significant land owners in urban areas, e.g. Dŵr Cymru / Welsh Water, University campuses and non-governmental bodies.

This supplementary county report provides detailed findings in the form of maps, tables and charts and are presented in a similar format as to what is presented in the national TCWTC study sections. To gain a greater understanding behind the county results this report should be read in conjunction with the more detailed analysis found in the national study. Further analysis is needed to tease out the particular characteristics and trends of canopy cover within each county.

## 1.4 How was the study developed? An overview

Because it is mostly through their crown spread that trees deliver benefits, the TCWTC study focuses on tree canopy cover (rather than counting individual number of trees). This was mapped through a desk-based analysis of 2006, 2009 and 2013 aerial photographs for Wales' 220 urban areas as defined by the Office of National Statistics' settlement based approach.

**Wales is the first country in the world to undertake a complete canopy cover study of all its urban areas.**

The findings of non-woodland 'amenity' trees were complemented by existing datasets on urban woodland (>0.5 hectares), using National Forest Inventory data. The analysis conducted at multiple scales (county, town and ward level) also considered the relation between canopy cover and local levels of deprivation.

## 1.5 A portrait of Wales' and Blaenau Gwent County Borough's urban tree canopy

### Urban canopy coverage

Wales' mean urban tree cover was estimated at 16.3% for 2013, down from 17.0% in 2009. Blaenau Gwent's urban cover was estimated to be 20.5% in 2013, down from 22.1% in 2009.

### High differences from town to town

Behind national figures, landscape character influences the noticeable differences that exist - often low in coastal towns (e.g. Rhyl and Porthcawl – 6%) and high in the South Wales Valleys (e.g. 30% in Treharris). This is particularly true for Blaenau Gwent, Wales' second highest canopied county on 20.5%. Neighbouring Abertillery and Aberbeeg / Llanhilleth both display canopy around 27%.

### Nationally one third urban woodland, two thirds amenity trees

Urban woodlands represent 35% of Wales' urban canopy cover, however in Blaenau Gwent it is as much as 50%. The other 50% is made up of so-called 'amenity' non-woodland trees, those individual and groups of trees growing along streets, gardens, car parks and other urban public and private open spaces.

### Distribution of canopy amongst land uses tells a great deal about urban tree stewardship

Public open space hosts 53% of all tree cover in our Welsh communities despite making up only 22% of urban land. This contribution to cover in Blaenau Gwent is as much as 66%, where the public open space accounts for 32% of urban land.

Private residential gardens make up 35% of Wales' urban areas and provide 20% of all our town's tree cover. This drops to 27% in Blaenau Gwent with gardens providing a significantly low figure of 9% of all canopy, presumably reflecting the nature of garden space in these Valley communities. Nationally this sizeable contribution underlines the responsibility of homeowners, and the importance of the good use and management of tree preservation orders to the upkeep of the Welsh urban forest. It also highlights the responsibility of developers and planners as part of the development process to ensure our housing areas are all adequately canopied.

Transport routes - including verges and pavements - make up 16% of Wales' urban land but they only provide 9% of cover, similar to what is found in Blaenau Gwent. Motorised traffic causes much of the urban air and surface water pollution, which trees have the ability to remove.

### Tree canopy loss

Overall towns in Blaenau Gwent lost 44 hectares between 2009 and 2013 with all towns contributing to this loss. This is a similar trend to the 159 of Wales' 220 urban areas showing a decline in canopy during this period.

When comparing loss and gain of trees between 2006 ~~to~~ and 2013, 7,000 large trees appear to have been lost across Wales – with as many as 496 indicated to have been lost in Blaenau Gwent. This suggests a steady erosion of Wales' Victorian and Edwardian tree legacy.

### Tree cover in deprived areas tends to be lower and relatively less rich in amenity trees

Whilst variation exists across Wales, 63% of more affluent wards have cover greater than 15% compared to 23% for less well-off wards. There is however great variation in tree cover within Wales' top 10 most deprived wards (2014), from as little as 2% in Rhyl West 2 to 19% in Merthyr

Vale 2, Aberfan. Un-characteristic of Communities First areas all four cluster areas display a healthy number of wards (LSOAs) with a relatively high level of cover.

Where high tree cover and high level of deprivation coexist, this seems to be associated with local urban woodland being present rather than amenity trees. Woods of this nature can sometimes be unmanaged and inaccessible.

### Potential for tree cover

'Green land' sites (soil, grass and shrub areas) were assessed for potential planting, piloting one major town in each local authority, e.g. Tredegar.

If all 'green land' sites identified were planted, with the right trees in the right places, cover in towns could potentially increase by 43%.

Knowing where trees might be planted enables planners to set realistic canopy cover targets. Many North American and Australian cities have comprehensive tree strategies with tree canopy cover goals. Portland in Oregon, with a similar climate to Wales, intends to increase its cover by 7% from its current level of 26%. Bristol City Council has set an aspirational goal of increasing canopy cover from 14% to 30%.

If Welsh towns with lower cover aimed for 20% (the UK Forest Standard woodland definition) in the medium term – we could have a nation of woodland towns!

## 1.6 The way ahead. What we can all do

### Share and build the evidence

What gets measured gets managed. The study has addressed a significant information gap. It's crucial that we continue to share findings and continue the research.

### Adopting a strategic approach to managing our urban trees

The study has identified significant discrepancies in canopy cover levels between and within individual towns. International best practice shows that the best way to ensure all urban communities achieve adequate canopy cover is to adopt local tree strategies and set canopy cover targets.

### Supporting sustainable urban tree management

Significant rates of tree loss have been identified. It's crucial that we all review the effectiveness and use of existing tools and legislation for tree care and preservation and ensure that the potential of grant programmes is maximised to support Wales' urban treescape.



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## 2. Blaenau Gwent - County and town canopy cover findings

This section presents headline findings on canopy cover extent.

Facts, figures and conclusions are provided in the following sequence:

2.1 Blaenau Gwent County Borough's cover

2.2 Town canopy cover comparisons

2.3 Summary: actionable findings



## 2.1 Blaenau Gwent County Borough's cover

Blaenau Gwent County Borough's mean canopy cover for 2013 was estimated at 20.5%, totally 560 hectares – down from 22.1% in 2009.

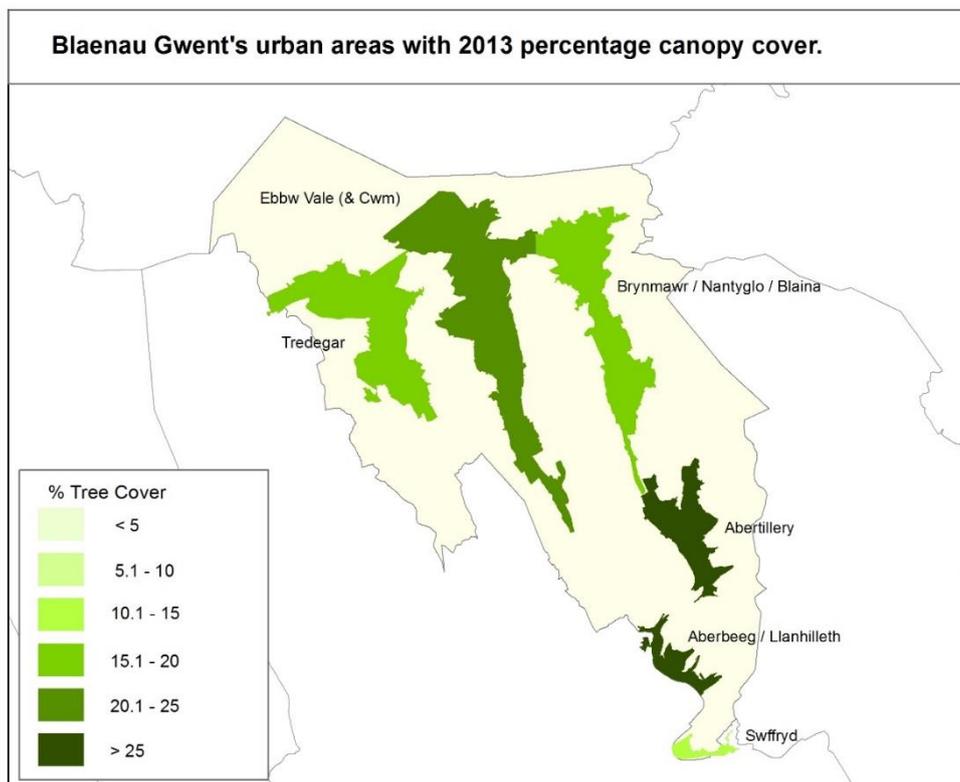


Figure 2: Blaenau Gwent County Borough's urban areas with their 2013 canopy cover percentage

## 2.2 Town canopy cover comparisons

Urban Area Size (ha) Category:

0 - 250	251-500	501-1000	1001-5000	>5000
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Canopy Cover Size Classes:

0 - 5%	5.1 – 10%	10.1 -15%	15.1 -20%	20.1-25%	>25.1%
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National Area Size Rank	Urban Area	Landscape Character Zone	Population ONS 2011 Census	Urban Area (ha)	Total Cover '13 (ha)	Total Cover '13 (%)
19	Ebbw Vale (& Cwm)	H. of Valleys	22,390	1022	207	20.3%
26	Tredegar	H. of Valleys	14,855	657	121	18.5%
29	Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina	H. of Valleys	14,973	605	116	19.2%
73	Abertillery	H. of Valleys	10,946	292	78	26.5%
133	Aberbeeg / Llanhilleth	H. of Valleys	2,990	119	33	27.3%
210	Swffryd	H. of Valleys	1,834	42	5	10.9%

Table 1: Town size and canopy cover

## 2.3 Summary: actionable findings

### Setting canopy cover targets

The review of experiences on the international stage demonstrates that adopting canopy cover targets helps to drive urban tree management. The national findings on mean canopy cover provide a useful benchmark for local planning authorities across the country to use in support of their local planning efforts.

Under the UK Forest Standard 20%, tree cover constitutes woodland. This could be applied to urban areas as to whether they attain 'woodland town' status.

### Priority towns for adoption of a strategic approach to canopy cover increase

Apart from the number of people affected by low tree canopy provision, other factors to consider when identifying canopy cover needs include deprivation, air quality and flood issues.

- Whilst the majority of towns, except Swffryd, display a respectable level of canopy, it is the trend of canopy loss that needs to be investigated further and measures put in place to maintain and grow the current resource.

The ward-level analysis provides further insight where targeted tree planting might be needed. This is addressed in Section 4.

### Optimising funding tools facilitating delivery

The strategic delivery of the canopy cover objectives set for a local area will be greatly facilitated if existing funding streams supporting the delivery of a high quality environment and infrastructure across urban Wales integrate tree-related measures as an eligible expenditure. For example: Vibrant and Viable Places, Coastal Communities Fund, Business Improvement District Fund Wales, Regional Transport Consortia Grant, Safe Routes in Communities, etc.

In line with this, NRW will ensure that its own grant schemes are open to urban tree and woodland proposals as far as possible.



*Morgan Street, Bedwellty House and Park, Tredegar*

## 3. Distribution, composition and change to canopy cover

This section focuses on the distribution, composition and changes to Blaenau Gwent County Borough's urban forest. It considers:

- 3.1 Urban canopy cover distribution across land-uses
- 3.2 Balance between urban woodland and amenity trees
- 3.3 Monitoring the extent of urban tree canopy over time - losses and gains
- 3.4 Summary – actionable findings

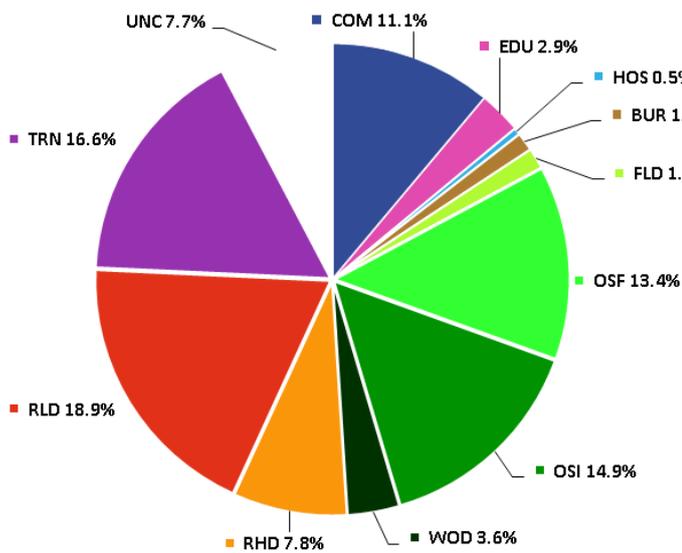


### 3.1 Urban canopy cover distribution across land-uses

Land Use Category	Total Land-use: hectares	TCWTC 2013 Canopy Cover : hectares
Commercial Areas (COM)	303.63	56.22
Education (EDU)	79.33	14.37
Hospitals (HOS)	13.29	2.46
Burial (BUR)	34.99	5.74
Remnant Countryside (FLD)	39.28	5.04
Formal Open Space (OSF)	367.94	92.70
Informal Open Space (OSI)	409.13	181.00
Woodland (WOD)	97.70	97.70
High Density Residential (RHD)	214.83	4.61
Low Density Residential (RLD)	519.69	47.04
Transport Corridors (TRN)	456.01	44.20
Un-Classified Land-Use (UNC)	210.18	13.73
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2746.00</b>	<b>564.81</b>

