

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

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REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update Cabinet on the Destination Management Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf and seek sign off.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the Rhondda Cynon Taf Destination Management Plan 2014-2020 as a strategic tourism document. And that its actions/projects are taken forward to the next stage – assessment of delivery.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The economic benefit of tourism to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2012 was estimated at £116 million, STEAM (2012). Tourism in Rhondda Cynon Taf is important for the local authority and under the directorate of Strategy, PR and Tourism, the Tourism Unit has the responsibility of working in partnership with key stakeholders to increase tourism within the County Borough.
- 3.2 Welsh Government has tasked local authorities in Wales to develop a Destination Management Plan. The Plan is essentially a strategy to develop and manage a destination in order to stimulate the visitor economy. Subsequently, Welsh Government and WEFO will consult the Plan when considering funding and grant solutions.
- 3.3 A ‘destination’ is an area which includes attractions, accommodation and support services. It may be defined by physical, thematic or administrative boundaries and it embraces a set of distinctive images and qualities that give it a brand identity recognisable by potential visitors.
- 3.4 Due to its size and diverse geography and topography, Rhondda Cynon Taf has been divided into seven smaller, more manageable destinations that are defined by geography and a common ‘offer’. By ‘offer’ we mean

the things to do and see by the visitor and by definition, each has a clear and distinctive identity which can be promoted and described to visitors and recognised by them. These offers can then be branded and promoted through the Council and partner organisations. The Destinations are:

Aberdare & Upper Cynon
Lower Cynon
Upper Rhondda
Mid Rhondda
Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda
Ely Valley
Lower Taff Valley

- 3.5 A Partnership has been established for each ‘destination’ and includes ‘Tourism Ambassadors’, community groups, accommodation providers, attraction and activity providers, shops, eateries, transportation providers and other public bodies. There are several advantages to be gained by this approach including more meaningful consultation, greater buy-in from the local communities resulting in a more collaborative/realistic plan for the future. These opportunities will have a local and regional benefit including accessing external funding sources.
- 3.6 The RCT Destination Management Plan provides the strategic context including information on destination Rhondda Cynon Taf. It follows the ‘visitor journey’ process from researching a destination right through to evaluating the visit and feedback. It provides an RCT wide overview of priorities and a more detailed plan for each destination hub.

4 **CONCLUSION**

The Destination Management Plan provides a strategic framework to develop the tourism potential of Rhondda Cynon Taf and visitor attractions. It also provides a useful tool to monitor the economic impact of tourism for our local economy. The document will support the Council’s broader economic priorities in line with increased focus being given to Tourism by the Welsh Government.

Destination Rhondda Cynon Taf

Tourism Destination Management Plan 2013 - 2020 (Draft Plan)

Foreword – Rhondda Cynon Taf Destination Management Plan

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1. Introduction / Preface

Rhondda Cynon Taf is the third largest unitary authority in Wales and covers an area of 424 square kilometres. Tourism in Rhondda Cynon Taf is a priority for the local authority and under the directorate of Strategy, PR and Tourism, the Tourism Unit has the responsibility of working in partnership with key stakeholders to increase tourism within the County Borough, including; accommodation providers, restaurants and cafés, tourist attractions, activity providers and those involved or responsible for the natural environment. These stakeholders provide the tangible products and services that we promote to visitors. To complement this we work with industry bodies such as Visit Wales, Capital Regional Tourism, the 'Valleys' and Valleys Regional Park. These provide guidance, funding and the benefits of economies of scale in this ever-competitive industry.

To help develop Rhondda Cynon Taf as an attractive area for visitors, it is vital that the destination has wide appeal and several reasons to visit. A destination is an area which includes attractions, accommodation and support services. It may be defined by physical, thematic or administrative boundaries and it embraces a set of distinctive images and qualities that give it a brand identity recognisable by potential visitors. Destinations should be places with which tourism stakeholders have a natural affinity and within which it is practicable for them to work together. A key consideration of whether an area can and should be managed as a destination in its own right is whether it has a clear and distinctive identity by which it can be promoted and described to visitors and recognised by them. 'Destination Management' has been introduced to ensure there is a holistic approach to the visitor experience. Rhondda Cynon Taf Council are leading on this project and working closely with all stakeholders in the development of a strategic Destination Management Plan.

2. Strategic Context

Rhondda Cynon Taf is predominantly a day visitor destination with 77% of visits in this category according to STEAM data (2012). This, coupled with the statistic that when visitors do stay, 81% stay with friends or relatives, suggest that the Council and its partners have a considerable challenge to alter the tourism proposition to encourage longer visits and appeal to those visitors without friends and relatives residing in the County Borough.

2.1 Vision and Aims

The ongoing challenge is engendering a tourism environment to achieve the vision set for 2020. The vision being:-

*Rhondda Cynon Taf will be a successful visitor destination
within the valleys region of Wales by 2020*

In order to achieve the vision and provide an effective service within the tourism industry, Strategy, PR and Tourism has three broad aims:-

1. To develop effective partnership working within the tourism industry;
2. To develop Rhondda Cynon Taf as a collaboration of quality visitor experiences;
3. To raise the profile and credibility of Rhondda Cynon Taf on the UK tourism map.

3. Understanding the Market and Visitor Offer

The destination management process has been interpreted differently by various local authorities or regional partnerships tasked with their implementation. It is felt that in its purest form destination management is separate from destination marketing, however it could be argued that the two are mutually exclusive and will be addressed in unison. To start, this section provides an overview of the visitor offer and market.

3.1 Key Tourism Facts

According to STEAM figures, in 2012 Rhondda Cynon Taf welcomed just under 2 million visitors, spending over £116 million.

There were 9.6 million overnight trips to Wales by GB residents. Most visitors to Wales come from a domestic market – Wales and England in particular. Key English regions include the Midlands, the South West and London. Overseas visitors primarily come from Ireland, the US, Germany, Netherlands and France.

The associated spend was £1.5 billion. 62% of GB visitors to Wales came for a holiday, 25% to visit friends or relatives and 13% on business. Among the regions of Wales, North Wales attracted the largest share of overnight GB tourists on a holiday. The majority of overnight business trips occurred in South East Wales. The Great Britain Day Visits survey indicated that expenditure by day trippers in Wales amounted to over £2.9 billion in 2011.

3.2 Visitor Profile

'The Valleys' Marketing Area, which includes Rhondda Cynon Taf, has the following visitor profile:-

- Age profile of visitors is higher than the UK profile, with a much stronger presence of the over 45's
- More male visitors than the UK profile, 58% vs 52%, women lower than the UK profile, 40% vs 48%
- Distance from the Valleys is a significant factor, with the majority of visitors coming from Wales, the South West and the Midlands. West Midlands accounted for 20% of visitors over the past two years
- Majority of visitors live with their spouse only, a reflection of the older profile

In terms of lifestyle profiling, 26% of visitors to the Valleys are 'Traditionals' and have the following characteristics. They are mainstream, have traditional values, prefer function over style, value good service, unlikely to spend on expensive alternatives. They live at a relaxed pace, enjoy intellectual challenges, on TV. 57% have internet access. From the research it is evident that to maximise the potential tourism return from this profile, the following should be adhered to:-

- Tap into existing customers as the Valleys has a high repeat visitor rate;
- Push activities to promote the Valleys as an 'all year round' destination;
- Push shorter breaks of 1-3 nights as the longer holidays in the UK diminish;
- Use the surrounding areas, such as Cardiff and the Brecon Beacons National Park as 'hooks' to attract visitors.

3.3 Marketing Communication Channels

Rhondda Cynon Taf markets itself both independently and regionally with our regional partners. Working regionally allows greater economies of scale as a larger collective fund has stretched further and allowed a wider, more varied tourism offer to the visitor. Regional campaigns receive considerable external funding. On the downside however, regional marketing does not increase the profile of each participant area as the visitor becomes aware of the regional or sub-regional brand and not the individual destinations. The marketing campaigns conducted from within the authority address this and centre upon the key tourism propositions.

3.4 The Rhondda Cynon Taf offer visitor offer

Rhondda Cynon Taf is located north of Cardiff, at the heart of South Wales and is the third largest local authority in Wales. The Brecon Beacons National Park is just to the north and Cardiff to the south. The M4 runs along at its base and the A470 runs north to south on its eastern boundary. There are eight main towns and the geography embraces an upland plateau and three valleys in the north, with rolling farmland and woods in the south.

Hyder Consulting's 2007 strategy, 'Heads of the Valleys Tourism Opportunities' identified the cycling, walking, adventure/activity, culture/events, heritage/genealogy, equestrian and golf tourism sectors as opportunities for product development. The area is well equipped to make the most of these growth markets through the Destination Management process.

Geography and Geology is our greatest natural asset and includes designated 'historical landscapes' created during the last ice-age in upper Rhondda and in upper Cynon. High mountain roads at Bwlch, Maerdy and Rhigos offer dramatic viewpoints towards the twin peaks of Pen y Fan and Corn Du in the Brecon Beacons. The steep wooded valleys sides, carved out by the three rivers, from which the County Borough gains its name gradually levels out towards the gentle rolling hills of the Vale to the south of the County Borough.

3.4.1 Cycling/Walking/Adventure/Activity

Cycling is often treated as one market but is, in fact, an amalgam of very different activities. The market profile of a mountain biker is very different from a touring cyclist, a family of 'dabblers' in the activity or families touring on the National Cycle Network.

There were 1.3 million new cyclists in the UK in 2010 with the sector generating £2.9 billion for the British economy. The 'Visit Wales cycle tourism strategy' reports that cycle tourists, whether coming for cycling holidays, or participating in cycling as a holiday activity, represent a growing and valuable tourist market for Wales. The 'Hyder' study identified mountain biking, Wales cycle breaks, family cycling and cycle touring in Wales as key growth market areas.

Rhondda Cynon Taf currently has only one real facility providing significant biking standards, at Garwnant. Competition in this sector is fierce from areas like Afan Argoed in Neath Port Talbot, Cwm Carn in Caerphilly and the recently opened Gethin Park. However these centres of excellence act as attractors to the valleys and we need to work closely to extend the benefits to Rhondda Cynon Taf. Trails like the Celtic Trail Mountain Bike Route that links Pontypridd and Neath also provide opportunities to enter this market.

The National Cycle Network also provides recreational access within Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Celtic Trail (Route 47) runs northwards from Pontypridd before heading west above Maerdy. Route 4 runs from Pontypridd and heads westwards towards Bridgend. The Taff Trail (Route 8) follows the strategic

footpath from Cardiff to Brecon, passing through Pontypridd and Merthyr Tydfil. The ‘Skyline’ Route (46) passes through the northern edges of the County Borough. Organisations such as Sustrans and Natural Resources Wales, who we work with closely, will develop the infrastructure and provide opportunities to enable maximisation of this market.

Rhondda Cynon Taf is ideally positioned to develop the cycling product. It’s situated between three of South Wales’ cycling destinations (Afan Argoed, Cwm Carn and Gethin) and includes the Celtic and Taff Trails. The development of the Loops and Links network will help to connect established strategic trails to attractions and accommodation and cycle hire initiatives are available throughout the County Borough. In addition, plans to develop Cwmsaerbren in the Upper Rhondda as a ‘woodland’ activity centre and Dare Valley Country Park, near Aberdare as a ‘Natural’ cycle trails hub will further enhance the cycle offer.

Walking is also a market that can be subdivided. Walking as a holiday and a day visitor activity is very popular in Wales. The ‘Visit Wales Walking Tourism Strategy’ suggests over half of all day visits include walking activity. Spend by walking visitors is estimated to bring over £550 million into rural and coastal communities. Walking visits bring other benefits, alongside the economic ones, including reducing seasonality and contributing to the development of sustainable tourism.

Walking in Rhondda Cynon Taf is recognised as a key activity for increasing visitor numbers and engaging our local communities. The County Borough has over 700 kilometres of trails and established walks linking communities and villages to woodlands and mountains. There are diverse access opportunities, with the remote and challenging moors, contrasting with the thick forestry plantations or deciduous woodlands. In the north, open access land on the southern tip of the Brecon Beacons National Park is extensive, in places adjoining terraced streets. Whilst in the south, the footpath and bridleway network is denser, crossing a countryside of farms and small woodlands.

The County Borough is well served by strategic walking (and cycling) routes providing links across the region. The Taff Trail is accessible for walkers and forms an integral element of ‘Sustrans’ Route 8 on Lon Las Cymru. Within Rhondda Cynon Taf this Trail provides access to Cardiff (in the South) and Merthyr and Brecon (in the North) and has a number of visitor related businesses along the route. The recently revamped Glamorgan Ridgeway Walk is a 27 mile (43km) route along the southern edge of the South Wales Coalfield. It follows public footpaths, bridleways, forest tracks and quiet country lanes along the ridge-line from Margam Country Park to Caerphilly Castle, taking in spectacular upland and valley scenery through Llantrisant and Gwaelod-Y-Garth.

The Cynon Trail is substantially complete with the incomplete sections currently under development. It will provide a walking/cycling route linking the Cynon River Park with a network of cycle paths to surrounding towns and villages. Further developments include linking the Taff Trail in Abercynon to Ynysybwl, a cycle link from Dare Valley Country Park to Aberdare Town Centre and linking Dare Valley Country Park to Cwmaman.

The Rhondda Fawr Community Route (constructed as part of the Porth Relief Road) and the Church Village Community Route (constructed as part of the Church Village by Pass) were developed in line with standard RCT practice to construct walking and cycling routes as part of new major road schemes.

The Loops and Links network joins together strategic routes with local level rights of way, country lanes, old drovers roads and forestry tracks. The initiative has so far established a number of trails within Rhondda Cynon Taf, which are designed to be used by walkers, mountain bikers and, wherever possible, horse riders, encouraging the exploration of the towns, villages and countryside of the Valleys. This and other established schemes such as the annual Wales Walking Festival have helped raise the profile of this key tourism growth area in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Much is being done to co-ordinate and promote the vast amount of walks being developed by local communities, through the Destination Management process.

Adventure tourism includes climbing, caving and potholing, non-motorised water sports, diving, motorised land sports, air sports, mountain biking, hill walking/trekking and other land based activities. Adventure tourist visits involving these activities either as their main or secondary purpose of visit, currently account for around 1.25 million visits to Wales per year and in the order of £180 million direct visitor spending.

Adventure tourism has been developed as a major product in the Brecon Beacons, West Wales and Snowdonia. Rhondda Cynon Taf has several activity centres offering climbing, quad biking, shooting and other adventure activities. Anecdotal evidence recognises a demand for this form of provision in South-East Wales suggesting growth in this sector, particularly given facility development, improved access and better marketing and promotion. But there is currently little if any marketing support at a regional level and it is acknowledged that there can be issues regarding access, land ownership and liability, as well as potential environmental concerns.

