25 years: restoring the prosperity and pride of



In a new series celebrating The National Lottery's 25th Birthday, we explore how its investment in heritage has transformed six places across the UK.

Blaenavon: a community reborn

Perched high on a South Wales hillside, Blaenavon is a community forged from the heat, smoke and dust of the Industrial Revolution.

Its ironworks and coal pit provided the majority of the town's residents with employment until 1980. The town's shops, churches, chapels, schools and workmen's hall were once a bustling hive of activity.

The 20,000 people of Blaenavon held a deep sense of community - proud of the role their small corner of the world played on the international stage, supplying coal around the globe.

But by the turn of the 21st century, this prosperous Blaenavon was gone.

A community in decline

The ironworks ceased production in 1904, which initiated a slowdown in the area's economy. However, it was the closure of the Big Pit in 1980 that meant, like many coalfield towns, Blaenavon lost its purpose and began to rapidly decline.

By 2000, around 75% of the town's buildings were boarded up, its population had more than halved to 6,000, and its sense of community had been lost.

There seemed little prospect for the future of this one-time powerhouse of industry.

Heritage: a catalyst for change

The year 2000 marked a significant turning point for Blaenavon. UNESCO designated its industrial landscape a World Heritage Site. This became a catalyst for a major shift in how not only the wider world viewed Blaenavon but also its local residents.

It became clear that its future could lie in its seemingly redundant industrial past.

National Lottery investment

Today, Blaenavon is enjoying a renaissance, and £8.7million of National Lottery investment in the town's heritage has played a pivotal role in restoring its prosperity, confidence and pride.

Blaenavon's **town centre shopfronts** are being revived with National Lottery money. The **Bethlehem Chapel**, a significant building in the town, opened its doors in September following a major restoration, and can now be used more widely by the community.

Big Pit National Coal Museum received significant funding in 2002 and is today a major tourist attraction for the area. Visitors travel from across Europe to experience first-hand a working coal mine.

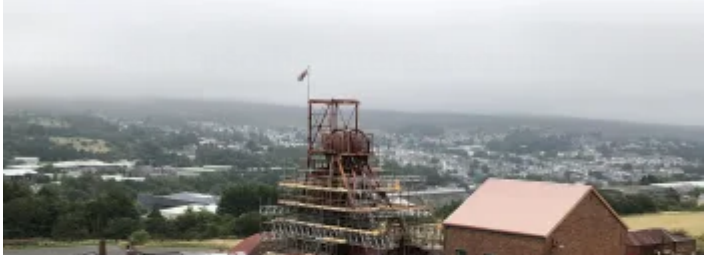
The **Blaenavon World Heritage Centre** is located in the sympathetically restored former St. Peter's School and provides a starting point for exploring Blaenavon Industrial Landscape. Funded through The National Lottery, it also provides vital community facilities including a library, café, state-of-the-art conference facilities and a tourist information centre.

Find out more

Hear from three of Blaenavon's current residents.

25 years of funding for heritage

Over the past 25 years, The National Lottery Heritage Fund has been the largest dedicated grant funder of the UK's heritage. We've awarded £8bn to more than 44,000 projects across the UK.









, City of Discovery

25 years: inspiring passion, people and pride in Rochdale