

5 Review of Tourism Assets

The existing tourism product within Rhondda Cynon Taff is primarily focussed around the area's rich heritage and natural environment. A number of attractions currently offer the visitor an insight into the areas heritage with its strong links to the mining industry. Since the decline of that industry, many reclamation schemes within RCT have vastly improved the landscape, which is today another focus for visitors. Not only does the area offer quality facilities such as the Dare Valley Country Park, but there are also a number of smaller county parks and an abundance of forest areas.

The following Section identifies the tourism facilities and infrastructure. In order to visually appreciate the existing assets within RCT and the wider valleys area, existing attractions, country parks, picnic areas / forest parks, accommodation, and communications / linkages have been mapped spatially on Figures 5.1 to 5.4. A brief description of each Figure is also provided below.

In order to spatially appreciate the relationship with wider tourism assets the Figures also identify those beyond the identified core study areas.

5.1 Tourism Attractions

Where available, Table 5.1 presents visitor numbers for the main tourist attractions within RCTCBC. Rhondda Heritage Park, Dare Valley Country Park and the Cynon Valley Museum no longer provide visitor numbers to the Wales Tourist Board/Visit Wales and therefore some figures for these attractions were unavailable.

Table 5.1: Visits to Tourist Attractions

Attraction	2004	2005	Location
Dare Valley Country Park	-	79,550 ¹⁷	RCTCBC/HoV
Cynon Valley Museum	31,090 (2003)	53,000 (2006)	RCTCBC/HoV
Nantgarw China Works	553	2,193	RCTCBC
Rhondda Heritage Park	50,332	55,956	RCTCBC
Pontypridd Museum	27,737	-	RCTCBC
The Pit Pony Sanctuary	1,000 (Estimate)	-	RCTCBC

¹⁷ Figure is an estimate of those visiting the visitor centre as opposed to visitors to the wider park.

Model House Craft & Design Centre	43,064	41,739	RCTCBC
Brecon Mountain Railway	75,843	73,937	HoV
Cyfarthfa Castle	62,841	65,719	HoV
Big Pit, National Mining Museum	141,127	156,977	HoV

Source: Atkins Study & Visit Wales

The table shows that Dare Valley Country Park is the main tourism attraction within the core study area and also RCTCBC. Most of the attractions elsewhere within RCTCBC are failing to achieve the benchmark of 50,000 visitors per annum for a sustainable attraction. Data presented for the attractions within the wider HoV area illustrates the popularity of these attractions which currently attract significantly more visitors per annum than the majority of attractions within RCT.

Figure 5.1 identifies existing tourism attractions under key themes

- social / cultural attractions;
- heritage attractions;
- country parks & local reserves;
- picnic & forest areas;
- viewpoints; and
- tourist information centres.

5.1.1 Core Area

The Figure illustrates a small range of attractions exist within the main study area. These include six local heritage attractions mainly local churches, castles and statues and Iron Age features. Another large attraction in the area is the natural environment with the many rights of way and strategic trails and the many waterfalls and waterfall walks which are located within RCT.

There is the Welsh Whisky Visitor Centre at Penderyn together with cultural attractions at the Parc and Dare Theatre and the Cynon Valley Museum located at Aberdare, three country parks and forestry areas at Dare Valley, Aberdare Park, and the Garwnant Forest Visitor Centre and a single viewpoint at Craig y Llyn. Dare Valley Country Park and Garwnant both provide opportunities to create gateway environmental sites within RCT.

The attractions are concentrated spatially along the Cynon Valley and focussed around the towns of Mountain Ash, Aberdare and Penderyn. There are few attractions within the Rhondda Fach Valley.

5.1.2 Peripheral Area

Outside of the study area and within the southern area of RCT, the number of tourist attractions increases significantly, including regional attractions such as the Rhondda Heritage Park, which has recently been nominated as an 'anchor point' on the European Route of Industrial Heritage, and tourism information centres. There are a total of eight heritage attractions, five social / cultural attractions, three country parks, three picnic / forest areas, two viewpoints and a tourist information centre at Pontypridd. As with the core area, attractions tend to be spatially concentrated at certain locations, there area example of local hubs with attractions such as at Llanwonno with many other assets focussed in and around Pontypridd and along the Rhondda Fawr Valley.

5.1.3 Wider Area

There are a larger number of more significant attractions located outside of the study area but within the wider Heads of the Valleys region. Merthyr contains a tourist information centre and attractions such as Cyfarthfa Castle and Brecon Mountain Railway. There are also a number of country parks to the east of the study area and attractions such as the World Heritage Site at Blaenavon are considered to be important for the development of the wider region, although some distance from RCT.