3.4.2 Heritage and Genealogy

Although better-known for its industrial heritage, Rhondda Cynon Taf's heritage is surprisingly much more diverse, comprising Iron, Bronze and Stone Age relics. However, it is the history of the 'industrial revolution' that provides a strong heritage brand for the South Wales Valleys, and this reflects the growing confidence in the cultural and economic potential of the area's industrial legacy and the successes of high profile initiatives which were developed by 'Herian' and are being continued to some extent through the Valleys Regional Park initiative.

The European Routes of Industrial Heritage initiative also provides the opportunity to promote Rhondda Cynon Taf's heritage on a European scale. Rhondda Heritage Park is an identified site along the South Wales Regional Route, and this establishes tourism links with more prominent regional attractions at Big Pit and Swansea's National Waterfront Museum.

Heritage and genealogy are effectively two separate but complimentary markets. Heritage is identified in national, regional and local strategies as one of the Valleys' key tourism 'products' and includes; Industrial heritage; Pre-industrial heritage; Landscape and Cultural heritage. The heritage story is enthusiastically told throughout the county borough at, for instance, Rhondda Heritage Park, Cynon Valley Museum & Gallery and Pontypridd Museum. Further development opportunities also exist at venues including Taff's Well Thermal Spring, Nantgarw Chineworks and Pontypridd Lido, set to open in 2015. Since 2008, there have been efforts to interpret the heritage of our area with the installation of almost 40 Blue Plaques and the development of a number of heritage walking and driving trails. These are available in printed and electronic formats through www.heritagetrailsrct.co.uk and more recently further enhanced by the creation of innovative 'Audio Trails' which are available on this website and as a downloadable 'App' for MP3 and smart phone. QR technology has also been introduced.

Heritage is already a key asset of the area and it is envisaged that it will continue to grow. This growth is strongly associated with development of specific niche markets, such as genealogy, which has itself become a growth market as a consequence of developments on the Internet, and the launch of websites like Ancestry.com and television programmes such as 'Who do you think you are?' As people establish family links to Wales, a visit to their birthplace is often associated, bringing a number of benefits to the local economy. The 'Rough Guide' views genealogy as "*one of the fastest growing sectors in the travel industry, with the potential to be extremely lucrative in Wales due to the numbers of Americans whose families originate there.*" Reference Libraries and Museums offer a local family history service as well as online information resources and photographic archives.

The 'Faith Tourism Action Plan for Wales' recognises the importance of churches and chapels to the heritage offer and subsequently has identified a list of key priorities to fully realise their potential to visitors including encouraging tourism businesses to become better acquainted with the Faith Tourism product in the area and this can be achieved through Destination Management.

This growth in heritage tourism has been acknowledged by areas such as Torfaen, which has developed the town of Blaenavon and the Big Pit Mining Museum into a World Heritage Site. Linking with other high profile attractions will be vital to extend the visitor offer in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Castell Coch and Caerphilly Castle, for instance, have been identified as key partners to the heritage offer in Lower Taf. The theatres and museums are vibrant cultural hubs which are also historically important and play a crucial role in the development of the destination for visitors.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council has recently reiterated its commitment to protecting the heritage assets of the area and developing a means of marketing and interpreting them. Following the creation of a Heritage Strategy for the period 2007-2010, this has been further reinforced by the adoption of a further strategy for 2010-2013 to run in parallel with this tourism strategy and a Heritage Officer is in place to deliver the work. It is acknowledged that Rhondda Cynon Taf has a unique place in the history of the UK and as such this is an important differentiating factor when marketing the area for tourism.

3.4.3 Equestrian

Horse riding is an important tourist activity in Wales with an estimated 800,000 riding occasions each year and a direct expenditure of approximately £18.55 million. Visit Wales estimates a 10% growth in riding holidays as achievable, giving product strengths and assuming further developments to facilities. Rhondda Cynon Taf is well placed to benefit from this anticipated growth with a high proportion of horse ownership and an excellent outdoor environment.

Recognised opportunities to develop the bridleway and horse riding product in Rhondda Cynon Taf exist but they may need to be linked to external offerings within the Brecon Beacons or Swansea Valley areas to be viable as a marketable product. However, there are currently very few established facilities for Equestrian Tourism here and this suggests an ongoing developmental need in this area. It must be stressed that to develop the infrastructure alone will require considerable resources.

Although the Briars Bridleway, a 14-mile trail from Barry Sidings Countryside Park near Pontypridd to Dare Valley Country Park has been recently developed, there is a recognised shortage of promoted bridleways in Rhondda, Cynon and Taf. Some limited provision for horse riders has been developed as part of the Loops and Links project in the north of the County Borough and there is extensive access to Natural Resources Wales land via the concordat with the British Horse Society.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has four established horse riding centres; Green Meadow based in Dare Valley Country Park, Talygarn Equestrian Centre based near Llantrisant, Rockwood Riding Centre, Craig yr Allt, near Taffs Well and there are opportunities to develop this the equestrian tourism market.

3.4.4 Golf Tourism

Rhondda Cynon Taf is well provided for, with a number of clubs welcoming members and non-members access to excellent facilities. There are several golf clubs in the region, including 18 hole courses and 9 hole courses. A pitch and putt course is based in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park. Golf tourism is always popular and apart from the obvious benefits to accommodation providers and golf courses in Rhondda Cynon Taf, there is the added potential to provide for friends and family visiting who do not want to play golf.

3.4.5 Accommodation

There is a good choice of hotels and guesthouses in Rhondda Cynon Taf, mainly concentrated around major settlements such as Pontypridd and Aberdare. Dare Valley Country Park offer's hotel, caravan and camping accommodation.

3.4.6 Attractions and Activities.

The existing tourism product within Rhondda Cynon Taf is primarily focused around its rich heritage and natural environment. A number of attractions currently offer the visitor an insight into the area's heritage and its strong links to industry. Since the decline of mining, and following a major reclamation programme, the landscape has also become the focus for visitors, perfectly emphasised by Dare Valley Country Park and a number of smaller countryside parks and forestry areas.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has numerous attractions spread geographically throughout the County Borough, including many local heritage attractions such as churches, castles, monuments and Iron Age features.

The natural environment also features prominently and the area is rich in rights of way, strategic trails, waterfalls and waterfall walks and is also a hub for several major walking and cycling routes.

There are a number of social/cultural attractions including the Park & Dare Theatre, Dare Valley Country Park, and Garwnant Forest Visitor Centre. The Welsh Whisky Distillery at Penderyn has developed a visitor tour, which should further enhance its unique status and the proposed visitor centre at the Royal Mint in Llantrisant could be a huge draw.

3.4.7 Countryside and Parks

Countryside covers 80% of the County Borough. There are 400 hectares of green spaces including two premier 'formal' parks in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park and Aberdare Park along with Dare Valley Country Park and other key countryside sites and sports grounds. Garw Nant Forest Visitor Centre lies just on the border between Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil and is managed by Natural Resources Wales. These green spaces provide opportunities for both formal and informal recreation, everything from bowling greens and tennis courts to public rights of way and fishing waters. The County Borough also benefits from many areas of Open Access land, especially in the north.

One of the three key attractions, Ynysangharad War Memorial Park in Pontypridd, complements its parkland and recreational facilities with an all year-round events programme that attract visitors from all over. The Lido project within the Park includes the regeneration of the Grade II listed baths to both preserve this important piece of local history and to bring the site up to the 21st century in terms of leisure and recreational access. This will not only have a local appeal but also form a regional attraction and catalyse the regeneration of Pontypridd Town Centre.

Dare Valley Country Park in the north of Rhondda Cynon Taf is set in over 500 acres of reclaimed industrial land with woodlands, and boasts way-marked trails and lakes. Recent regeneration, courtesy of Welsh Government and European funding has seen an enhanced visitor centre, café, three star

accommodation and 3 star camping and caravan park. The Park has also secured an externally run ‘Laser Tag’ experience and has enormous potential for further phased development.

The Cynon Valley River Park Project brings together all the relevant green-space projects in the valley floor from Rhigos and Penderyn in the north to Abercynon in the south. This will require a coherent and up to date framework which can be used to guide action and fundraising over the next 10 years.

3.4.8 Arts and Entertainment

The Welsh Government’s ‘Cultural Tourism Action Plan 2012-2015’, indicates that in 2010, £743 million was spent on holidays where a cultural Experience was either the main reason for the holiday or undertaken as part of it. There is still a need to change perceptions through raising the profile of Wales as a unique cultural tourism destination drawing on its language, history and the arts.

The Valleys cultural identity is also closely aligned to the traditions of music, literature and sports and the enhancement and promotion of modern cultural activities is important in terms of promoting an attractive vibrant image. Rhondda Cynon Taf works alongside neighbouring authorities and third sector on the ‘ArtsConnect’ initiative to enable a more effective delivery of the cultural offer.

There are Arts Council funded theatres in Rhondda Cynon Taf including the Park & Dare Theatre in Treorchy, The Muni Arts Centre in Pontypridd and the Coliseum Theatre in Aberdare, are supported by a range of smaller venues including the Cwmaman Institute, the Factory in Porth, Clwb Y Bont in Pontypridd and the Phoenix Theatre in Ton Pentre, to provide a diverse programme of film, music, drama, dance, literature, craft, digital media, visual arts and light entertainment.

Events and festivals are critical in promoting local arts and culture and encouraging community participation. Although festivals and events vary considerably in size and level of attraction, they share the potential for encouraging local tourist expenditure and overnight stays and to develop into regional or potentially national festivals and events.

3.4.9 Shopping and Eating Out

Rhondda Cynon Taf has eight towns, each with its own identity and offering a huge choice of cafes, restaurants, specialist shops and high street brands, and this has been emphasised in promotional materials. Modern out-of-town shopping centres include Talbot Green Retail Park, whilst Parc Nantgarw offers, a range of leisure experiences including restaurants, a multiplex cinema and bowling complex. The hilltop town of Llantrisant offers unique boutique style shops and has a Craft & Design Centre, featuring a gallery shop and studio space for craft tenants who run their own businesses from attractive glass fronted studios.

3.4.10 Events

Events and festivals are an emerging giant in the competitive leisure and tourism arena. Increasingly public and voluntary organisations are teaming up with commercial operators to deliver events for dual social and economic rewards. Rhondda Cynon Taf has a proven track record for staging successful events, attracting in excess of 130, 000 visitors. A range of target markets are accommodated, with food and agricultural shows, music concerts, fetes, carnivals, community & educational events, as well as Christmas parades, sporting activities & civic functions.

The famous Nos Galan Races are held annually on New Year's Eve to commemorate the athletic prowess of legendary Welsh runner Guto Nyth Bran and regularly attract crowds of over 11,000 people.

The strategic development of events and festivals, as social and economic generators will greatly enhance the tourism product within Rhondda Cynon Taf, further establish the areas reputation for excellence in this field and maximise the opportunities for sponsorship and commercial partnerships.

3.4.11 Conference and business facilities

Rhondda Cynon Taf offers a good standard of conference venues for international conferences, business meetings, incentives and training events. These are based in hotels, attractions and the University of South Wales. However, it is important to point out that Rhondda Cynon Taf is very close to larger scale facilities in the nearby cities of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea.

3.4.12 Infrastructure

Rhondda Cynon Taf is primarily accessed by car but the general quality of transport linkages throughout the County Borough is good. The railway serves both the Rhondda Fawr and the Cynon Valley and Paddington to Swansea mainline service which stops at Pontyclun and Llanharan, 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 Rhondda Cynon Taf is in need of improvement.

Car parks within Rhondda Cynon Taf are predominately owned and run by the local authority. Attractions such as Rhondda Heritage Park and Dare Valley Country Park have ample free car and coach parking for the use of visitors.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has a Tourism Information Centre, which is situated in the Pontypridd Museum building. There are a number of areas within Rhondda Cynon Taf Council offices, libraries and attractions which all offer tourist information and this is an area that will be more formally developed in the next few years.

3.5 Measurement

- 1 Volume and value of tourism is notoriously difficult to measure. In the UK, data is gathered by several agencies for different countries, areas, regions and local authorities. Data sources include; The Office of National Statistics; the Department of Culture, Media and Sport; Visit Britain; Welsh Government; Visit Wales; Capital Region Tourism; STEAM and Southern Wales.
- 2 Consultation has been undertaken at 'local' attractions, to determine visitor profiles and opinions. The different research methods, extrapolation methods and interpretation create a massive variance in figures and values, so therefore, none of the figures quoted should be considered as definitive but rather as indicators of trends.

Tourists to the area can only be tracked if tourists physically make a booking or notify you of their visit. Day visits and activities such as walking, cycling etc can take place without anyone knowing. The majority of tourism providers are reluctant to monitor or share visitor details, which would highlight the impact of marketing campaigns.

4. Destination Management

To help promote and enhance Rhondda Cynon Taf as an attractive area for visitors, it is vital that communities play an active role in the visitor experience. The Community Tourism Ambassador Scheme was introduced by our regional partner, Valleys Regional Park (VRP), to encourage volunteers from across the Valleys region to receive free, accredited training and become a welcoming host and a source of information for their locality. The training is aimed at

people who come into contact with visitors either through work or volunteering, such as community groups and café owners, and aims to give local people the confidence and skills to promote the area to visitors and as a result enhance the visitor experience.

The programme has been particularly successful in Rhondda Cynon Taf and this is why these ‘fora’ have helped create Rhondda Cynon Taf’s Destination Management Partnerships and subsequently the Destination Management Plans. At the outset, considering the cultural geography and the diverse visitor offer in the County Borough, we took the decision to break down the area into ‘bite-size-pieces’ to encourage local buy-in and make the process more manageable. We created seven geographical ‘Hubs’.

Due to its size and diverse geography and topography, it has been divided into seven smaller, more manageable destinations that are defined by geography and a common ‘offer’. By ‘offer’ we mean the things to do and see by the visitor and by definition, each has a clear and distinctive identity which can be promoted and described to visitors and recognised by them. These offers can then be branded and promoted through the Council and partner organisations. The Destinations are:-

- Aberdare & Upper Cynon
- Lower Cynon
- Upper Rhondda
- Mid Rhondda
- Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda
- Ely Valley
- Lower Taff Valley

A Partnership has been established for each destination and includes ‘Tourism Ambassadors’ (volunteers who have completed the ‘World Host’ and ‘Our Place’ training modules), community groups, accommodation providers, attraction and activity providers, shops, eateries, transportation providers and other public bodies. There are several advantages to be gained by this approach including a more meaningful consultation, greater buy-in from the local communities resulting in a more collaborative and therefore realistic plan for the future. The Partnerships have agreed terms of reference and assigned a chairperson and secretariat. Strategy, PR and Tourism in Rhondda Cynon Taf Council will continue to support the Partnerships and oversee the wider destination management process. Each Partnership has identified the key assets within their destination and the gaps or opportunities to develop in order to deliver a visitor destination. These Destination Action Plans can be found later in section 5 of this document.