Table 2: Canopy cover within each land-use for the six towns

**Blaenau Gwent land-use 2013**



**Blaenau Gwent canopy cover per land-use 2013**

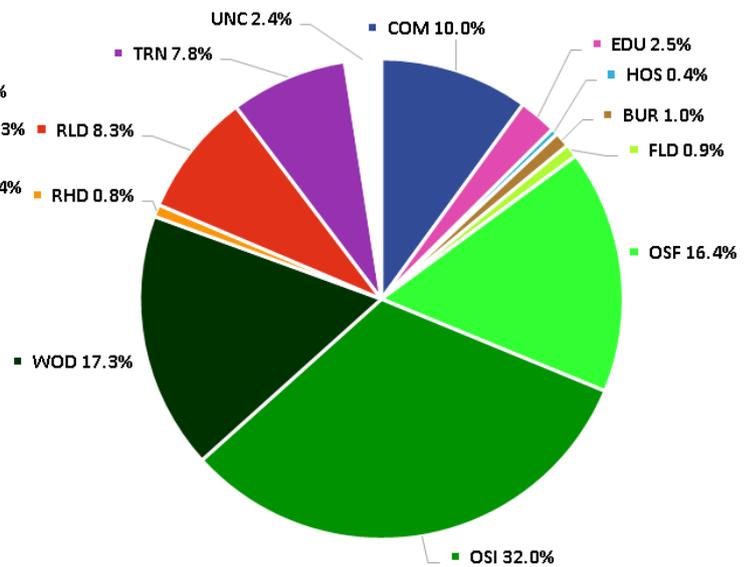


Figure 3: Distribution of the 12 land-use categories (2013) across Blaenau Gwent's urban areas

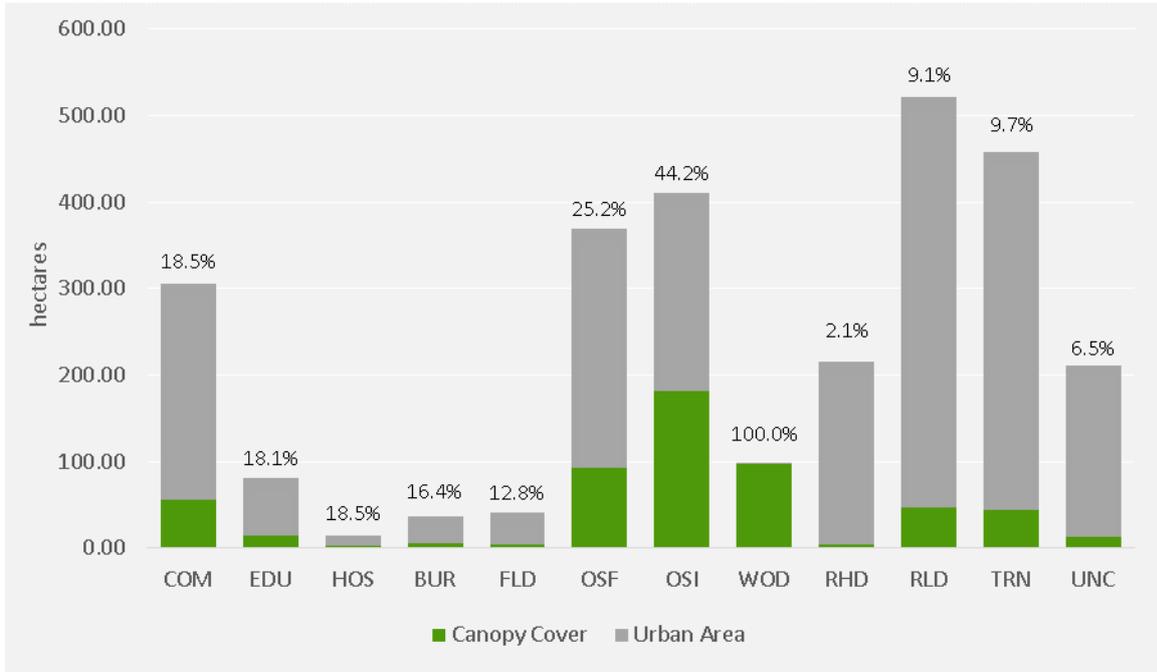


Figure 4: The Percentage Contribution of Canopy Cover within each Land-Use

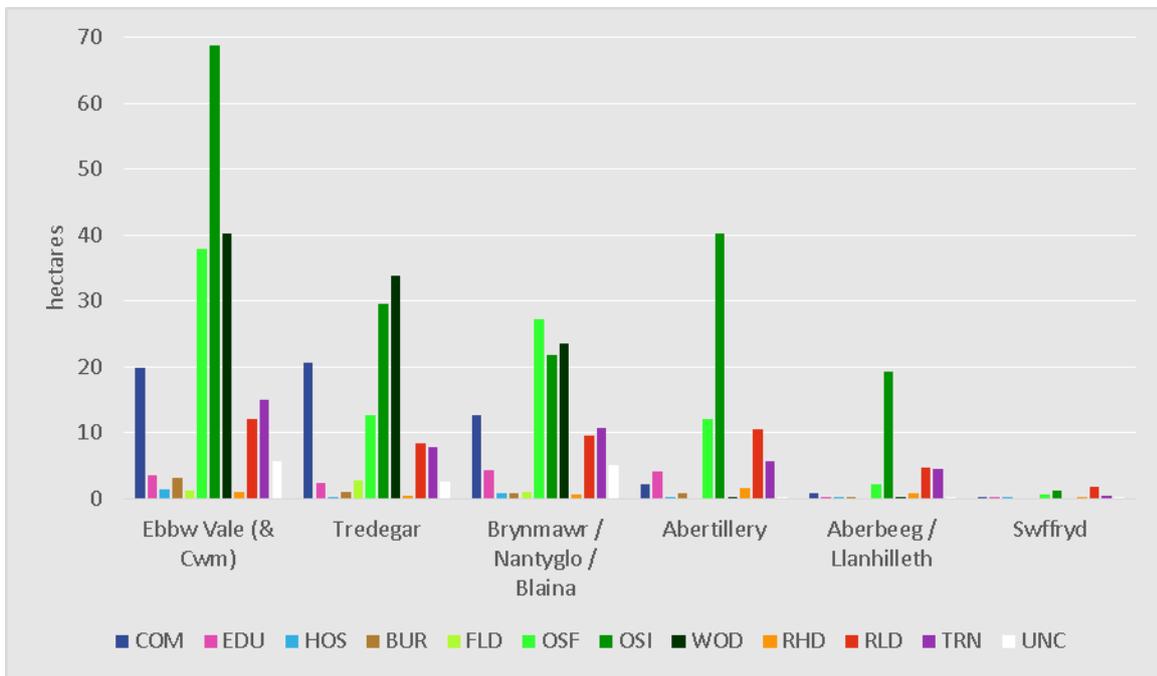


Figure 5: Land-Use Canopy Cover Distribution within Blaenau Gwent's Towns

## Land-use distribution of canopy cover within wards (LSOAs)

WIMD  1 - 190  190 - 380  380 - 570  570 - 950  950 - 1896

Ward (LSOA) with WIMD (Cluster Area Ward highlighted)	Total Ward Area (ha)	Town Area in ward (ha)	COM (ha)	EDU (ha)	HOS (ha)	BUR (ha)	FLD (ha)	OSF (ha)	OSI (ha)	WOD (ha)	RHD (ha)	RLD (ha)	TRN (ha)	UNC (ha)	Total Cover TCWTC 3 (ha)
<b>Aberbeeg / Llanhilleth</b>															
Crumlin 3	212.39	9.50	0.48	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.18	1.18	0.00	0.01	0.40	0.37	0.01	2.70
Cwm 2	510.16	1.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.27	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.08	0.00	0.36
Llanhilleth 2	504.15	61.95	0.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.47	10.82	0.00	0.43	1.82	2.44	0.02	17.30
Llanhilleth 3	79.75	46.33	0.05	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.44	7.09	0.01	0.40	2.45	1.61	0.08	12.17
<b>Abertillery</b>															
Abertillery 1	240.60	24.54	0.18	0.08	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.13	2.44	0.00	0.26	0.63	1.17	0.02	5.00
Abertillery 2	25.69	25.38	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	1.65	0.00	0.19	0.38	0.21	0.01	2.69
Abertillery 3	193.73	40.21	0.01	0.49	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.36	3.94	0.01	0.04	2.39	0.26	0.01	7.52
Cwmtillery 1	107.66	59.68	0.09	2.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.74	12.94	0.00	0.09	1.55	2.39	0.02	23.45
Cwmtillery 2	847.93	55.71	0.80	0.13	0.00	0.63	0.00	6.18	6.21	0.01	0.33	1.55	0.57	0.01	16.41
Cwmtillery 3	32.34	31.94	0.07	0.74	0.02	0.10	0.00	0.01	2.95	0.00	0.21	0.68	0.27	0.01	5.07
Six Bells 1	209.65	19.59	0.68	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.20	3.87	0.01	0.04	0.78	0.37	0.00	6.01
Six Bells 2	216.35	35.24	0.10	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	1.48	6.36	0.05	0.42	2.53	0.36	0.02	11.35
<b>Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina</b>															
Blaina 1	128.74	64.70	1.67	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	5.22	3.73	3.11	0.12	0.54	1.23	1.22	16.90
Blaina 2	336.11	77.03	0.00	0.23	0.42	0.00	0.03	7.20	2.13	7.27	0.06	1.30	0.75	0.72	20.12
Blaina 3	329.41	58.79	0.16	0.01	0.00	0.38	0.14	2.59	1.92	7.07	0.09	1.25	1.40	0.59	15.60
Brynmawr 1	441.64	58.22	3.20	2.29	0.02	0.00	0.55	0.31	0.60	0.73	0.06	1.14	2.12	0.43	11.39
Brynmawr 2	55.24	32.91	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	1.48	0.13	0.00	0.05	1.06	0.24	0.12	3.16
Ward (LSOA) with WIMD (Cluster Area Ward highlighted)	Total Ward	Town Area in	COM (ha)	EDU (ha)	HOS (ha)	BUR (ha)	FLD (ha)	OSF (ha)	OSI (ha)	WOD (ha)	RHD (ha)	RLD (ha)	TRN (ha)	UNC (ha)	Total Cover TCWTC 3

	Area (ha)	ward (ha)													(ha)
Brynmawr 3	49.33	47.17	2.20	0.60	0.10	0.04	0.00	0.38	2.70	0.24	0.05	0.52	1.47	0.11	8.41
Brynmawr 4	36.11	32.60	0.06	0.04	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.55	0.02	0.00	0.06	0.68	0.27	0.15	2.03
Cwmtillery 1	107.66	15.43	1.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.54	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.14	0.83	0.61	3.27
Nantyglo 1	472.11	115.01	3.45	1.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.69	5.28	0.69	0.04	0.25	1.07	0.34	16.96
Nantyglo 2	112.69	48.75	0.00	0.08	0.03	0.03	0.17	1.93	2.94	2.93	0.07	1.40	0.74	0.47	10.79
Nantyglo 3	149.87	54.57	0.42	0.00	0.21	0.11	0.15	1.88	1.29	1.36	0.05	1.30	0.62	0.35	7.75
<b>Ebbw Vale (&amp; Cwm)</b>															
Badminton 1	179.01	83.81	0.67	2.38	0.48	0.00	0.00	3.67	1.16	0.80	0.03	1.09	0.75	0.23	11.24
Badminton 2	88.65	50.08	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.14	5.47	0.77	1.98	0.05	1.30	0.61	0.23	10.57
Beaufort 1	120.00	45.41	0.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.89	3.23	1.00	0.03	0.92	0.28	0.13	6.68
Beaufort 2	153.33	40.61	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.05	0.79	5.05	0.36	0.03	0.48	1.10	0.16	8.06
Beaufort 3	70.56	36.96	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.34	0.06	0.56	3.29	0.53	0.04	0.99	0.40	0.18	6.40
Cwm 1	215.11	43.30	0.02	0.04	0.00	1.18	0.00	1.37	3.00	5.67	0.04	1.18	0.90	0.03	12.71
Cwm 2	510.16	20.56	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.10	0.00	0.07	0.07	0.30	0.03	0.79
Cwm 3	253.33	78.75	0.17	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.52	12.33	6.92	0.13	0.69	3.93	0.36	31.97
Ebbw Vale North 1	91.35	41.57	0.04	0.13	0.01	0.00	0.28	2.46	1.49	0.53	0.05	0.61	0.92	0.20	6.71
Ebbw Vale North 2	101.60	49.07	0.16	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.62	2.10	0.04	0.07	0.53	0.14	0.11	7.98
Ebbw Vale North 3	55.99	42.68	0.64	0.02	0.00	1.63	0.00	0.82	0.07	0.00	0.04	0.26	0.74	0.15	4.36
Ebbw Vale South 1	72.08	37.20	0.05	0.18	0.12	0.00	0.33	1.97	0.82	0.15	0.08	0.78	0.15	0.22	4.85
Ebbw Vale South 2	558.51	184.92	5.78	0.00	0.11	0.00	0.00	4.04	17.19	8.01	0.13	0.85	1.28	2.50	39.87
Ebbw Vale South 3	30.73	30.73	0.04	0.00	0.62	0.00	0.00	0.55	2.21	0.44	0.05	0.54	0.36	0.13	4.94
Rassau 1	423.48	177.30	11.01	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.32	0.44	13.79	9.70	0.04	1.12	1.54	0.66	38.73
Rassau 2	58.73	58.73	1.03	0.18	0.00	0.02	0.09	2.78	0.52	4.20	0.07	0.65	1.65	0.34	11.53
<b>Swffryd</b>															
Crumlin 4	494.27	12.86	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.62	0.78	0.00	0.11	0.58	0.22	0.01	2.33
Llanhilleth 1	156.97	29.09	0.10	0.04	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.47	0.00	0.04	1.26	0.26	0.00	2.23

