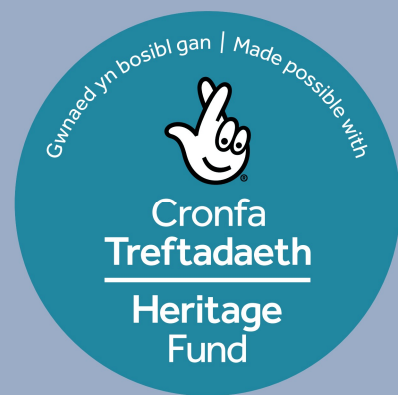




RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

HERITAGE STRATEGY

2025-2030



GWASANAETH TREFTADAETH
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
HERITAGE SERVICE



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

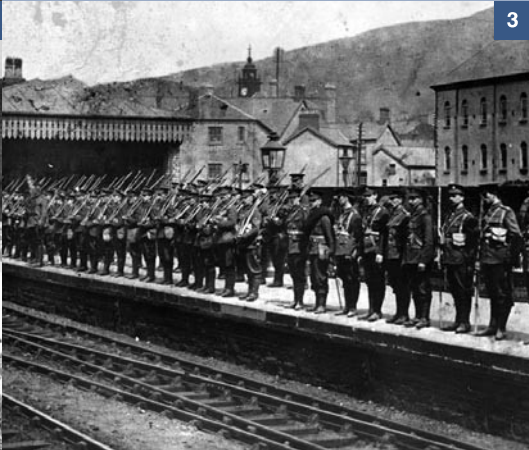
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Front cover images:

1. Bracchi Brothers Confectionery Store, Canon Street, Aberdare
2. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdâr Heritage Project
3. Women collecting coal from tips during the 1910 Strike, Cwmbach
4. Tour Guide, Rhondda Heritage Park Museum
5. Archaeology workshop, Hafod Primary School
6. The Rocking Stone, Pontypridd

Above images:

1. A J Cook addressing miners on Cilfynydd Common during the 1926 General Strike
2. Demonstration at Penrkyber Colliery during the Miners' Strike, 1984
3. Soldiers at Mountain Ash Station during World War I
4. Evan James and James James Memorial, Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd



The Old Bridge, Pontypridd

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Our Vision:

To celebrate and value the rich heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf by showcasing our cultural legacy; recognising the people and stories that shape our history; and preserving our buildings, collections and physical assets for the present and future generations.



1



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1. Cwmbach Male Voice Choir with Paul Robeson
2. Griffith Rhys Jones ('Caradog') Statue, Aberdare

3. Rugby match at the Ynys Fields
4. Hen Felin Wynt, Llantrisant
5. Street Party in Holly Street, Rhydyfelin, 1937
6. St Gwynno's Church, Llanwonno

Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf is a destination of rich cultural and historic heritage, whose increased visibility and appeal is the overriding aim of this strategy. Our heritage shapes our identity and fosters a sense of community.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's Corporate Plan 'Working with our Communities 2024-30', sets out the Council's Vision that:

"All people, communities, and businesses can grow and live in a healthy, green, safe, vibrant, and inclusive County Borough where they can achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives and work, both now and in the future".

Heritage and culture are recognised as one of the four Wellbeing Objectives of the Corporate Plan, acknowledging that:

- **Culture and heritage are vibrant, and difference is celebrated in strong communities that enhance well-being.**
- **We celebrate and preserve the cultural, industrial and sporting heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf.**

This is an ambitious strategy that will require collaboration, innovation and involvement from our communities, residents and visitors, private business and third sector organisations. Issues related to accessibility, inclusion, and diversity are at the forefront of this strategy as we continue to seek out new ways to accommodate people with different needs. A stronger, more robust approach to inclusion will require a comprehensive reassessment of the ways our tangible and intangible heritage can be made accessible to all, regardless of disability, identity, or background.

This strategy represents our shared vision for positive management, conservation and promotion of the Council's heritage and sets out how our heritage can positively contribute to the development of vibrant and sustainable communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf. By creating and supporting effective partnerships and resilient communities, we aim to sustain and protect our heritage, and work together to promote understanding and knowledge of it through education, involvement and engagement activities. The Strategy aims to embrace all aspects of the Council's heritage including natural, built, industrial, cultural, sporting and community elements, and encourage wider participation in heritage across the County Borough.

This strategy has been written by Rhondda Cynon Taf Heritage Service and funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Using money raised by National Lottery players, The National Lottery Heritage Fund supports projects that connect people and communities with the UK's heritage. The Altered Images project was made possible through The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, we have been able to invest in our heritage work by delivering a three-year activity programme, consultation and the creation of this Heritage Strategy which puts heritage and culture at the heart of the future vision for Rhondda Cynon Taf.



Street party at Ton Row, Ton Pentre



Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Rhondda Cynon Taf, 2024

The new Heritage Strategy was developed in the year that Rhondda Cynon Taf hosted the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol (National Eisteddfod), Europe’s largest and oldest touring cultural festival. The Eisteddfod Genedlaethol is a unique part of Wales’ and RCT’s heritage, where the first modern-day Eisteddfod was held in 1861. The County Borough has much to offer its residents and visitors alike, and the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol provided the opportunity to showcase our people and places – key aspects of our heritage – and use its legacy to inspire engagement and support the achievement of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy ambitions.

In creating the Heritage Strategy, Rhondda Cynon Taf adopted a place-based and people-centred approach. The strategy is informed by an engagement process with stakeholder groups and residents:

- **Online Surveys running from July 2023 to September 2024.**
- **‘Our Heritage’ engagement sessions at locations across RCT.**
- **Stakeholder group engagement meetings.**

The process focused on asking the question: ‘What is the heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf?’, seeking to identify what the term ‘heritage’ means, and how we collectively define and identify tangible and intangible heritage assets.

