

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>14 JULY 2025</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER (CAT) UPDATE</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>LOUISE CONNOLLY CAT OFFICER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>This report has no effect on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>This report provides an update on the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Programme, highlighting progress made. The programme has successfully supported community groups and local councils through the transfer of assets using both internal and external funding to maximise community benefit.</b></p> <p><b>These transfers have strengthened local ownership, empowered communities and helped protect valued facilities. The CAT Programme continues to play a key role in supporting local aspirations and delivering positive outcomes for residents across the borough.</b></p>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the committee of recent developments within the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Programme. The report outlines the significant progress achieved to date and identifies some of the challenges encountered throughout the programme.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 CAT Policy**

- 2.1.1 Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC's) current CAT programme was developed over a number of years following recognition dating back to 2014, of the deteriorating condition of BCBC sports and other facilities, due to budgetary pressures and resulting under-investment in assets. At the time a backlog of legacy repair needed in sports pavilions of circa £4 million had been identified.

- 2.1.2 CAT was recognised as a way forward to save facilities from closure and to prioritise needed investment in a manner that was aligned to long term savings.
- 2.1.3 The CAT Task & Finish Group chaired by the Deputy Leader recommended to Cabinet in a report approved on 23 July 2019 that the priority of assets for CAT should be refined so that savings under the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) could be prioritised accordingly:

Priority 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sports Pavilions</li><li>• Playing Fields (excluding school playing fields) and Bowling Greens</li><li>• Community Centres</li></ul>
Priority 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Playgrounds / Play Areas</li><li>• Free Car Parks</li><li>• Allotments</li></ul>
Priority 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Miscellaneous Assets</li></ul>

- 2.1.4 The Council's most recent CAT Policy was approved by Cabinet on 23 July 2019 and took account of the recommendations of the CAT Task & Finish Group.
- 2.1.5 The CAT Programme was subject to an internal audit in April 2025 and the programme achieved an outcome of "Substantial Assurance", which indicates that a sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
- 2.1.6 The internal audit identified two medium priority recommendations, as outlined below:
- a) The latest Welsh Government best practice guidance should be incorporated into the BCBC CAT Policy Document.
  - b) A formal monitoring framework should be developed for all assets that have been transferred to a third party.

## **2.2 Service Provision and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Savings**

- 2.2.1 The MTFS includes £300,000 savings attributed to the Green Spaces Section (more commonly known as the "Parks Department") identified in the 2019-2020 budget from community asset transfers.

## **2.3 CAT Funding History**

- 2.3.1 In 2014-15 Council approved capital funding of £1m to refurbish pavilions and support CATs.
- 2.3.2 The CAT Policy was revised in 2017 to include the following CAT Fund approval thresholds:
- Up to £50k – CAT Steering Group
  - Over £50k - Cabinet
- 2.3.3 In 2021, Cabinet approved new measures to support CAT:

- (1) Replenish the £1m CAT Capital Fund as required (and subject to the availability of finite capital resources)
- (2) Extend the CAT Revenue Fund via Earmarked Reserves, to include pitch and drainage surveys, equipment grants (up to £10k) and a one-off £5k grant for bowls clubs.

2.3.4 Earmarked Reserves were approved in 2020 to provide transitional support for bowls clubs (£50k) and pitch surveys (£25k).

2.3.5 The CAT capital fund was topped up by £500k in June 2022, a further £480k in July 2023 and £500k in November 2024, resulting in total capital allocated of £2.480 million since 2014-15. This is in addition to £495,488 of grant funding, outlined in paragraph 3.4 below.

## 2.4 CAT Resource Allocation

2.4.1 The Corporate Management Board (CMB) approved the following posts on 14 October 2020:

- CAT Officer (FT)
- CAT Assistant (PT)
- CAT Surveyor (FT)
- CAT Green Spaces Assistant (FT)

2.4.2 These posts were identified as essential to ensure the progression of multiple CATs and to achieve the financial savings under the MTFS.

## 3. Current situation / proposal

### 3.1 Overall CAT Activity

3.1.1 A total of 50 self-management agreements (leases, tenancies at will and licenses) have been finalised under the CAT programme to date. These have allowed specific assets to be managed on a day-to-day basis and enhanced to ensure they are safeguarded for the benefit of future generations by community groups (see List of Completed CATs at **Appendix A**).

3.1.2 The majority of community groups, particularly sports clubs, are actively engaging with the CAT process and a further 58 enquiries and transfers are in progress.

