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**Friends of
the Earth**

Briefing

Green Jobs in the Heads of the Valleys

Friends of the Earth carried out research in December 2010 as an initial scoping of the potential for green jobs in Merthyr Tydfil and the Heads of the Valleys area of south Wales. It is based simply on two types of action for which there is already a good deal of practical experience to draw on, which gives us a robust basis for projecting how much local employment could be generated if these projects were strongly developed in the area.

Our research shows that there is an impressive potential for the development of Green Jobs in the Heads of the Valleys, with upwards of 3000 new jobs to be gained.

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SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The two programmes of action we examined for their Green Jobs potential are:

Recycling/reprocessing of waste

Much of our current “waste” stream represents an untapped resource. Rising prices of raw materials and energy to produce new goods make it ever more desirable that we should put this to good use. Increasing recycling rates offers an excellent economic opportunity as Friends of the Earth’s recent report “More Jobs, Less Waste”ⁱ shows. This research drew on the past decade’s experience of recycling to arrive at a projection of how many new jobs could be generated by increasing the rates of domestic and commercial and industrial recycling to 70%. This level of recycling is the target set last year by the Welsh Assembly Government and became a statutory target for 2025 in the Wales Waste Measure 2010. The present research is the first to apply the methodology to a smaller area, and measure the new jobs that could be brought to the Heads of the Valleys through a determined effort to boost recycling.

Home energy efficiency and renewables

A similar opportunity exists to create jobs through a programme of action to bring our energy-wasting housing stock up to standard. As part of our Get Serious About CO₂ campaign Friends of the Earth commissioned case studies from three very different local authority areas to see what package of energy efficiency and small scale renewable measures could deliver cuts of 40% in CO₂ emissions from those areas by 2020. Again we drew on the real life experience of small firms installing home insulation, solar panels and the like to calculate how many jobs such a programme could generateⁱⁱ. In this report we apply this methodology to the five local authorities in the Heads of the Valleys to show the jobs potential from energy saving in homes.

WHAT ARE GREEN JOBS?

In recent years the twin challenges of recession and of greatly reducing carbon emissions and the wider environmental impacts of economic activity have led to much interest across Europe and North America in “Green Jobs”. Broadly these are jobs in manufacturing, services, utilities and land-based industries that contribute to the transformation of the economy and greatly enhanced eco-efficiency. The Green Jobs movement also emphasises the quality of work that should be offered by this economic transformation. Green Jobs should be accessible to people with a wide range of skills, of good quality and provide workers in green industries with opportunities to develop new skills and careers.

FINDINGS

The overall results of the projections are impressive, showing that these two programmes of work have the potential to support upwards of 3,000 full time jobs over the next 10-15 years in the Heads of the Valleys, broken down as follows:

	70% recycling of household waste (based on data for waste in each local authority area)	70% recycling of commercial and industrial waste (population based estimate)	Home energy efficiency and renewables – lower estimate for urban settings	Home energy efficiency and renewables – higher estimate for rural settings
Caerphilly	160		622	746
Blaenau Gwent	54		150	180
Merthyr Tydfil	51		103	123
Rhondda	180		522	626
Torfaen	83		186	223
HEADS OF THE VALLEYS TOTALS	528	747	1583	1900
	Recycling Combined = 1275			
	Home energy measures: range from 1583 to 1900			
	Recycling plus home energy measures: range from 2858 to 3175			

WHY MERTHYR AND THE HEADS OF THE VALLEYS?

Green Jobs have particular potential to be a platform for economic recovery in areas that are suffering from long term structural decline in their employment base - so long as they are properly supported. We decided to focus on the area around Merthyr Tydfil because it is just such an area. It suffers from some of the highest levels of unemployment in Britain and persistent problems of low educational attainment and poor health as well as other symptoms of deprivation. It is also however an area where such problems are recognised and where funding and support can be targeted.

One of the problems such areas may also face is that they become a magnet for industries that would be more strongly resisted elsewhere. In recent years on land directly above the town and closely adjacent to housing, Merthyr has seen the development of a landfill site and the UK's largest opencast coal operation. The same area is now being targeted by US utility giant Covanta, who propose to build there an incinerator of 750,000 tonnes capacityⁱⁱⁱ. This is larger than would be required to take all the residual waste in Wales and as big as any currently operating in the UK. Incinerators are generally unwelcome neighbours on account of the traffic, pollution and ash that they generate, and are poor providers of jobs. Covanta themselves claim only 65 permanent jobs would be provided by their facility.

We believe that Merthyr deserves better, and can do better. This is why we chose to look more closely into the potential of the area to support a different approach to waste processing, one that would conserve resources instead of destroying them, and provide more beneficial local work in the process. Last Autumn Iain Duncan-Smith stirred up controversy by suggesting that unemployed people in Merthyr Tydfil needed to "get on a bus" to find work elsewhere^{iv}. In our view there is untapped potential in the resources and energy that are wasted every day in Merthyr itself and solutions closer to home can be developed.

Merthyr shares many of its problems, and a significant part of its economic activity, with the wider grouping of five local authorities that collectively make up the Heads of the Valleys. To look at the potential for waste processing, especially commercial and industrial waste, on the basis of just one local authority area may give a misleading impression. Indeed some figures are not available broken down to this local scale, as is explained more fully in the technical appendix. This is why we have applied our methodology to the Heads of the Valleys as a whole rather than just Merthyr. We do not think that this makes our comparison with Covanta's projected 65 jobs unfair. On the contrary, Covanta's proposed incinerator would suck in resources from the whole of Wales and beyond, so it jeopardizes jobs from a far wider area than the Heads of the Valleys alone.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Our research has shown that there is an impressive potential for the development of Green Jobs in the Heads of the Valleys, with upwards of 3000 new jobs to be gained. We are not the first to have reached such a conclusion and an ambitious Heads of the Valleys Low Carbon Programme is already underway. Our aim in publishing this research is to add impetus to the debate around the future of waste management in the area and to stimulate further activity on Green Jobs.

We have examined only two strands of potential green jobs because we have a methodology that allows us to assess the scale of activity that is needed and the results in job terms. There are many others we have not looked at, such as the deployment of renewable energy and combined heat and power on the medium or large scale.

To move from paper-based projections such as ours to real jobs and a sound long-term future for green skills and a resource-efficient economy in the area is a journey of many steps. Issues such as sustainable funding, business support and skills development are of paramount importance. **Friends of the Earth stands ready to assist and we are proposing a Green Jobs Roundtable for the Merthyr Tydfil area as a next step.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Any errors in this briefing are the responsibility of the author, Mike Birkin.

REFERENCES

The full research and methodology are available from Friends of the Earth

ⁱ "More Jobs Less Waste", Friends of the Earth, September 2010.
http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/jobs_recycling.pdf

ⁱⁱ Job creation from local action on climate, Friends of the Earth, December 2009
http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/job_creation_carbon_descent.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ This project is one of the first to come before the newly created Infrastructure Planning Commission
<http://infrastructure.independent.gov.uk/projects/wales/merthyr-tydfil-energy-from-waste-power-station/>

^{iv} Iain Duncan Smith tells Merthyr jobless to 'get on bus', 22 October 2010
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-11605318>