This strategy adopts a broad definition of heritage, to include:

- **built environment (including our historic buildings and monuments);**
- **artefacts and materials (from museums and archival collections to online resources);**
- **and intangible heritage (Welsh language, local stories, people, traditions and practices).**



Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Aberdâr, 1956

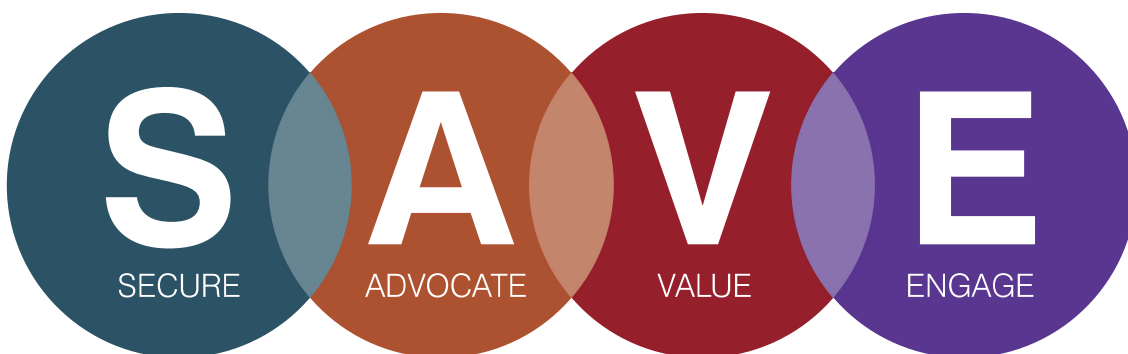
Heritage can provide a historical perspective and offers us an understanding of who we are today and our place in the world. The strategy aims to not just provide us with a context as to where we came from, but to also stimulate our future hopes and aspirations, and to reinforce our pride in place. People and communities, stories and traditions, culture and Welsh language, are our heritage.

The strategy recognises how our historic built environment is a powerful resource for economic development, regeneration, supporting business and enterprise, tourism, and attracting people to live, work, visit and invest in the County Borough. This strategy therefore has strong links to the Council's Tourism Strategy, published in September 2021, that sets out to establish RCT as:

“The premier destination in the UK for “experience” based visits and vacations showcasing our first-class landscape, culture and heritage.”

The Heritage Strategy 2025-2030 is key to the delivery of our Corporate Plan 2024-2030. It sets out actions that seek to ensure the sustainable conservation and management of our heritage assets, as well as objectives that can add value to the well-being of our communities.

We have identified four strategic priorities that will support the achievement of our Heritage Strategy vision over the next 5 years:



Secure our shared heritage – ensuring that we adopt the highest standards of conservation in our collection management; work in partnership to preserve and protect our built historic environment; and document our living history for posterity.



Advocate for our shared heritage – championing our roles as custodians of heritage and communicating the vital importance of our heritage, including the Welsh language, to all.



Value our shared heritage – the heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf is recognised as having worldwide significance. We will seek to increase the understanding of this rich heritage, including that of the Welsh language, by encouraging research and supporting heritage-based activities across the County Borough and beyond.



Engage communities with our shared heritage – working with residents, visitors, communities, and partners to create opportunities to get involved with heritage, including through the Welsh language, to promote health and well-being and protection of our history and heritage.

STRATEGIC AIM

SECURE

our shared heritage

Hen Felin Wynt, Llantrisant



Preserving our physical assets relates both to conservation and preservation. Assets, including cultural and industrial heritage, are a part of telling the story of Rhondda Cynon Taf and its people, and help define the character and identity of the County Borough.

The Council is committed to supporting community heritage groups and recognises their valuable contribution to creating and safeguarding a more inclusive and diverse society. We will raise awareness of community initiatives and encourage them to flourish by bringing together people of different ages and backgrounds and enhance community identity as well as mutual and cross-cultural understanding.

In securing our heritage, we will ensure that we have meaningful engagement with all parts of our community to ensure we hear a representative voice. We will endeavour to both collect and to preserve our community's oral histories, thereby conserving both our shared collective memory and our wider intangible culture, including that of the Welsh language in the County Borough.



1. Rhondda Heritage Park Museum
2. Demonstration at Penrikyber Colliery during the Miners' Strike, 1984

3. 'The Forgotten Voices: Preserving the History of Female Activism on the South Wales Coalfield' Project
4. Rhondda Heritage Park Museum

In terms of physical assets, we will provide appropriate guidance to community groups, heritage practitioners, institutions, third sector, and others upon request, to facilitate the harnessing of the enormous potential of our heritage to contribute as a tool for sustainable development and the regeneration of our communities.

There are policies, strategies, and legislation in place at national and local levels to protect tangible and intangible heritage assets (see Appendix 2).

Identifying 'Heritage at Risk' in RCT remains a fundamental part of the strategy and will continue to shape the creation and implementation of future action plans. The historic character of where we live, work and play can potentially enrich our daily lives and enhance our well-being; however, competing demands on public and private funds mean that there is a need to focus on the heritage assets that are at greatest risk and that offer the best opportunities for positive development.

Regular assessment of heritage assets will allow us to inform our communities as to the condition of heritage in their locality. It also encourages the public to become more actively involved in looking after what is precious to them. We can then support these communities to explore options that sustain these valuable heritage assets.

Outcomes:

- **The creation of a heritage assets risk register that will enable the prioritisation of those at greatest risk and offer opportunity for positive development.**
- **Communicate the Authority's approach to its Listed Buildings at Risk in terms of conservation, planning, housing, regeneration and development.**
- **Work with partners and stakeholders to ensure and facilitate engagement with communities in decisions that affect heritage assets.**

'Secure' Action Plan 2025-2030

| Actions: | Delivery Date |
|---|----------------------|
| Identify funding to audit, rationalise and digitise RCT Council's Collections. | Years 1-3 |
| Develop a policy for Contemporary Collections e.g. Covid-19. | Years 1-2 |
| Work with our elected members and communities to develop criteria to determine the priority and status of our Council-owned listed building heritage sites. | Years 1-2 |
| Develop a plan that enables the condition of Council-owned listed buildings to be understood and develop a plan in response to the findings for each site. | Years 1-3 |
| Identify funding to safeguard preservation of key heritage sites for future generations. | Years 1-5 |
| Enable community groups and responsible organisations to develop their own strategies to safeguard non-Council owned 'at risk' memorial assets. | Years 1-5 |

STRATEGIC AIM

ADVOCATE

for RCT's shared heritage

War Memorials Project





Evan James and James James Memorial, Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd

Rhondda Cynon Taf has nationally recognised award-winning parks and accredited museums, designated conservation areas, listed buildings, monuments, and a varied and rich heritage, all of which are a strong advocacy asset highlighting the rich heritage of our County Borough (see Appendix 1: Heritage Assets).