Following on from the Community Tourism Ambassador scheme, the trained ‘Ambassadors’ form the nucleus of the ‘Hub Partnerships’ that meet periodically to discuss and agree tourism priorities in their area. The partnerships also include other local tourism providers who found it difficult to devote two days away from the workplace to attend the training, along with other public, private and third sector representatives. These partnerships will agree terms of reference, assign a chairperson and secretariat and develop and agree a constitution. As the task ahead will involve the many aspects of the ‘visitor journey’ the group may be sub-grouped into areas of interest or challenges. RCT Tourism will continue to support and advise each partnership and oversee the wider destination management process. There are several advantages to be gained by this approach including:-

- more meaningful consultation,
- greater buy-in by local communities resulting in a more collaborative and therefore realistic plan for the future,
- a natural continuation of the ‘Ambassador’ programme

Initial responsibilities for each partnership would include: -

- Agreeing terms of reference for the Group
 - What does the Group want to achieve?
 - Who should be involved?
 - Who will do what?
 - How and when it will be achieved?
 - Select committee to lead the group
 - Agree and develop a constitution
- Agreeing tourism priorities for the Plan
 - Short term – quick wins

- Longer term – larger projects

5. Priorities and Action Planning by Destination

The following section introduces each of the seven destinations within Rhondda Cynon Taf. A combined version of the ‘visitor journey model’ will provide the framework for highlighting the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities within each area. These are:-

1. Researching Rhondda Cynon Taf as a destination for a visit or short break
2. Getting to and around Rhondda Cynon Taf
3. Staying in Rhondda Cynon Taf
4. Experiences in Rhondda Cynon Taf
5. Recommending a visit to Rhondda Cynon Taf

5. Rhondda Cynon Taf Strategic tourism priorities

CHALLENGE 1

Researching Rhondda Cynon Taf as a destination for a visit or short break

Improving the image of Rhondda Cynon Taf as a short-break destination through partnership working, positive media management and marketing, improved online booking and short-break itineraries.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Destination partnerships	Develop public, private and voluntary partnerships to develop, manage and market the Destination(s). Work closely with service providers and strategic partners to develop the destination and identify funding opportunities.	Reviewed annually	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism/ Local Businesses/transport providers/public sector and voluntary sector/VRP and WAG	Partnership for all

	<p>Work closely with our regional partner (Valleys Regional Park) to support and develop DM partnerships.</p> <p>Support destination partnerships and community groups through the funding application process.</p>			
Marketing Rhondda Cynon Taf	<p>Work with partners to gain a better understanding of the visitor and their needs and develop a market segmentation strategy to more effectively meet these needs, change perceptions of RCT and to establish the county borough as a visitor destination.</p> <p>Promote Rhondda Cynon Taf's as a visitor destination through an improved web presence at www.visitrct.co.uk</p> <p>Promote Rhondda Cynon Taf as a visitor destination through the use of emerging technologies, including social media, as a means of effective and economical two-way communication.</p> <p>Work with our regional partners to develop a sustained PR and marketing strategy for the wider 'valleys' offer, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Day Visitor/VFR Market - Travel Trade Market - School Market - Conference and Meeting Space Market - Activity Market 	Reviewed annually	<p>RCT PR Strategy and Tourism/ Internal DMP Officer Group/ Destination Partnerships/VRP</p> <p>www.visitrct.co.uk</p> <p>www.thevalleys.co.uk</p> <p>www.southernwales.co.uk</p> <p>www.visitwales.co.uk</p> <p>www.walesvalleyswalking.co.uk</p>	Promoting the Brand

Events programme	Work with partners to jointly promote a comprehensive events programme and provide partner access to the Council's online promotional listing on www.whatsonrct.co.uk and subsequently www.visitrct.co.uk	Annual	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships	Promoting the Brand
Natural environment	Work with partners to jointly promote the spectacular natural environment in RCT and surrounding areas through traditional and emerging methods and including www.visitrct.co.uk	ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships/VRP	Promoting the Brand
Walking, cycling and equestrian Trails in RCT.	Work with partners to jointly promote the authorised trails in RCT and surrounding areas through traditional and emerging methods and including www.visitrct.co.uk Promote and support the 'Wales valleys walking Festival'	Ongoing Annually	RCT Parks and Countryside/ Natural Resources Wales (NRW)/RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships	Promoting the Brand
Heritage in RCT	Promote the wealth of history in RCT and surrounding areas through traditional and emerging methods and including www.visitrct.co.uk Develop and promote the genealogy offer in RCT Continue to develop, support and publicise the Blue Plaque Scheme. Develop the Open Doors event through the setting up of regional partnerships.	ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism/HLF / Destination Partnerships/VRP	Promoting the Brand
Faith Tourism in RCT	Work closely with 'Churches Tourism Network Wales' and partners to package and subsequently	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination	Promoting the Brand

	promote Faith Tourism opportunities in RCT through emerging and traditional methods.		Partnerships / CTNW	
Golfing in RCT	Work closely with Visit Wales to package and subsequently promote golfing opportunities in RCT through emerging and traditional methods.	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships /Golf clubs/VRP	Promoting the Brand
Angling in RCT	Encourage and support partnerships to develop the 'angling' offer in RCT and develop a database of angling providers and available locations in the area. Promote fishing opportunities on key publications and www.visitrct.co.uk	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships / Angling clubs/VRP	Promoting the Brand
Climbing in RCT	Promote climbing opportunities in RCT and surrounding areas through traditional and emerging methods and including www.visitrct.co.uk	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships / SW Mountaineering Club / RCT Sports Development/VRP	Promoting the Brand
Leisure Centres in RCT	Promote leisure facilities in RCT and surrounding areas through traditional and emerging methods and including www.visitrct.co.uk	ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / RCT Leisure / Destination Partnerships	Promoting the Brand
RCT's Retail offer	Promote the diverse range of shopping in RCT, from out-of-town retail parks to bustling high streets and unusual independent gift shops through traditional and emerging methods and including www.visitrct.co.uk	ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / RCT Development & Regeneration / Destination Partnerships/VRP	Promoting the Brand
Eating Out In RCT	Promote Rhondda Cynon Taf as a great place to eat out through traditional and emerging methods and	ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / DMP Officer	Promoting the Brand

	<p>including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p> <p>Change people's perceptions of Rhondda Cynon Taf's food offer, encourage providers to procure locally and to develop a sense of place menu by recruiting a food expert to assist in the publication of an 'Eating out in RCT' guide. This will serve to encourage providers to procure locally and to develop a sense of place menu and to raise awareness will act as a response piece and signpost to www.visitrct.co.uk</p> <p>Include 'enhanced' food offer in the 'RCT Guide' visitor publication currently being considered by DMP Officer group</p>	2014	group / Destination Partnerships / Places to eat / Food providers /SEWLFT/Food Adventures	
Meeting, training and conference venues	Promote Rhondda Cynon Taf as a place to hold a meeting, training workshop or conference through the publication of a creative spaces/meeting places' guide.	Pending funding 2014/15	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism /RCT Corporate Estates/ DMP Officer group / Destination Partnerships	Promoting the Brand
Ambassador 'Croeso' Programme	<p>Work with our regional partner (Valleys Regional Park) and community ambassadors to develop and promote the 'warm welcome for visitors' in RCT.</p> <p>Work with our regional partner (Valleys Regional Park) to develop and roll-out the Ambassador training programme and establish a 'connecting to visitors' initiative via both www.visitrct.co.uk and www.thevalleys.co.uk</p>	2014	Valleys Regional Park (VRP) / Capital Region Tourism / Destination Partnerships /RCT PR Strategy and Tourism	People development
Photographic database	Work with professional and amateur partners to develop an online database of striking images of	2014	Destination Partnerships /RCT PR Strategy and	Promoting the Brand

	RCT. Provide access to Photographic database in line with current arrangements in place for RCT Library Service photo archive.		Tourism / RCT Library Service/VRP	
Rhondda Cynon Taf Visitor Packages	Work with partners to provide special offers, discounts and packages for the day and overnight visitor market	2014	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Destination Partnerships / Local Businesses/transport providers	Partnership for all
Online Booking Facilities	Encourage providers to become more accessible through the development of online booking.	2015	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Destination Partnerships/Visit Wales	Profitable performance

CHALLENGE 2

Getting to and around Rhondda Cynon Taf

Improve visitor information on route and on arrival and offer a warm ‘valleys’ welcome and excellent facilities to visitors.

Entry point - Road	Provide clear directional signage to destination - amenities/parking/attractions and tourist Information...for instance Brown & White Signage Welcoming arrival at destination – ‘sense of place’. Develop a link between destination signage and National Cycle Network signage	2015	RCT Transport/RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism/Destination Partnerships/Transport providers/VRP	Place building
Travelling by Bus	To provide improved passenger facilities and encourage more public transport use. Promote destinations available by public transport.	2015	RCT Transport/RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism/Destination Partnerships/Transport	Place building

	Develop arrival indicators at bus stations/key bus stops - welcoming arrival at destination – ‘sense of place’ - promote attractions, walking and cycling links and Tourist Information Points.		providers	
Travelling by Rail	To provide improved passenger facilities and encourage more public transport use. Promote destinations available by public transport Improve initial ‘Welcome’ at Railway Stations through clean-ups, ‘sense of place’ and improve directional signage to amenities, attractions, walking and cycling links and Tourist Information Points.	2015	RCT Transport/Arriva/ Network Rail/Welsh Government/RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism/ Destination Partnerships	Place building
Public Conveniences	Access to clean, free toilet facilities Consider branding and promotional opportunities	Ongoing	RCT Streetcare/Destination Partnerships	Place building
Tourist Information Points (TIP)	Develop or enhance Tourist Information Points (TIP’s) at key locations throughout RCT	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism/Destination Partnerships/VRP	Place building
Tourism Ambassadors and Embassies	Develop a culture where local people champion their area and provide a warm welcome for visitors - along the lines of ‘New York greeters’ Assist the development of ‘local embassies’ for ambassadors and direct visitors to them Encourage local people to buy-in to the ‘Ambassador’ concept and sign up for formal training programmes when available	2015	Valleys Regional Park (VRP)/ RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships	People development /Place building
Visitor Parking	Provide sufficient parking for visitors and residents	Ongoing	RCT	Place building

	Provide clear directional signage to car parks Provide directional signage to amenities, attractions, walking and cycling links and Tourist Information Points from car parks.			
Accessibility for all	Ensuring that visitors of all abilities are able to experience the destination	Ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism/Destination Partnerships	Place building
RCT memorial database and online research facility	Creation of memorial database and online research facility	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships	Product development

CHALLENGE 3

Staying in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Improve and increase a range of graded accommodation in Rhondda Cynon Taf and make the booking process simpler

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Visitor Conversion Research	Encourage providers to sign-up to 'Visit Wales Occupancy Survey' – this will give a national, regional and local comparison and a snapshot for providers.	Ongoing	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Destination Partnerships/Visit Wales	Profitable performance
Accommodation	Enhance RCT's reputation as a good place to stay by:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ improving the quality and choice of accommodation▪ Encouraging partnership working and joint	2016	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism/Destination Partnerships/Visit Wales/VRP	Product development

	<p>marketing with transport providers, tourism businesses and food producers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing ‘sense of place’ menus ▪ improving the brand and signage ▪ utilising new technologies including the provision of free WIFI access ▪ Develop meeting/conference facilities and promote their availability ▪ Ensuring staff receive the latest training ▪ considering eco-accreditation ▪ encouraging the ‘grading’ of premises ▪ promoting the choice and availability of accommodation 		
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CHALLENGE 4

The Visitor experience in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Things to see and do in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Creative Industries	<p>Develop the Creative offer in Rhondda Cynon Taf by showcasing talent and encouraging partnership working between artisans and the Local Authority.</p> <p>Develop and improve the theatre venues and continue to develop and promote their comprehensive events programme.</p>	2015	RCT Cultural Services/RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism/Destination Partnerships/VRP/Melissa Warren at ‘Blue Lemon’	Product development

	Develop art/artists trail at appropriate locations throughout the County Borough.			
Events programme	Work with partners to develop and support a coordinated and sustainable event programme.	Annual	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships	Product development
Heritage visitor offer	<p>Work with partners to gain a greater understanding of the heritage offer of the area through an in-depth diagnostic and subsequent database development project.</p> <p>Create/develop key 'natural environment' visitor destinations, by connecting and subsequently interpreting attractions:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>along the Lower Rhondda Corridor</i> - <i>along the Trevithick Trail</i> - <i>in the Lower Taf area</i> 	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism/HLF / Destination Partnerships/VRP	Product development
Faith Tourism in RCT	<p>Work closely with 'Churches Tourism Network Wales' and partners to gain a greater understanding of the Faith Tourism offer in the area through an in-depth diagnostic and subsequent database development project.</p> <p>Create/develop key 'natural environment' visitor destinations, by connecting and subsequently interpreting attractions...</p> <p>Create/develop key Faith Tourism visitor destinations by connecting and subsequently interpreting religious points of interest including:-</p>	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships / CTNW	Product development

	<i>- St Mary's Well and Penrhys/Cistercian Way</i>			
Natural environment	<p>Work with partners to gain a greater understanding of the natural environment and open spaces in RCT through an in-depth diagnostic and subsequent database development project.</p> <p>Create/develop key natural environment visitor destinations, by linking and subsequent interpretation, at:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Upper Rhondda, Penpych and Cwmsaerbren Basin</i> - <i>Llanwonno</i> - <i>Dare Valley Country Park</i> 	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships/VRP	Product development
Outdoor activities	<p>Work with partners to gain a greater understanding of the availability of outdoor activities in RCT through an in-depth diagnostic and subsequent database development project.</p> <p>Create/develop key outdoor activity visitor destinations particularly at:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Dare Valley Country Park</i> - <i>Taff Buggy Trails, Rhydyfelin</i> 	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships/VRP	Product development
Walking, cycling and equestrian Trails in RCT.	<p>Work with partners to gain a greater understanding of walking, cycling and equestrian trails in RCT through an in-depth diagnostic and subsequent development of a database of authorised trails.</p> <p><i>Support and develop the Wales valleys walking</i></p>	2014	RCT Parks and Countryside/Natural Resources Wales (NRW)/RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships	Product development/Promoting the Brand

	Festival Work with partners to ensure trails are well maintained and clearly way-marked and sign-posted. Consider Route enhancement funding for 'optional' excursions from main trails to ensure attractions are more widely used AND the visitor gains a more memorable experience.			
Golfing in RCT	Work with partners to develop the golf offer in RCT. Develop a database of golfing locations and facilitators in RCT and surrounding areas.	2015	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships /Golf clubs/VRP	Product development
Angling in RCT	Work with partners to develop the angling offer in RCT. Develop a database of angling locations and facilitators in RCT and surrounding areas.	2015	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships / Angling clubs/VRP	Product development
Climbing in RCT	Work with partners to develop the golf offer in RCT. Develop a database of climbing providers and available locations in RCT and surrounding areas.	2015	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Destination Partnerships / SW Mountaineering Club / RCT Sports Development/VRP	Product development
Leisure Centres in RCT	Continue to develop and improve leisure facilities in the County Borough.	ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / RCT Leisure / Destination Partnerships	Product development
Eating Out In RCT	Undertake an audit of available venues and develop a comprehensive RCT 'places to eat' database for inclusion on www.visitrct.co.uk	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / DMP Officer group / Destination Partnerships / Places to eat	Product development

	Galvanise the Destination Management partnerships to develop the food offer in RCT by encouraging more locally procured produce and the development of sense of place menus to gain RCT a reputation as a food destination.	2014	/ Food providers /SEWLFT/Food Adventures Ltd.	
Meeting, training and conference venues	Work with partners to undertake a comprehensive audit of available venues and develop a comprehensive database for RCT.	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / DMP Officer group / Destination Partnerships	Product development

Challenge 5

Recommending a visit to Rhondda Cynon Taf

Returning to RCT and recommending a visit to others

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Develop a CRMS	Develop a Customer Relationship Management system to build information on our visitors and their experiences. Encourage them to return to RCT via targeted communication.	2014	PR Strategy and Tourism / Destination Partnerships	Profitable performance

6. Priorities and Action Planning by Destination

6.1 The Upper Rhondda

'Steeped in culture'

6.1 The Upper Rhondda Destination Offer

The Upper Rhondda covers the communities of Treorchy, Treherbert, Penyrenglyn, Blaenrhondda, Tynewydd, Cwmparc and Blaen-y-cwm. Road access is not straightforward, but the dramatic upland roads of Rhigos and Bwlch offer incredibly rewarding vistas and the Valleys Lines train service travels deep into the heart of the area.