3.1.3 The current CAT activity levels as of 24 June 2025 are summarised below:

Category	Lease Type	Playing Fields & Pavilions	Other Asset Groups
Completed CAT Transfers	Long Leases	19	5
Completed CAT Transfers	Freehold	0	1
Interim CAT Agreements	Short Term Leases	15	2

Interim CAT Agreements	Licence to Occupy/Tenancy at Will Etc.	7	1
CAT Transfers In Progress	Freehold	0	1
CAT Transfers Approved & In Progress	New	18	1
CAT Transfers Approved & In Progress	Conversion to full lease (from an interim agreement)	14	2
CAT Formal EOIs Received	Awaiting Approval	4	2
CAT Informal EOIs Received	Discussions Ongoing	13	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>90</b>	<b>18</b>

- 3.1.4 It should be noted that the performance indicators for the CAT Programme were updated for the 2025-26 financial year, to include the conversion of short-term leases to longer term leases, as these require ongoing involvement of the CAT Officer to secure a long term transfer with significant support provided to assist groups with their future plans and to ensure the sustainability of the groups and secure the future of the asset for the benefit of future wellbeing.
- 3.1.5 Two brief case studies of completed CATs in respect of Bryncethin RFC and Rest Bay Sports that outline the refurbishment of facilities, local re-generation and benefits to the wider community has been included at **Appendix B** for illustrative purposes.

### 3.2 CAT Funding Status

- 3.2.1 Cabinet and the CAT Steering Group has to date expended funding totalling £1,435,632.70 from the £2.48 million CAT Capital Fund and committed further funding of £492,211.36 reducing the current available CAT Capital Fund balance to £552,155.94.
- 3.2.2 It is recognised that there are limited funds and competing demands for the authority's capital programme. The risks associated with not investing further in the CAT capital fund are highlighted below:
- Future savings to offset general increased costs in the Parks department and / or creation of future MTFS savings will not be possible.
  - Clubs and organisations who have had their expectations raised regarding CAT and are fully expecting the much-needed investment in facilities, would be let down.
  - Facilities will gradually close as conditions deteriorate to beyond which they can safely be provided for public use.
  - Clubs and organisations who have already undertaken CAT transfer responsibilities, would question why they are continuing to carry the additional cost of running facilities whilst others do not, leading to a potential hand back of facilities and additional budget pressures.

### 3.3 CAT Resourcing – Staffing

- 3.3.1 As outlined in paragraph 2.4.1, 4 new posts in relation to CAT were approved in October 2020.

3.3.2 The requirements of the CAT Programme have been reviewed and it has been noted that the following support is required to move the programme forward in an efficient manner:

- CAT Officer
- Town and Community Council Liaison Officer
- CAT Green Spaces Assistant
- Temporary Locum Lawyer
- CAT Surveyor

3.3.3 The position of CAT Officer and CAT Green Spaces Assistant are funded via a recurring core budget on an ongoing basis.

3.3.4 A recruitment exercise for the position of Town and Community Council Liaison Officer on a two-year basis is currently underway, funded from an earmarked reserve.

3.3.5 It has been identified that there is sufficient revenue funding available via the CAT EMR to appoint a locum lawyer on a temporary basis, to enable the outstanding leases and legal issues to be addressed, in order to move the programme forward.

### **3.4 External Funding Opportunities**

3.4.1 The development of assets that are in a poor condition that may attract inward investment from external sources not readily available to the Council is also a consideration of the CAT Programme, as this additional funding can help ensure that assets can be safeguarded for future generations.

3.4.2 The previous and current CAT Officers have continued to work with external organisations and other teams/colleagues within the Council to achieve the maximum benefits possible for the groups involved in CATs as well as the wider community as outlined below.

#### **3.4.3 Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) – Park Tennis Courts**

The LTA and BCBC worked in partnership to enable 9 tennis courts to be refurbished or built across the County Borough at an estimated cost of £519,469 with funding of £328,238 allocated by the LTA and balance of funding provided under the Council's CAT Fund.

Work on the tennis courts at Heol-y-Cyw, Caedu Park and Maesteg Welfare Park was completed in September / October 2023, and the new tennis courts at Griffin Park completed in June 2024.

#### **3.4.4 Sports Wales Court Collaboration Project**

In January 2024, five Expressions of interest were submitted to Sports Wales under the Court Collaboration scheme which seeks to refurbish existing facilities such as tennis and basketball courts that are in a poor condition. Two projects were subsequently approved for Maesteg Welfare Park (former tennis courts) and Caedu Park (former basketball court). Total funding of £167,250 was allocated by Sports Wales for these projects estimated to cost £223,000 with a contribution of 25% being

provided by BCBC. These two projects have been progressed and currently under construction.