In the context of the Corporate Plan and this Heritage Strategy, establishing strong advocacy offers three central benefits:

- **Civic pride and well-being – making RCT a better place to live, work and visit.**
- **Economic regeneration – growing our local economy through tourism and inward investment.**
- **Conservation – engaging our communities in the preservation and protection of our heritage.**



Elaine Morgan Statue, Mountain Ash

Beyond our physical landscape, RCT also has deeply held traditions and a wealth of collections and stories that describe the lived experience of people who are part of our heritage. This new strategy signifies our collective ambition to reinvigorate heritage provision across the authority. It represents a commitment to collaboration, and to transforming people and places by embedding heritage at the heart of place-making in a people-centred approach to community development. The Welsh language is significant in understanding a sense of place across the County Borough too, connecting with place names, landmarks, and stories shared by our communities.

Ynysangharad War Memorial Park's Canolfan Calon Taf, is an example of the merits of this approach. A heritage and educational centre funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Welsh Government Transforming Towns, and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, has proved to be a vibrant hub of activity and learning. Heritage takes centre stage with regular history talks covering fascinating topics like the Tunnellers of Pontypridd, Ynysangharad Fields, and Pontypridd in the 1960s. The centre provides numerous courses and activities. As an example of the levels of engagement, the 'poppy crafting project' witnessed the collaboration of schools and the wider community to create 100 ceramic poppies that were displayed for Remembrance Sunday.

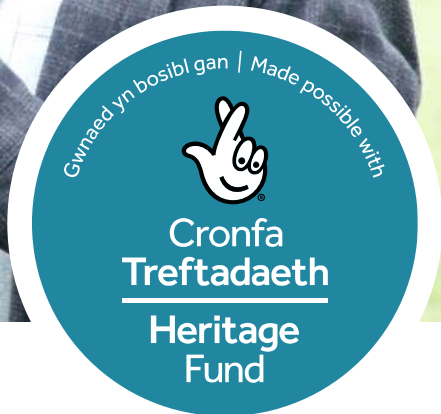
Led by a team of dedicated volunteers, 'The Friends of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park' gardening enthusiasts, benefit from classes and workshops in the greenhouse and garden area. 'The Friends' have also facilitated a series of planting activities for children and cooking demonstrations. To enrich visitors' experiences, interpretation boards have been installed throughout the park, offering insights into landmarks such as The National Lido of Wales, Evan James & James James, the Bandstand, the Sunken Garden, and the park's sporting history as well as its deep connections to Memorialisation.

Calon Taf has hosted numerous heritage pop-up shops where park visitors are encouraged to share their memories and photographs of the park. These contributions have significantly informed and enriched our interpretative displays around the park.

Hosting the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2024 at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park in Pontypridd is an example of this approach. With attendance on the Maes in excess of 180,000 visitors, and with over 200 stalls, the Eisteddfod provided ample opportunities for our heritage to be appreciated.

Canolfan Calon Taf, Pontypridd





Altered Images

The development of the Altered Images project, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, has provided us with a template for future public engagement. The project has engaged with people of all ages and abilities on an array of creative, innovative, and educational heritage-themed activities, which have contributed to improving the health and well-being of project participants. Through workshops, training sessions, and performance and interpretation opportunities, participants have explored our tangible and intangible cultural heritage to reveal how our communities have developed over time. With a focus on memorials and statues, and stories, myths and legends, the project has worked with hundreds of local people to research and interpret our area's heritage and history.

Project volunteers have taken thousands of photographs to produce an up-to-date visual record of RCT's statues, memorials, and monuments. Volunteers have also conducted interviews with local people and recorded the stories and reminiscences of members of our communities to create an oral history archive which captures the social history of RCT. All of their work features on the new 'RCT Our Heritage' website, which showcases and celebrates the rich and diverse culture, heritage, and history of RCT.



1. Nigerian Community Heritage Project
2. 'Introduction to Oral History' Training

3. 'On The Mab Trail' Project
4. 'Our Heritage' Digital Photography Project

Outcomes:

- The public perception of, and engagement with, our shared heritage will improve.
- Community heritage, collaboration and co-production will have a greater focus. We commit to work with our communities, private business, heritage groups, historical societies, and the cultural sector among others, to encourage a “sense of place”.
- Our communities will be brought together through a shared interest in, and engagement with, our local heritage and the Welsh language, for local benefit.

‘Advocate’ Action Plan 2025-2030

| Actions: | Delivery Date |
|--|------------------|
| Establish a database that records and identifies intangible and tangible heritage across RCT. | Years 1-2 |
| Identify and deliver actions that increase accessibility to Council-managed heritage across RCT for all sectors of the community. | Years 1-5 |
| Identify opportunities to maximise our heritage offer and seek additional funding to develop projects. | Years 1-3 |
| Develop a framework that ensures we recognise and celebrate the people who contribute to the heritage of RCT e.g. Blue Plaque, Hall of Fame and Sporting Heroes schemes. | Years 1-2 |
| Establish an RCT Heritage Forum and develop an action plan with partners and communities that identifies milestones to promote and maximise the heritage offer within RCT. | Year 1 |



Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdâr Heritage Project

STRATEGIC AIM

VALUE

our shared heritage

Women collecting coal from tips during the 1910 Strike, Cwmbach





1

The global significance of our rich, vibrant and diverse heritage, including the Welsh language, provides an opportunity to gather, share and increase knowledge amongst our residents, learners and visitors.

Our heritage provision must remain relevant and adaptable, engaging with the new methods of learning encompassed in the Curriculum for Wales. The new curriculum aims to provide learners in schools across RCT with a knowledge and understanding of their local heritage placed in a wider context. Local illustrations are used to engage with national and global events, for example, the visit of the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2024 to Rhondda Cynon Taf fostered a greater understanding of the Welsh language and of the history of eisteddfodau across the County Borough.