Ward (LSOA) with WIMD (Cluster Area Ward highlighted)	Total Ward Area (ha)	Town Area in ward (ha)	COM (ha)	EDU (ha)	HOS (ha)	BUR (ha)	FLD (ha)	OSF (ha)	OSI (ha)	WOD (ha)	RHD (ha)	RLD (ha)	TRN (ha)	UNC (ha)	Total Cover TCWTC 3 (ha)
<b>Tredegar</b>															
Badminton 1	179.01	8.42	0.59	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.79	1.36	0.00	0.00	0.16	0.11	4.02
Georgetown 1	363.92	54.75	1.59	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	2.95	2.69	0.08	1.36	0.48	0.35	10.50
Georgetown 2	44.53	32.94	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.52	1.31	0.16	0.08	0.49	0.38	0.16	3.11
Sirhowy 1	118.67	79.49	2.71	0.14	0.00	0.11	0.00	0.21	5.55	1.63	0.02	1.46	1.70	0.48	14.01
Sirhowy 2	42.56	32.82	0.08	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.59	2.27	0.68	0.02	0.34	0.10	0.11	4.20
Sirhowy 3	1402.05	174.52	13.77	0.64	0.00	0.00	0.14	4.34	1.85	16.42	0.02	1.19	1.59	0.48	40.45
Sirhowy 4	89.42	39.28	0.20	0.19	0.00	0.00	2.58	0.67	1.93	0.80	0.02	0.60	0.46	0.33	7.78
Tredegar Central and West 1	729.43	80.97	0.17	0.93	0.02	0.81	0.00	1.77	5.71	2.33	0.02	0.51	0.80	0.15	13.22
Tredegar Central and West 2	200.72	29.94	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.26	1.48	0.33	0.03	0.49	0.12	0.07	2.81
Tredegar Central and West 3	96.97	42.51	0.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.26	1.07	0.46	0.03	0.52	0.25	0.09	2.99
Tredegar Central and West 4	79.29	77.00	1.14	0.42	0.03	0.00	0.00	2.97	3.58	6.64	0.09	1.04	1.76	0.31	17.97
Twyn Carno 2	1292.84	3.86	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.02	0.25

Table 3: Land-use distribution of canopy cover within wards (LSOAs)