Although the Upper Rhondda is famed for its industrial legacy, its history dates back to Mesolithic times and fine examples are dotted throughout the area. But it's the spectacular landscape which is the key attractor for visitors, with the area is so rich in a diverse and thematic archaeological resource of many periods and types, that it is included in the national *Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales*. Pride of place is Penych, one of only two 'flat top spur' mountains in Europe, flanked by a site of special scientific interest at Cwmsaerbren. The whole area is criss-crossed with a diverse range of walking, cycling and equestrian trails and a recent study suggests the development of a 'hub' to cater for this expanding market is a key priority.

The bustling town of Treorchy is popular with residents and visitors with its range of traditional shops, pubs and cafes and a rich musical heritage centred around the vibrant Park & Dare Theatre. The theatre has major development aspirations and provides a performing space for several world-renowned choirs and brass bands.

Pentre to the south is dominated by ‘the Cathedral of the Rhondda’ and nearby Ton Pentre boasts several listed buildings including the former Miners Institute now the Phoenix Centre. The building is part of an exciting project which will see major improvements to the facility and with support its ambitious plans for the development of a cultural arts centre could be realised.

The key activities and attractions in the area centre on both the spectacular upland landscapes suffused with historical sites and a range of dramatic trails, to the strong musical tradition of the area based around the inspiring theatre. The visitor offer is supported by a range of shops, places to eat and several public houses.

Tourism Offer	Type
Park and Dare Theatre	Theatre & Arts Venue
Hot Gossip Café	Place to eat & drink
Wonderstuff	Gift shop/places to eat & drink
Phoenix Theatre / Bethesda Chapel	Theatre & cinema and Historical buildings
Treorchy Male Voice choir	Choir
Parc & Dare Band	Brass band
Cory band	Brass band
Faith, Hope and Harmony	Community Choir
Ty Draw Farm	B&B and Riding School
Rhigos	Viewpoint/ Driving, walking & cycling Trails/climbing/Geology
Bwlch	Viewpoint/ Driving, walking & cycling Trails/climbing/Geology
Penpych	Waterfalls viewpoint/ Walking & cycling Trails/climbing/Geology
Cwmsaerbren Basin	Site of special scientific interest/Walking & cycling Trails/climbing/Geology
Blaencwm Forest	Waterfalls viewpoint / Walking & cycling Trails/climbing/Geology
Cwmparc	Viewpoint / Walking & cycling Trails/climbing
St. Peter's church and fountain	Historical buildings
Maendy camp	Historical site
Hendre'r Gelli	Historical site
Llyn Fawr	Historical site
Dragon Races	National Cycling event
Rhondda Fun Run	Running event

The Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership

The partnership includes members of the community and represents local tourism business and accommodation providers, community organisations as well as public bodies such as Natural Resources Wales and the local authority.

Organisation	Location
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Clydach
Hot Gossip Cafe	Treorchy
Celfyddwaith Picture Shop	Treorchy
Hendrewen Hotel	Treherbert
Rhondda History Society	Treorchy
Arriva Trains	Cardiff
Treorchy Male Voice Choir	Treorchy
Ton Pentre Residents association	Ton Pentre
Wonderstuff	Treorchy

Rhondda Housing	Treorchy
Dragon Ride (event organiser)	Treherbert
Natural Resources Wales (NRW)	Cardiff
Valleys Kids	Penyrenglyn
Ty Draw Farm and Equestrian Centre	Treherbert
Upper Rhondda Community First	Treherbert
Interlink	Treforest
Parc & Dare Brass band	Treorchy
St Peters Church	Pentre
Melissa Warren - Artist	Ton Pentre
Gervaise James – Artist	Blaencwm
Interlink	Nantgarw
Rhondda Fun Run (event organisers)	Treorchy
Richards Barratt - Keep Wales Tidy	Cardiff

Chair Ceri Nicholas **Valleys Kids and Coed Lleol Woodland Project**
Secretary Daniel Williams **Cwmni Communities First**

The Upper Tertiary Deposits Key carboniferous problems

Challenge 1

Researching Upper Rhondda as a destination to visit and booking a break

Improving the image of Upper Rhondda as a short-break destination through partnership working, positive media management and marketing, improved online booking and short-break itineraries.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
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Marketing Upper Rhondda 'Steeped in Culture' Promotional Campaign	Promoting Upper Rhondda as a unique cultural experience in a dramatic outdoor setting in marketing campaigns including RCT Visitor Guide and www.visitrct.co.uk	2014	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership	Promoting the Brand
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CHALLENGE 2

Getting to and around Upper Rhondda

Improve visitor information en route and on arrival and offer a warm 'Valleys' welcome and excellent facilities to visitors.

Gelli/Treorchy Relief Road	To provide better access to the Mid and Upper Rhondda Fawr by reducing congestion along the existing corridor. It will also improve the environment for commercial and residential areas by reducing traffic in the many streets which have direct frontage access.	2016	Sewta/LDP proposal	Place Building
Travelling by Rail - Ton Pentre station - Treorchy station - Treherbert station	Improve welcome to visitors at:- - Ton Pentre station - Treorchy station - Treherbert station Install 'Welcome' signs at each station to greet visitors and direct them to amenities, attractions, walking and cycling links and TIP's:- Welcome to Treherbert...home of	Start 2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Arriva/CRT	Place Building

	<p>Penych.....Western Europe's only table-top mountain.</p> <p>Welcome to Treorchy....home of the world renowned Park & Dare Theatre</p> <p>Welcome Ton Pentre....home to the Phoenix Theatre and cinema</p> <p>Organise clean-ups at the railway stations</p> <p>Improve signage at each station</p>			
National Cycle Network RHONDDA FAWR	Create cycle trail through Rhondda Fawr and provide links to main attractions in Rhondda Fawr and other trails.	Depending on funding	RCT LDP / Sustrans / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership	Product Development
Treorchy Town Centre Regeneration Strategy	Public realm and commercial property Improvements in the town centre	Depending on funding	RCT Regeneration and Planning	Place Building
Tourist Information Points (TIP)	Develop Tourist Information points at :- Tonypandy Library/one4all centre Trehebert Library Ton Pentre Library OR Phoenix Theatre Cwmparc Community Centre	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / RCT Library Service / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership	Place Building
Visitor Parking - Craig y Llyn	Resurface parking area at Craig y Llyn	2016	RCTCBC	Place Building
Upper Rhondda Visitor Map	Develop an 'at destination' visitor information map highlighting key points of interest including:- Park & Dare Theatre; Penych, Bwlch and Rhigos. Retail and eating/drinking offer in Treorchy	2013	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership	Place Building

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CHALLENGE 3

Staying in Upper Rhondda

Improve and increase a range of graded accommodation in Rhondda Cynon Taf and make the booking process simpler - **see RCT key priorities**

There are four places to stay in Upper Rhondda. The table below shows the accommodation available, rating and occupancy levels.

Accommodation	Type	Rating	Bedrooms	Bed spaces	Occupancy %
Ty Draw Farm and Riding School	B&B	Not graded	3	6	
Hendrewen Hotel	B&B Inn	2*	4	8	
Dunraven hotel	B&B Inn	Not graded	9	21	
Baglan Hotel	B&B Inn	Not graded	4	12	

CHALLENGE 4

The Visitor experience in Upper Rhondda

Things to see and do in Upper Rhondda

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Upper Rhondda Events programme	Work in partnership to develop and support a coordinated and sustainable event programme, including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Music and culture events- Health, fitness and sporting events including Rhondda Fun Run and Wiggle	2013...ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership	Product Development

	<p>Dragon Ride Wales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family fun events - Heritage events <p>Publish and promote through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p>			
RCT Point of Interest Trail.....Upper Rhondda Point of interest Interpretation trail (s)	<p>Develop a definitive and authorised series of 'point of interest' Interpretation trails, referencing history, geology and ecology.</p> <p>Develop connectivity between the trails with consideration for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.</p> <p>Install interpretation displays at key 'viewpoint' locations in: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adjacent to Car Park, Blaencwm 2. Waterfall viewpoint, Penych 3. Adjacent Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy 4. St Peters Church, Pentre 5. Miners Institute (Phoenix), Ton Pentre <p>Publish and promote the Trail Promote the trails through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p> <p>Develop App for downloadable Audio and augmented reality trail.</p>	2014	<p>RCT Parks and Countryside / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership / Natural Resources Wales</p>	Product Development
Upper Rhondda Town Heritage Trail(s)	<p>Develop three 'town' Heritage Trails:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Treorchy - Ton Pentre/Pentre - Trehebert/Blaenrhondda 	2014	<p>RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership</p>	Product Development

	<p>Connect to form an Upper Rhondda Heritage Trail and link to RCT Point of Interest Trail</p> <p>Publish and promote the Trail(s) in line with current branding, through leaflet, on-line presence, App for downloadable Audio and augmented reality.</p> <p>Install information panels as required.</p>			
PARK AND DARE THEATRE <i>Theatre built in 1913 using subscriptions from miners' wages. Dance, drama and music events.</i>	<p>Development of the venue to include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpretation - Improvements to foyer - Development of lounge bar as an additional performance space - Café facility - Parking - Integrated signage throughout the theatre - Staff training – Welcome host <p>Develop partnerships with cultural offer providers</p>	2020	<p>RCT Cultural Services / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership / Treorchy Male Voice Choir/Cory Band Offer/Park and Dare Band/Treherbert & District Band/Faith, Hope and Harmony community choir and cultural providers</p>	Product Development
Creative art trail in Treherbert	Develop art trail on ground behind Treherbert station	2015	<p>RCT Cultural Services / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Upper Rhondda DM Partnership / Cwmni</p>	Product Development
Upper Rhondda Environmental Visitor Project	Develop an environmental woodland centre/café as a focal point of the Upper Rhondda's dramatic upland terrain and historic landscape including; <i>Cwmsaerbyn basin (SSSI); Blaencwm Forest; Penpych; Lluest waterfalls; Rhigos and Bwlch mountain roads.</i> The 'hub' would be central to the	2016	<p>RCT Parks and Countryside RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism/Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership/Interlink /</p>	Product Development

	<p>visitor offer in the area support walking, cycling, historic trails, environmental education and sustainable energy.</p> <p>Consider community Hydro initiative</p>		<p>Natural Resources Wales / BCCB/Network Rail</p> <p><i>Site being considered on old brewery site would require change of 'permissions' by Network Rail</i></p>	
Upper Rhondda woodland workshop initiative	<p>Develop eco-workshops and bunk house initiative in Upper Rhondda</p> <p><i>Consider joint initiative with the Upper Rhondda Visitor Centre above</i></p>	2020	RCT Parks and Countryside / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership / Natural Resources Wales / Rhondda Housing Assoc.	Product Development
Extreme Zip Wire activity centre	<p>Develop extreme activity visitor offer within the Blaencwn – Rhigos area.</p> <p>Possibly enables extension of the Environmental project in Cwmsaerbren</p>	2014	Vertigo/Hang loose @ Adventure Valley// RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership	Product Development
Phoenix Centre (formerly Ton Pentre Workingmen's Hall and Institute) <i>The Phoenix provides a facility for cinema and theatre. Building is grade 2 listed</i>	<p>Improve the Phoenix cinema/theatre and develop as a cultural arts centre.</p> <p>Preserve the Grade 2 listed building in conjunction with the adjacent Grade 2* listed Bethesda chapel</p>	2016	RCT / Ton Pentre Community Trust / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership / Interlink / Wales co-operative / Coalfields Communities	Product Development
Blaencwm Tunnel <i>When completed in July 1890. it measured 3,300</i>	Install 'keystone' at Treherbert Station with supporting interpretation.	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Upper Rhondda Destination	Product Development

<i>yards - the seventh longest tunnel in the UK</i>			Partnership / Network rail / Arriva / Sustrans	
Parc Hall, Cwmparc <i>Community Theatre/cinema</i>	Support plans to develop venue as a hub for (residents and) visitors to the area, including the creation of a formal café space and tourist information point.	2020	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership / Cwmparc Community Association.	Product Development

Challenge 5

Recommending a visit to Upper Rhondda

See RCT key priorities

6.2 The Lower Taf

'Castles and Curiosities'

6.2 The Lower Taf Destination Offer

The Lower Taf hub lies at the south-eastern corner of Rhondda Cynon Taf and includes the communities of Taff's Well, Ty Rhiw and Nantgarw. The area is located just north of Cardiff and is easily accessed by the M4 motorway and the A470 trunk road. The Valleys Lines rail link between the capital and Pontypridd operates every twelve minutes.

There are a number of unique and unusual historical 'oddities' in the area including the World renowned, Nantgarw Chineworks Museum and the Taff's Well Thermal Spring, the only one in Wales set against the spectacular backdrop of nearby Garth Mountain. Opportunities exist to develop the heritage

offer in the area by partnering with the World renowned Castell Coch standing sentinel-like at the ‘gateway to the valleys’ and Caerphilly Castle which lies ten minutes to the east.

The more energetic, can walk or cycle the 55 mile Taff Trail which runs north from the vibrant capital city, through the historical valleys landscape and into the beautiful Brecon Beacons National Park. The Glamorgan Ridgeway is a more challenging 27 mile trail that dissects the Lower Taff as it wends from Margam to Caerphilly. The Taff Buggy Centre near Upper Boat provides a wide range of outdoor activities for all ages.

The key activities and attractions in the area centre on the historical Nantgarw Chinaworks Museum and Taff’s Well Thermal Spring. The Taff Trail runs through the area and the visitor offer is supported by several public houses.