A key aim of this strategy is to increase wider access to the wealth of history and knowledge held in the memories, experiences and language of our residents and communities. Our 'story' is world renowned, Rhondda Heritage Park Museum (RHPM) attracted 73,202 visitors in 2023/2024 alone, and each year we welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors to the County Borough seeking to understand and engage with our heritage. The Museum continues to evolve, and, with the support of Welsh Government funding, it has introduced new innovative digital technologies in its exhibition spaces. Both on site at RHPM and across the Authority we continue to work with our creative partners and broad cross-section of community groups on several ground-breaking projects.

The Altered Images project, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, has worked with partners to creatively gather knowledge across the generations, and the RCT Our Heritage website will archive visual and audio records of our heritage as seen, heard and told by our communities.

We will continue to develop the use of QR codes and GPS technology in the process of updating, recording and reviewing our built heritage assets.

2



3



1,2,3. Workshops at Rhondda Heritage Park Museum

Strategic Aim **VALUE** our shared heritage

Located in our parks, churches and on roadsides, the 125 War Memorials in Rhondda Cynon Taf allow our residents and visitors to engage with our heritage in an incredibly diverse setting. Commemorating the fallen from wars in the nineteenth century, and World Wars I and II, they also honour those who fought in the Falklands War, the Spanish Civil War, and dedications to more recent conflicts.



In the last 18 months, the Armed Forces Team have worked closely with Councillors, local community groups and our Highways Team on several war memorial projects that have included a range of improvement works and maintenance. In addition, the team provided support to the community in Cwmparc on the opening of their new war memorial.

In commemorating those who fought and sadly lost their lives in conflict, digitisation of war memorials will ensure knowledge is available and shared via QR codes that link to the new 'RCT Our Heritage' website where we can learn about the lives and the stories behind the names. Digitised ways of archive management and data collection will be identified, such as SCRIPTI used by Bereavement Services, to digitise death records for all cemeteries in the County Borough.

1. War Memorial, Mountain Ash
2. War Memorials Project, Porth
3. War Memorial, Pontypridd

Research

RCT’s museums, archives and libraries have gained a reputation as key centres of research for industrial and social historians. As well as working closely with Cardiff University, The University of South Wales and Swansea University, we are currently working in collaboration with academics, universities, institutions, and independent researchers from across the world. Providing both primary source materials and our own understanding of the area, we seek to enhance and to broaden the understanding of our past. Ongoing projects include ‘Female activism on the coalfield’ and ‘Black Miners: from Port to Pit’.

Outcomes:

- **Schools and colleges across RCT will recognise, use and celebrate our heritage and Welsh language in their delivery of the Curriculum for Wales.**
- **Digital innovation will be used to embed heritage as a key-driver in place-making, and in the recording and reviewing of our heritage assets.**

‘Value’ Action Plan 2025-2030

| Actions: | Delivery Date |
|--|------------------|
| Create resources and support the development of a broader understanding of RCT’s heritage in partnership with the education sector. | Years 1-3 |
| Identify funding to create opportunities for all to access and increase knowledge and understanding of RCT’s heritage. | Years 1-5 |
| Map the provision of heritage-focused learning provided by members of the Adult Community Learning Partnership and seek to increase provision and engagement in heritage-focused adult education. | Years 1-5 |
| Build from the Eisteddfod Legacy and seek opportunities to further promote Welsh language and cultural activities across RCT. | Years 1-5 |
| Improve access to the War Memorials of RCT by digitising the assets for the ‘RCT Our Heritage’ website, allowing the public to research and understand the stories behind the names inscribed on them. | Years 1-3 |

STRATEGIC AIM

ENGAGE

communities in our shared heritage

'Mapping Memories' Project, Hawthorn



Our heritage offers diverse opportunities for our communities and residents that can have a positive impact on health and well-being.

Engagement with local heritage, including the Welsh language, provides shared experiences and learning, with intergenerational activities connecting generations and strengthening community cohesion. We will endeavour to increase engagement with heritage, particularly among children and young people, and other groups in our communities that experience barriers to participation. In achieving the aim, we intend to increase how all parts of our communities connect with our local heritage.

We have trialled several new approaches over the course of the Altered Images project, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project officer created a series of creative, innovative and educational activities that engaged with all ages and abilities, this included workshops, training sessions, and performance/interpretation opportunities. We will continue to build on the work of the project and will also seek to increase both outreach sessions with object handling sessions and explore the use of innovative and creative digital content.



Events

The Council holds a series of key events each year across our town centres and parks, with the largest and oldest touring festival in the UK, Wales' Eisteddfod Genedlaethol, a prestigious event hosted at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park in 2024.

The Authority's Events Team, in collaboration with our Heritage Service, provide several opportunities for our residents and visitors to celebrate and showcase our rich local heritage. In addition to the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol, 2024 saw a series of events with a heritage aspect provided. These included an 'Easter Egg-stravaganza' held at RHPM with 2,400 in attendance over two days, and Whitsun half term heritage events at RHPM with almost 400 attendees. That said, there is significant potential within the events annual calendar to further strengthen the links with heritage in other events ongoing across the Authority. This would include for example, the Aberdare Festival, which had a footfall of 10,000 in 2024.

1. 'Heritage on the High Street' Project, Aberdare
2. 'Mapping Memories' Project, Hawthorn

3. 'The Life of Morfydd Llwyn-Owen' Project, Aberdare

Volunteering and Heritage

Across the County Borough, there are many who volunteer in the conservation and preservation of our heritage, and we commit to work with our communities and third sector to enable them to develop and highlight these opportunities to residents and stakeholders, supporting the sustainability of community groups. As discussed, the Altered Images project has provided opportunities for volunteers to conduct interviews with local people. They have recorded stories and reminiscences of members of our communities to create an oral history archive which captures the social history of RCT.

Recognising that engagement with heritage has many positive impacts for the sector, our communities and individuals. There will also be a continued commitment to engaging all ages in our heritage through consultations and targeted activity.