A4046, Ebbw Vale

### 3.2 Balance between urban woodland and amenity trees

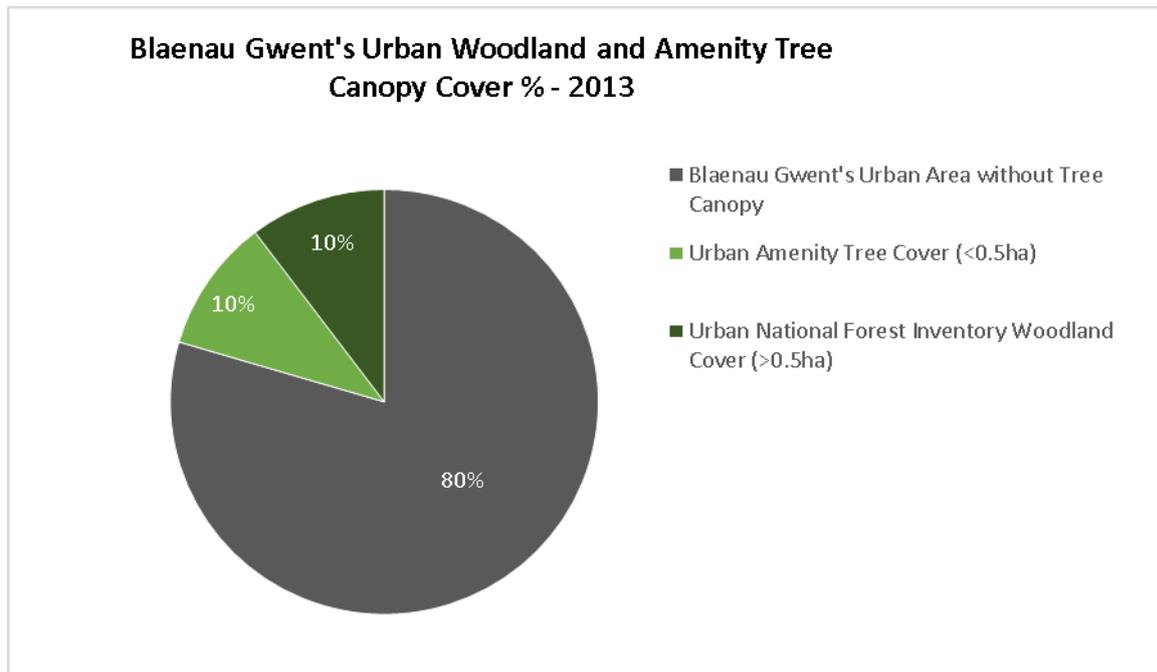


Figure 6: Blaenau Gwent's Urban Woodland and Amenity Tree Canopy Cover % - 2013



St Peters - Blaina, Ebbw Fach

### Spatial distribution of woodland and amenity trees within towns

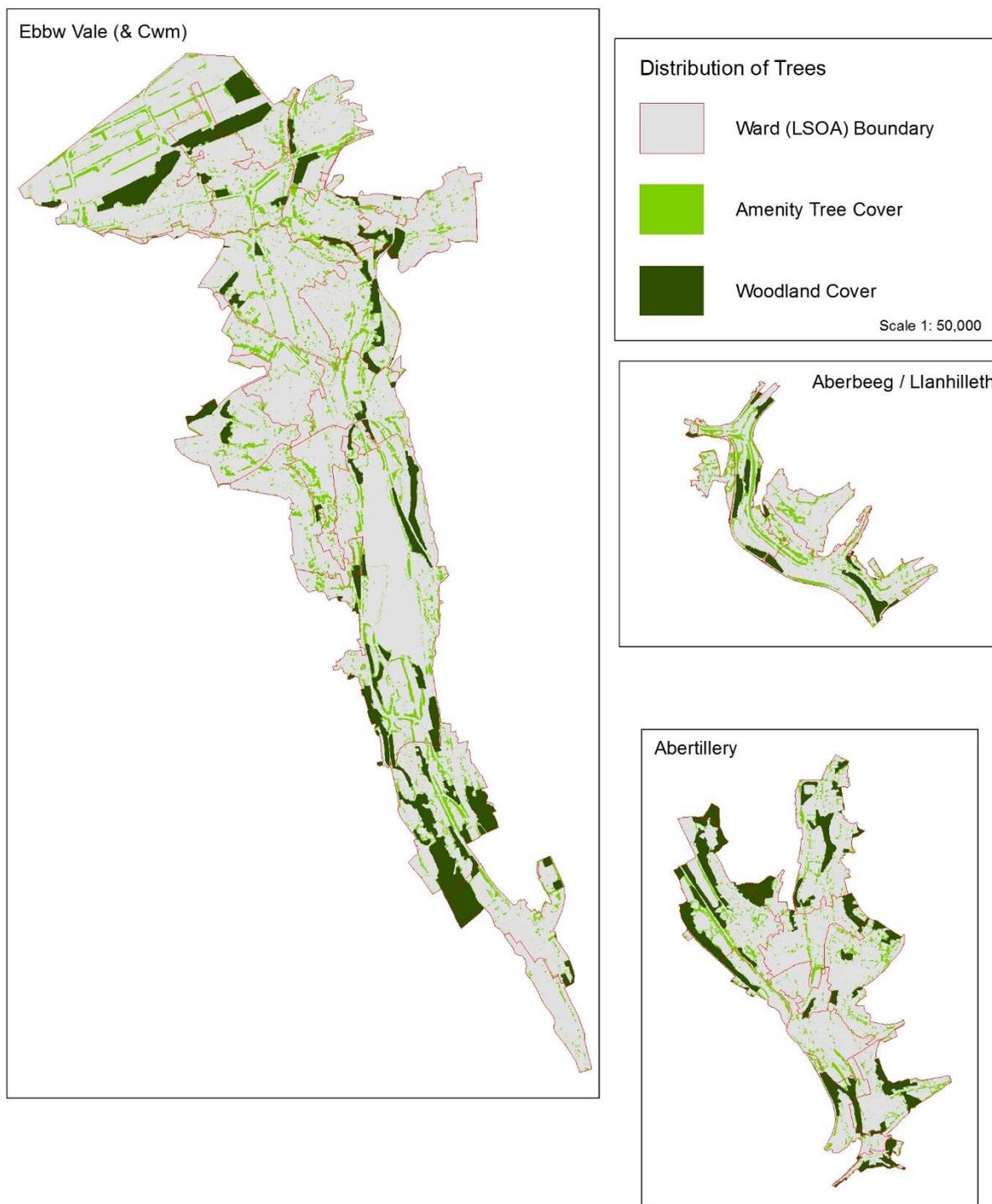


Figure 7: Spatial Distribution of Woodland and Amenity Trees within Towns

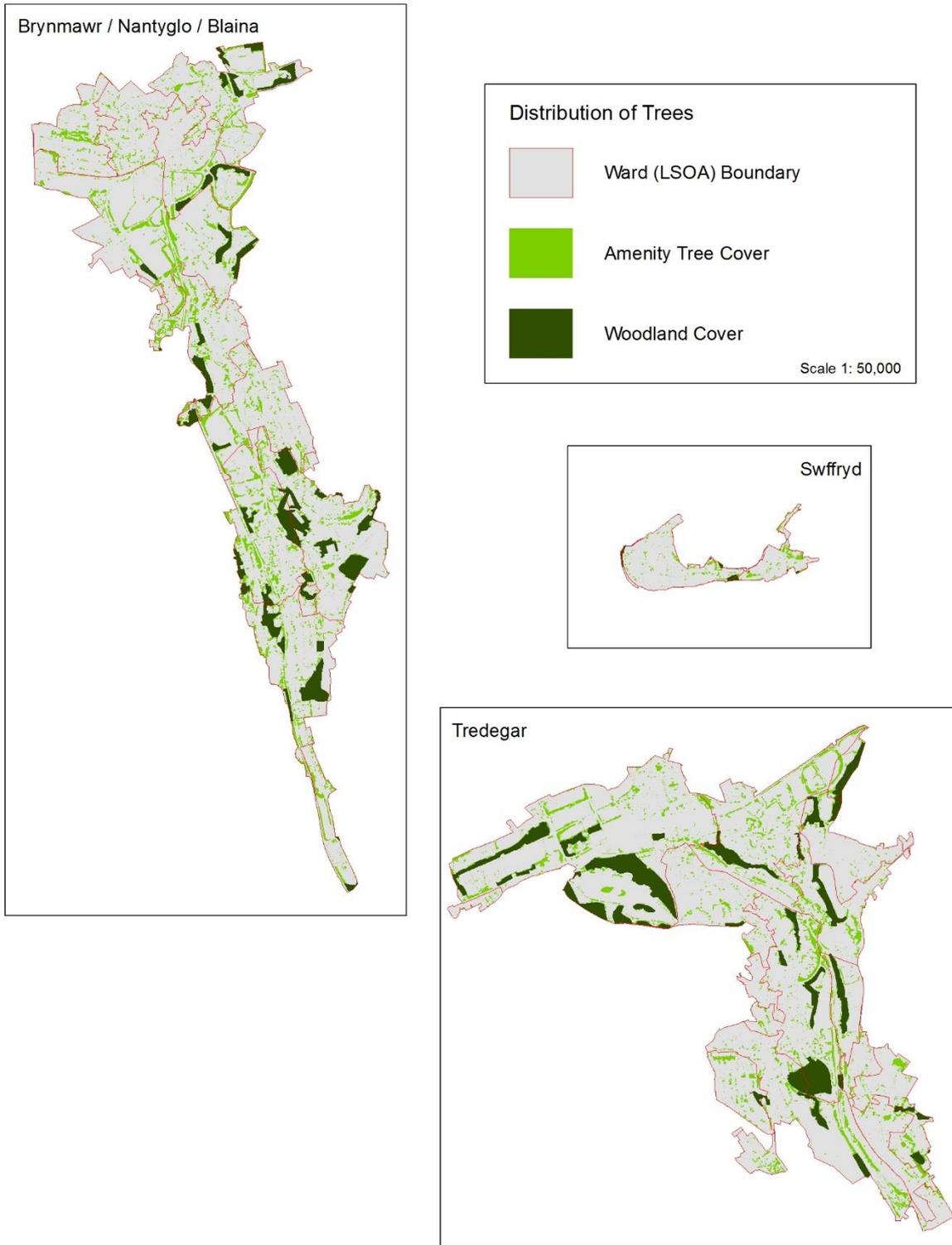


Figure 8: Spatial Distribution of Woodland and Amenity Trees within Towns

### Extent of woodland and amenity tree coverage across Blaenau Gwent's towns

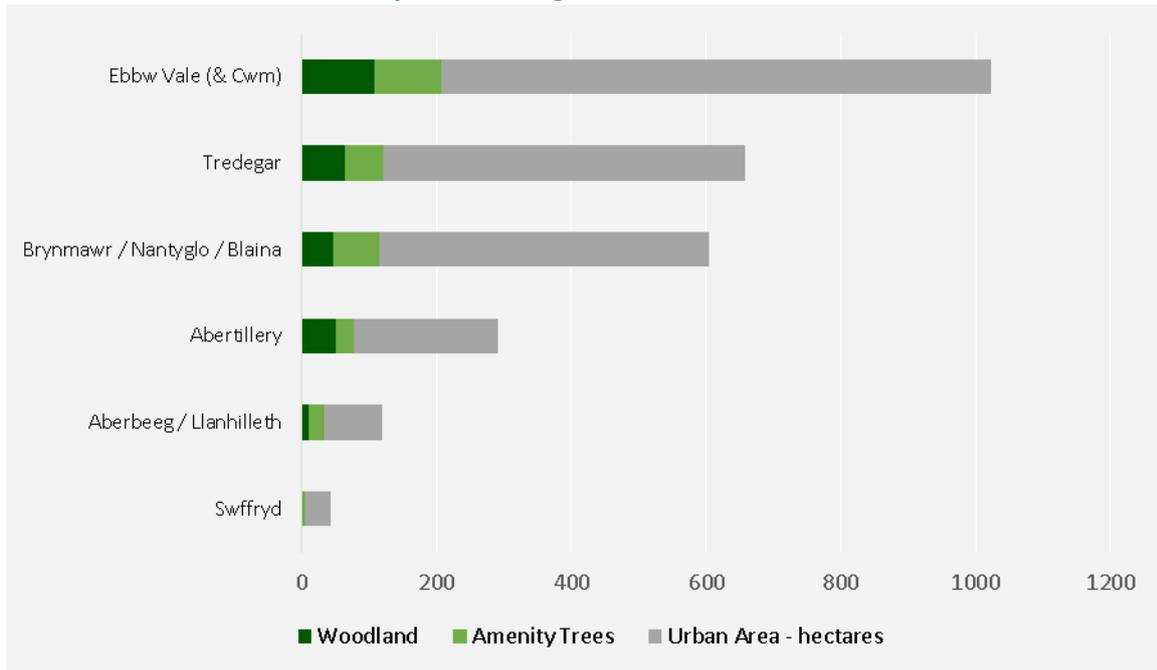


Figure 9: Extent of Woodland and Amenity Tree Coverage (ha) across Blaenau Gwent County Borough's Towns

### Land-use distribution of woodland vs. amenity canopy

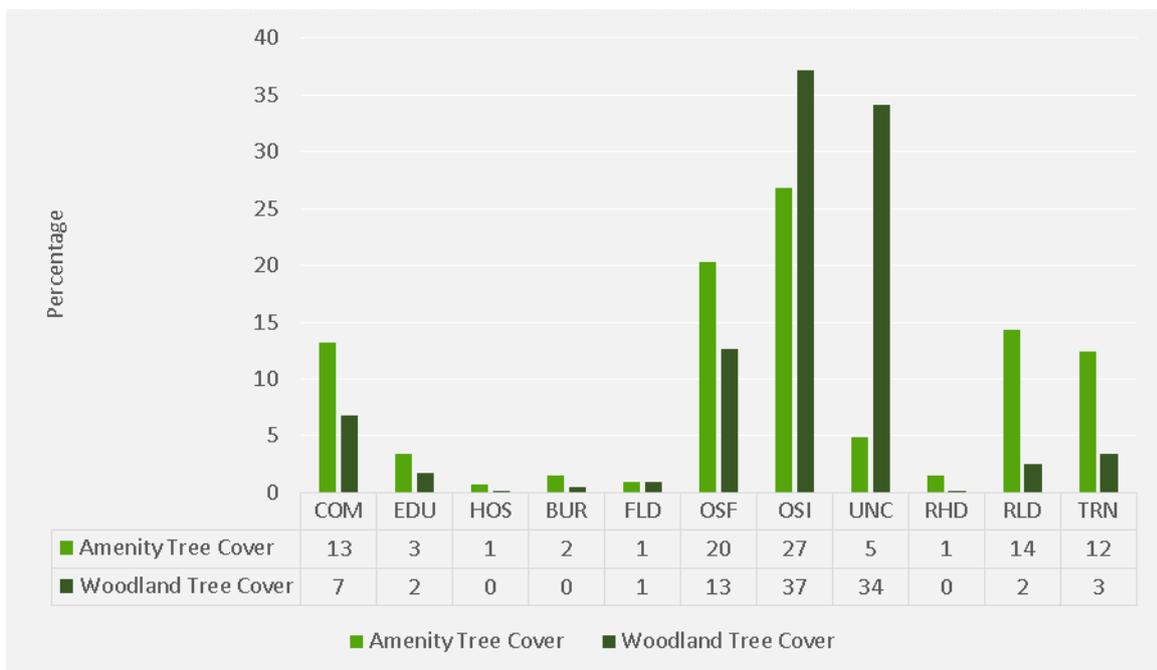


Figure 10: Percentage Distribution of Amenity Tree and Woodland Cover across the Land-Uses

### Wards with high and low woodland (NFI) cover – making the distinction between ‘wooded’ and ‘amenity’ tree cover

Cluster Area Wards (LSOA)	Urban Area	‘Wooded’ %	‘Amenity’ Tree %	Total Canopy %
<b>High ‘Wooded’ Wards</b>				
Cwmtillery 2	Abertillery	73%	27%	29.3%
Cwm 1	Ebbw Vale (& Cwm)	72%	28%	29.6%
Sirhowy 2	Tredegar	69%	31%	12.8%
Six Bells 1	Abertillery	69%	31%	30.1%
Blaina 2	Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina	67%	33%	26.1%
Sirhowy 3	Tredegar	67%	33%	23.2%
<b>Low ‘Wooded’ Wards</b>				
Brynmawr 2	Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina	0%	100%	9.6%
Ebbw Vale South 1	Ebbw Vale (& Cwm)	14%	86%	13.1%
Abertillery 2	Abertillery	15%	85%	10.7%
Ebbw Vale South 3	Ebbw Vale (& Cwm)	18%	82%	16.1%
Tredegar Central and West 2	Tredegar	20%	80%	9.4%
Tredegar Central and West 3	Tredegar	20%	80%	7.0%

Table 4: The highest and lowest ‘woodland’ cover within Blaenau Gwent County Borough’s Communities First Cluster Area wards (LSOAs)

### 3.3 Monitoring the extent of urban tree canopy over time - losses and gains

Town	Amenity Tree Loss & Gain between 2006, 2009 & 2013						Change in Tree Count 2006 - 2009	Change in Tree Count 2009 - 2013	Change in Tree Count 2006 - 2013
	Large Trees 12m+ 2006 - 2009	Large Trees 12m+ 2009 - 2013	Medium Trees 6 - 12m 2006 - 2009	Medium Trees 6 - 12m 2009 - 2013	Small Trees 3 - 6m 2006 - 2009	Small Trees 3 - 6m 2009 - 2013			
Ebbw Vale (& Cwm)	-96	-294	5774	-1136	9540	-3423	15218	-4853	10365
Tredegar	-73	25	2959	-655	16560	-7030	19446	-7660	11786
Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina	-234	-53	4766	-523	5634	-2049	10166	-2625	7541
Abertillery	-43	4	-1396	27	5552	-601	4113	-570	3543
Aberbeeg / Llanhilleth	2	-1	-2124	35	9625	-1078	7503	-1044	6459
Swffryd	-9	4	-122	160	610	-737	479	-573	-94
Change in Tree Numbers	-453	-315	9857	-2092	47521	-14918	56925	-17325	39600

Table 5: Town amenity tree loss and gain between 2006, 2009 & 2013

Town	Area of NFI 2011 (ha)	Area of NFI 2014 (ha)	Change (ha)
Aberbeeg / Llanhilleth	11.31	11.33	+0.02
Abertillery	51.25	51.24	-0.01
Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina	47.84	47.66	-0.18
Ebbw Vale (& Cwm)	106.33	107.34	+1.00
Swffryd	0.91	0.91	0.00
Tredegar	64.12	63.72	-0.39
<b>Blaenau Gwent County Borough</b>	<b>281.8</b>	<b>282.2</b>	<b>+0.45</b>

Table 6: Town woodland loss and gain between 2011 and 2014

URBAN NAME	Area Size Rank	Survey Year	Urban Area (ha)	Woodland (ha)	Amenity Trees (ha)	Woodland %	Amenity Trees %	Woodland + Amenity Trees (ha)	Total Cover %
Aberbeeg / Llanhilleth	133	2006	118.9	11.3	21.0	9.5%	17.7%	32.3	27.2%
		2009	118.9	11.3	22.9	9.5%	19.3%	34.2	28.8%
		2013	118.9	11.3	21.2	9.5%	17.8%	32.5	27.3%
Abertillery	73	2006	292.3	51.2	27.6	17.5%	9.4%	78.9	27.0%
		2009	292.3	51.2	27.2	17.5%	9.3%	78.4	26.8%
		2013	292.3	51.2	26.3	17.5%	9.0%	77.5	26.5%
Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina	29	2006	605.3	47.8	41.7	7.9%	6.9%	89.6	14.8%
		2009	605.3	47.8	77.3	7.9%	12.8%	125.2	20.7%
		2013	605.3	47.7	68.7	7.9%	11.4%	116.4	19.2%
Ebbw Vale (& Cwm)	19	2006	1021.8	106.3	67.4	10.4%	6.6%	173.7	17.0%
		2009	1021.8	106.3	119.8	10.4%	11.7%	226.2	22.1%
		2013	1021.8	107.3	100.1	10.5%	9.8%	207.4	20.3%
Swffryd	210	2006	41.9	0.9	3.6	2.2%	8.6%	4.5	10.8%
		2009	41.9	0.9	3.7	2.2%	8.9%	4.6	11.1%
		2013	41.9	0.9	3.6	2.2%	8.7%	4.6	10.9%
Tredegar	26	2006	656.7	64.1	29.3	9.8%	4.5%	93.5	14.2%
		2009	656.7	64.1	73.2	9.8%	11.2%	137.4	20.9%
		2013	656.7	63.7	57.6	9.7%	8.8%	121.3	18.5%
BLAENAU GWENT TOTAL		2006	2736.9	281.8	190.7	10.3%	7.0%	472.4	17.3%
		2009	2736.9	281.8	324.3	10.3%	11.8%	606.0	22.1%
		2013	2736.9	282.2	277.6	10.3%	10.1%	559.8	20.5%

Table 7: Summary breakdown of town amenity tree and woodland cover in 2006, 2009 and 2013

### 3.5 Summary: actionable findings

#### Identifying landowners to promote better care and planting of trees

The distribution of Blaenau Gwent's urban tree resource amongst 12 land uses has demonstrated the wide range of public and private stakeholders that have a decisive impact on the county's existing and future urban canopy cover. The strategic delivery of increasing canopy cover will be greatly facilitated if existing funding streams of respective landowners' budgets can be tapped into in order to support the delivery of a high quality environment and infrastructure across urban Blaenau Gwent. In doing so, this would recognise the huge contribution that trees make to ecosystem services.

#### Identifying quantity and quality of tree cover to improve the provision and management of trees where best aligned to communities needs

The case for distinguishing between woodland and amenity canopy cover is useful where:

- Quantity; where woodland cover increases a town's canopy but, in terms of benefits to neighbourhoods, they are often not realising their potential due to lack of management or accessibility.
- Quality; where regular tree management in parks, gardens and streets provide a cared-for appearance. These are the trees that, whilst not extensive in terms of canopy, tend to be 'on the doorstep' of where people live and work.

The presence, or not, of woodland is clearly a factor in accounting for the highs and lows of the South Wales Valley and coastal towns, as Blaenau Gwent clearly demonstrates. The open-space land-use categories host the majority of woodland cover, with private gardens being the major provider of towns' amenity trees. Examining woodland vs. amenity cover at a ward level helps to understand that the make-up of the local landscape plays a major role in determining high and low cover. Despite the broad high and low cover distinctions between the Valleys and coasts, affluent versus deprived areas, there are numerous specific examples where woodland significantly raises canopy levels in both localities.

Further detailed analysis and ground-truthing would usefully reveal:

- Evidence as to the exact spatial balance between 'wooded' and 'amenity tree' areas within communities.
- To what degree quantity and quality of tree cover align with the needs of where people live, work and play and where targeted tree planting is required.