Further opportunities have also been identified for the 2026-27 funding round and will be progressed in line with the funder's schedule.

### 3.4.5 Bryntirion Comprehensive School Project

The CAT Officer had worked with the Corporate Director for Education, Early Years & Young People, the Manager (sustainable communities for learning) and the members of the School Modernisation Board to prepare funding applications to the Cymru Football Foundation and Sport Wales for the replacement of an existing artificial pitch at Bryntirion Comprehensive School which was deemed as end of life. If successful, the project will bring £560,000 of external capital funding into the authority and encompass a new pitch and floodlights for the school, with booking available for clubs in the community via a system managed by the school.

### 3.4.6 Shared Prosperity Fund Projects

The CAT Officer has worked closely with the Resilient Communities, Regeneration and Porthcawl Regeneration teams to identify opportunities for both BCBC and the community groups/Town and Community Councils to benefit from. Some of the projects explored and commissioned by BCBC directly are outlined in the table below:

Project	Project Outline	Value
<b>Aberfields All-Weather Pitch</b>	Proposals for an all-weather pitch at Aberfields (the Planka) via the Community Feasibility Fund.	£20,000
<b>Bridgend Energy Efficiency Surveys</b>	Energy Efficiency Surveys (EES) for 40 community centres and sports pavilions.	£40,000
<b>Sports and Community Facilities Improvement Project</b>	The commissioning of the Sports and Community Facilities Improvement Project enabled building condition surveys, suitability assessments and action plans to be produced in relation to 15 locations across the borough.	£40,000
<b>Newbridge North Project</b>	An application was made to the community feasibility fund for feasibility study to consider a potential dual use pavilion, café and toilets & usage of a disused bowls green in the North area of Newbridge fields.	£35,000
<b>Military Hub Design &amp; Feasibility</b>	An EOI was approved by the Grant Approval Panel for the consideration of a replacement facility for the Sea Cadets, Army Cadets and Air Cadets in Porthcawl.	£18,500

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

- 5.1 The activity of the CAT Programme assists in the achievement of the following corporate wellbeing objectives both directly and indirectly:
- **A Prosperous Place with thriving communities** – Protecting our landscapes and open spaces and providing opportunities for culture, leisure and play.
  - **Creating modern, seamless public services** – Improving how we engage with people, listening to views, acting on them, modernising, and becoming a more efficient council, as well as improving partnership working with partners, the third sector and Town and Community Councils.
- 5.2 The activity of the CAT Programme assists in the achievement of the following Well-Being of future Generations (Wales) Act objectives, both directly and indirectly:
- A prosperous Wales
  - A healthier Wales
  - A more equal Wales
  - Cohesive communities
- 5.3 It should be noted that the CAT Programme also aligns with multiple objectives under the following policies and procedures:
- The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-Being Plan (2023 -2028)
  - Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 - Play Sufficiency Duty
  - Climate Change Response Programme

#### **6. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 6.1 The CAT programme enables the community to take ownership of their facilities, including existing buildings that may be performing poorly (in terms of both thermally poor building fabric and inefficient plant and machinery) to be refurbished or replaced with new solutions incorporating energy-smart designs and space efficient building. The programme will ultimately be of benefit to the climate change agenda by saving energy and reducing the carbon footprint.
- 6.2 There is also potential to carry out additional, renewable energy, works to pavilions in conjunction with the community groups involved in the transfers, both utilising their own expertise and that of external specialists (such as Ynni Cymru and EGIN).

- 6.3 All CATs are subject to consideration by the Countryside Manager and where the presence of bats or other wildlife is identified, suitable assessments and surveys are undertaken to ensure controls are put in place to protect the ecology of the green space areas involved.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

- 7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications arising from this report.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 Cabinet and the CAT Steering Group has to date expended funding totalling £1,435,632.70 from the £2.48 million CAT Capital Fund and committed further funding of £492,211.36 reducing the current available CAT Capital Fund balance to £552,155.94.
- 8.2 Based on anticipated funding applications of £921,650, demand on the CAT capital budget could exceed the available funding by £369,494. Consequently, unless further funding is awarded, some CATs may not be able to be progressed.

## **9. Recommendations**

- 9.1 Members of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:-
- Note the content of this report relating to the progress being made by the CAT Programme and provide comments on the work undertaken to date and the way forward outlined herein.
  - Note that the leveraging of external funding to progress with projects both independently of the community groups and in partnership should be continued.

## **Background documents**

None