Tourism Offer	Type
Nantgarw Chinaworks	Historical building / Museum / activities
Taff’s Well Thermal spring	Historical building
Taff’s Well Park	Home to the Thermal spring and outdoor bowls/tennis
Umber & Sienna Café	Place to eat and drink
Taff’s Well Inn	Place to eat and drink
The Spice Connoisseur Indian Restaurant	Place to eat and drink
Bombay Blue	Place to eat and drink
Frankie & Benny’s	Place to eat and drink
Nando’s	Place to eat and drink
Cross Keys	Place to eat and drink
Upper Boat	Place to eat and drink
Gwaelod Y Garth Inn	Place to eat and drink
The Pottery	Place to eat and drink
Taff Valley Quad Bike & Activity Centre	Activities
Parc Nantgarw	Retail and places to eat & drink
Nantgarw Bowlplex	Activities
Showcase Nantgarw	Cinema
Castell Coch	Historical building
Caerphilly castle	Historical building

Pugh's Garden Centre	Garden Centre
Caerphilly Garden Centre & Palms restaurant	Garden Centre and place to eat and drink
Garth Mountain	Viewpoint/ walking & cycling Trails
Craig Yr Allt	Viewpoint/ walking & cycling Trails
Taff Trail	Walking & cycling Trails
Ridgeway Walk	Walking & cycling Trails
River Taf	Angling/boating
Taff's Well Community Choir	Choir

The Lower Taf Destination Partnership

The partnership includes members of the community and represents local tourism business and accommodation providers, community organisations as well as public bodies such as Natural Resources Wales and the local authority.

Organisation	Location
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Clydach
Taff's Well Community Council/Trust	Taff's Well
Taff's Well Inn	Taff's Well
Taff Valley Quad Bike & Activity Centre	Gellihirion
Friends of Nantgarw Chinaworks	Nantgarw
Umber & Sienna Café	Taff's Well
Sally Stubbins Potter/Ceramicist	Nantgarw
Arriva Trains	Cardiff
RCT Library Service	Nantgarw
RCT Countryside & Parks	Pontypridd
RCT Museum Service	Abercynon
British Geological Survey	Tongwynlais

Coleg y Cymoedd	Nantgarw
Richards Barratt - Keep Wales Tidy	Cardiff

Chair **Lynne Thomas** **Taff's Well Community Council/Trust**
Secretary **Helen Edmunds** **Taff's Well Community Council/Trust**

The Lower Taf Destination - key tourism priorities

Challenge 1

Researching Lower Taf as a destination to visit and booking a break

Improving the image of Lower Taf as a short-break destination through partnership working, positive media management and marketing, improved online booking and short-break itineraries.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Marketing Lower Taf ‘Gateway to the Valleys’ ‘Promotional Campaign’	Promoting Lower Taf as the ‘Gateway to the Valleys’. Focus on proximity to Cardiff AND the heritage offer of the Thermal Spring and Nantgarw Chineworks Museum in conjunction with neighbouring Castell Coch and Caerphilly Castle in marketing campaigns including RCT Visitor Guide and www.visitrct.co.uk	2014	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Upper Rhondda Destination Partnership	Promoting the Brand

CHALLENGE 2

Getting to and around Lower Taf

Improve visitor information on route and on arrival and offer a warm ‘valleys’ welcome and excellent facilities to visitors.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
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Travelling by Road	Look at 'welcome' at village entry points. Taff's Well - Home of Wales's only Thermal Spring Nantgarw – Home of the World renowned Nantgarw porcelain	2016	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism	Place Building
Travelling by Rail - Taff's Well station	Install 'Welcome' signs at each station to greet visitors and direct them to amenities, attractions, walking and cycling links and TIP's:- Welcome to Taff's Well...home of Wales's only Thermal Spring Organise clean-ups at the railway stations Improve signage at station	Start 2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Arriva	Place Building
Lower Taf Visitor Map	Develop an 'at destination' visitor information map highlighting key points of interest including:- Thermal Spring, Nantgarw CWM, Castell Coch, Caerphilly, Taff Trail and eating and drinking offer.	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Lower Taf Destination Partnership	Promoting the Brand / Place Building

CHALLENGE 3

Staying in Lower Taf

Improve and increase a range of graded accommodation in Lower Taf and make the booking process simpler – see RCT priorities

There is no accommodation in the Lower Taf hub, but there are several hotels nearby.

Accommodation	Type	Rating	Bedrooms	Bed spaces	Occupancy %
The Legacy Cardiff International	Hotel	3*	95	180?	
The Village Hotel	Hotel	2*	132	260	
Travelodge Caerphilly	Hotel	Budget	51	70	
Gwaelod y Garth Inn	Inn	4*	3	6	
Tynant Inn	Inn	No rooms			

CHALLENGE 4

The visitor experience in Lower Taf

Things to see and do in Upper Rhondda

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW tourism Priority
Lower Taf Events programme	<p>Work in partnership to develop and support a coordinated and sustainable event programme, including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Music and culture events - Health, fitness and sporting events - Family fun events - Heritage events <p>Publish and promote through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p>	2013..ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Lower Taf Destination Partnership	Product Development
Taff's Well Thermal Spring	<p>Short-term improvement to the venue:-</p> <p>Phase 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remedial works to building so 'fit for purpose', by reinstating a steel lintel and carrying out minor internal repairs including whitewashing of 	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / RCT D&R / Lower Taf Destination Partnership	Product Development

	<p>the walls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External Interpretation - Internal Interpretation and the installation of a 3D digital projection <p>Consider renewable energy sources</p> <p>Phase 2:</p> <p>Feasibility of a longer term aspiration to develop a visitor centre with the Well at the focal point and including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - viewing gallery and internal interpretation - Meeting room - Café facility - Public toilets - changing rooms <p>Publish and promote the Thermal Spring through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk. And develop an App for downloadable Audio and augmented reality trail.</p>			
Nantgarw Chineworks Museum	<p>Develop the museum as a key tourist attraction:-</p> <p>Phase 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tell the story of Nantgarw Porcelain through a strategic interpretation project. - Introduce a café facility - Publish and promote the venue through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk. -develop an App for downloadable audio and 	2014	RCT Cultural Services / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Lower Taf Destination Partnership / Metropolitan University / Fireworks Ceramic Centre	Product Development

	<p>augmented reality trail.</p> <p>Phase 2: Carry out remedial works to enable wider access to site including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessing feasibility of major building restoration - Assess feasibility of major canal restoration - Assess criteria for expansion of collection - Improve public toilets - Develop Café with outdoor seating area - develop upstairs gallery 	2020		
Taff Valley Quad Bike & Activity Centre	<p>Identify Product development ideas with owner</p> <p>Continue to support the business and promote through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p>	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Taff Valley Quad Bike & Activity Centre/ Lower Taf Destination Partnership /	Product Development
RCT Point of Interest Trail.....Lower Taf Point of interest Interpretation trail (s)	<p>Develop a definitive and authorised 'point of interest' Interpretation trail, referencing history, geology and ecology. Including the 'joining' of key offers in the area.</p> <p>Develop connectivity between trails with consideration for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.</p> <p>The proposal is to extend the interpretation displays at key 'viewpoint' locations: - Nantgarw Chineworks Museum Nantgarw Retail Park</p>	Phase 1 - 2014 Phase 2 - 2016	RCT Parks and Countryside / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Lower Taf Destination Partnership / Natural Resources Wales / CADW / Cardiff City Council	Product Development

	<p>Taff's Well Park/Thermal Spring Taff's Well Village – adjacent to Taff's Well Inn; Taff's well Station Taff Trail adj. to Umber and Sienna café; Garth Mountain trail Taff Valley Quad Bike & Activity Centre Ridgeway Walk – Craig Yr Allt Upper Boat</p> <p>Publish and promote the trail through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p> <p>Develop App for downloadable Audio and augmented reality trail.</p>			
<p>Taff Trail / Glamorgan Ridgeway / Umber & Sienna Art Café</p> <p>The 55 mile 'Taff Trail' runs from Cardiff Bay to Brecon. The Umber & Sienna is a strategically located 'art' café on the Trail at Taff's Well.</p>	<p>Continue to publish and promote the trails through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk. Consider Route enhancement funding for 'optional' excursions from main trails to ensure attractions are more widely used AND the visitor gains a more memorable experience.</p> <p>Develop App for downloadable Audio and augmented reality trail.</p> <p>Look at opportunities to extend the visitor offer along the Taff Trail by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving signage to the Umber & Sienna Café and local attractions • Introducing cycle storage/cycle hire at 	2014..ongoing 2014/15	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Lower Taf Destination Partnership / Sustrans/ Umber & Sienna Cafe	Product Development / Profitable Performance

	<p>Umber & Sienna, possibly in partnership with 'Pedalpower' Cardiff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing accommodation at Umber & Sienna cafe 			
Surrounding heritage offer	<p>Expand the 'Partnership' to enable joint development and marketing of the wider Lower Taf visitor offer:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taff's Well Thermal Spring • Nantgarw Chinaworks Museum • Castell Coch • Caerphilly Castle • Garth Mountain 	2014	<p>RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Lower Taf Destination Partnership / CADW / Cardiff City Council/Caerphilly County Council</p>	Partnership for All / Product Development

Challenge 5

Recommending a visit to Lower Taf

See RCT key priorities

6.3 Ely Valley 'Royal Connections'

6.3 The Ely Valley Destination Offer

The Ely Valley hub lies at the west of Rhondda Cynon Taf and includes the communities of Llantrisant, Talbot Green, Miskin, Llanharan, Pontyclun, Llanharry, Gilfach Goch and Tonyrefail. The area is located just north of the M4 motorway and the area is easily accessed by the A4119. There are stations at Pontyclun and Llanharan which lie on the main rail link between Cardiff and Bridgend.

The whole area is scattered with historical points of interest from ‘Richard Llewellyn’s’ Gilfach Goch to the outstanding visitor attraction in the region, the medieval hilltop town of Llantrisant standing guard over the rolling countryside. Royal connections, narrow cobbled streets, quirky shops, restaurants and cafes make it the key attractor. The adjacent World renowned Royal Mint will certainly add to the destination if plans to develop a visitor experience are realised. The extensive retail park in Talbot Green is conveniently located near the M4 motorway and is easily accessible to the Rhondda Valleys and Pontypridd. Nearby Talbot Green and Pontyclun are also well stocked with high quality eateries, independent retailers and traditional gift shops.

The Glamorgan Ridgeway is one of many trails in the area and with plans to extend the Church Village Community Route and to develop a ‘point of interest’ trail, walkers and cyclist are well catered for.

The key activities and attractions in the area centre on the historical town of Llantrisant. There is a splendid retail offer from high street to independent gift and craft shops and the visitor offer is supported by a diverse range of restaurants, cafes and public houses.

Tourism Offer	Type
Llantrisant Town	Historical building / Museum / activities / viewpoint
Llantrisant Town Restaurants and cafes	Place to eat and drink
Llantrisant Leisure Centre	Leisure
Model House	Arts and culture
Beth Giles Gallery	Arts and culture
The Art Workshop & Gallery	Arts and culture
Miskin Manor Hotel and Health Club	Accommodation/ Historical building/Leisure
Gilfach Goch & Cordell	Heritage
Tonyrefail	Heritage
Talbot Green Restaurants and cafes	Place to eat and drink
Pontyclun Restaurants and cafes	Place to eat and drink
Ridgeway Walk	Walking & cycling Trail
Talygarn	Heritage

Ely Valley Trail	Walking & cycling Trail
Church Village Community Route	Walking & cycling Trail
Gwynt y Ddraig	Drinks producer
Ely River and Trinant Fisheries	Angling
Llantrisant Male voice choir	Choir

The Ely Valley Destination Partnership

The partnership includes members of the community and represents local tourism business and accommodation providers, community organisations as well as public bodies such as Natural Resources Wales and the local authority.

Organisation	Location
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Clydach
Llantrisant Community council	Llantrisant
Pontyclun Community Council	Pontyclun
O'Sullivans	Llantrisant
Miskin Manor	Miskin
Model House	Llantrisant
Giles Gallery	Pontyclun
Fullbrooks Restaurant	Pontyclun
The Art Workshop & Gallery	Talbot Green
Gilfach Goch Community Association	Gilfach Goch
Llantrisant Historical Society	Tonyrefail
Porcellinis Cafe	Pontyclun
St Illtuds Church	Llanharry
St Anne's Church	Talygarn
Richards Barratt - Keep Wales Tidy	Cardiff
Llantrisant Ramblers	Gilfach Goch

Chair Anne Bennett Pontyclun Community Council
Secretary Alison Jenkins Llantrisant Community Council

The Ely Valley Destination - key tourism priorities

CHALLENGE 1

Researching the Ely Valley as a destination to visit and booking a break

Improving the image of Ely Valley as a short-break destination through partnership working, positive media management and marketing, improved online booking and short-break itineraries.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Marketing Ely Valley ‘Royal Connections...’ Promotional Campaign.	<p>Promoting Ely Valley’s diverse visitor offer and proximity to Cardiff and M4 in marketing campaigns including RCT Visitor Guide and www.visitrct.co.uk.</p> <p>Campaign to include references to Royalty – Royal Charter, Royal Mint, Crown Brewery in Pontyclun.</p> <p>The unique historic town of Llantrisant is the key attractor but is supported by interesting surrounding villages and a considerable retail and hospitality offer.</p>	2014	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Ely Valley Destination Partnership	Promoting the Brand
‘Out of town’ Retail Offer High Street shopping and cafes incl. Argos, Boots, Next, River Island, M&S	<p>The area has a strong and visible retail offer which should be used as a key attractor for visitors.</p> <p>Develop partnership with Landlord (Savill’s) to help promote visitor offer in the area...TIP?</p>		RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Savills / Ely Valley Destination Partnership	Product Development

and Starbucks				
Eating-out in Ely Valley Large number of high quality restaurants and cafés in the area	<p>Build on existing reputation of the area and develop the 'Ely Valley' as a key 'eating out' hub for the region.</p> <p>Encourage buy-in from providers and encourage local procurement and the development of sense of place menus to show differentiation.</p> <p>Consider 'Food' event</p>	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Providers/ Producers / Ely Valley Destination Partnership / SEWLFT	Product Development

CHALLENGE 2

Getting to and around the Ely Valley

Improve visitor information en route and on arrival and offer a warm 'Valleys' welcome and excellent facilities to visitors.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
TRAVELLING BY ROAD	Introduce 'welcome' at town/village entry points. I.E. Pontyclun - Home of fine dining.	2016	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism	Place Building
Travelling by Road - Llanharan By Pass	Improve access to strategic development site and reduce congestion in area		LDP/Sewta road proposal	Place Building
Travelling by Road - Ynysmaerdy to Talbot Green Relief Road	Provide traffic relief to A4119 and improve access to local area and Rhondda Valleys. Likely to impact on Royal Mint visitor offer		LDP/Sewta road proposal	Place Building
Travelling by Road - Talbot Green By-Pass	Reduce congestion in local area and in particular, as far as DMP is concerned, to Llantrisant Old Town.	Longer term proposal,	LDP road proposal	Place Building