'Through Our Eyes' Project, Treorchy

Health Determinants Research Collaboration: RCT

The Council is committed to improving the life chances of its citizens and funding has been secured from the National Institute of Health and Care Research to establish a new and innovative Rhondda Cynon Taf Health Determinants Research Collaboration. The HDRC involves teams across the Council, Cardiff University and academia, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTM UHB), Interlink RCT and third sector partners, and Public Health Wales, as well as citizens, working as a partnership to break the cycle of poverty and improve outcomes for residents.

Our heritage offers an opportunity to engage with our residents whilst also recognising the value of our heritage in improving health and well-being.

Outcomes:

- **Opportunities to engage children and young people in heritage will be created through partnership work and community development activities.**
- **Increase engagement in protecting, researching and celebrating our heritage and in strengthen the resilience of heritage-focused community groups by providing volunteering opportunities. Community awareness of our heritage will increase.**
- **Heritage will be celebrated at key events across the County Borough.**

‘Engage’ Action Plan 2025-2030

| Actions: | Delivery Date |
|---|------------------|
| Consult with stakeholders in relation to celebrating our local heritage, including the Welsh language. | Years 1-5 |
| Inclusion of a heritage offer across all key RCT events. | Year 1 |
| Work with voluntary sector and community groups to identify and promote opportunities for volunteers to develop skills and champion RCT Heritage. | Years 1-5 |
| Utilise heritage as a tool for public involvement and participation, recognising its role in improving health and wellbeing outcomes for residents, particularly as part of the wider determinants of health. | Years 1-3 |
| Create a stakeholder engagement pathway for the development of RCT Heritage Strategy 2030 onwards. | Year 5 |

Monitoring and Evaluation

This strategy provides a framework for the future management and development of Rhondda Cynon Taf’s heritage. Its delivery will involve our communities and partners from the public, private and third sectors.

The Strategic Aims, Outcomes and Actions will be undertaken collaboratively, therefore, a process to monitor and evaluate the delivery of the strategy is vital.

The Council’s Heritage Service will lead in the delivery of this strategy and will be responsible for its evaluation. There will be regular monitoring of the delivery of identified actions and the Service will deliver a progress report on the Implementation Plan on an annual basis. The Progress Update Report and an Annual Implementation Plan will be presented to the Strategic Arts and Culture Steering Group prior to each new financial year. Furthermore, progress on delivery will be scrutinised periodically at the relevant Council Scrutiny Committee.

The Council’s Heritage Service will work with key stakeholders to establish a new RCT Heritage Forum, representative of the public, private and third sector, to facilitate delivery of this Strategy and explore opportunities to maximise available resources, expertise and experience, and provide expert advice, insight and support in the delivery of this strategy to our communities.

A review of the strategy will be undertaken during 2027/28 and reported to Cabinet. The next review to inform a new strategy post-2030 will be undertaken in 2029/2030, aligned with the Council’s Corporate Plan timeline.



‘Introduction to Oral History’ Training

Appendix 1: Heritage Assets

Memorials

There are 203 memorials known to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council:

| Number | Dedication of Memorial |
|--------|--|
| 1 | Royal Family |
| 3 | Personal |
| 4 | Sporting Figure |
| 6 | Historic |
| 9 | Structure or individual within construction industry |
| 10 | Councillors or Politicians |
| 15 | Arts |
| 30 | Mining |
| 125 | War |

Gorsedd circles

Location on satellite and OS maps may be found using the NGRs on <https://gridreferencefinder.com/>

| | | | |
|------|--------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1850 | Pontypridd | Gorsedd | ST 08138 90098 |
| 1861 | Aberdare | National | Removed |
| 1885 | Aberdare | National | Removed |
| 1905 | Mountain Ash | National | ST 04470 99793 |
| 1928 | Treorchy | National | SS 95858 96149 |
| 1946 | Mountain Ash | National (Postponed from 1940) | ST 04470 99793 |
| 1956 | Aberdare | National | SN 99428 03315 |

Historic buildings

There are 89 scheduled monuments in Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Council is legally responsible for the protection of 2 of the 89:

- **Medieval Llantrisant Castle**
- **Post-medieval shrine of St Mary's Well in Penrhys**

In addition, the Council owns around 5% of the listed buildings in the County Borough.



Rhondda Heritage Park Museum

Owned and managed by the Council, Rhondda Heritage Park Museum is located on the former Lewis Merthyr Colliery site and consists of Grade II listed pit bank and buildings. Established in 1986, the Rhondda Heritage Park Museum ‘tells’ the social history of the Rhondda Valleys. The collection of approximately 12,500 objects represents various themes including, mining, industry, unionisation, activism, local celebrities and sports personalities, domestic items, fashion, and religion. Since its opening, the Heritage Park has become nationally renowned for preserving social, mining and industrial history and uniquely ‘telling’ the story of the South Wales Valleys. Over the last decade significant investment and staff restructuring have witnessed continuous improvements and reinvention across the museum and have resulted in the site consistently attracting more visitors year on year (with the exception of Covid-19).

Visitors to Rhondda Heritage Park Museum:

| | | | |
|---------|--------------|---------|-----------------------|
| 2015/16 | 33591 | 2020/21 | 1696 Covid-19 |
| 2016/17 | 33655 | 2021/22 | 34569 Covid-19 |
| 2017/18 | 41173 | 2022/23 | 66678 |
| 2018/19 | 46137 | 2023/24 | 73202 |
| 2019/20 | 52180 | | |

