

Strategy

Assets & Sustainability

Investing in our homes.
Sustaining our future.



Asset and Sustainability Strategy 2025 -2030

Context

Valleys to Coast is the largest single social landlord within Bridgend County Borough, owning and managing over 6,000 homes and commercial assets.

Poverty, disability and poor health are experienced in high levels for all areas and the majority white, Christian nature of the communities leaves diverse individuals isolated and under catered. This strategy will allow for the different wants and needs in homes and communities to be accommodated.

The majority of Valleys to Coast's homes are terraced, flats and maisonettes built between 1945 – 1980 resulting in an ageing stock profile. Around 1,000 homes were built using non-traditional construction techniques i.e. not brick or stone.

Consequently, a large proportion of stock is expensive to maintain and difficult to bring to modern day standards.

Within the business there is a good understanding of stock condition and relative asset performance. However, little of this information is used to drive decision making in the day to day operations of the organisation and the business lacks the ability to turn data and information into intelligence.

Externally, there is a phase of rapid change within the sector and the economic environment. Volatile macro economics are adversely impacting costs for both Valleys to Coast and its supply chain.

The increasing standards around the Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023, Health and Safety regulation and ambitious plans to improve the energy efficiency of our homes is driving the need for Valleys to Coast to do things differently.

Our ambition

In order to manage its challenges, Valleys to Coast will need to diversify its business and look for different models of delivery, it will need to become more efficient through:

- a reduction in failure demand
- better use of data to target resources
- more effective financial controls and oversight
- better use of technology
- better use of partnerships and shared services and
- a laser focus on what the customer wants.

This strategy will help move the business into smarter decision making and realising the efficiencies and increased satisfaction of data driven services.

Our approach

Valleys to Coast will improve its homes and communities to create places that are desirable, where people are proud to live. It will take a holistic approach to its homes and communities, ensuring the customer voice and robust use of data will lead all decision making. The approach will encompass all assets including green and grey spaces, commercial properties and future land opportunities.

It will take an uncompromising approach to safety and quality of service for customers ensuring all homes are safe, warm and dry. It will make the most of the money it spends through using data and the customer voice to target maintenance spend, deliver great procurement and contract management.

Responsive repairs are expensive for Valleys to Coast and disruptive to customers. We will move the business towards data led planned maintenance and component replacement programmes, achieved through proactive and whole home approaches, issue mapping, and a regeneration mind set. The benefits of the group structures will be maximised and the foundations laid for large scale regeneration through development, refurbishment, disposals and strategic partnerships.

This strategy will help deliver for a better Bridgend and a better Wales through socially responsible business practices that support the foundational economy as well as delivering good value for customers.

Our priorities

There are many cross cutting themes through the strategy however, for the sake of clarity, the vision will be achieved with the following five priorities:

- Using the voice of the customer to shape services.
- High quality safe warm and dry homes
- Improving the quality and use of data
- Investing wisely to provide 'future-ready' homes.
- Working towards carbon neutral homes.

Specific outcomes and deliverables will adapt as we grow.



01: Using the voice of the customer to shape services
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"The voice of the customer will be at the centre of shaping our services to truly reflect what matters most to our communities and to accommodate individual needs."
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In this way we can ensure all customers feel connected to Valleys to Coast and have a real say in what happens locally.

Customer consultation will be undertaken to identify customers' local priorities. This will help shape services and develop investment plans that truly reflect local views and priorities. The review of what customers want from their homes and communities will be undertaken through a variety of methods to ensure a diversity of customer voice is heard. The consultation will include what and how the services are delivered covering areas such as service standards, experience, convenience of and access to services.

Complaints and customer feedback are a real opportunity to learn and improve services. This strategy will try to reduce the number of upheld and repeated complaints arising but when things go wrong, complaints will be managed well and critically, the learning captured to improve for the future.

Communication will be open, honest and respectful and will include details about works, plans for homes and any changes to those plans.

- We are committed to:
- Conducting a review of what customers want from our services and shaping our services
 - Undertaking an extensive customer consultation to better understand customers' priorities and using this to shape services to local priorities and different needs
 - Improving our digital offer providing choice and making it easier for customers to contact us and access the services they need when they want
 - Improving satisfaction with our services, safety and repair of homes, how well we listen and keep customers informed
 - We want to work towards minimising upheld/repeat complaints and use the complaints we have to improve services
 - Communicating effectively with customers in an open, honest and respectful way and providing useful information and updated on the things that matter to them

What success looks like:

- Increased customer satisfaction
- Local representation and engagement on specific projects
- Customer approved standards and scrutiny of services
- Reduced upheld/ repeat complaints



02: High quality safe warm and dry homes
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"This strategy will move Valleys to Coast from a reactive component led maintenance program to a more holistic approach."
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It will deliver high quality, safe, warm and dry homes by using whole homes surveys, manifest issues with similar homes and geographical location. Up to date data trends and eventually real time data will be used to ensure we are achieving the right quality standards. Through the use of the diverse customer voice the standards set for our homes and our services will be inclusive and meet people's diverse needs.