Dualling		currently no indication of where funding will come from or timescales		
Travelling by Road - Talbot Green Bus Station	<p>The provision of tourist information notices within the bus station – a key gateway to area and an important interchange point.</p> <p>Provide assistance to both local residents and visitors to the area. Will help promote sustainable tourism to local attractions and places of interest.</p>	2015	LDP/Sewta road proposal	Place Building
TRAVELLING BY RAIL - Pontyclun station - Llanharan station	<p>Install 'Welcome' signs at each station to greet visitors and direct them to amenities, attractions, walking and cycling links and TIP's:-</p> <p>Welcome to Pontyclun...home of great hospitality</p> <p>Organise clean-ups at the railway stations</p> <p>Develop a 'wicker' piece of public art near Pontyclun station</p> <p>Improve signage at station</p>	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Arriva / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Ely Valley Destination Partnership	Place Building
Travelling by Rail - Beddau railway line	<p>Line reopening including stations at Cowbridge Rd, Cardiff Road, Gwaun Miskin and Beddau (Tynant)</p> <p>Install 'Welcome' signs at each station to greet visitors and direct them to amenities, attractions, walking and cycling links and TIP's...</p>	tbc	<p>Currently contained in revised Sewta Rail Strategy 2011.</p> <p>Implementation will be a WG responsibility.</p>	Place Building
Ely Valley Cycle/walking Trail	Plans to extend the existing Church Village community route from Cross Inn to Talbot Green	2015	RCT / Sustrans / Ride Bike Wales (Talbot Green	Place Building

	<p>for cyclists and walkers.</p> <p>Promote the route to extend the 'destination' offer</p> <p>Develop cycle hire hub on or close to trail and promote points of interest and places to eat and drink en-route.</p>		<p>cycle provider)</p>	
Ely Valley Visitor Map	<p>Develop an 'at destination' visitor information map highlighting key points of interest including: - Llantrisant, Talbot Green retail , Royal Mint, Pontyclun and Talygarn, Gilfach Goch and Richard Llewellyn. Also strong retail and eating and drinking offer.</p>	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Ely Valley Destination Partnership	Promoting the Brand / Place Building

CHALLENGE 3

Staying in the Ely Valley

Improve and increase a range of graded accommodation in Ely Valley and make the booking process simpler - **see RCT priorities**

There is a range of good accommodation in the Ely Valley hub, including:

Accommodation	Type	Rating	Bedrooms	Bed spaces	Occupancy %
Miskin Manor and Health Resort	Hotel	4*	43	75	
Premier inn, Llantrisant	Hotel	budget			
SMOKEY COTTAGE	B&B	Not graded	5	12	
The Three Saints	Hotel	Not graded	29	62	
Llwynau Farm	Self Catering	3*	4	16	
The Countryman & Trinant Fishery	Inn	4*	13	46	
The Stables at Brook house	B&B/Self Catering	4*	1 Cottage	2	

CHALLENGE 4

The visitor experience in the Ely valley

Things to see and do in Ely Valley

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Ely Valley Events programme	<p>Work in partnership to develop and support a coordinated and sustainable event programme for:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Music and culture events -Health, fitness and sporting events -Family fun events -Heritage events <p>Including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beating the Bounds - Dr William Price celebration - Victorian Christmas fayre, Llantrisant - Llantrisant Summer Festival - Vintage Car Rally, Tonyrefail - Paul Robeson celebration - Choirs programme <p>Publish and promote through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p>	2013..ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Ely Valley Destination Partnership	Product Development / Partnership for all
LLANTRISANT TOWN Ancient Hilltop town with	Develop the Town and surrounding area as a	2020	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / RCT D&R / Ely	Product Development

vibrant history, significant architecture, colourful characters and attractive cafes, restaurants and gift shops	tourist destination. Publish and promote through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk .		Valley Destination Partnership / Town Trust	
Guildhall, Llantrisant The building dates from 1773 and an original building dates from medieval times.	Develop The Guildhall as a visitor centre and tourist information point	Application for £1m grant submitted to HLF	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / RCT D&R / Ely Valley Destination Partnership / Town Trust	Product Development
Royal Mint, Llantrisant. Makes beautifully crafted coins and medals for countries all over the world. Over a thousand years of craftsmanship and artistry	Develop as a major tourist destination within South Wales and a key attractor for the Ely Valley, to include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Visitor Centre- Guided tours- Restaurant/café- Gift shop	Discussions have progressed regarding funding and logistics etc.	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Royal Mint / Ely Valley Destination Partnership / Funders	Product Development
Royal Mint Trail	Link Royal Mint attraction to the old town of Llantrisant. Develop a safe and way-marked route to eating and shopping visitor offer	2015	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Ely Valley Destination Partnership / Local volunteers/Royal Mint	Product Development
St. Anne's Chantry, Talygarn. (Possibly) 7 th century church with close links to George T. Clarke	Develop plans to restore the 'Chantry' as a 'community' resource	Feasibility 2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Ely Valley Destination Partnership / Local volunteers / CADW	Product Development
Lower Ely Valley Heritage project	Employ a historian to engage with the community to uncover the history of the Pontyclun area.	Start 2014... HLF application pending	Pontyclun Community Council/Ely Valley Destination Partnership /	Product Development

	<p>Develop an online presence through www.pontyclun.net and include on the 'people's collection' website.</p> <p>Develop a Lower Ely trail with interpretation throughout the area and a supportive publication.</p> <p>Link into the wider Ely Valley and subsequently RCT 'Point of interest' Trail.</p>	approval	HLF	
RCT Point of Interest Trail.....Ely Valley Point of interest Interpretation trail (s)	<p>Develop a definitive and authorised 'point of interest' Interpretation trail, referencing history, geology and ecology. Including the 'joining' of key offers in the area.</p> <p>Develop connectivity between the trails with consideration for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.</p> <p>The proposal is to develop the interpretation currently at key 'viewpoint' locations at Llantrisant Castle and Gwaun Ruperra car park to include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Melin (Billy) Wynt; - Bullring - Llantrisant Church; - Iron Age fort, Rhiwsaeson - Royal Mint, Llantrisant. - Pontyclun village centre - Pontyclun village entry - Talygarn Manor & Country Park; - St. Anne's Church and Chantry, Talygarn - Llanharan House. - Pant y Brad / Corn Mill, Tonyrefail 	Phase 1 - 2014 Phase 2 - 2016	RCT Parks and Countryside / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Ely Valley Destination Partnership	Product Development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gilfach Goch/Richard Llewellyn - Miskin Manor - Llanharry - Ely border interest trail - Pontyclun Trainworkers Union <p>Publish and promote the trail through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p> <p>Develop App for downloadable Audio and augmented reality trail.</p>			
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CHALLENGE 5

Recommending a visit to the Ely Valley

See RCT key priorities

6.4 Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda

'Connecting people & places'

6.4 The Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Offer

The Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda hub lies at the heart of Rhondda Cynon Taf and includes the communities of Pontypridd, Treforest, Hopkinstown and Trehafod. The area is easily accessed by the A470 trunk road and the Valleys Lines train service runs directly from Cardiff to Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil via Pontypridd.

The rich cultural and historic past is at the heart of the visitor offer for Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda: The Welsh National Anthem, Tom Jones, the Old Bridge, Brown Lennox, Sir Geraint Evans, Neil Jenkins, William Price and Stuart Burrows all hail from the area. The historical ‘Tramroad’ trail runs from the bustling market town to Rhondda Heritage Park, where the area’s industrial history is imaginatively captured. But if plans to partner the Grade 1 listed Hetty engine house, Barry Sidings Countryside Park, Capel Rhondda and Heritage Park Hotel are realised, the visitor offer can be greatly enhanced.

The 55 mile Taff Trail passes through the town as it makes its way north from the vibrant capital city to the beautiful Brecon Beacons National Park. The 12 mile Pontypridd circular trail, combined with several point of interest trails are excellent ways to explore the fascinating history and ecology of the area.

There is a diverse range of activities and attractions in and around Pontypridd’s bustling town centre which is supported by a range of restaurants, cafes and public houses. But the ‘jewel in the Town’ is Ynysangharad War Memorial Park and its exciting Lido restoration project.

Tourism Offer	Type
Taff Trail	Walking & cycling
River Taf	Angling
Edwards' Bridge	Heritage
Brunel's Bridges	Heritage
Public Art	Heritage and culture
Pontypridd Rugby Club	Sport
Muni Arts Centre	Heritage, Culture, food & drink
Ynysangharad War Memorial Park & Lido	Leisure and heritage
Pontypridd Male Voice Choir	Culture

Rhondda Heritage Park	Heritage and culture
The Hetty Engine House	Heritage
World of Groggs	Retail and heritage
Barry Sidings	Leisure and heritage
Tramroad Trail	Leisure and Heritage
Restaurants/cafes/Pubs	Food & Drink
High street brands and traditional shops	Retail
Pontypridd Indoor and outdoor Market	Retail and Heritage
Pontypridd Common	Heritage and leisure

The Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership

The partnership includes members of the community and represents local tourism business and accommodation providers, community organisations as well as public bodies such as Natural Resources Wales and the local authority.

Organisation	Location
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Clydach/Pontypridd
Pontypridd Male Voice Choir	Pontypridd
Keep Wales Tidy	Cardiff
Pontypridd Rugby Club	Pontypridd
Pontypridd Town Council/Pontypridd Museum	Pontypridd
Clwb Y Bont	Pontypridd
Pontypridd Canal Restoration Group	Pontypridd
Ynysangharad War Memorial Park & Lido	Pontypridd
Rhondda Heritage Park	Trehafod
Heritage Park Hotel	Trehafod

The Hetty Trust	Hopkinstown
Communities First / Barry Sidings	Porth
World of Groggs	Pontypridd
Bunch of Grapes & Otley Brewery	Pontypridd
Coleg y Cymoedd	Treforest
Positively Ponty	Pontypridd
Love Ponty	Pontypridd
Glamorgan Family History Society	Rhondda
Capel Rhondda	Hopkinstown

Chair **Owen, Pontypridd Canal Restoration Group**
Secretary **David Gwyer, Pontypridd Museum**

Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination - key tourism priorities

CHALLENGE 1

Researching Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda as a destination to visit and booking a break

Improving the image of Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda as a short-break destination through partnership working, positive media management and marketing, improved online booking and short-break itineraries.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Marketing Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda <i>'Connecting people & places'</i> ... Promotional Campaign.	Promoting Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda's importance as a communications intersection in marketing campaigns including RCT Visitor Guide and www.visitrct.co.uk .	2014	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership	Promoting the Brand

CHALLENGE 2

Getting to and around Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda

Improve visitor information en route and on arrival and offer a warm ‘Valleys’ welcome and excellent facilities to visitors.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Travelling by Road	Introduce ‘welcome’ at town/village entry points. Treforest – Birthplace of Tom Jones	2016	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism	Place Building
Travelling by Road Pontypridd Bus Station	The provision of tourist information notices within the bus station – a key gateway to area and an important interchange point. Provide assistance to both local residents and visitors to the area. Will help promote sustainable tourism to local attractions and places of interest.		LDP/Sewta road proposal	Place Building
Travelling by Rail - Pontypridd station - Treforest station - Trehafod station	Install ‘Welcome’ signs at each station to greet visitors and direct them to amenities, attractions, walking and cycling links and TIP’s:- Welcome to Pontypridd... Home of the Welsh National Anthem Welcome to Treforest... Birthplace of Tom Jones Welcome to Trehafod... home of Rhondda Heritage Park Organise clean-ups at the railway stations Improve signage at station	Start 2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Arriva / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership	Place Building

Tourist Information Points (TIP)	Develop Tourist Information points at :- Pontypridd Library Hub Pontypridd Museum Rhondda Heritage Park	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / RCT Library Service / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership	Place Building
Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Visitor Map	Develop an 'at destination' visitor information map highlighting key points of interest including: Also strong retail and eating and drinking offer.	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership	Promoting the Brand / Place Building

CHALLENGE 3

Staying in Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda

Improve and increase a range of graded accommodation in Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda and make the booking process simpler – see RCT priorities

There is a range of good accommodation in the Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda hub, including:

Accommodation	Type	Rating	Bedrooms	Bed spaces	Occupancy %
Heritage Park Hotel	Hotel	3*	44	81	
Central Guesthouse	Guesthouse	4*	8	13	
Ceffyl Cottage	Self cat/ lodges	4*	1 Cottage	3	
The Bertie, Trehafod (accommodation & Pub/restaurant)	B&B	Not rated			
Llechwen Hall Hotel, Pontypridd	Hotel	4*	20	34	
The Blueberry Inn	Hotel	Not graded	9	18	
University of South Wales Accommodation	Hostel	3*			

CHALLENGE 4

The Visitor experience in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Things to see and do in Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Events programme.	<p>Work in partnership to develop and support a coordinated and sustainable event programme, including key regional events at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Music and culture events - Health, fitness and sporting events - Family fun events - Heritage events <p>Publish and promote through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p>	2013...ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership	Product Development / Partnership for all
RCT Point of Interest Trail.....Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Point of interest Interpretation trail (s)	<p>Develop a definitive and authorised 'point of interest' Interpretation trail, referencing history, geology and ecology. Including the 'joining' of key offers in the area.</p> <p>Develop connectivity between the trails with consideration for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.</p> <p>The proposal is to extend the interpretation displays at key 'viewpoint' locations:-</p> <p>a. Pontypridd Common (see below)</p>	Phase 1 - 2014 Phase 2 - 2016	RCT Parks and Countryside / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership	Product development

	<p>b. Pontypridd RFC/Tramroad trail c. Tramroad Trail start, Pontypridd d. Barry Sidings, Hopkinstown e. The Hetty, Hopkinstown f. Capel Rhondda, Hopkinstown g. Tramroad Trail end, Trehaftod h. Ynysangharad Locks, Pontypridd i. Pontypridd Museum rear</p> <p>Publish and promote the trail through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p> <p>Develop App for downloadable Audio and augmented reality trail.</p>			
Pontypridd Common Trail	<p>Develop point of interest trail overlooking the Town with interpretation at key points en-route</p> <p>Develop a downloadable audio trail for the 'Common trail' and publish branded leaflet with detailed route on www.visitrct.co.uk</p> <p>Install a camera obscurer on the common overlooking the town and with a digital link to Pontypridd museum</p>		Pontypridd Town Council/ RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership	Product Development
'Groggs' Trail	Develop a 'celebrity Grog' trail using the much loved and now World-renowned ceramic figures. The proposal is to create a series of famous life size characters who have gained recognition through sporting, music, business and film AND to use the recognisable 'sheep' brand to engage	2015...funding dependent	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership and World of Groggs/ Neighbouring authorities	Product Development