#### Identifying amenity tree and woodland loss, aligning with decline in canopy cover and highlighting specific town and county concerns for further investigation

The loss of large long-lived trees is concerning. This maturing Victorian and Edwardian legacy, whilst at some point in need of replacement, does offer urban society the greatest benefits. The danger is that these trees are not being replaced and where they are, small, short-lived trees offering fewer overall benefits take their place. A consistent, resourced and planned approach is needed to:

- Protect and care for the Victorian and Edwardian legacy of large trees
- Promote planting of large canopy specimens.

Initial analysis combining tree count and canopy cover loss across counties highlights specific towns where a diminishing tree resource is apparent. The next steps for local authorities and NRW would be to:

- Undertake detailed interrogation of the survey data, ascertaining both the validity of the highlighted concerns and identifying in detail where specific loss is occurring.
- Undertake complimentary ground-truthing across towns to further understand and explain the reasons behind tree removal and their rate of loss.

### Identifying legislation to protect and funding to increase tree planting opportunities

Optimising some of the existing legislation to reduce tree loss and current funding tools to secure planting schemes can both facilitate in addressing canopy cover concerns. Examples of practical next steps include:

- Reviewing the effectiveness and use of existing tools and legislation for tree preservation.
- Ensuring investments in enhancing the Wales urban treescape are an eligible expenditure for grant programmes such as Vibrant and Viable Places, Coastal Communities Fund, Business Improvement District Fund Wales, Regional Transport Consortia Grant, Safe Routes in Communities.



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## 4. Neighbourhood canopy cover – a focus on wards

This section focuses on contrasting ward level canopy cover, considering levels of deprivation where relevant, to identify where qualitative or quantitative improvements to tree cover might be needed.

Analysis and findings are presented as follows:

- 4.1 Best and worst canopied urban wards
- 4.2 Multiple deprivation and canopy cover
- 4.3 Summary: actionable findings



## 4.1 Best and worst canopied urban wards

### Town ward by ward canopy cover breakdown

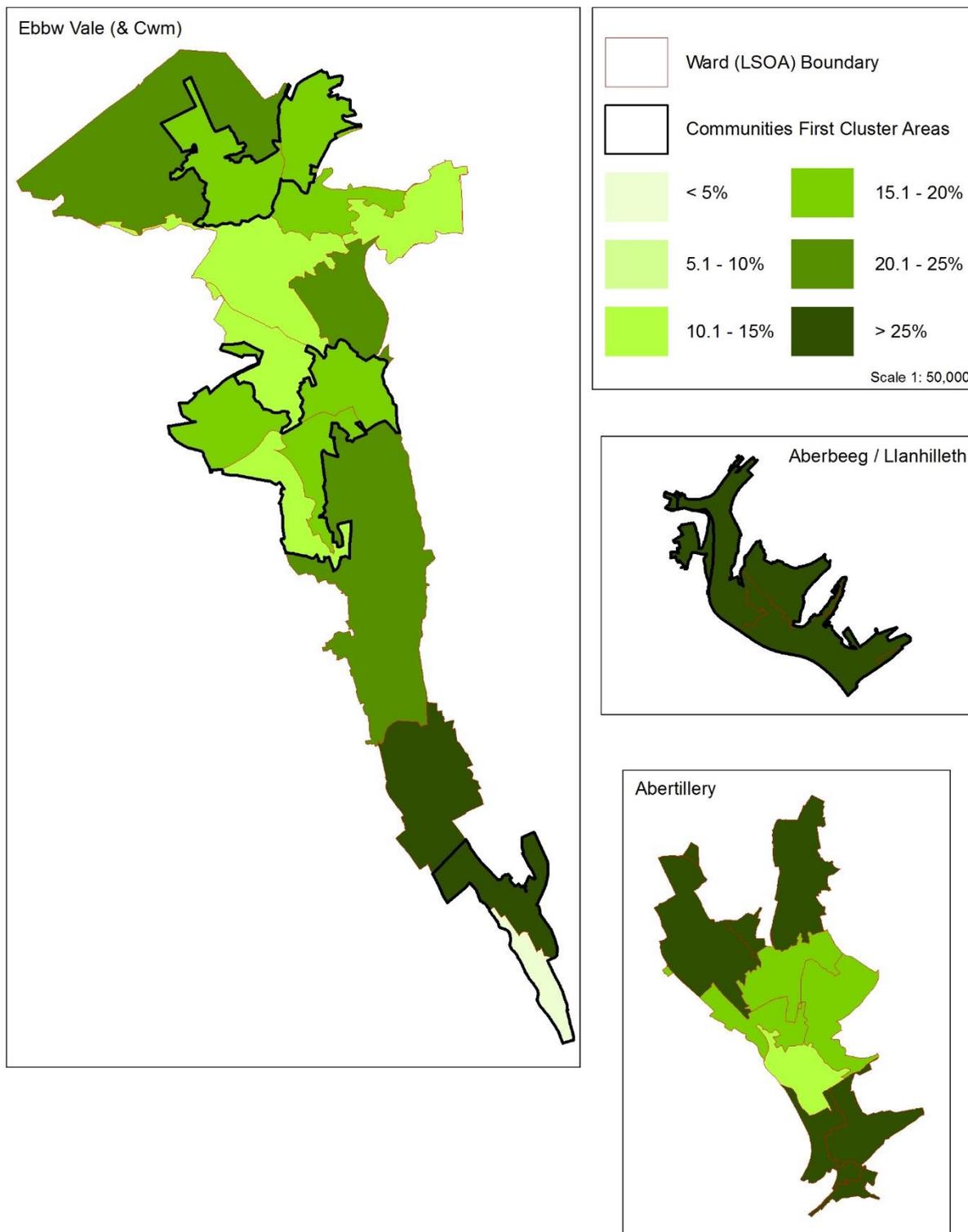


Figure 11: Town Ward by Ward Canopy Cover Breakdown

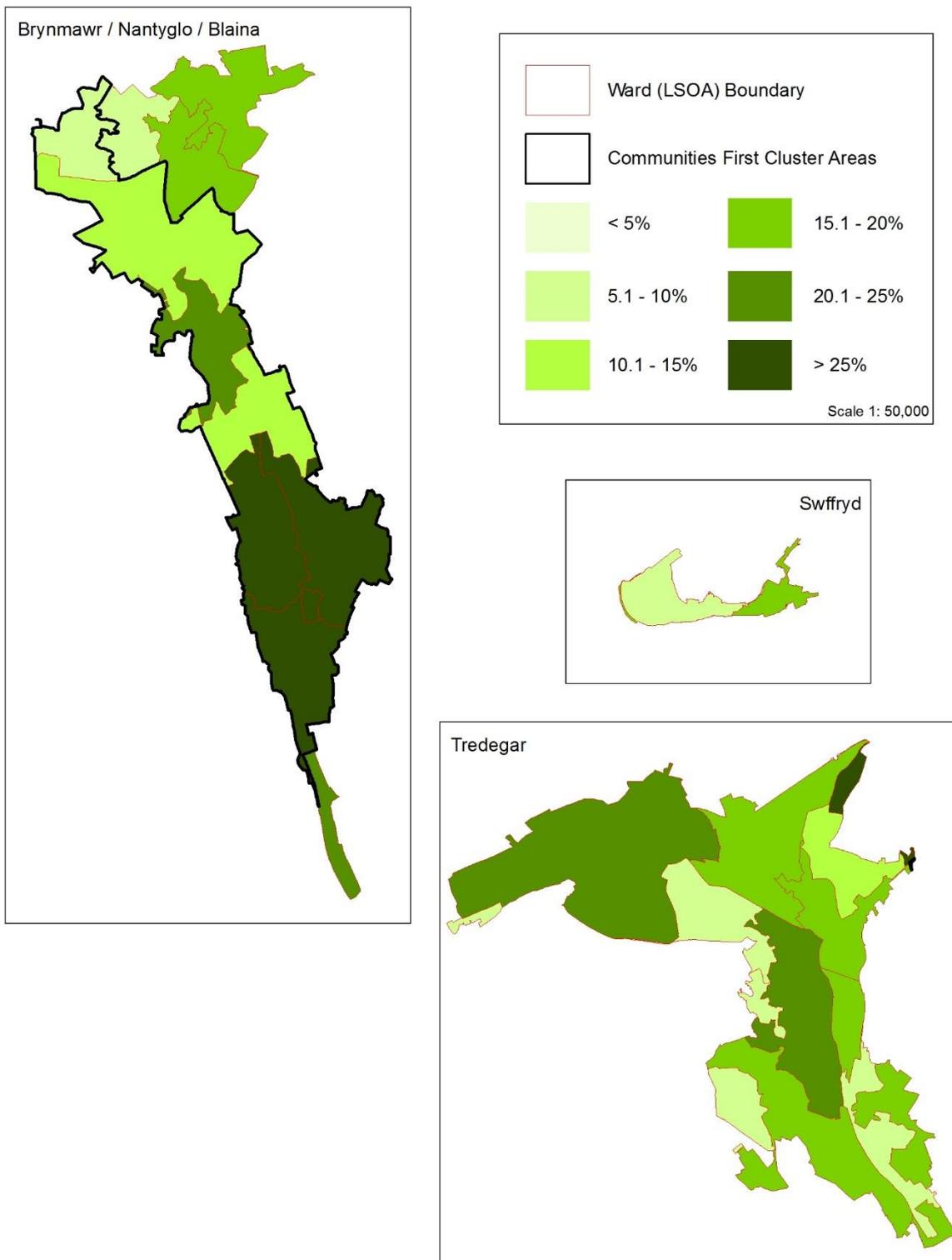


Figure 12: Town Ward by Ward Canopy Cover Breakdown

## 4.2 Multiple deprivation and tree canopy cover

### Wales' Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)

No	Key		WIMD Category	Total No. of Wards	TCWTC Urban Area (ha)
1	Most Deprived	0-10%	1 - 190	11	484
2		10-20%	191 - 380	9	594
3		20-30%	381 - 570	13	518
4		30-50%	571 - 950	11	822
5	Least Deprived	50-100%	951 - 1896	6	321
<b>Total</b>				<b>50</b>	<b>2739</b>

Table 8: Distribution of Blaenau Gwent County Borough's wards (LSOAs) as per the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011

### 'Top 10' most canopied and 'Bottom 10' least canopied urban wards and WIMD

Canopy Rank	Urban Area	Ward / WIMD Category	Urban Area in Ward (ha)	Canopy Cover %
1	Tredegar	Badminton 1	8 of 179	50.3%
2	Ebbw Vale (& Cwm)	Cwm 3	79 of 253	40.5%
3	Aberbeeg / Llanhilleth	Cwm 2	1 of 510	35.7%
4	Abertillery	Cwmtillery 1	60 of 108	35.6%
5	Abertillery	Six Bells 2	35 of 216	32.4%
6	Abertillery	Six Bells 1	20 of 210	30.1%
7	Aberbeeg / Llanhilleth	Crumlin 3	9 of 212	30.0%
8	Ebbw Vale (& Cwm)	Cwm 1	43 of 215	29.6%
9	Abertillery	Cwmtillery 2	56 of 848	29.3%
10	Aberbeeg / Llanhilleth	Llanhilleth 2	62 of 504	27.9%

Table 9: 'Top10' most canopied wards

Canopy Rank	Urban Area	Ward / WIMD Category	Urban Area in Ward (ha)	Canopy Cover %
1	Ebbw Vale (& Cwm)	Cwm 2	21 of 510	3.8%
2	Tredegar	Twyn Carno 2	4 of 1293	6.1%
3	Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina	Brynmawr 4	33 of 36	6.1%
4	Tredegar	Tredegar Central and West 3	43 of 97	7.0%
5	Swffryd	Llanhilleth 1	29 of 157	7.7%
6	Tredegar	Tredegar Central and West 2	30 of 201	9.4%
7	Tredegar	Georgetown 2	33 of 45	9.4%
8	Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina	Brynmawr 2	33 of 55	9.6%
9	Ebbw Vale (& Cwm)	Ebbw Vale North 3	43 of 56	10.1%
10	Abertillery	Abertillery 2	25 of 26	10.8%