This will allow both visible issues to be resolved along with underlying issues yet to be diagnosed. This will provide efficiency savings of programmes being in one place, limit disruptions for customers and make a visible and impactful difference with our spend. Through this approach the business will move from a reactive to a planned service that can predict issues before they become problems.

This means there may be works in some areas that are undertaken later than planned to make space for this new programme. Communication will be made with customers to manage expectations and essential works to keep homes safe, warm and dry will continue to be undertaken.

The focus of this holistic approach will be on the fabric of the building ensuring homes are safe water tight and easier to heat.

Valleys to Coast will ensure there is a robust approach to meeting all building safety, legal and regulatory compliance requirements so customers feel safe in their home. We will do this by having robust policies in places in areas such as gas, electrical and fire safety in addition to disrepair, damp and mould issues.

These will be underpinned by a robust performance management and assurance framework to ensure we deliver. Information will be shared with customers, so they know how we are performing. A plan to promote and embed a positive safety culture across Valleys to Coast will be developed. This means all colleagues and contractor partners proactively identify any safety issues, the presence of hazards and any problems with the general condition of homes' and neighbourhoods.

Through the five years of this strategy an optimised balance of delivery through contractors and the group structure will be developed. Good procurement and contractor management will underpin this approach to quality and Value for Money.

We will review the empty homes and cyclical maintenance programmes to ensure that they are data driven, value for money and have the customer at the heart of services.

We are committed to:

- **Investing sufficient resources in a timely manner** to ensure all homes are demonstrably safe and as a minimum meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023
- **Using data and business intelligence to shape services** and prevent avoidable problems arising
- **Developing plans to increase the proportion of investment** delivered in a planned rather than reactive way
- **Exploring the potential** to increase the level of delivery through Llanw
- **Ensuring we have the structures and skills to:** effectively manage our projects, contracts, and external contractor procurement
- **Strengthening our approach** to diagnosing and prioritising repairs

- **Undertaking a fundamental review** of the voids service
- **Putting in place robust cyclical maintenance programmes**
- **Embed a robust approach** to meeting all building safety, legal and regulatory compliance requirements and continuing to embed a positive safety culture across Valleys to Coast

What success looks like:

- Reduction in void costs and time
- 100% compliance
- Reduction in Disrepair and Damp and mould cases
- Contractors meeting KPI monitoring



03: Improve the quality and use of data

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"Valleys to Coast is committed to collecting and using robust data about assets to drive our decision-making and ensuring Value for Money investments in our homes."
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Investing in technology will enable homes to be digitally connected providing real time data, this will allow Valleys to Coast to take advantage of predictive and remote forms of property maintenance. The ultimate aim of using this technology is to positively impact issues such as damp and mould, condensation, energy efficiency and planned component replacements.

However this investment will need to be supported by the upskilling of colleagues and customers to ensure this technology is embraced and used to its maximum effect. Continuing to invest in our systems, processes and ways of working will ensure our colleagues have the knowledge and skills to produce the information and business intelligence to drive evidence-based asset management decisions.

All colleagues will understand that data quality is part of the day job and is everyone's responsibility, and a one version of the truth approach to business data and information will be developed.

A whole stock assessment will be undertaken to ensure we continue to hold accurate, up-to-date and robust data on the condition and energy performance. Our understanding of relative asset performance will be refreshed and we will use this to make evidence-based decisions on future investment.

Data led decision making will include customer data as details on vulnerabilities, socioeconomic status and diversity will

impact the requirements of homes and communities.

Benchmarking is important in demonstrating that our services represent good value for money. Benchmarking will be used to develop a comprehensive understanding of how our costs and performance compare and we will use this to identify opportunities to drive continuous improvement.

We are committed to:

- **Ensuring all colleagues understand that data quality is everyone's responsibility** & relevant colleagues have the specialist knowledge and skills needed
- **Develop data quality policies and procedures** for producing performance information for decision-makers
- **Improving the quality and use of data** to inform how we shape services and proactively prevent problems
- **Undertaking a whole stock assessment every 5 years** to each of our homes and taking every opportunity to keep condition and energy performance data up-to-date
- **Using benchmarking to understand how costs and performance compare** and identifying opportunities for continuous improvement

What success looks like:

- Delivery and maintaining of a home grading process that is beyond component information
- Capture live performance data on high priority and poorly performing properties
- Create within the organisations structure where data is collected and utilised cross cutting across Valleys to Coast departments

04: Investing wisely to provide 'future ready homes'

"A holistic view of investment will be taken targeting homes and places to maximise impact and enhance future sustainability."

The aim is to ensure our homes are desirable and meet customer's future needs, but all investment has an opportunity cost – when money is spent on one thing it is not spent somewhere else.

Valleys to Coast will develop longer-term investment plans that integrate all investment in homes and places. This includes all decarbonisation works. In this way impact will be maximised by ensuring all investment is co-ordinated and complementary, even if it takes place at different times.