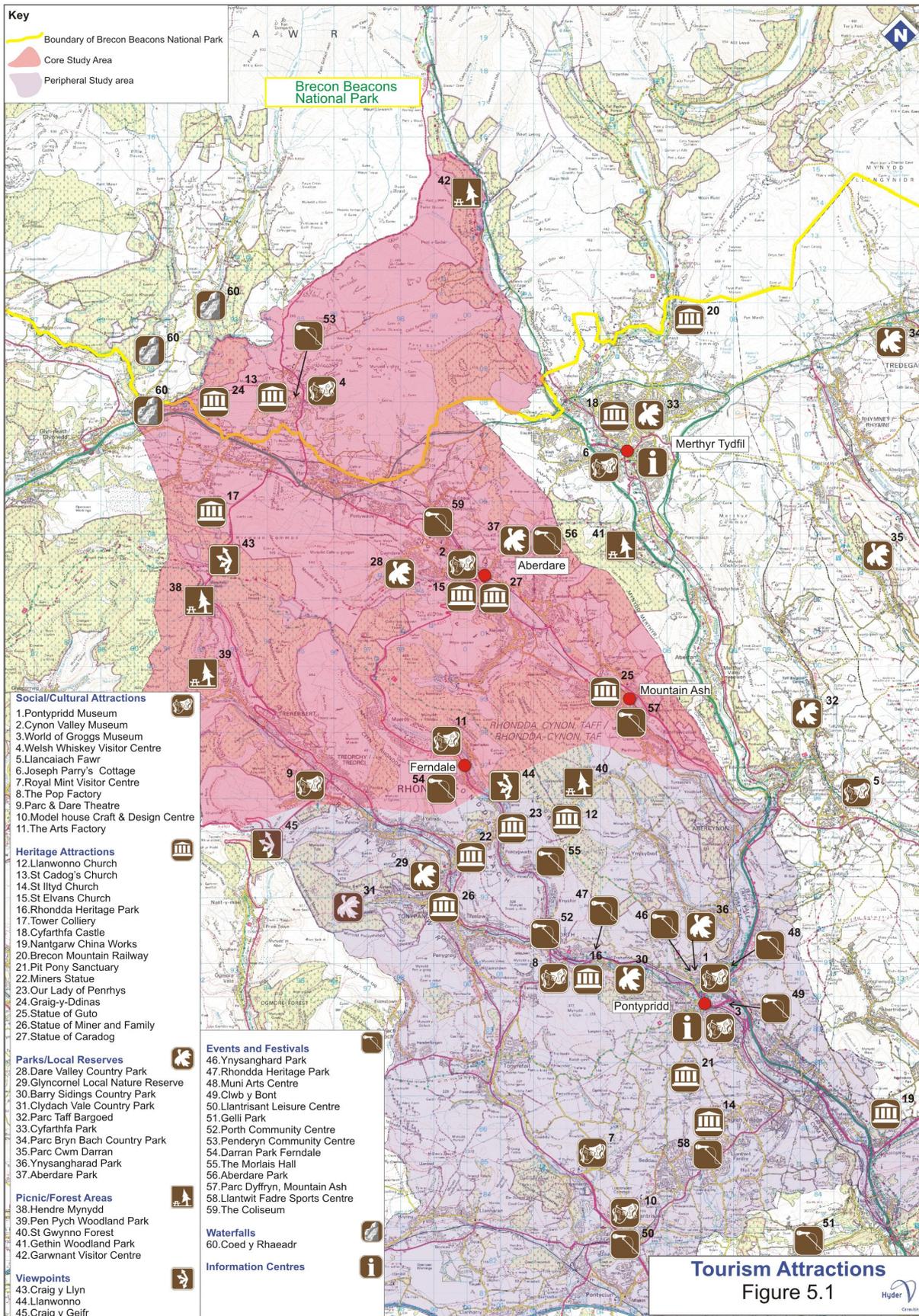
5.1.4 Events and Festivals

Events and festivals are important for the local communities and for tourism and while the study area only has one national type event there are a number of smaller regional/local events which provide a strong base to build on. There are also a number of national events located in the surrounding areas, including the Wales Rally GB and a number of events in Cardiff. Within the HoV area event and festival locations include:

- Ynysangharad Park
- Nos Galon Race
- Bryn Bach Park Cycling, Motorcycling and Fishing Events

Outside the study area events and festivals include:

- Merthyr Heritage
- Festival Vintage Bus Show
- Tydfil Arts Festival
- Blaenavon World Heritage Day
- The Walking Festivals organised by Valleys Tourism



5.2 Accommodation

Figure 5.2 identifies the location and type of accommodation provision within and around RCT. There is at present a broad range of accommodation within the study area including caravan and camping sites and bunkhouse style accommodation to guesthouses and hotels. It is noticeable that accommodation within RCTCBC tends to be concentrated around the major settlements particularly Pontypridd and within the study area at Aberdare. However, it is possible that a large number of small establishments that are not star rated by Visit Wales exist, but with limited information about their location through normal promotion and marketing material have not been identified in the Figure.

RCTCBC annually gather accommodation information from known providers. Table 5.2 shows the number of rooms available by different types of accommodation within the County Borough. The information includes rooms in establishments not currently verified by Visit Wales.

Hostel rooms have not been included in the sub total of rooms within RCT as those stated are within the University of Glamorgan and are therefore only available at certain periods of the year.

Table 5.2: RCT Room Figures

Accommodation Type	Number of Rooms
Hotels	423
Country Hotels	126
B&B	64
Guest Houses	29
Self Catering Lodges	12
Sub Total	654
Hostel	1460
Caravan & Camping	1 site (10 Pitches)

NB. 'Country Hotels' includes rooms at Dare Valley County Park and 'Hostel' rooms are all located within the University of Glamorgan.