Table 10: 'Bottom 10' least canopied wards

### Canopy Cover in Communities First Cluster Areas

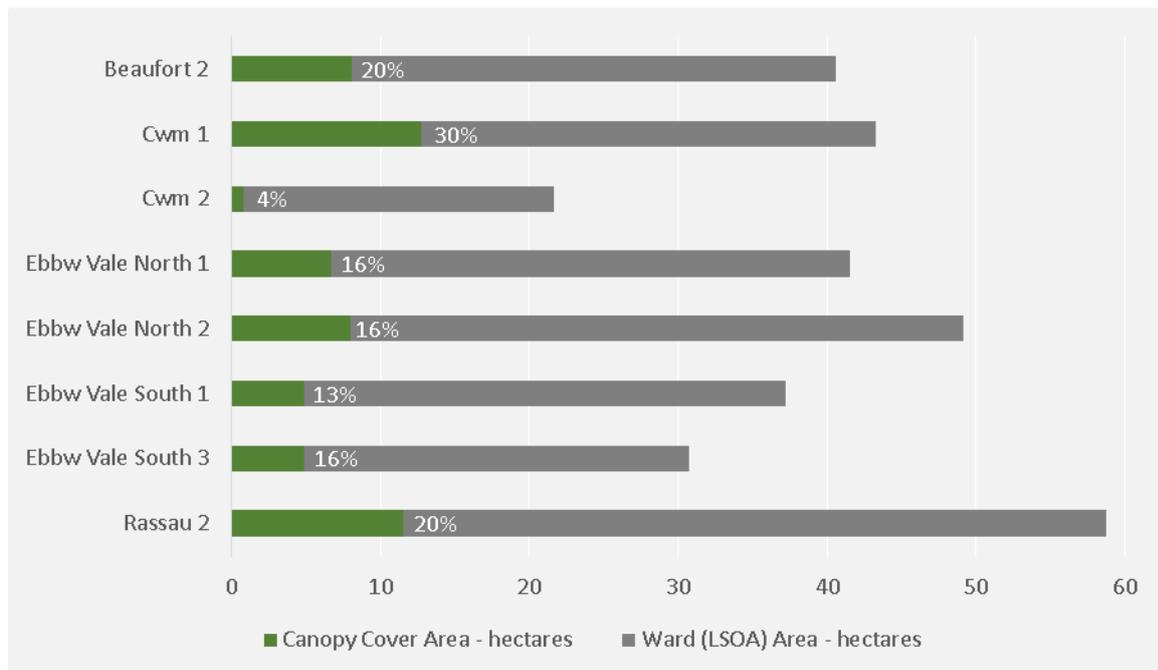


Figure 13: Canopy Cover in 'Ebbw Fawr' Communities First Cluster Area

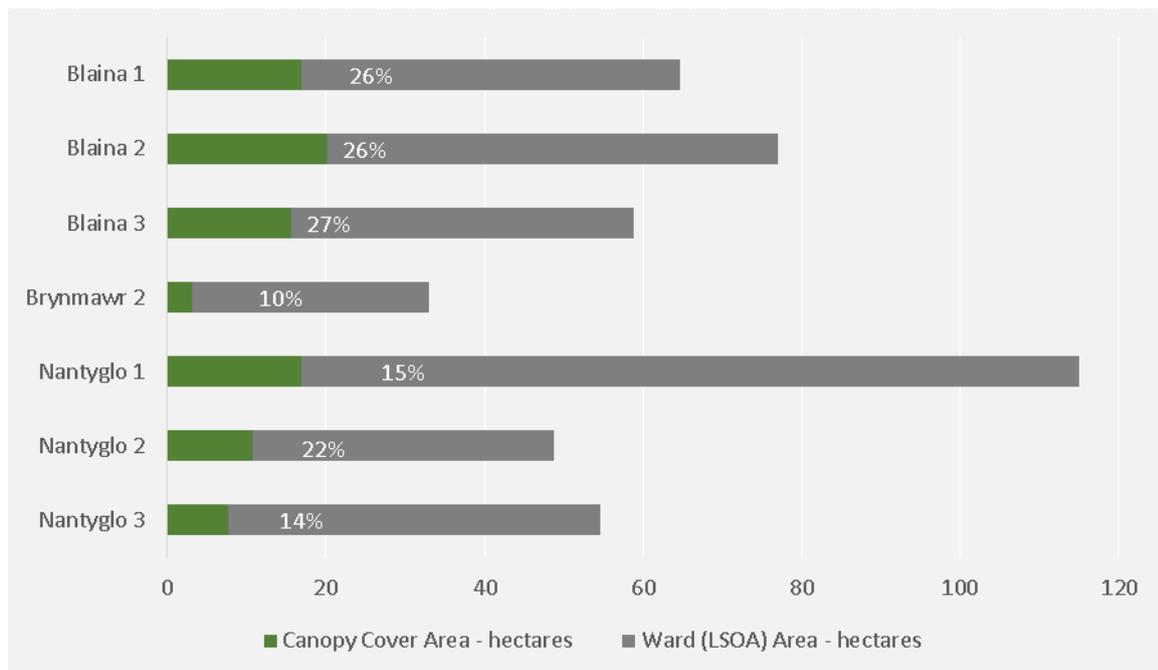


Figure 14: Canopy Cover in 'North Ebbw Fach' Communities First Cluster Area

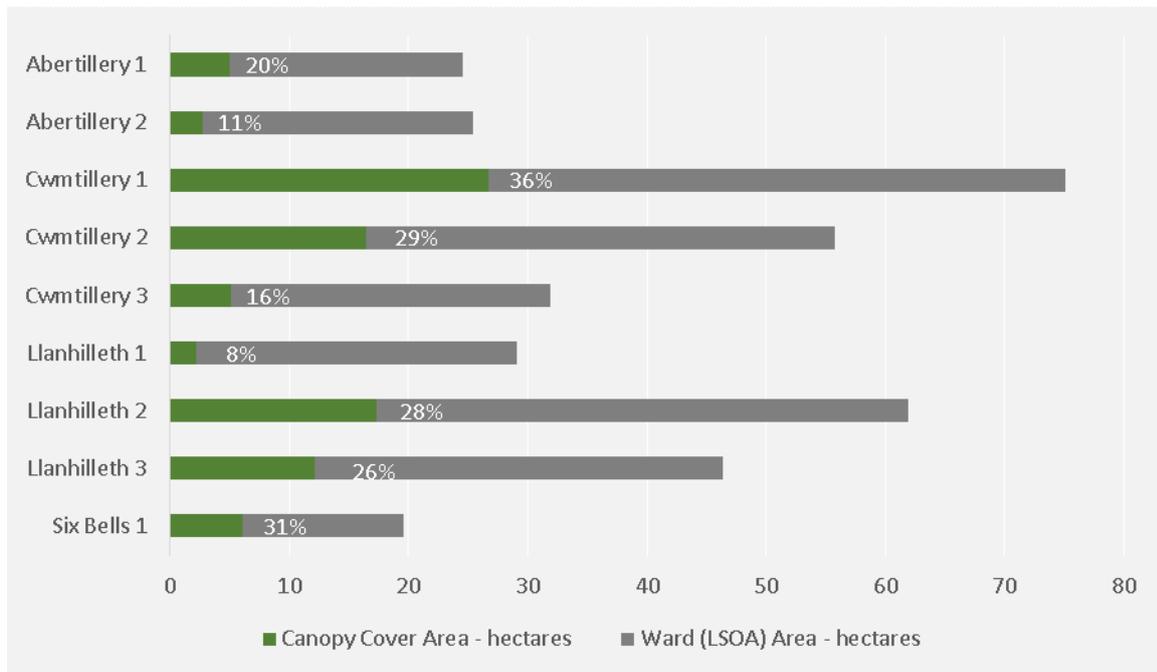


Figure 15: Canopy Cover in 'South Ebbw Fach' Communities First Cluster Area

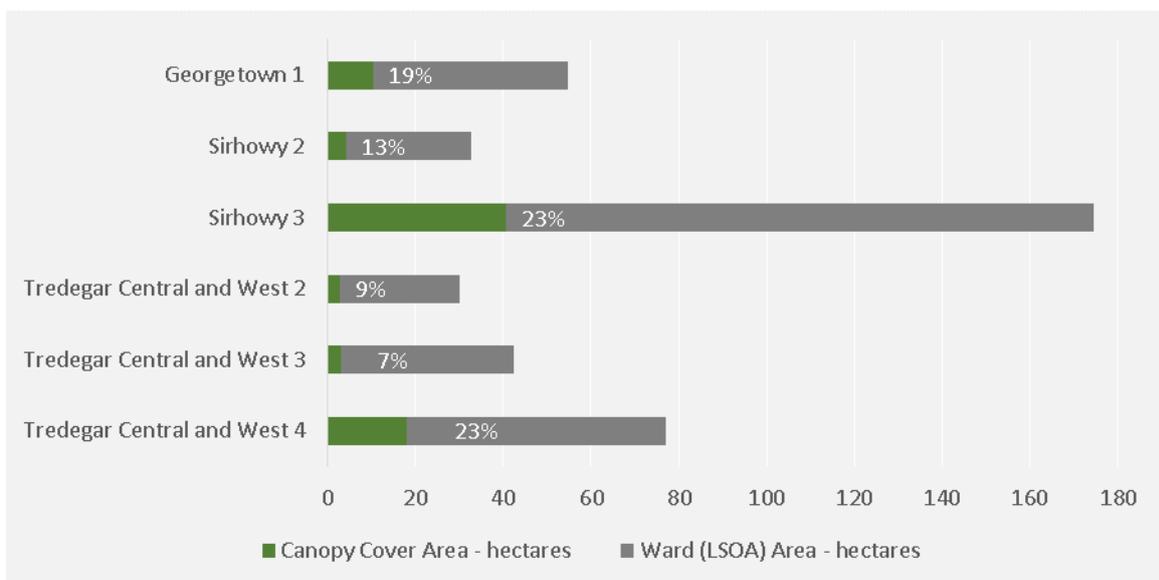


Figure 16: Canopy Cover in 'Tredegar' Communities First Cluster Area

### Ward by Ward (LSOAs) Canopy Cover



Ward (LSOA) with WIMD (Cluster Area Ward highlighted)	Total Ward Area (ha)	Town Area in ward (ha)	Amenity Trees 2006 (ha)	NFI Cover 2011 (ha)	Total Cover TCWTC 1 (ha)	Total % Cover TCWTC 1	Amenity Trees 2009 (ha)	NFI Cover 2011 (ha)	Total Cover TCWTC 2 (ha)	Total % Cover TCWTC 2	Amenity Trees 2013 (ha)	NFI Cover 2014 (ha)	Total Cover TCWTC 3 (ha)	Total % Cover TCWTC 3
<b>Aberbeeg / Llanhilleth</b>														
<b>Crumlin 3</b>	212.39	9.50	2.37	0.06	2.43	25.6%	2.92	0.06	2.98	31.4%	2.63	0.06	2.70	30.0%
<b>Cwm 2</b>	510.16	1.08	0.21	0.22	0.43	39.8%	0.15	0.22	0.38	34.8%	0.13	0.22	0.36	35.7%
<b>Llanhilleth 2</b>	504.15	61.95	10.76	5.72	16.48	26.6%	12.05	5.72	17.77	28.7%	11.58	5.72	17.30	27.9%
<b>Llanhilleth 3</b>	79.75	46.33	7.63	5.30	12.92	27.9%	7.81	5.30	13.10	28.3%	6.86	5.32	12.17	26.5%
<b>Abertillery</b>														
<b>Abertillery 1</b>	240.60	24.54	2.38	2.43	4.81	19.6%	2.59	2.43	5.02	20.4%	2.57	2.43	5.00	20.0%
<b>Abertillery 2</b>	25.69	25.38	2.55	0.41	2.96	11.7%	2.34	0.41	2.75	10.8%	2.28	0.41	2.69	10.8%
Abertillery 3	193.73	40.21	5.06	3.30	8.37	20.8%	4.48	3.30	7.78	19.4%	4.21	3.30	7.52	18.8%
<b>Cwmtillery 1</b>	107.66	59.68	5.81	17.36	23.17	38.8%	6.07	17.36	23.43	39.3%	6.09	17.36	23.45	39.1%
<b>Cwmtillery 2</b>	847.93	55.71	4.58	12.04	16.62	29.8%	4.42	12.04	16.46	29.5%	4.37	12.04	16.41	29.3%
<b>Cwmtillery 3</b>	32.34	31.94	2.39	2.85	5.23	16.4%	2.24	2.85	5.09	15.9%	2.22	2.85	5.07	15.8%
<b>Six Bells 1</b>	209.65	19.59	2.11	4.20	6.31	32.2%	1.94	4.20	6.15	31.4%	1.81	4.20	6.01	30.1%
Six Bells 2	216.35	35.24	2.71	8.66	11.37	32.3%	3.08	8.66	11.74	33.3%	2.69	8.65	11.35	32.4%
<b>Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina</b>														
<b>Blaina 1</b>	128.74	64.70	6.29	7.20	13.49	20.9%	10.17	7.20	17.37	26.8%	9.70	7.20	16.90	26.0%
<b>Blaina 2</b>	336.11	77.03	3.82	13.62	17.44	22.6%	7.81	13.62	21.43	27.8%	6.57	13.55	20.12	26.1%
<b>Blaina 3</b>	329.41	58.79	4.25	8.77	13.02	22.1%	8.18	8.77	16.95	28.8%	6.83	8.77	15.60	26.4%
Brynmawr 1	441.64	58.22	3.69	5.40	9.08	15.6%	7.34	5.40	12.74	21.9%	6.09	5.29	11.39	19.6%