	<p>with families.</p> <p>This intention would be to extend the concept throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf and beyond.</p> <p>Publish and promote the trail through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p> <p>Develop App for downloadable Audio and augmented reality trail.</p>			
Tom Jones 'statue'	<p>The proposal is to create a permanent structure dedicated to one of the World's most iconic pop stars and Pontypridd's most 'famous son'. This could be part of the proposed 'Grogg' trail – and could be developed as a 30ft Grogg figure. This would be of huge appeal to Tom's huge global fan base and be a unique reflection of the 'Valleys' humour and strong musical traditions.</p> <p>Publish and promote the project through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p> <p>Develop App for downloadable Audio and augmented reality.</p>	2015...funding dependent	<p>RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership and World of Groggs/Tom Jones fan Club/ Tom Jones management Company</p>	Product Development
Ynysangharad War Memorial Park and Pontypridd Lido A popular park adjacent to Pontypridd town centre used for	<p>Restore the park to its original splendour.</p> <p>A project to restore the swimming lido and create a regional visitor attraction in its own right is underway. This will contribute to the wider Ynysangharad War Memorial Park offer.</p> <p>Develop, support and publish the major events</p>	Lido project commences 2014	<p>Regeneration & Planning / Leisure Parks and Countryside/HLF/ RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership</p>	Product Development

major events	<p>programme at the park and enhance its reputation as a regional visitor attraction.</p> <p>Develop and publish a point of interest trail with interpretation at key points and include on-line at www.visitrct.co.uk. Subsequently develop an accompanying audio trail</p>			
Lower Rhondda Corridor visitor offer	<p>The development and subsequent linking of several attractions between Trehaftod and Pontypridd would enhance each individual attraction and improve the overall offer to visitors, including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rhondda Heritage Park - Barry Sidings Countryside Park - Hetty winding house - Tramroad Trail - Ponty RFC - Capel Rhondda 	Talks started 2013	RCT /Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership/Communities First/Capel Rhondda/Hetty Trust/Ponty RFC	Product Development/ Partnership for all
Hetty winding house. <i>Grade I listed buildings (the only other grade I in RCT with Ponty Old Bridge)</i>	<p>Preserve the building and engine and develop as a key tourist attraction.</p> <p>Link with the Hetty Winding house, Barry Sidings Countryside Park and wider Lower Rhondda corridor visitor offer. A pedestrian bridge from the Hetty to Barry Sidings would improve accessibility to RHP and extend the</p>	ongoing	RCT/Hetty Trust - <i>ongoing discussions regarding 'Friends' taking on a lease for the site</i>	Product Development/ Partnership for all

	visitor offer.			
Barry Sidings Countryside Park, Hopkinstown. <i>3.5 hectare park on the lower slopes of Mynydd Gelliwion along the river Rhondda. Former railway sidings where coal was loaded from the adjacent pit to be transported to Barry. Visitor centre has a café, which is open seasonally, public toilets car parking.</i>	Develop as a key tourist attraction....including the creation of a cycle hub. <i>Link with the Hetty Winding house, Barry Sidings Countryside Park and wider Lower Rhondda corridor visitor offer. A pedestrian bridge from the Hetty to Barry Sidings would improve accessibility to RHP and extend the visitor offer.</i>	ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership/Communities First	Product Development/ Partnership for all
Rhondda Heritage Park <i>25 year old tourist attraction on the site of the old Lewis Merthyr Colliery.</i>	Creation of a new museum gallery telling the story of the people of the Rhondda to meet national accreditation standard and to allow for the display of the majority of the venues collection for the first time. Create storage / lab area to conservation standard Restoration and interpretation of the Trefor &	tbc	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership/Friends of RHP	Product Development/ Partnership for all

	<p>Bertie Winding Houses.</p> <p>Upgrade the guided tour to include the allocation of helmets for visitors. These could be developed to include digital audio and video</p> <p>Interpret the site, environs and buildings.</p> <p>Create Garden of remembrance (Mines & Military)</p> <p>Create Family Learning & Basic Skills Centre</p> <p>Online searchable catalogue database in line with the Accreditation Standard</p> <p>Creation of online self led learning resources</p> <p>Create online exhibitions on the history of the Rhondda and its people.</p> <p>Develop the Energy Zone, possibly looking at this as an opportunity for a local SME to set up a soft play business.</p> <p><i>Link with the Hetty Winding house, Barry Sidings Countryside Park and wider Lower Rhondda corridor visitor offer. A pedestrian bridge from the Hetty to Barry Sidings would improve accessibility to RHP and extend the visitor offer.</i></p>			
Tramroad Trail <i>Built by Richard Griffiths in 1809 to link the first mines in the</i>	Re-think and develop existing trail. Publish rebranded leaflet and include detailed route on-line at www.visitrct.co.uk	2020	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination	Product Development/ Partnership for all

<i>Rhondda to the Glamorganshire canal in Pontypridd.</i>	<p>Develop point of interest interpretation at key points en-route.</p> <p><i>Consider pony and trap ride – in keeping with original transportation method.</i></p> <p><i>Link with the Hetty Winding house, Barry Sidings Countryside Park and wider Lower Rhondda corridor visitor offer. A pedestrian bridge from the Hetty to Barry Sidings would improve accessibility to RHP and extend the visitor offer.</i></p>		Partnership/Communities First	
<i>Capel Rhondda Associated with 'Cwm Rhondda', written in 1905 by John Hughes for the Cymanfa Ganu in Pontypridd and first played here.</i>	<p>Introduce Interpretation at site</p> <p>Include on re-worked and re-branded Tramroad trail leaflet and include on www.visitrct.co.uk</p> <p><i>Link with the Hetty Winding house, Barry Sidings Countryside Park and wider Lower Rhondda corridor visitor offer. A pedestrian bridge from the Hetty to Barry Sidings would improve accessibility to RHP and extend the visitor offer.</i></p>	2020	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism /Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership/Capel Rhondda	Product Development/ Partnership for all
<i>Glamorganshire Canal / Bunch of Grapes, Pontypridd Ynysangharad Locks and Bridge currently being excavated by the</i>	<p>Aspirations set out in Atkins Report 2002; also in the design and Access Statement of the Planning Application for Ynysangharad Locks and Bridge.</p> <p>Increase group of volunteers – develop an engagement leaflet to raise awareness and</p>	Ongoing works	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Pontypridd Canal Conservation Group/canal owners / Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination	Product Development/ Partnership for all

<i>Pontypridd Canal Conservation Group adjacent to award winning pub/restaurant</i>	<p>encourage membership</p> <p>Renovate Canal and introduce canal side and Towpath walk with interpretation – promote the site.</p> <p>Develop links with Bunch of Grapes to improve visitor offer</p> <p>Improve access and parking to site...develop partnership with adjacent retailers</p>		Partnership	
Taff Trail	<p>Work with partners to ensure trails are well maintained and clearly way-marked and sign-posted. Consider Route enhancement funding for 'optional' excursions from main trails to ensure attractions are more widely used AND the visitor gains a more memorable experience.</p> <p>Development of Taff Trail at Trallwn</p>	Funding requested for 2014	RCT / Sustrans/Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership	Product Development
Town centre pony and trap ride	<p>Develop new attraction through the town centre...particularly through Ynysangharad Park new and wider audience</p> <p>Would help to promote and develop the transportation reputation of the Town</p> <p>This would be a unique attraction in the region and would support the transportation reputation of the Town and an extended trail could include Tramroad route above...in keeping with original transportation method</p>	Idea stage	<p>Commercial opportunity</p> <p><i>By-laws to be checked for permitted usage in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.</i></p>	Product Development
Cylch Cymraeg	Establish a venue that can house:-	Phase 1	Cylch Cymraeg -	Product Development

<i>The development of a vibrant area in Pontypridd where Welsh culture, language and art is celebrated and showcased.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A café/bar/meeting area for visitors; - Office Space to manage the project. - Rooms for local groups to meet and for classes to be held. - A performance area to host public meetings, cultural events, and to showcase music performances, poetry etc. 		voluntary Welsh language group	
Taff Street Dash Former annual sprinting/running event in Pontypridd	Re-introduce historic and unique sprint event in centre of Pontypridd town and promote as part of a wider RCT event programme!	Idea stage	RCT/ Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda Destination Partnership	Product Development

CHALLENGE 5

Recommending a visit to Pontypridd & Lower Rhondda

See RCT key priorities

6.5 Aberdare & Upper Cynon ‘Wisdom, walks & waterfalls’

5.2 The Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Offer

Aberdare & Upper Cynon covers the northern segment of Rhondda Cynon Taf and includes Brecon Beacons National Park . The A4059 dissects the area North to South and the A4065, Heads of the valleys Road, runs East to West. Aberdare is at the confluence of the Rivers Dare and Cynon

Aberdare is at the confluence of the Rivers Dare and Cynon and dates from the middle ages when life in the small agricultural village centred around the Church of St John the Baptist. At the beginning of the 19th century it became a thriving industrial settlement, which was also notable for the vitality of its cultural life. It hosted the first National Eisteddfod, was home to film pioneer William Haggar and was an important publishing centre. The bustling town centre includes an indoor market, a busy theatre and a vibrant museum. Hirwaun's industrial history centres on iron and more recently the last deep mine in Wales, the Tower colliery. The rural village of Penderyn lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park and is home to the world renowned Whiskey distillery.

There are a number of trails to explore the area including the Cynon Trail which follows the river Cynon from Hirwaun to Abercynon (NCN478) and the Briars Bridleway, which runs from Barry Sidings near Pontypridd to nearby Dare Valley country Park, a transformed colliery site and now home to an abundance of flora and fauna and a diverse outdoor activities programme. From Penderyn the beautiful Scwd-yr-Eira waterfall can be explored.

The key activities and attractions in the area centre on both the spectacular upland landscapes suffused with historical sites and a range of dramatic trails, to the strong musical tradition of the area based around the inspiring theatre. The visitor offer is supported by a range of shops, places to eat and several public houses.

Tourism Offer	Type
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Coliseum Theatre	Theatre & Arts Venue
Penderyn Whisky Distillery	Distillery visitor experience
Dare valley Country Park	Country Park with outdoor activities, accommodation and cafe
Cynon Valley Museum & Gallery	Museum and art gallery
St Elvan's/St John's/St Cynog's	Faith history/church architecture
Aberdare Golf club	Golf Club
Glancynon Inn/Red Lion	Public Houses
Penaluna's Chippy & Cafe	Award winning fish & chips
Food Adventures	Culinary tours and experiences
Aberdare Printing project	Creative Arts
Trails	Walking & cycling

The Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership

The partnership includes members of the community and represents local tourism business and accommodation providers, community organisations as well as public bodies such as Natural Resources Wales and the local authority.

Organisation	Location
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Clydach
Arriva Trains	Cardiff
Penderyn Whisky	Penderyn
Natural Resources Wales (NRW)	Cardiff
Richards Barratt - Keep Wales Tidy	Cardiff
Penderyn Community Council	Penderyn
Team Hirwaun	Hirwaun
Penderyn History Society	Penderyn
Dare Valley Country Park	Aberdare
Greenmeadows Riding School	Aberdare

Ty Newydd Country Hotel	Penderyn
Groundworks	Llwydcoed
Aberdare Printing Project	Aberdare
Tower Colliery	Hirwaun
Welsh Language History	Penderyn
Food Adventures	Aberdare
St Evans Trust	Aberdare
Penaluna's Chippy & Cafe	Hirwaun
Glancynon Inn	Penderyn
Red Lion	Penderyn
Cwmbach Male Choir	Cwmbach
Hirwaun travel	Hirwaun
Coleg Morgannwg	Trecynon
Aberdare Golf Club	Aberdare

Chair
Secretary

Arfon Evans
Julie Bishop

Penderyn Community Council
Team Hirwaun

The Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination - key tourism priorities

Challenge 1

Researching Aberdare & Upper Cynon as a destination to visit and booking a break

Improving the image of Aberdare & Upper Cynon as a short-break destination through partnership working, positive media management and marketing, improved online booking and short-break itineraries.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Marketing Aberdare & Upper Cynon ' Wisdom, walks & waterfalls ' promotional Campaign	Promoting Destination Aberdare & Upper Cynon...an area with a vibrant history, stylish buildings and dramatic upland area in marketing campaigns including RCT Visitor Guide and www.visitrct.co.uk	2014	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership	Promoting the Brand

CHALLENGE 2

Getting to and around Aberdare & Upper Cynon

Improve visitor information en route and on arrival and offer a warm 'Valleys' welcome and excellent facilities to visitors.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Travelling by Road A465 dualling scheme	Improve level of service on this trunk road to improve safety, ease congestion and assist in the economic regeneration of the area, particularly the upper Cynon Valley and its proposed strategic development sites by improving accessibility, including to sites of tourism interest in the area	NTP/WIIP commitments to complete by 2020	WG/Sewta/LDP proposal	Place Building
A465/A4059 Cynon Gateway	To improve accessibility to the upper Cynon Valley (including to sites of tourism interest in the area) to assist regeneration and to relieve existing communities of the adverse effects	Intended to complete in conjunction with the A465		Place Building

	of traffic	scheme in 2020.		
Aberdare Bus Station <i>Key gateway to area.</i>	The provision of tourist information notices within the bus station – a key gateway to the area. Provide assistance to both local residents and visitors to the area. Will help promote sustainable tourism to local attractions and places of interest	2014		Place Building
Travelling by Rail Aberdare Station - Key entry points to destination providing public transport links to:- -DVCP -CVM&G -History Trails -Coliseum -Market and retail offer	Improve welcome to visitors at:- - Aberdare station Install 'Welcome' signs/panels at each station to greet visitors and direct them to amenities, attractions, walking and cycling links and TIP's. Welcome to Aberdare... Organise clean-ups at the railway stations Improve signage at each station	2014	WG/RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Arriva	Place Building
Aberdare Access Improvement	Improve links to Aberdare from villages close by. Benefit of walkers and cyclists	No funding allocated yet	RCT/SEWTA	Place Building
National Cycle Network 46	Improve National Cycle Network and walking and cycling links where applicable Create cycle trail through and provide links to main attractions in Aberdare & Upper Cynon	Currently under construction	RCT/SEWTA	Place Building

	and other trails			
Cwmaman to Aberaman Cycle route	Route will serve from Cwmaman, through Aberaman and join the Cynon Valley Trail in Aberdare. Benefit cyclists and walkers to travel to Aberdare.	No funding allocated yet	RCT/SEWTA/Sustrans	Place Building
Tourist Information Points (TIP)	Develop Tourist Information points at :	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / RCT Library Service / Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership	Place Building
Visitor Parking - Craig y Llyn	Resurface parking area at Craig y Llyn	2016	RCTCBC	Place Building
Aberdare & Upper Cynon Visitor Map	Develop an 'at destination' visitor information map highlighting key points of interest including: Dare valley Country Park, Coliseum Theatre, Aberdare Park, Penderyn Whisky, Brecon Beacons National Park and Hirwaun.	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership	Place Building

CHALLENGE 3

Staying in Aberdare & Upper Cynon

Improve and increase a range of graded accommodation in Rhondda Cynon Taf and make the booking process simpler - **See RCT key priorities**

There is a range of places to stay in **Aberdare & Upper Cynon**. The table below shows the accommodation available, rating and occupancy levels.