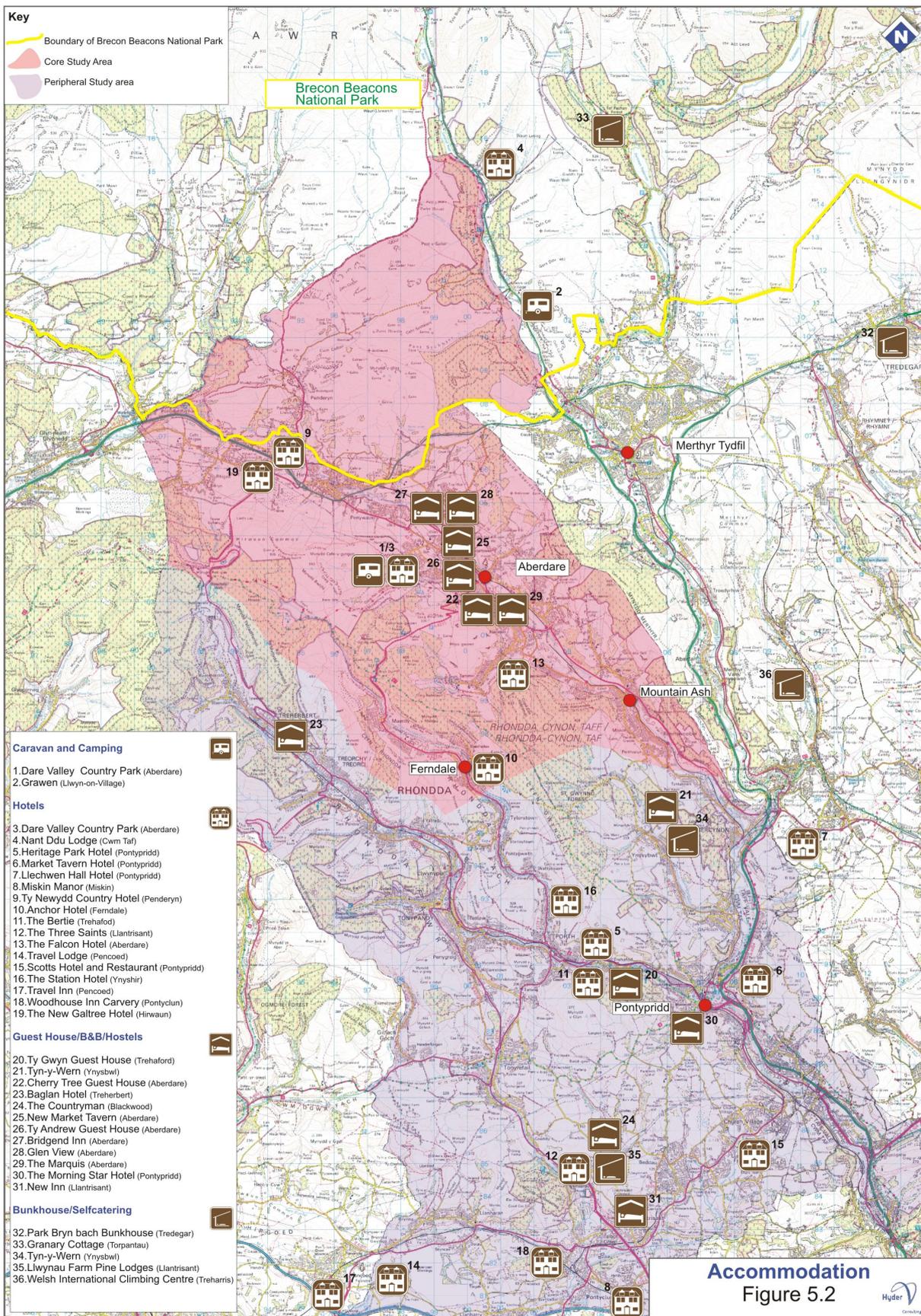
Through analysis of other areas within the Heads of the Valleys and discussions with tourism bodies the figures show a fairly good range of guest rooms in different types of accommodation.

It has been identified that there is a significant lack of camping and caravan pitches throughout RCT, particularly within Dare Valley Country Park which



has become increasingly popular as a camping / caravan destination over recent years.

Consultations have also established the area's accommodation base has a reputation of being quite poor quality and in need of improvement.



5.2.1 Core Area

The area of Aberdare contains two guesthouse / Bed and Breakfast style establishments, one camping and Caravan Park and a hotel. There are also hotels noticeably centred on Hirwaun and Penderyn near to the A465 and also at Ferndale.

5.2.2 Peripheral Area

The accommodation base in the peripheral area is more geographically dispersed and there is also a greater variety of accommodation with two hotels, four guesthouse / B&B style establishments, one camping / caravan site and two bunkhouse / self-catering establishments.

5.2.3 Wider Area

The wider, Heads of the Valley area offers a range of tourist accommodation including near to RCT are two hotels, a caravan park and a bunkhouse.

5.3 Communications and Linkages

Figure 5.3 illustrates the major communication routes and linkages. The figure shows all strategic routes within the region including walking and cycling routes, along with the main railway and bus stations. It is considered important that strategic routes link with attractions and other tourism infrastructure and this is discussed later in the study. Most of the communication routes and linkages identified link the study area with the wider RCT and Heads of the Valleys area.

The general quality of communication linkages is good. The railway line serves both the Rhondda Fawr and the Cynon Valleys, however there is no rail link to the Rhondda Fach. Bus services are available to all Valleys. In relation to strategic routes, the general quality is again good, however, the quality of certain stop off points along trails throughout RCT is in need of improvements.