Ward (LSOA) with WIMD (Cluster Area Ward highlighted)	Total Ward Area (ha)	Town Area in ward (ha)	Amenity Trees 2006 (ha)	NFI Cover 2011 (ha)	Total Cover TCWTC 1 (ha)	Total % Cover TCWTC 1	Amenity Trees 2009 (ha)	NFI Cover 2011 (ha)	Total Cover TCWTC 2 (ha)	Total % Cover TCWTC 2	Amenity Trees 2013 (ha)	NFI Cover 2014 (ha)	Total Cover TCWTC 3 (ha)	Total % Cover TCWTC 3
<b>Brynmawr 2</b>	55.24	32.91	1.86	0.00	1.86	5.7%	3.81	0.00	3.81	11.6%	3.16	0.00	3.16	9.6%
Brynmawr 3	49.33	47.17	3.24	2.88	6.12	13.0%	6.05	2.88	8.93	18.9%	5.53	2.88	8.41	17.9%
Brynmawr 4	36.11	32.60	1.31	0.00	1.31	4.0%	2.74	0.00	2.74	8.4%	2.03	0.00	2.03	6.1%
<b>Cwmtillery 1</b>	107.66	15.43	1.75	0.44	2.19	14.2%	3.04	0.44	3.48	22.6%	2.83	0.44	3.27	21.8%
<b>Nantyglo 1</b>	472.11	115.01	6.49	4.20	10.70	9.3%	13.13	4.20	17.34	15.1%	12.76	4.20	16.96	14.8%
<b>Nantyglo 2</b>	112.69	48.75	4.73	3.54	8.27	17.0%	8.39	3.54	11.93	24.5%	7.25	3.54	10.79	22.0%
<b>Nantyglo 3</b>	149.87	54.57	4.23	1.78	6.01	11.0%	6.65	1.78	8.43	15.4%	5.97	1.78	7.75	14.1%
<b>Ebbw Vale (&amp; Cwm)</b>														
Badminton 1	179.01	83.81	5.21	3.49	8.70	10.4%	10.05	3.49	13.54	16.2%	8.01	3.24	11.24	13.4%
Badminton 2	88.65	50.08	3.32	5.29	8.61	17.2%	5.94	5.29	11.23	22.4%	5.28	5.29	10.57	21.1%
Beaufort 1	120.00	45.41	1.53	3.89	5.42	11.9%	3.67	3.89	7.56	16.7%	3.00	3.68	6.68	14.8%
<b>Beaufort 2</b>	153.33	40.61	2.48	3.61	6.09	15.0%	4.83	3.61	8.45	20.8%	4.44	3.61	8.06	19.7%
Beaufort 3	70.56	36.96	3.06	1.67	4.73	12.8%	5.88	1.67	7.55	20.4%	4.82	1.59	6.40	17.3%
<b>Cwm 1</b>	215.11	43.30	4.05	9.28	13.33	30.8%	3.84	9.28	13.12	30.3%	3.54	9.18	12.71	29.6%
<b>Cwm 2</b>	510.16	20.56	0.89	0.04	0.93	4.5%	0.89	0.04	0.93	4.5%	0.75	0.04	0.79	3.8%
Cwm 3	253.33	78.75	4.99	23.16	28.15	35.7%	10.68	23.16	33.84	43.0%	8.70	23.27	31.97	40.5%
<b>Ebbw Vale North 1</b>	91.35	41.57	4.39	1.59	5.98	14.4%	5.95	1.59	7.54	18.1%	5.12	1.59	6.71	16.0%
<b>Ebbw Vale North 2</b>	101.60	49.07	2.08	3.50	5.59	11.4%	5.24	3.50	8.75	17.8%	4.04	3.94	7.98	16.3%
Ebbw Vale North 3	55.99	42.68	3.08	0.00	3.09	7.2%	4.91	0.00	4.92	11.5%	4.36	0.00	4.36	10.1%
<b>Ebbw Vale South 1</b>	72.08	37.20	2.62	0.68	3.30	8.9%	5.47	0.68	6.15	16.5%	4.17	0.68	4.85	13.1%
Ebbw Vale South 2	558.51	184.92	14.01	23.04	37.05	20.0%	20.62	23.04	43.66	23.6%	17.49	22.38	39.87	21.5%
<b>Ebbw Vale South 3</b>	30.73	30.73	2.93	0.88	3.81	12.4%	5.15	0.88	6.03	19.6%	4.06	0.88	4.94	15.9%
Rassau 1	423.48	177.30	9.30	20.51	29.80	16.8%	20.02	20.51	40.53	22.9%	16.45	22.28	38.73	21.9%
<b>Rassau 2</b>	58.73	58.73	3.35	5.70	9.05	15.4%	6.58	5.70	12.28	20.9%	5.84	5.70	11.53	19.5%
Ward (LSOA) with WIMD (Cluster Area Ward highlighted)	Total Ward	Town Area in	Amenity Trees	NFI Cover	Total Cover	Total % Cover	Amenity Trees	NFI Cover	Total Cover	Total % Cover	Amenity Trees	NFI Cover	Total Cover	Total % Cover

	Area (ha)	ward (ha)	2006 (ha)	2011 (ha)	TCWTC 1 (ha)	TCWTC 1	2009 (ha)	2011 (ha)	TCWTC 2 (ha)	TCWTC 2	2013 (ha)	2014 (ha)	TCWTC 3 (ha)	TCWTC 3
<b>Swffryd</b>														
Crumlin 4	494.27	12.86	1.87	0.42	2.29	17.8%	1.90	0.42	2.32	18.0%	1.91	0.42	2.33	17.9%
<b>Llanhilleth 1</b>	156.97	29.09	1.75	0.49	2.24	7.7%	1.84	0.49	2.33	8.0%	1.74	0.49	2.23	7.7%
<b>Tredegar</b>														
Badminton 1	179.01	8.42	0.19	2.97	3.16	37.5%	1.11	2.97	4.08	48.5%	1.05	2.97	4.02	50.3%
<b>Georgetown 1</b>	363.92	54.75	2.48	5.04	7.52	13.7%	6.89	5.04	11.94	21.8%	5.46	5.04	10.50	19.1%
Georgetown 2	44.53	32.94	2.01	0.46	2.47	7.5%	3.55	0.46	4.01	12.2%	2.65	0.46	3.11	9.4%
Sirhowy 1	118.67	79.49	4.73	4.43	9.16	11.5%	12.84	4.43	17.27	21.7%	9.57	4.43	14.01	17.7%
<b>Sirhowy 2</b>	42.56	32.82	0.41	2.90	3.31	10.1%	1.73	2.90	4.63	14.1%	1.31	2.90	4.20	12.7%
<b>Sirhowy 3</b>	1402.05	174.52	5.97	27.29	33.26	19.1%	17.17	27.29	44.46	25.5%	13.26	27.18	40.45	23.1%
Sirhowy 4	89.42	39.28	2.21	3.88	6.09	15.5%	5.07	3.88	8.95	22.8%	4.18	3.59	7.78	19.9%
Tredegar Central and West 1	729.43	80.97	3.91	5.52	9.43	11.7%	10.06	5.52	15.58	19.2%	7.70	5.52	13.22	16.3%
<b>Tredegar Central and West 2</b>	200.72	29.94	1.25	0.55	1.80	6.0%	2.74	0.55	3.29	11.0%	2.26	0.55	2.81	9.4%
<b>Tredegar Central and West 3</b>	96.97	42.51	1.31	0.60	1.91	4.5%	3.08	0.60	3.68	8.7%	2.39	0.60	2.99	7.0%
<b>Tredegar Central and West 4</b>	79.29	77.00	4.65	10.46	15.12	19.6%	8.62	10.46	19.09	24.8%	7.51	10.46	17.97	23.3%
<b>Twyn Carno 2</b>	1292.84	3.86	0.18	0.00	0.18	4.6%	0.30	0.00	0.30	7.8%	0.25	0.00	0.25	6.1%

Table 11: Ward by Ward (LSOAs) Canopy Cover



Alma Street, Abertillery

## 4.4 Summary: actionable findings

### Adopting a ward-level focus to identify priority communities for action

Blaenau Gwent's ward-level data (LSOAs) provides a useful insight into those areas most deficient in tree cover, especially if aligning with those urban areas that have been identified as priorities for town-scale strategic action in section 2.5.

1–570 WIMD wards have already been identified as having serious social, economic and environmental problems. The low levels of tree cover that exist in the majority of these needy communities also emphasise how poorly they are provided for, in terms of pleasant, leafy surroundings. These initial findings are particularly powerful in highlighting the case for action, once further detailed scoping for opportunities has been undertaken.

Regeneration schemes focusing on designated Community First cluster areas should integrate urban forestry improvement measures looking at both quantitative and qualitative enhancement ensuring:

- Amenity trees are present where people live, shop, work and play;
- Existing woodlands are designed and managed to bring value to local communities.

One of the avenues to explore includes reviewing existing regeneration grant funding to make sure quantitative and qualitative enhancement to the local tree resource are qualifying expenditures.

Natural Resources Wales' focus on supporting and targeting action in Communities First cluster areas should, through working with partners, enable a better spatial understanding of where the priority planting needs are. Where realistic opportunities exist, pilot projects need to be resourced, implemented and publicised as exemplar case studies.

*(As of October 2016 the Welsh Government has decided to bring the Communities First programme to an end – too recent to re-vamp the focus of the TCWTC study).*



*Ebbw Vale (including the steel works prior to the 'Works' regeneration): © Crown Copyright: RCAHMW*

## 5. Estimating the potential for tree planting - a pilot exercise for Tredegar

This section presents a desktop methodology that was piloted across a sample 27 urban areas across Wales, including Tredegar, to identify where new tree planting might be possible.

The approach and its findings are presented as follows:

5.1 Estimating the realm of the possible: the TCWTC method – Potential canopy cover (PCC)

5.2 Potential green areas for targeting tree planting – the Tredegar pilot

5.3 Summary: actionable findings



## 5.1 Estimating the realm of the possible: the TCWTC method

To enable tree strategies and canopy cover targets to be fully developed, national and local government not only need a clear picture of the existing resource but also an indication of what's potentially possible to achieve.

A number of cities in the United States have been particularly proactive, in conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, in underpinning urban tree management with canopy cover mapping, stocking level information and canopy cover targets. This is all part of a far more structured approach to urban forest management than exists in the UK. *Planning the Urban Forest* and *Sustaining America's Urban Trees and Forests* are two useful introductory publications by the American Planning Association and Forest Service respectively.

Over and above existing canopy cover data, many US cities now have information on land that is potentially 'plantable' and could form 'Potential Canopy Cover' (PCC). This often focuses on:

- Impervious areas, particularly streets, through assessments of 'stocking levels'; the number of street trees that can realistically be planted within a neighbourhood.
- Green space – based on land allocation and context.

The pilot assessment of tree planting potential, conducted as part of the TCWTC study, does not have the sophistication of American models. The datasets available to Natural Resources Wales confined this exercise to identifying 'green' land without existing canopy cover. It was not possible to identify potential 'grey/impervious' land, albeit these are often the locations in tough challenging urban environs where canopy cover is most needed.

Whilst not offering a holistic assessment of the realm of the possible, the method adopted below offers the advantage of highlighting potential 'easy wins': tree planting is typically less expensive in soft landscape environs than in hard landscapes. Trees are also likely to have better chance of survival and better fulfil their genetic potential (i.e. grow as big as they can) if they have access to large soil volumes.

Twenty-seven pilot towns were selected across Wales' 22 local and three national park planning authorities based on selecting a major county town per authority, e.g. Tredegar.

Three basic categories have been identified within the urban boundary:

- Existing cover (based on 2009 canopy cover survey & NFI woodland data);
- Grey, impervious and blue areas – i.e. buildings, roads, rail and water – which might provide opportunities for tree planting, particularly along streets or within civic spaces and parking lots, but which were not included within the scope of this study;
- Green areas that theoretically could be recruited for additional tree planting, and could help increase the overall local canopy cover – i.e. areas of bare soil, grass and beds of shrubs / young trees.

The aim, of this pilot exercise is to:

- Highlight green areas to investigate for potential new (and low-cost) tree planting within, a) each urban area, b) their constituent wards, and c) each land-use category on a ward-by-ward basis.
- Offer observations as to where the key opportunities to investigate lie, in particular where the study's findings are already making the case towards increasing canopy cover in certain towns and wards.

## 5.2 Potential green areas for targeting tree planting – the Tredegar pilot

Assuming that the existing tree cover level remains stable as new planting conducted in target green spaces achieves 100% coverage of all these areas, Table 12 above shows that canopy cover could potentially increase by 43% in Tredegar, resulting in an overall tree coverage as high as 64%. In reality, several constraints will reduce the actual potential for increase:

- Achieving a sustainable cover in the target green areas will take a significant amount of time. Maintaining tree cover levels in existing areas will require good planning and management, underpinned by a good understanding of required tree replacement rates (and capacity to implement the required replacements). The age pyramid and species distribution of the existing tree stock will have a strong influence on the timeframe within which this will be achievable.
- Achieving a 100% cover in the target green areas is unlikely to be suitable or desirable without compromising other highly valued benefits associated with green spaces e.g. playing fields, biodiversity sites with open habitats, allotments, etc. Ground-truthing and community engagement is required, to narrow down the identified wide range of potential green locations, to ear-mark realistic and suitable sites for planting, and to determine a consensual canopy cover target.

URBAN AREA	Urban Area (ha)	'Grey' Areas (ha)	Existing Cover* (ha)	'Green' areas for potential planting (ha)	2009 Cover* %	Potential cover increase** %	Existing* + Potential** Canopy Cover %
Tredegar	657	240	137	280	21	43	64

Table 12: The potential to increase canopy cover in Tredegar by assessing green space without trees.