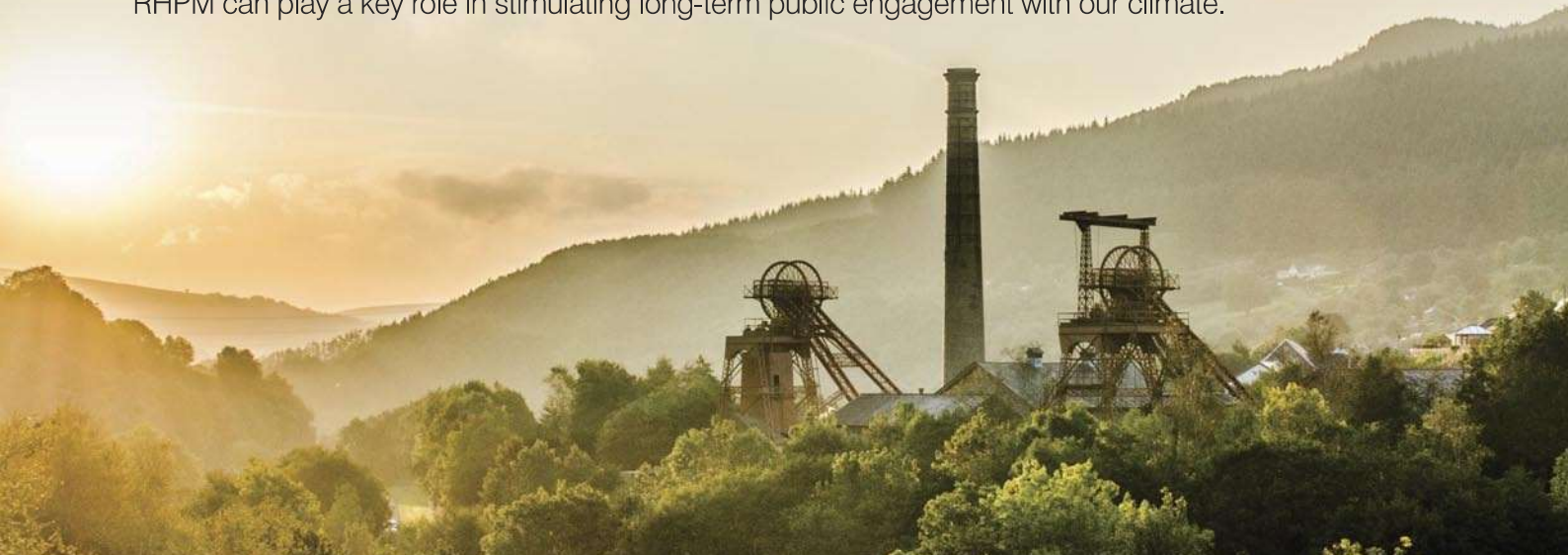
Current initiatives:

Supported by Capital Transformation funding from the Welsh Government, a total of £150,000 was invested in developing a digital exhibition space using the ‘Black Gold’ (coal history) exhibition content. This exhibition consists of touch screens containing interactive digital content (text in timeline and map formats, relevant images of objects from our collection, historical videos, and audio files) mirrored on to large TV screens.

RHPM has begun the process of recording the current guides’ memories with the long-term aim of both creating a self-led digital ‘Underground Tour’ and capturing the lived experience of miners for future generations.

Future opportunities

Geoscience is essential to helping us monitor and understand natural earth processes and the impacts of climate change, so that we can support practical solutions to adapt to a changing planet. Working with cultural, heritage or arts organisations and climate or environmental organisations, RHPM can play a key role in stimulating long-term public engagement with our climate.





The National Lido of Wales: ‘Lido Ponty’

Owned and managed by the Council, the 1921 Miners’ Welfare Fund contributed 86% of the overall costs for the construction of the original Lido building. Almost a century later, a grant of £6.3 million from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, European Regional Development Fund, CADW and the Council enabled the restoration of the Lido to its former glory. The Grade II listed building, originally built in 1927, underwent meticulous restoration and officially reopened on 24 August 2015.

Retaining its 1920s appearance and architecture, including ‘Pantile’ roof tiles, wooden cubicles, and original turnstiles, the restored Lido reopened in 2015 as The National Lido of Wales, Pontypridd. Combining heritage with modern comforts, its prominent position in the magnificent parkland setting in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park makes it one of the most iconic open-air lidos in the UK. The ‘Lido’ is nationally recognised as a successful regeneration model, galvanising further regeneration in Pontypridd town centre, and serving as an exemplar of best practice in regeneration.