Decision-making on future investment will be driven by robust data on our stock and its relative asset performance. Options appraisals on poor quality or poorly performing homes will be undertaken to explore the available courses of action.

The aim will be to improve performance and considerations will include remodelling, redevelopment, disposal or estate-based interventions.

A longer-term development and regeneration plan will be developed. Opportunities will be sought to develop new homes and regenerate areas through active management of our existing assets to enable high quality homes and places that are fit for future generations. Accommodating the diverse needs of current and future customers will promote inclusive communities of the future.

Valleys to Coast play an important role as placemakers, this requires us to work effectively with a range of partners and to engage with our local communities. Strong partnerships will be built with the aim of maximising the impact of our shared resources including external funding across the whole of Bridgend. All partners' roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined and all investment and activities coordinated. The customer voice will be key to ensuring this approach delivers what matters most to communities.

Integral to improving the quality of our neighbourhoods include improving the usability of local green and grey spaces open for amenity or biodiversity value or other wider community benefits. Opportunities will be actively sought to create additional funding in this area.

In addition, where identified as a local priority we will work with partners to explore how we can better connect neighbourhoods to health, wellbeing, social and employment opportunities. This could include improvements to the transport infrastructure, digital connectivity, shops or community facilities.

Homes that are adaptable and accessible can support customers to remain living safely and independently for longer and reduce demands on other services, where possible adaptations will be undertaken quickly. Clear processes and policies will keep people informed with good information and advice.

We will make best use of our resources by maintaining an up-to-date property register. We will re-let adapted homes to households with similar needs or recycle equipment where possible.

Investment in our commercial portfolio will also be undertaken, maximising return on investment in both a commercial and social perspective.

We are committed to:

- **Taking a holistic approach by Integrating all investment** (including decarbonisation works) in homes and places
- **Using robust data on our stock** and relative asset performance to drive decision-making
- **Maximising opportunities to develop new homes** and regenerate areas through active management of our existing assets
- **Conducting option appraisals** on poor quality or poorly performing homes
- **Developing a longer-term development and regeneration plan**
- **Working with customers and partners** to improve the quality of our neighbourhoods
- **Meeting customers identified needs** for adaptations where possible

What success looks like:

- Improved customer satisfaction with the home
- Create an investment programme that maintains our homes prior to component failure.
- Publicise progress of regeneration plans
- Map and grade green and grey grey spaces
- Quantify and grade our commercial assets

05: Working towards carbon neutral homes

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"Over the next five years there will be an improvement in sustainability performance and a reduction in the carbon footprint."

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The drive to net zero has been laid out in the Welsh Government's Net Zero Wales plan and the integration of targets within WHQS2023. Welsh Government has set a target for all social housing to have an EPC rating of C by 31 March, 2030. At present, 50% of Valleys to Coast homes are rated C, with 11% rated B; 11% D; 1% A and 0.5% E.

The immediate priority will be a combination of targeted deliverable projects and works to the worst performing properties while ensuring all significant investment represents good value for money. For homes where the costs are identified as prohibitive, we will undertake option appraisals to identify the best future option.

Valleys to Coast will develop a decarbonisation roadmap setting out our investment priorities for retrofit, energy efficient external works, future heating provision and the use of new renewable technologies for different property types. All future investment plans will integrate decarbonisation works into wider investment plans, aligning component replacement programmes wherever possible to help reduce costs and minimise disruption.

Our investment approach will be flexible, enabling us to take advantage of any funding or partnering opportunities.

Undertaking a Whole Stock Assessment is a prerequisite to the development of Target Energy Pathways (TEPs) to effectively plan we will need to consider data, software and analytical skills. We will continue to hold accurate, up-to-date and robust data on the condition and energy performance of our stock. More detailed energy data will be required and new technical and data management knowledge and skills across the organisation will need to be developed. The demand on contractors in this area will increase so work will need to be undertaken to secure local skills and train and develop our own staff.

Again customers are integral to the development of our plans but also in the use of new technologies in our homes. Customers will be involved in piloting and promoting the success of retrofit and new renewable technologies and approaches for example, heating and renewables as part of our decarbonisation work.

We will commit to exploring novel and new approaches working with Universities, delivery partners and key stakeholders to identify tested deliverable solutions. We will listen and follow at pace new approaches working towards decarbonisation.

We are committed to:

- Undertaking a Whole Stock Assessment every five years to keep condition and energy performance data up-to-date (applying good data quality processes)
- Ensuring our investment and financial plans reflect the costs of decarbonisation and organisations ambitions
- Planning for and investing in a new team to lead our retrofit and decarbonisation programme
- Embedding new retrofit technical and data management skills across the organisation
- Exploring the potential to upskill and increase in-house capacity through Llanw to though local supply chains

- Working with customers to co-produce plans for a carbon neutral future
- Have on the shelf projects that can be mobilised quickly in response to grant availability

What success looks like:

- Map of homes that can have improved efficiency to inform our future investment programme
- Measure our stock condition data
- Set targets which deliver both value for money for the organisation and tangible improvements for our customer