\* Assuming existing tree cover remains stable overtime; \*\* Assuming 100% coverage is achieved in green areas targeted for planting

The figures presented in Table 12 confirm space is available to consider undertaking new planting. Together with the constraints and associated mitigation steps presented above, this suggests a methodology and starting point to begin defining approaches for increasing the local urban tree resource. What is encouraging is that those already identified as 'low cover' towns, especially Holyhead, Port Talbot and Rhyl, are all rich in green areas where increasing canopy cover might be possible.

### Potential Canopy Cover - Tredegar

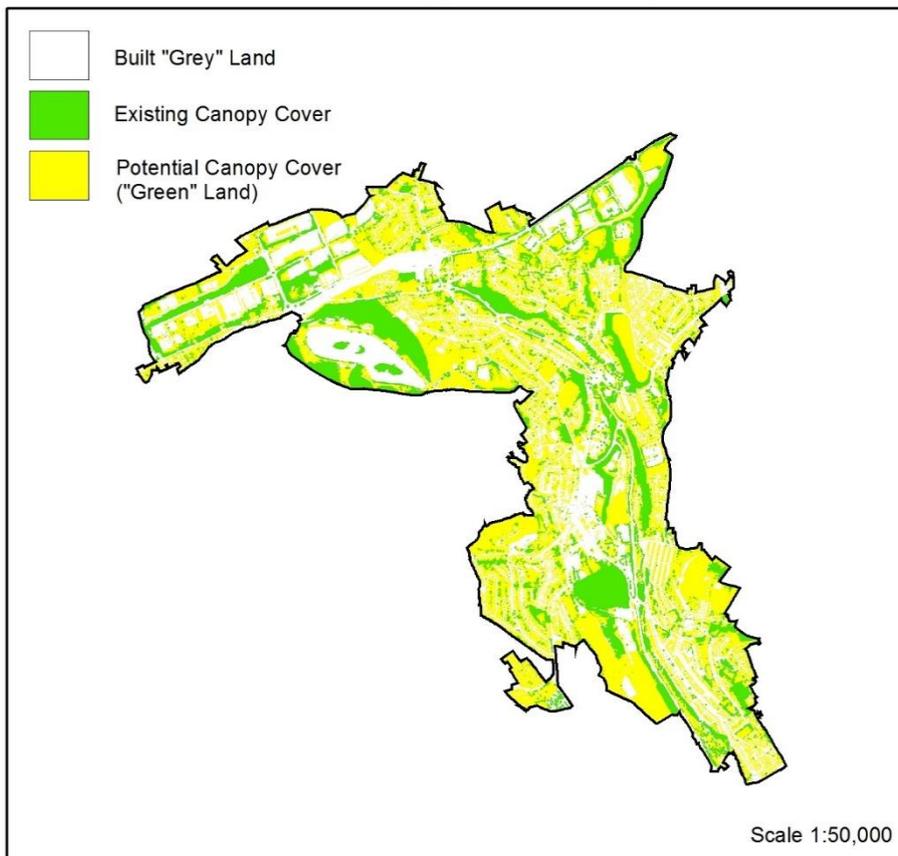


Figure 17: Tredegar's canopy cover and green areas with potential to explore new planting



Tredegar: © Crown Copyright: RCAHMW

### 5.3 Summary: actionable findings

#### All towns and wards offer scope for increasing planting and canopy cover

The pilot analysis of potential areas for tree planting has focused on what might be considered as ‘easy wins’: tree planting in green spaces has fewer constraints, and often lower upfront costs, than accommodating trees within hard landscapes.

Results have shown that large tracks of ‘green’ land – both public and private – seem to offer potential for tree planting. However, a detailed, on-the-ground appraisal is needed to enable decision makers to fully understand where planting is most achievable and desirable, so as to plan effectively for a more substantial and robust urban forest.

Consideration of this town assessment approach to potential canopy cover would benefit from:

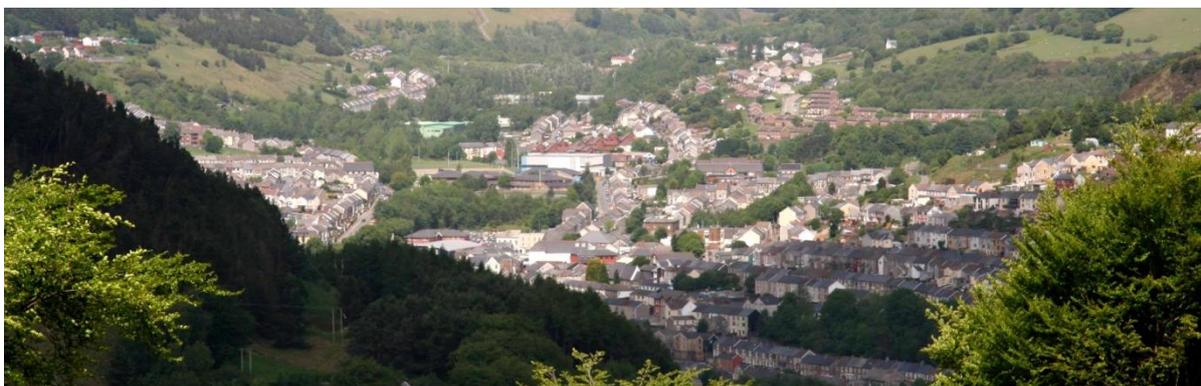
- Feedback from stakeholders, especially local authorities, as to the usefulness of this approach. Closer analysis of and comment on each county’s pilot town findings would be useful.
- An indication as to the merits of expanding the approach to other towns.
- Exploring methods to best identify and map potential ‘grey’ planting areas.

#### The importance of identifying land-use and available ‘green’ and ‘grey’ areas in understanding where it’s feasible to plant and set realistic canopy cover targets

The pilot conducted has also shown that in some of the densely populated and more challenging areas, focusing exclusively on green areas for spotting opportunity to increase tree cover was not enough. The approach to mapping potential areas for planting across both green and grey areas to the level of detail that US cities adopt, deserves to be investigated further and utilised as the way ahead for realistically developing tree strategies and setting urban canopy cover targets.

The next steps here would be to:

- Engage with pilot local authorities keen to take this approach to the next level of investigation;
- Select a pilot town or county, and work to build up comprehensive site-based data, enabling an approach to setting meaningful canopy cover targets.



Abertillery

## 6. Conclusion: disseminating, refining and updating the data

The 'Tree Cover in Wales' Towns and Cities – Blaenau Gwent study makes a significant contribution in pinpointing where and how much tree cover the county's towns possess. Making the most of these findings requires concerted efforts towards:

6.1 Disseminating the data

6.2 Improving and updating the dataset

6.3 Using the findings: sustaining and growing canopy cover



## 6.1 Disseminating the data

### Communicating the Blaenau Gwent County Borough's findings

The target audience is the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's policy and programme formulators, the chief executive and heads of department, politicians, professional practitioners and organisations working in both, the urban green space realm and, less advantaged communities.

Copies of this county report are available from: [urbantrees@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:urbantrees@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk) , to where queries on its content can be forwarded.

The national TCWTC report and summary can be accessed by visiting the urban trees page on NRW's website.

### Data sharing

The county and national reports are supplemented by:

- Visiting the County Local Evidence Packages from the Infobase Cymru website, to identify those towns assessed for their canopy cover.
- Accessing the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales Lle geo-portal website for the study datasets in GIS and tabular formats.

## 6.2 Improving and updating the dataset

### Gathering feedback

Comments on the usefulness and format of the data provided in the county report would be welcome via: [urbantrees@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:urbantrees@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk) .

Following the 2016 updated TCWTC study main report and summary, continued feedback on the methodology used, the findings and next steps will be sought from the target audiences.

This will aid Natural Resources Wales to further, a) refine the evidence gathering approach, b) build on where there are gaps in knowledge, and, c) work closer together to promote urban canopy cover

### Aerial photography

The next planned aerial photography capture for Wales is due in 2017. It would therefore be timely, if feasible, following the 2006, 2009 and 2013 aerial assessments, to carry out a Phase 4 survey in 2018-19. With a suite of aerials of the same resolution spanning eight years, the picture of change in canopy cover comparison will become that much more reliable.

Pre-2006 aerial photography is potentially available to test change over time for specific towns and areas of interest.

### The urban boundary

A review of the land-use rules, boundary checking and, in the light of any feedback, the urban areas as currently defined by Natural Resources Wales would be beneficial. Consideration should be given to aligning with the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's 'settlement boundaries'.

### Tree and canopy data

To provide more consistent canopy cover figures, the urban NFI components need to be analysed more closely, and where canopy diameter does not exceed 3.0 metres, these need to be omitted from the findings.

No ground-truthing has been done to date, e.g. does taking the median for each of the three tree size categories give a fair reflection of actual canopy cover?

There would be merit in separately identifying canopy cover for those 1.0–3.0 metre diameter trees - their contribution to those 'grey' areas in low cover wards, while not adding greatly to canopy cover, does have an important 'greening' impact.

What would be useful is to ascertain to what degree the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has, in recent years, invested heavily in planting which has yet to register as canopy cover, or has there been minimal or no programme of young recruitment planting.

Consider other tree and canopy data capture techniques, e.g. infrared hyperspectral imagery to identify tree height and species.

There is a case for adding additional layers of specific tree interest, partly related to canopy cover, e.g. tree preservation orders (TPOs), historic, ancient and veteran trees.

### **Public – private land ownership**

There would be value in identifying private and public tree cover in towns, i.e. where Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council could influence change greatest. Public land could be categorised further e.g. parks, street trees or educational, in the quest for more informed management and seeking out opportunities for planting. Identifying canopy cover and planting opportunities on land holdings, such as Registered Social Landlords, would appear in line with much of the WIMD and 'Communities First' cluster area focus this study has adopted.

### **Potential planting**

The planting opportunities pilot assessment for Tredegar deserve more investigation and validating on site. Case studies would help to raise the profile of this approach to setting canopy cover goals. Consider extending the approach to all towns along with refining the methodology, especially identifying potential paved 'grey' areas for trees when suitable datasets are available.

### **Cross-referencing datasets**

The cross mapping with WIMD has been revealing and it would be equally invaluable to do more research against datasets such as air quality, health, temperature, flood risk, property values, crime, wildlife connectivity and access to green-space. In terms of an ecosystem approach these would no doubt highlight particular urban areas that would benefit from additional canopy cover.

This study only identified trees and woodland within the built boundary. Urban fringe woodland is also important for potential recreational access and as a backdrop to life. An assessment of the degree of woodland beyond town boundaries would highlight communities lacking in trees on both counts, making their case for 'action on the ground' greater.

### **Valuing the benefits of tree cover**

In due course NRW, The Open University and Forest Research intend to upload this study's dataset onto the Treezilla 'Monster Map' site as point data. Over time Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, community groups and individuals can input species, girth, height, crown and ground surface information to those specific trees, which then generates values as to the benefits that tree provides society.

The 'Valuing Urban Trees in the Tawe Catchment' i-Tree Eco report (2015) included the city of Swansea along with towns lying within the Swansea Valley. Revealing an understanding of Tawe's urban forest structure, i-Tree Eco also crucially quantifies and values the ecosystem benefits urban trees provide. The report highlights the cost / benefit effectiveness of trees in contributing to tackling many of today's urban challenges from infrastructure provision to the health and well-being of communities.

### 6.3 Using the findings: sustaining and growing canopy cover

The TCWTC study provides Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council with a critical component of the evidence base they need to produce a tree and green infrastructure strategy that can be embedded in policy through guidance, development and related infrastructure plans. However, a tree strategy must be fully costed to realistically sustain and grow the urban forest. To this end Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council first need to know their tree resource. A major outcome from the strategy should be the setting of a local canopy cover goal, grounded in a good understanding of their existing tree resource – which the TCWTC data goes a long way in facilitating.

The TCWTC study provides the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and others with solid evidence of the state of the county's urban forest, both in terms of extent and distribution as well as of its evolution. This has highlighted some important issues regarding:

- Canopy cover loss: the TCWTC study show clear evidence that 8 urban areas have lost canopy cover between 2009 and 2013.
- Canopy cover discrepancies between towns and wards.
- Unfulfilled potential to better use land for increasing cover.
- The findings provide grounds to undertake a review on current legislation and guidelines as to their effectiveness on delivering ecosystem goals, e.g. TPOs and ensuring robust conditions are adhered to on development sites.

The TCWTC study provides local community champions and third sector organisations, such as local tree ambassadors and tree wardens, with an open source dataset to inform their work in taking local action to increase and care for canopy cover, as well as to spread the word about the value of trees to the wider public:

Public Service Boards have a crucial role to play in bringing together public, private and voluntary organisations to address issues where tree cover can offer solutions.

Active local campaigners groups such as GAG (Greener Aberystwyth Group) work tirelessly to raise tree and green space issues amongst fellow residents and work alongside Ceredigion Council. Their existence has been very much a contributory factor in securing the 2012-14, £375,000 funded, Coed Aber project.

Examining the neighbourhood tree approach, adopted successfully in many US cities and piloted over here in places such as Hackney, London and Bristol, there is potentially the appetite to engage more fully with residents in tree-planting and on-going maintenance projects.

31 / 10 / 2016