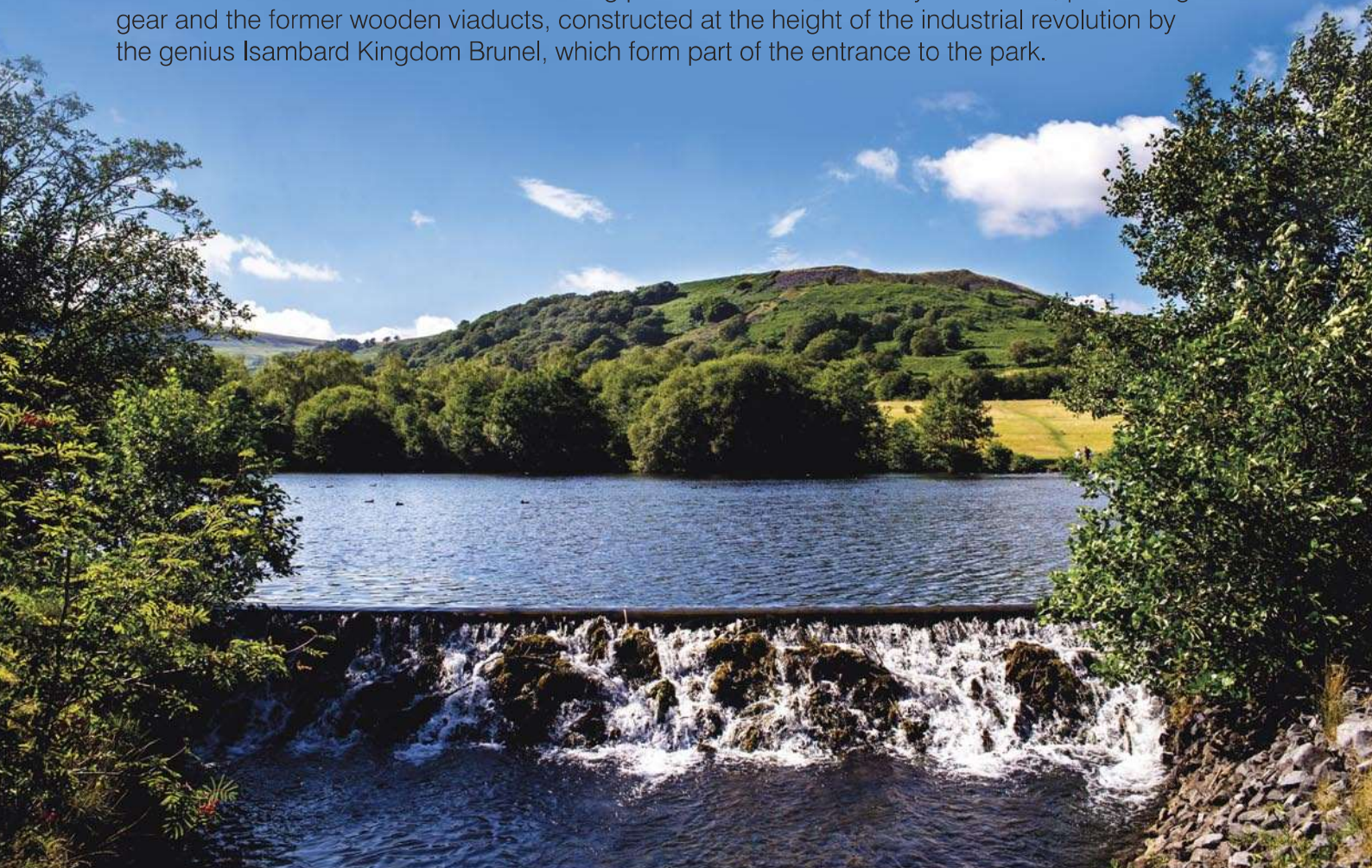


Dare Valley Country Park

Owned and managed by the Council, Dare Valley Country Park is one of the most exciting and diverse destinations in South Wales, with over two hundred acres of open space packed with things to do. Home to the brand-new Gravity Family Bike Park and on-site accommodation the Park is a Dark Sky Wales site, offering perfect night sky conditions for stargazing and constellation-spotting.

The Park is built on land reclaimed from over a century of coal mining in the area, it is a Valleys Regional Park Discovery Gateway site, a key tourism attraction for RCT, and offers access to the wider tourist attractions across the South Wales Valleys.

The Park's Visitor Centre has been in operation since 1985 and there are numerous other historical remnants of the area's coal mining past. This includes colliery coal trams, pit winding gear and the former wooden viaducts, constructed at the height of the industrial revolution by the genius Isambard Kingdom Brunel, which form part of the entrance to the park.





Cynon Valley Museum

Cynon Valley Museum (CVM) is a CADW Grade II listed building and former tram workshop built on the site of the casting house of the Gadlys Ironworks. The building's renovation was completed in 1996 with the museum opening fully in 2000. The Museum tells the story of the Cynon Valley from prehistoric times to the present day. The museum's collection, managed by RCT's Heritage Service, has objects primarily linked to industrial growth and coal society. The Museum is recognised as Accredited under the Museum Accreditation Scheme, a UK partnership managed by Arts Council England. The Museum has been managed since 2016 by the Cynon Valley Museum Trust under the terms of a Service Level Agreement

with the Council. The Trust was awarded £388,178 in 2017 by the Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm Community Fund to 'support the Museum to become self-sustainable by diversifying their income streams, increasing the staff team and allowing them to work more with the local community.' The Council owns and continues to care for and manage the collection, working with the Trust to make the collection accessible for the benefit of its stakeholders. There are approximately 22,000 objects in the CVM collection covering several themes, including (but not limited to) mining and industrial history of the Cynon Valley, art, sport, domestic material, fashion, and religion.





Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries

Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries' Local Studies Department actively collects documents on all aspects of the County Borough, both past and present, to conserve for study and research at all levels. These documents are stored in the Local Studies Collections based at Aberdare Library, Treorchy Library and Pontypridd Library. The collections at each of these libraries contain thousands of documents in a wide range of formats, many of which are unique and irreplaceable.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries have used these resources to create inviting opportunities to discover our heritage through a range of on-line experiences. The Altered Images project, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, updates the current Library Service's Our Past and Digital Photographic Archive, providing a new website - RCT Our Heritage - to showcase, record, preserve, and promote the rich and diverse culture, heritage, and history of Rhondda Cynon Taf. It contains RCT Libraries' photographic, video, and audio collections; objects from the collections of RCT's Heritage Service; and educational content and resources that relate to RCT, alongside the Altered Images community heritage projects.

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/Libraries/Libraries.aspx>

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/Libraries/Archiveandhistoricsearches.aspx>

<https://www.rctourheritage.com/>





Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy

Theatres

The Council owns three theatres and operates two, the Park & Dare in Treorchy and the Coliseum in Aberdare. Collectively, the theatres are known as RCT Theatres and are revenue-funded clients of the Arts Council Wales. The history and heritage of both theatres provide evidence of their past status in their localities, as a place of learning (through the extensive library, meeting rooms, events and lectures), social gathering, play and entertainment for the local mining community and attracting visitors and visiting speakers from far and wide. Today, the theatres remain bustling venues, hosting a diverse range of events including drama, comedy, music, cinema screenings, school shows and community productions.

The Grade II* listed Park & Dare Theatre comprises two separate buildings; an Institute built in 1892, and a much larger hall and theatre built in 1913. The proscenium arch is a depressed curve, supporting a baroque foliated shield at its highest point, and is attractively decorated over its entire length with plasterwork representing fruit and flowers. In 2020, the lounge bar was converted into a studio theatre to support the development of new work.

The Coliseum Theatre was officially opened on Saturday 17 September 1938. It boasts a unique 1930s art deco design with a 600-seat auditorium and cinema facilities. An extension to the theatre was opened in 1995 adding a bar facility and meeting rooms.

The Council also owns the Muni Arts Centre in Pontypridd. A Grade II listed building, its heritage and stunning gothic architecture are an important part of Pontypridd's heritage. The Council secured £5.3m in funding from UK Government's Levelling Up Fund to revitalise the Muni Arts Centre in collaboration with the charitable organisation Awen Cultural Trust. This joint approach will ensure the Muni is successfully brought back into use as a cultural venue with a commercially robust and viable future.