5.3.1 Trails & Routes

The study area is well served by walking and cycling routes providing links across the region. There are three key strategic footpaths within or surrounding the study area. The Coed Morgannwg Way runs east to west taking in the Dare Valley Country Park and passing close to Aberdare town centre. The Taff Trail strategic footpath borders the eastern boundary and provides opportunities to access RCT at Pontypridd and in the north. The Rhymney Valley Ridgeway walk runs north – south to the east of the study area although does not directly enter RCT. The Cynon Trail is currently

under development and will provide a walking / cycling route along the Cynon Valley.

A number of cycle routes also provide access into both the core and peripheral study areas. Specifically, the Celtic Trail (Route 47 of the National Cycle Network) runs northwards from Pontypridd before heading west above Maerdy. Route 4 of the Network runs from Pontypridd and heads westwards towards Bridgend. The Taff Trail (Route 8 of the National Cycle Network) follows the strategic footpath until Merthyr before bearing northeast away from the core study area.

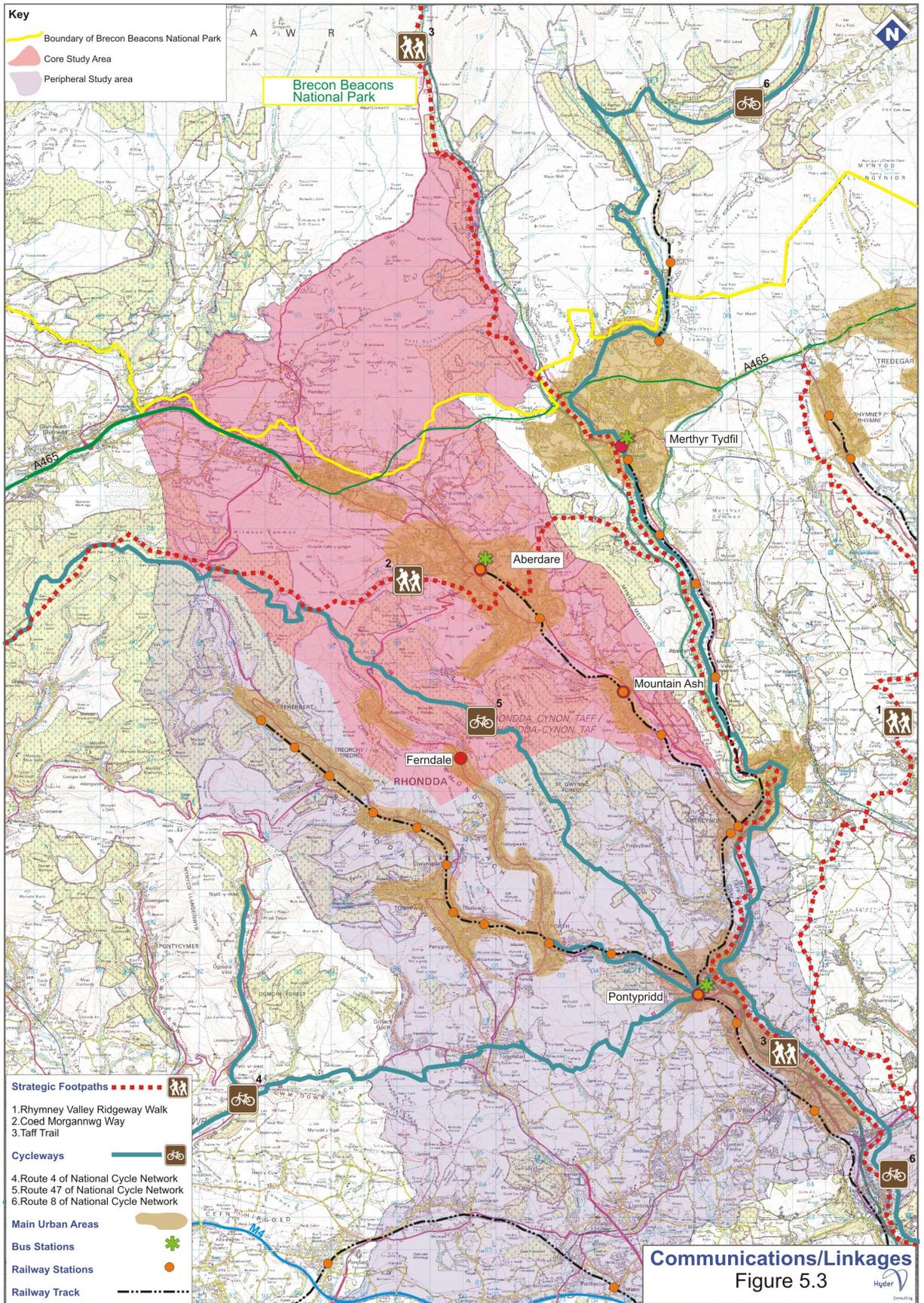
There is also a network of bridleways that allow visitors to explore the study area and wider Heads of the Valleys on horseback,

5.3.2 Loops & Links

The Loops and Links network is a recent initiative to join together strategic routes with local level rights of way, country lanes, old drovers roads and forestry tracks. The initiative has so far established 18 trails linking the study area with the Merthyr Tydfil area of the Heads of the Valleys. The trails are designed to be used by walkers, mountain bikers and wherever possible by horse riders and offer routes to explore the towns, villages and countryside of the Valleys.

