

## Digging the dirt

Local residents in Pyle have sharpened up their shovels, washed off their wellies and started digging on a resurrected allotment site off Beach Road.

This time last year the site was severely overgrown and filled with decades of waste – chemical containers, mattresses, computers... even a whole spa bath. Valleys to Coast Housing (V2C) called on help from the Tidy Towns – a partnership between Keep Wales Tidy and BCBC Street Scene.

The scale of the problem became clear as they moved through the site and removed around 1,000 tonnes of garbage and fly-tipped material. And the Tidy Towns team didn't just send it to landfill – the green waste was shredded and all the rubbish separated into plastics, metal and wood for recycling.

The locals had already formed an allotment group by the time the site was cleared, and hand-picked broken bottles, plastic and metal from the soil in their free time.

The project was nearly sunk when soil testing revealed the land was contaminated with heavy metals and fuel oils. Years of dumping had taken their toll. The decision was taken to import tonnes of topsoil to allow the allotments to go ahead – the alternative was to watch the area slip back into a dumping ground.

The new allotment holders were lined up ready with their seeds and shovels as soon as the last load of soil was tipped, and green shoots are already coming up. Rachel Morton, V2C Community Regeneration, said: "The locals were pushing us on to finish in time for this growing season and it was their enthusiasm which kept us going. They didn't sit back waiting for things to be done for them – they got out themselves and cleaned and worked the site."

Also attending the re-launch of the allotments was Councillor Clive James, who said: "Tidy Towns have done excellent work across the borough for the benefit of the community."