Y Muni reopened in Summer 2024, under the management of Awen Cultural Trust, re-establishing itself as a unique local venue for regional arts and music.

Examples of independent heritage provision in RCT:



Hetty: Great Western Colliery Preservation Trust Ltd

The Hetty shaft was sunk by the Great Western Colliery Company in 1875, when the engine house was built. Alterations were made to the winding engine and headframe in 1902, and it is now the only large steam engine in Wales in working order (i.e. not dependent on an electric motor), and it is also the oldest two-cylinder horizontal winding engine in the UK still on its original site. The engine raised coal from a depth of 360m but by 1923 the seams were worked out. Subsequently the Hetty was used as an emergency shaft for Ty Mawr and Lewis Merthyr collieries and the engine, kept on standby, was converted for use with compressed air. Hetty ceased working in 1983 and is a Grade I listed building of national importance.

That it still survives is a tribute to the work of the men who built, rebuilt, operated, and maintained it, and also the dedicated team of volunteers who are restoring the site as a unique visitor attraction of our mining heritage.

<https://hettypit.org>

The Rhondda Tunnel Society

The Society aims to reopen a disused railway tunnel linking the villages of Blaencwm in the Rhondda Valleys and Blaengwynfi in the Afan Valleys; almost 2 miles long - for cycling and walking.

Constructed by the Rhondda and Swansea Bay Railway between June 1885 and July 1890. The tunnel was engineered by Sydney William Yockney, the son of Samuel Hansard Yockney, who work for Isambard Kingdom Brunel on several other tunnels.

In December 1970 the Ministry of Transport announced the withdrawal of passenger services citing the cost of repair at £90,000 to be prohibitive. With coal mining ceasing in the upper Rhondda Fawr and after a decade of disuse the tunnel cuttings were filled in and the surrounding area landscaped.

In 2018, Balfour Beatty Rail carried out a detailed inspection. It reported that most of the tunnel was still in excellent condition, but repairs would be needed, mainly towards the ends. At the same time, it was also recognised by the Institute of Civil Engineers to be a structure of historic importance because of the accuracy of its surveying and the early use of concrete in a tunnel. The tunnel is 3443 yards (3148 metres) long making it the third longest railway tunnel in Wales and the 11th longest in the UK.

<https://www.rhonddatunnelsociety.co.uk/>



The Royal Mint Museum and Experience

The Royal Mint Museum is a registered charity and an accredited museum, based on The Royal Mint site in Llantrisant, South Wales. Established in 1816, the Museum has one of the finest collections of coins and related numismatic material in the world. Further information about the work of the Museum is available at: www.royalmintmuseum.org.uk

The Royal Mint Experience is one of Wales' top tourist attractions. Offering highly popular exhibitions and tours and a wide range of events suitable for all ages. The 'Mint' provides a full calendar of activities – ranging from creative workshops to special guest speakers and interactive sessions.

<https://www.royalmint.com/the-royal-mint-experience/>



Blaencwm Railway Tunnel Workmen, circa 1885-90

Pontypridd Museum

Opened in 1986 within the former Tabernacle Welsh Baptist Chapel, Pontypridd Museum tells the story of an area transformed from a quiet Valleys community to a thriving industrial town. Around this industry sprung a vibrant culture of music, art, sport and political activity which still shapes the town.

<https://www.pontypriddmuseum.wales/>



Nantgarw China Works

Their vision is to transform where the world's finest porcelain was made into a vibrant centre for ceramic history and contemporary innovation.

Today, the China Works is an independent museum, as well as a working pottery and an educational institution offering some 500 workshop sessions every year.

<https://nantgarwchinaworksmuseum.co.uk/>



St Elvan's, Aberdare

Founded in 1852 and located in the heart of Aberdare, St Elvan's has recently undergone an extensive renovation. The Church's Community Heritage Project was awarded a Vision Fund grant of £491,869 by Pen Y Cymoedd Community Fund, along with £786,700 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, £47,000 from Cadw, £40,000 from the National Churches Trust, and £12,000 from the James Pantyfedwen Foundation. Since reopening, it has provided a vibrant new space featuring concert and conference facilities, an exhibition gallery, meeting rooms, heritage tours and talks, and continues to be an active place of worship.

<https://www.stelvans.com/heritage-activities.html>



Appendix 2: Policies and Strategies

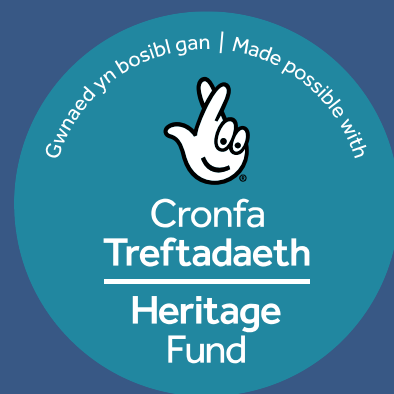
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| Cadw: Conservation Principles for Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales | Conservation Principles for Sustainable Management |
| Cadw: Policy, advice and guidance | Policy, advice and guidance |
| Curriculum for Wales | Curriculum for Wales |
| Future Wales The National Plan 2040 | Future Wales The National Plan |
| Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 | Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 |
| How to improve energy efficiency in Historic Buildings in Wales | Improving Energy Efficiency |
| Local Development Plan (revised RCT 2022-2037) | Local Development Plan |
| Place Making Charter | Place Making Charter |
| Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 February 2021 | Planning Policy Wales 11 |
| Working with our Communities (RCT Corporate Plan 2024-2030) | RCT Corporate Plan |
| Supplementary Planning Guidance: The Historic Environment | Historic Environment SPG |
| Supplementary Planning Guidance: Designated Canal Structures | Canal Structures |
| Supplementary Planning Guidance: Development and the Welsh Language | Welsh Language |
| Supplementary Planning Guidance: Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance | Buildings of Local Importance |
| Technical Advice Note 24 (TAN 24) The Historic Environment | Technical Advice Note 24 |
| Well-Being of Future Generations Act (2015) | Well-Being of Future Generations |



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
HERITAGE STRATEGY
2025-2030

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh.

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GWASANAETH TREFTADAETH
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
HERITAGE SERVICE