5.3.3 Open Access

In addition to the formal trail network Forestry Commission Wales allows open access for walkers throughout its extensive woodlands located throughout the study area. In some areas the Commission allows horse riding on a wider basis than the bridleway network.



5.3.4 Bus Services

The level of accessibility by public transport is considered as good within the study area with a number of bus services (some every 15 minutes) running through or near to all the towns on a Monday to Saturday. The main transport hubs identified are at Pontypridd, Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil. Several daily services also run from Cardiff into the study area and there are services to Caerphilly, Bridgend and Porthcawl. [Appendix D](#) provides a summary of the local bus services, it identifies that there are still limited services running in the study area on Sundays and Bank Holidays, on which it would be expected to be key days for tourists requiring public transport services. Generally, the bus services running up and down the individual Valleys are more widely available and frequent than services running between the valleys. This limits accessibility between the Rhondda and Cynon valleys and significantly increases journey times.

5.3.5 Rail Services

Rail services in Rhondda are operated by Arriva Trains Wales and generally run every half hour Monday to Saturday to and from Cardiff. This provide a strategic transport link with the stronger visitor markets based around the coastal areas of Cardiff and its links with Swansea, Newport and Bristol. The level of services provided is considered to be generally good and where train stations don't exist a bus link is provided e.g. to Maerdy and Hirwaun from the main line stations. The rail services and frequencies are summarised in Table 5.2

Table 5.2: Rail Service Information

Origin	Destination	Frequency Mon - Sat	Frequency Sunday	Bank Holiday
Treherbert	Cardiff Central	Every half hour (until 21:17)	Every 2 hours	Hourly (until 21:17)
Aberdare	Cardiff Central	Every half hour (until 22:52)	Hourly (until 17:22)	Every half hour (until 21:52)
Merthyr Tydfil	Cardiff Central	Every half hour (until 22:29)	Hourly (until 21:43)	Hourly (until 21:43)

Not all stations are staffed, only those at Pontypridd, Aberdare, Porth, Taffs Well and Treforest. The railway station at Pontypridd benefits from being accessible for those with limited mobility, however the remaining stations do not provide for this. Taffs Well has a dedicated car park and 5 disabled

parking spaces. Disabled parking spaces are not provided at the stations at Pontypridd, Aberdare, Porth and Treforest.

Cycle parking is not provided at any of the stations, however cycles can be carried free of charge on all services subject to space being available. It is also possible to reserve a cycle space on trains free of charge. Cycles are not allowed to be carried on trains arriving/ departing at Cardiff between peak hours 07:30 – 09:00 and 16:00 – 18:00 Monday to Friday.

Many of the stations have parking facilities within close proximity to encourage drivers to park their cars and not drive into the town centres.

5.3.6 Public Transport and Major Tourist Attractions

Rhondda Heritage Park, Trehafod

Rhondda Heritage Park is located just off the A470 between Pontypridd and Porth. It is well served by public transport, with bus services running on a Saturday and Sunday.

A Stagecoach Service (132) to Rhondda Heritage Park leaves Cardiff Bus Station every half hour from 10.00 until 15.00 (Monday to Saturday) and on a Sunday at 10.30, 12.00 and 13.30. The nearest railway station is Trehafod - five minutes walk from the Heritage Park, and runs a service every half hour from Cardiff Central. (Monday to Saturday), which takes approximately 30 minutes.

Dare Valley Country Park, Aberdare

The Dare Valley County Park is located within a 400m walking distance from a bus stop in Gadleys which has a service linking it with Aberdare railway station. This is considered an acceptable walking distance to access public transport services and is based on IHT Guidelines for Journeys by Foot (2000). From Pontypridd the train takes approximately 35 minutes to get to Aberdare. It is approximately a 1 hour journey from Cardiff Central. A direct bus service would benefit Dare Valley Country Park, as currently passengers have to make two changes when travelling from Pontypridd on bus.

Aberdare

Aberdare is the largest urban settlement within the Heads of the Valleys area of RCT and is easily accessed from the main A465. The town is well linked to the surrounding towns, such as Merthyr Tydfil and Maerdy in terms of public transport. There are a number of frequent bus services running from Aberdare Bus Station (Monday to Saturday), however again there are limited services on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Services run every half hour to/ from Aberdare railway station, and it takes approximately 1 hour from Cardiff Central.

5.3.7 Roads

The most significant road serving the study area is the A465 'Heads of the Valleys Road' which connects the northern area of RCT with the strategic route between Swansea and Abergavenny. The duelling of the road, which is currently under construction, will provide significant accessibility improvements for the study area and the Heads of the Valleys as a whole and is intended to provide a significant catalyst for investment in the area. There is a short and direct connections between the A465 and Aberdare, but there is a need to improve road linkages with the Rhondda Fach and Fawr valleys which are served by indirect or poor quality routes.

As with public transport linkages, the road network within the study area largely follows the valley topography north to south and these connection vary in quality. Road connections in the Cynon Valley linking Aberdare with the A470 are generally good and there are a number of road improvement schemes such as the Mountain Ash bypass that will improve road linkages further. Roads along the Rhondda Fawr and Fach valleys are less accessible passing along narrow streets and through towns where congestion occurs. With a series of improvements such as the Porth Bypass improving connections within the area the situation is likely to improve. In relation to east to west road connections, although links do exist, these roads are often local routes with narrow lanes and large gradients which can be difficult to use particularly during poor weather conditions.

It is considered that there is potential to upgrade the road network significantly within the study area further to create the standard required to attract investment and improve journeys for residents and visitors. This upgrading will be achieved through Relief Road schemes and other improvement outlined in the Local Transport Plan, including:

- A473 Church Village By Pass (Anticipated start date of Oct 2007)
- A4058 Gelli / Treorchy Relief Road
- A473 Llanharan By Pass (Linked largely to the development of Dragon Film Studios)
- A4059 Mountain Ash By Pass
- A4058 / A4233 Porth / Rhondda Fach Relief Road Phase 2 (Reliant of funding from Welsh Assembly Government Transport Grant)
- Ynysmaerdy – Talbot Green Relief Road (A4119 – A473)

In addition the following schemes are proposed within RCT:

- A465 Dualling between the eastern County Borough Boundary and Hirwaun (Likely to be the last phase of the A465 dualling, approximately 2010)
- A4059 Aberdare By Pass Extension (Linked largely to the above dualling project)

- B4273 Cilfynydd Cross Valley Link (Currently low priority in relation to the above projects)
- Upper Rhondda Fach Relief Road – Maerdy to A465

5.4 Activities

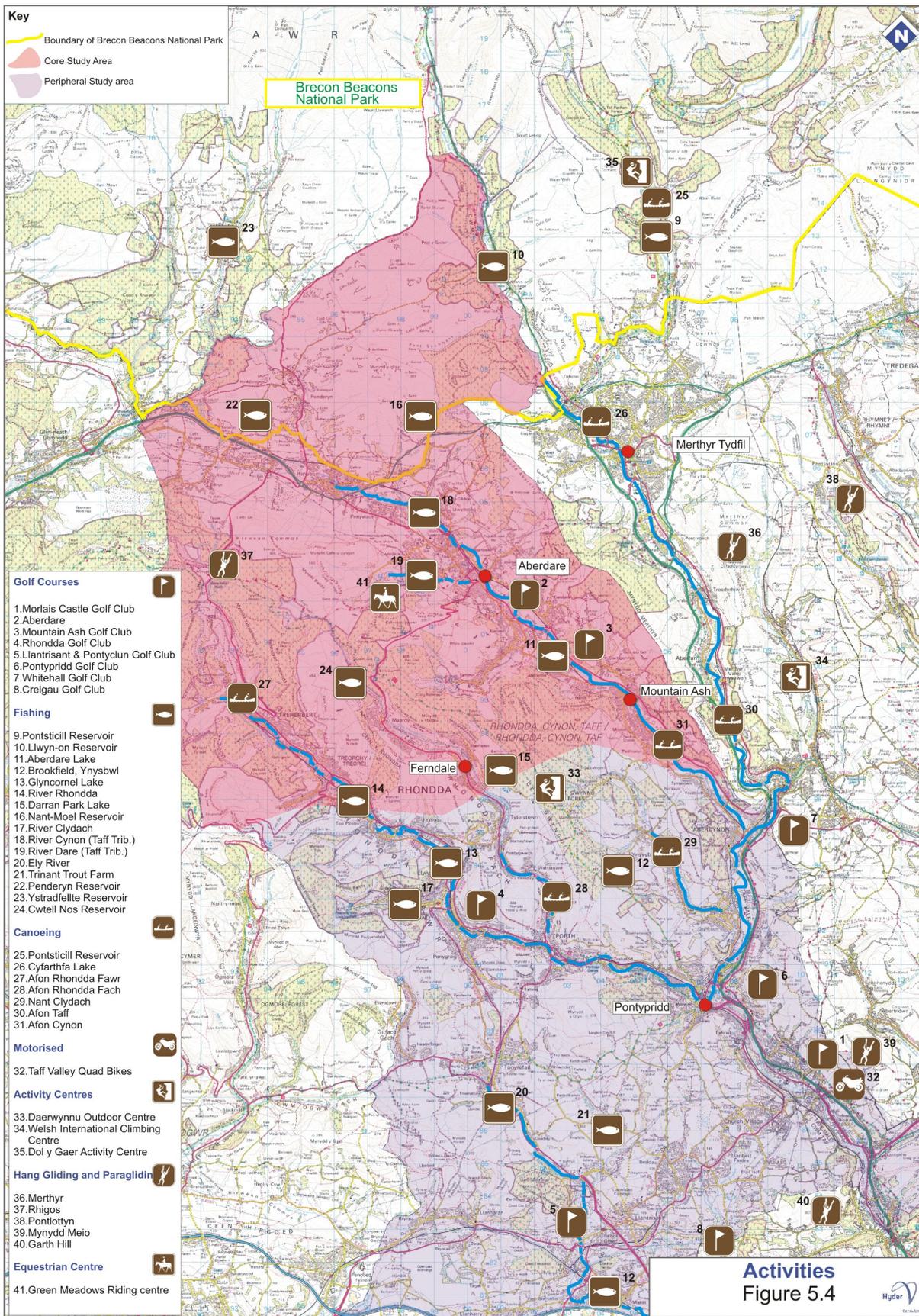
Figure 5.4 illustrates activity sites within RCT and the surrounding areas, including golf, fishing, canoeing and motorised sports.

5.4.1 Core Area

A limited number of locations are currently identified for activities within the core study area. Six locations are identified for angling including Penderyn Reservoir, Nant Moel Reservoir, the River Cynon, the Rive Dare, Aberdare Lake and the Reservoir at Castell Nos, Maerdy. There are two golf courses in the area including Aberdare golf club and Mountain Ash golf club. The Afon Cynon is identified as good for canoeing. There are however a broad range of possible activities within and surrounding the core area including cycling (both on and off road), paragliding, fishing, golf, horse riding and canoeing.

5.4.2 Peripheral Area

Similar activities occur within the peripheral area, however significantly more opportunities for participation have been identified. A total seven locations were identified for angling including both rivers and lakes such as Glyncornel, four golf courses including Rhondda Golf Club, Llantrisant and Pontyclun Golf Club, Pontypridd Golf Club and Creigau Golf Club were identified and three rivers within the area are considered as good for canoeing. There is also one attraction identified for quad biking.



5.4.3 Tourism Signage

Tourism signage in RCT and the Heads of the Valleys varies considerably including signage on main roads, signage to attractions and settlement signage.

Only one attraction located within RCT is signed off the M4 motorway, which is arguably the most important tourist route through South Wales. In the vicinity of Cardiff the M4 frequently displays brown signs directing tourist towards Rhondda Heritage Park from the south and this continues via the A470 towards Merthyr Tydfil. Significantly, the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road does not display brown signs for the Rhondda Heritage Park for tourist approaching the area from the north. The only brown signs displayed on the A465 for RCT are located in the vicinity of Hirwaun and direct visitors towards Dare Valley Country Park.



Within the study area local level signage for attractions is generally very limited or inconsistent. The limited presence of signage does not adequately reflect the number of attractions, activities, venues or accommodation (Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.5). The most consistent signage is that provided for trails and local level paths. Although small in scale, the signage for Loops & Links provides a good example that consistent and well provided throughout the north of RCT where the initiative has its main focus.

Settlement signage is generally of very poor quantity and quality making navigation throughout the study area difficult for those not familiar with the locality. The linear style settlement patterns in the Rhondda Fawr and Fach valleys in particular make it difficult to establish your location and this is compounded by limited, and in some parts, nonexistent, signage. Combining entrance signage for towns and villages with signage for local attractions is not something that has been adequately addressed.

Signage that portrays the linkages between all aspect of tourism, including attractions and infrastructure, enhances the visitor experience. This is however currently undeveloped within RCT.

6 Key Issues

The key issues relating to existing tourism offer have emerged from (a) review of documentation (b) consultations with relevant organisations/individuals; (c) assessment of tourism and recreation facilities and activities; (d) site visits/assessments. These have been brought together in summary form as a strengths and weaknesses analysis which will lead towards the identification of tourism opportunities considered in following Sections of the report.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Heritage. There are strong industrial roots within the study area. This is expressed in a variety of different ways in the form of building style, community layout, the numerous monuments depicting mining history and the number of old or existing industrial sites within the area. The Rhondda Heritage Park is the industrial heritage site with the largest profile within the RCT area. Pre-industrial heritage is also present within the study area, namely Craig-y-Llyn of Bronze Age significance.</p>	<p>Signage. There is a lack of adequate signage for attractions within the area on the main roads through and surrounding the study area. Whilst the higher profile attractions (Rhondda Heritage Park and Dare Valley Country Park) are good examples of signage, there generally appears to be an inconsistency between the profile of attraction and the signposting to it.</p>
<p>Natural Environment. There is high quality natural landscape, country parks and expansive forest areas such as Garwnant Forest, Gethin Forest or the Hirwaun Valley. Water is in abundance with a variety of rivers, beautiful waterfalls and expansive reservoirs. Large expanses of the natural environment have been reclaimed from its industrial past. Dare Valley Country Park is a well-established centre for exploring nature and enjoying the outdoors.</p>	<p>Urban Social Problems. There are a number of urban social problems that are inhibiting the development of attractive locations. These include littering, arson and illegal motorbike users who are damaging the natural landscape and the enjoyment of others wishing to participate in outdoor activities.</p>
<p>National Park. A portion of Brecon Beacons National Park covers the study area and the link with this well visited, internationally recognisable destination means close links already exist with a major tourist area.</p>	<p>Inadequate Tourism Infrastructure / Poor Quality Environment. Whilst major improvements have been made in recent years, poor quality urban areas continue to exist in some areas with, inadequate tourist infrastructure such as leisure or retail facilities.</p>
<p>Trails. Most notably the Loops and Links project has identified 18 circular or linear routes for different combinations of trail users. Not only does it link with local level cultural/social</p>	<p>Legibility of Towns and Villages. Navigating your way through settlements within the study areas is sometimes unclear; it can be hard to distinguish between villages and towns</p>

<p>and heritage attractions, but has had also links with key strategic trails that cross the study area connecting with adjoining local authority areas.</p>	<p>along the main valley routes.</p>
<p>Location. Located between the National Park to the north and the M4 Corridor to the south, the study area is well positioned to develop tourism. Travelling from West Wales, England, or to South Wales from the North, the study area is only a few minutes from the main A465 road. The duelling and general improvements of the A465 over the coming years will improve its accessibility further. However, if the tourism product is not strengthened, improvements may mean that tourist more easily pass by the area.</p>	<p>Rhondda Fach. There are no tourist attractions within this valley. The Rhondda Fawr and the Cynon Valleys either side both have a greater level of attractions, but there is currently no reason to visit the middle valley. This is not helped by poor quality accessibility, limited linking routes and no railway line.</p>
<p>Public Transport. There a numerous train stations following the line of the valleys through Rhondda Cynon Taff from Cardiff city centre. Bus stations are also located within the major settlements. The Beacons Bus for example runs from 11 different locations within South Wales. It has designated routes through the Valleys and links the area with Brecon town centre.</p>	<p>Accommodation. Inadequate in quality, quantity and strategic location. There are a low number of B&B, bunkhouses or campsites in area.</p>
<p>Environmental Management of Sites and Trails. There is a strong presence of organisations committed to the maintenance and development of specific attractions and trails. These include Groundwork, the Forestry Commission and RCTCBC.</p>	<p>Profile of Rhondda Cynon Taff. Rhondda Cynon Taff does not have a strong enough profile in its own right, which would set it apart from other Council's in the area. The County Borough is largely marketed within the wider region and the areas attractions are not as well recognised by the visitor as those in adjoining authorities. There is also the concern that the Heads of the Valleys region has too many tourism brands and should focus on a small number of consumer propositions through which other brands can be promoted.</p>
<p>Scenic Drives. Travelling through the study area you are struck by how attractive the Valleys environment is, most notably, the A4061 to Hirwaun through the Rhondda Fawr valley.</p>	<p>Information Point. There is no tourist information centre within the study area to provide tourists with the information to consider the activities available</p>
<p>Interconnected Communities. There is a strong sense of community within the study area which can help to develop tourism from the 'bottom up'. The history of the mining communities has created a positive atmosphere between neighbours and strong lines of communication. The Community First Partnerships also has a strong presence within the</p>	<p>Website. There is inadequate links to tourism attractions, information and infrastructure on the Borough Council's website. However, the authority has recently acquired the www.visitrct.co.uk web address which currently links to the tourism pages of the internal Council web pages, with anticipation of funding to create a stand alone tourism website in</p>

<p>area and is a key stakeholder in enabling change.</p>	<p>the future.</p>
<p>Interest Groups. There are a number of existing interest groups already committed to improving the tourism offer for the study area. Valleys Tourism Association, HERIAN, Churches Tourism Network Wales and Groundwork Trust are all such examples.</p>	<p>Public Transport. Whilst transport infrastructure exists, there is inadequate infrastructure for journeys across (east-west movements) the valleys. The further north you travel in the study area, the harder it is to use public transport such as buses not running on Sundays or Bank Holidays. There is also felt to be a lack of public transport encouraging journeys from the Brecon Beacons into the study area. The Beacon Bus for example really promotes trips into the national park.</p>
<p>Range of Outdoor Activities. A broad range of outdoor activities can be pursued within the study area. They range from golfers, ramblers, cyclists, hang gliders and anglers. More recently pursuit of more contemporary activities is becoming popular such as quad biking, trail riding and grass boarding.</p>	<p>Tourism Resources. Currently, both the marketing and regeneration departments at Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council have some role in tourism. However there is no overall dedicated officer / team responsible for tourism marketing and development. There is a need for such a resource to enable a strategic approach to the marketing and development of the tourism product.</p>
<p>Ribbon Housing. The network of ribbon style housing sprawling across the natural environment is increasingly identified as unique to the South Wales Valleys.</p>	<p>Market Presence. The strength of nearby tourism destinations (e.g. Brecon Beacons National Park, Cardiff Central, Wye Valley and the Gower Peninsula) provides strong competition. Many near by national attractions are free as part of the National Museums and Galleries of Wales entrance policy such as for Big Pit.</p>
<p>Events and Festivals. An emerging market of events and festivals within Rhondda Cynon Taff including Farmers Markets, the Full Ponty and the Festival of Walks. At present many of the static events and festivals are focussed around Ynysangharad Park in Pontypridd which hosts events such as the Full Ponty, and Aberdare Park, which hosts nationally recognised annual motorbike races, attracting biking enthusiasts from across the UK and abroad. Certain events within Ynysangharad Park are now attracting in the region of 20,000 visitors, bringing significant benefits to the Authority. There is also a calendar of smaller scale local events which is currently being promoted through the Big Anthem Fawr Website</p>	<p>Interpretation. Interpretation at viewpoints and local sites is poor quality or absent. There is a need for more working alongside HERIAN's work programmes which are looking to address this issue.</p>
<p>Established Attractions. Well established visitor attractions such as Rhondda Heritage</p>	<p>Partnerships. There is a perception of a lack of partnership working and the</p>

<p>Park and Dare Valley Country Park.</p>	<p>implementation of a shared strategy across adjoining authorities. Certain marketing material such as Wisdom and Walks is jointly produced for the region; however there would seem to be limited joint working in establishing tourism infrastructure for example. Competition between authorities may hold back this strategic tourism development.</p>
<p>Visitor Satisfaction. Surveys have shown visitors to the area generally enjoy their stay and would recommend a visit to friends.</p>	<p>Community Participation. Communities within the study area have difficulty identifying tourism as an industry with potential long-term employment opportunities. More support, such as that provided through some of HERIAN's work programmes, for communities to become more widely involved in the tourism sector is needed to enable local people to participate in the sector.</p>
	<p>Tourists' Perceptions. People are not aware of the potential locked within the valleys. Their perceptions of the offer are inhibited by a historically overriding theme of heavy industry and poor quality environment.</p>