Accommodation	Type	Rating	Bedrooms	Bed spaces	Occupancy %
Ty Newydd Country Hotel, Penderyn	Country Hotel	3*	28	57	

Fifth Avenue House, Hirwaun	Hotel	4*	10	15	
The Marquis Guest House, Aberdare	B&B/ Guesthouse	3*	6	15	
Ty Andrew Guest House, Aberdare	Guesthouse	Not rated	5	8	
Pant Cefn Fford Bunk Barn, Aberdare	Hostel	4*	1 cottage	16	
Premier Inn, Aberdare	Hotel	budget			
The Full Moon Hotel, Aberdare	x				
The Bridgend Inn, Treycynon	x				
Maes Y Ronnen, Aberdare	B&B	4*	2	4	
Dare valley Country Park	Country Park- Rooms, Camping & Caravanning	3*	Bunkroom	15	
Fedw Hir Eco Centre, Llwydcoed	x				
Beili Helyg	B&B	4*	3	11	
Blaen Nant y Groes Farm Cottages	Holiday cottage	Not graded	3 cottages	9	
Penybrynn Cottages	Self catering lodges	3*	2 cottages	9	
Cherry Tree House	Guesthouse	Not graded	4	12	
Cynon Valley Cottage	B&B	3*	1 bunkhouse	16	

CHALLENGE 4

The Visitor experience in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Things to see and do in Aberdare & Upper Cynon

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Aberdare & Upper Cynon Events programme	Work in partnership to develop and support a coordinated and sustainable event programme, including:- - Music and culture events	2013...ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership	Product Development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health, fitness and sporting events - Family fun events - Heritage events <p>Publish and promote through both traditional and modern methods including www.visitrct.co.uk.</p>			
RCT Point of Interest Trail.....Aberdare & Upper Cynon Point of interest Interpretation trail	<p>Develop an interpretation trail through Upper Rhondda to include history/geology/ecology.</p> <p>Install interpretation displays/lecterns at key 'viewpoint' locations in the Aberdare & Upper Cynon area</p> <p>Publish supporting Trail, leaflet and on-line presence</p> <p>Develop App for downloadable Audio and augmented reality trail.</p> <p>Promote the Trail by traditional and particularly modern methods incl. www.visitrct.co.uk</p>	2014		
Coliseum Theatre A unique 1930's art deco style 650 seat theatre nestling in the suburbs of Aberdare. Offers a busy programme of drama, comedy, opera, ballet, music, cinema, children's, school and community events.	<p>Development of the venue to include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpretation - Improvements to foyer - Development of lounge bar as an additional performance space - Café facility - Parking - Integrated signage throughout the theatre 	2020	RCT Cultural Services / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership	Product Development

	- Staff training – Welcome host			
Cwmbach Male Voice Choir Pendyrus Male voice choir	To support, promote and increase membership. Encourage cross-selling and Ambassadorial role and enable submission of events for inclusion on: www.visitrct.co.uk and www.whatsonrct.co.uk	2014	RCT Cultural Services / RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership	Product Development
Abernant Tunnel	Look at feasibility of re-opening Tunnel from Abernant to Merthyr for the creation/development walking and cycling trails	Long-term Pending funding	RCT / Merthyr	Product Development
Dare Valley Country Park A former colliery site which has been transformed into a 500 acre Country Park. Facilities include a hotel, café, interpretation area, camping and caravan site. Spectacular trails and children's play. Recently introduced Lazer tag and weddings. Identified as a key tourist destination for Rhondda Cynon Taf. (Atkins Report, 2006)	Phase 3 developments at the Country Park. Develop the café space to cater for increased numbers now visiting the venue, with the erection of a two storey extension over the existing play area. This would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- a flexible meeting/conference space which can be opened up to increase the café space during busy periods AND used as a venue for special events.- a 'dark space' facility on the upper level which would be used for astronomical observation Build on the current events programme and promote using both traditional and modern methods, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Santas Run- Santas Cottage	Pending funding	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership	Product Development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zombie Run - Valleys Velo <p>Develop the range of recreational activities with consideration for:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of a 'Perma-Snow slide/ride - Creation of a 'rookie' cycling trail - Develop a 'Natural trails' mountain biking offer - Creation of an 'army' assault course including a Zip wire off the 'Twin Tips' <p>Longer term developments include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zorbing - an Indoor play centre - a Toboggan run <p>Develop the eating-out offer at DVCP with the development of culinary tours, residential breaks and dining events/evenings.</p>			
Penderyn Penderyn Whisky Distillery Home to world renowned whisky and situated on the southern edge of the National Park.	<p>Develop as a key attractor for the whole of the Valleys region</p> <p>Develop the existing interpreted guided tours.</p> <p>Work in partnership to support the wider 'partnership' offer with creative linkages including the development of the adjacent Penderyn Community Hall as a café space</p>	2014 but pending funding	Penderyn Distillery/Tourism Unit/ Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership	Product Development

	which will support the proposed waterfall trail below			
Scwd Yr Eira One of the most spectacular waterfall's in the region	<p>Develop as a key attractor to the area</p> <p>Develop clear trail to waterfall and improve signage from Lamb Hotel/A4059 to pick up visitors on main routes</p> <p>Publish the trail to the waterfall and include on www.visitrct.co.uk</p>	Pending funding	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership /NRW / Brecon Beacons National Park / Penderyn Community Council / Penderyn Whisky Distillery	Product Development
Aberdare Park Grade II* listed Historic Park and Garden with several listed structures. Formal town park and home to the annual motorcycle races Grade II* listed Historic Park and Garden with several listed structures. Formal town park and home to the annual motorcycle races	<p>Develop as a tourist destination</p> <p>Develop a Heritage Trail guide/audio tour with:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpretation - Web presence - Printed leaflet - Audio trail <p><i>linking Aberdare Town Centre, Blue Plaques, CVM&G and Aberdare Park (Pos Dare Valley Country Park & Aberdare Cemetery).</i></p> <p>Develop an events programme and promote using traditional and modern methods incl. www.visitrct.co.uk</p> <p>Develop the walks within the park</p>	2014	Head of Museums & Heritage/RCT Parks/ Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership	Product Development
St Elvans Church, Aberdare	Develop church as a key focal point of the town, including, the opening of the venue	Application for	Friends of St Elvan's/RCT Museums Service/Tourism	Product Development

<p>St Elvan's Church is part of the Church in Wales in the Anglican communion. It is one of three Churches that make up the Parish of Aberdare and it is part of the Diocese of Llandaff.</p> <p>Built in 1852, it is now a grade 2* listed building containing many works of art which add to the quality and beauty of the original architecture.</p>	<p>during the daytime.</p> <p>Developing the internal space for events, conferences, exhibitions and community arts projects.</p> <p>Tell the story of the church using interpretation and digital technology.</p> <p>Support and promote the 2013 nativity project.</p>	<p>grant funding submitted 2013</p>	<p>Unit/ Aberdare & Upper Cynon Destination Partnership /CADW/HLF</p>	
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Challenge 5

Recommending a visit to Aberdare & Upper Cynon

See RCT key priorities

6.6 Mid Rhondda 'People & power'

6.6 The Mid Rhondda Destination Offer

The **Mid Rhondda** extends from Porth to Ystrad and Penrhys and includes the whole of the Rhondda Fach to Maerdy. Although the ‘Rhondda’ is most notable for its historical link to the coal mining industry which was at its peak between 1840-1925 AD, the area also contains several prehistoric sites and a religious Well at Penrhys first mentioned in the 15th century and the forerunner to the strong early non-conformist Christian movement which manifested itself in the baptist chapels.

A historical trail runs through the centre of the main town of Tonypandy which was the focal point of the famous 1910 riots. The former Cambrian colliery site had been transformed into a picturesque countryside park with spectacular trails and Ferndale’s formal Darran Park features a well stocked lake against a dramatic limestone escarpment backdrop.

The key activities and attractions in the area centre on its strong industrial legacy and a religious history. The visitor offer is supported by a range of shops, including the award winning Sub-Zero ice-cream and a range of places to eat and drink.

Tourism Offer	Type
Darran Park	Formal town park with a lake
Cwm Clydach Countryside Park	Countryside park with outdoor activities and cafe
Powerhouse	Historically important industrial building
Tonypandy 1910 Riots	Historically important event
Glyncornel House	Former mine-owners house and an important local landmark

St Mary's Well, Penrhys	Famous religious site
Maerdy Mountain	Driving viewpoint
Cor Meibion Morlais/Morlais Hall	Choir and cultural centre
Rhondda Life	Restaurant and museum
Ystrad Sports Centre/Rhondda Fach Sports Centre	Leisure
The Factory	Music venue
Valleys Golf Enterprise and Rhondda Golf Club	Golf course and academy
Miskin Hotel	Accommodation

The Mid Rhondda Partnership

The partnership includes members of the community and represents local tourism business and accommodation providers, community organisations as well as public bodies such as Natural Resources Wales and the local authority.

NB – This group is yet to be established, should you wish to become involved please e-mail Tourismenquiry@rctcbc.gov.uk with your details and we will advise you of the meeting dates.

List of potential partners follows:-

Organisation	Location
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Clydach
Arriva Trains	Cardiff
Keep Wales Tidy	Cardiff
Coleg y Cymoedd	Llwynypia
Penrhys Partnership	Penrhys
Cwm Clydach Countryside Park	Clydach
Sub Zero Ice-cream	Tonypandy

Communities First	Porth/Clydach/Llwynypia/Maerdy
Cor Meibion Morlais	Ferndale
Rhondda Life	Ferndale
Valleys Golf Enterprise and Rhondda Golf Club	Penrhys
Tonympandy Community College	Tonympandy
The Factory	Porth
Glamorgan Family History Society	Porth
Arts Factory	Ferndale
RambleBee Outdoor fitness	Leisure
Glyncoed House	Llwynypia

Chair TBC

Secretary TBC

The Mid Rhondda Destination - key tourism priorities

Challenge 1

Researching Mid Rhondda as a destination to visit and booking a break

Improving the image of Mid Rhondda as a short-break destination through partnership working, positive media management and marketing, improved online booking and short-break itineraries.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Marketing Mid Rhondda	To Be agreed by Partnership.	2014	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Mid Rhondda Destination Partnership	Promoting the Brand
'People & Power' Promotional Campaign	Promoting the Mid Rhondda Destination ...an area with a vibrant social history, in marketing campaigns including RCT Visitor Guide and www.visitrct.co.uk			

CHALLENGE 2

Getting to and around Mid Rhondda

Improve visitor information en route and on arrival and offer a warm 'Valleys' welcome and excellent facilities to visitors.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Travelling by Road Upper Rhondda Fach Relief Road.	LDP proposal to improve communications to the upper and mid Rhondda Fach opening up access to visitor attractions and employment opportunities as well as improving the environment in commercial and residential areas fronting the existing road.	Longer term proposal, currently no indication of funding.	WG/Sewta/LDP proposal	Place Building
Tonyypandy Bus Station <i>Key gateway to area.</i>	The provision of tourist information notices within the bus station – a key gateway to the area. Provide assistance to both local residents and visitors to the area. Will help promote sustainable tourism to local attractions and places of interest	2015		Place Building
Travelling by Rail Porth Station Dinas Station Tonyypandy Station Llwynypia station Ystrad station - Key entry points to destination providing public transport links to:-	Improve welcome to visitors at each station Install 'Welcome' signs/panels at each station to greet visitors and direct them to amenities, attractions, walking and cycling links and TIP's... Welcome to Porth ...Gateway to the Rhondda Welcome to Tonyypandy...home to the	2014	WG/RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Arriva	Place Building

	<p>historical 1910 Riots</p> <p>Welcome to Dinas ...and site of the Rhondda's first deep mine</p> <p>Organise clean-ups at the railway stations</p> <p>Improve signage at each station</p>			
Tourist Information Points (TIP)	<p>Develop Tourist Information points at :-</p> <p>To Be agreed by Partnership.</p>	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / RCT Library Service / Mid Rhondda Destination Partnership	Place Building
Mid Rhondda Visitor Map	<p>To Be agreed by Partnership.</p> <p>Develop an 'at destination' visitor information map highlighting key points of interest including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Darran Park, - St Mary's Well, Penrhys - Tylorstown tip - Rhondda Life - Historic Tonypandy – Riots, Powerhouse, Hen Dre'r Gelli Iron Age settlement - Glyncornel - Cwm Clydach Countryside Park 	2014	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Mid Rhondda Destination Partnership	Place Building

CHALLENGE 3

Staying in Mid Rhondda

Improve and increase a range of graded accommodation in Rhondda Cynon Taf and make the booking process simpler - **See RCT key priorities**

There is a range of places to stay in **Mid Rhondda**. The table below shows the accommodation available, rating and occupancy levels.

Accommodation	Type	Rating	Bedrooms	Bed spaces	Occupancy %
Ty Lily Mia Guest House, Trellaw	B&B/ Guesthouse	Not rated			
Miskin Hotel, Trellaw	B&B/ Guesthouse	Not rated	3	5	

CHALLENGE 4

The Visitor experience in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Things to see and do in Mid Rhondda

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Mid Rhondda Events programme	To Be agreed by Partnership.	2013...ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Mid Rhondda Destination Partnership	Product Development
RCT Point of Interest Trail.....Mid Rhondda Point of interest Interpretation trail	To Be agreed by Partnership.	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Mid Rhondda Destination Partnership	
Penrhys A place of pilgrimage over many centuries and includes St Mary's Well and the Shrine to Our Lady of Penrhys.	Develop the 'faith tourism' visitor offer at the village. Introduce 'point of interest' and viewpoint Interpretation to the site and include within the Mid Rhondda and subsequently RCT point of interest trail. Develop a faith tourism trail including reference to all denominations.	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Mid Rhondda Destination Partnership / Faith Tourism	
Darran Park, Ferndale Formal park set against the a	Develop way-marked trails from the Park and Introduce 'point of interest' and viewpoint	2016	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Mid Rhondda	

dramatic limestone escarpment which rises to 1384 ft and includes a 4 acre man made lake	Interpretation to the site		Destination Partnership	
'Old Smokey' (Tylorstown Tip) Built up of masses of colliery spoil and now a famous landmark. Fine vantage point with panoramic views.	Introduce 'point of interest' and viewpoint Interpretation to the site	2016	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Mid Rhondda Destination Partnership	

Challenge 5

Recommending a visit to Mid Rhondda

See RCT key priorities

6.7 Lower Cynon 'legends and landscapes'

6.7 The Lower Cynon Destination Offer

Lower Cynon..... Stretches from Abercynon in the south to Mountain Ash in the north and includes the expanse of St Gwynnos Forest. The A4059 links the A470 to the A465 ‘heads of the Valley’ road and travels along the valley floor alongside the River Cynon.

The village of Abercynon was developed as a transport interchange being strategically located at the junction of the Merthyr and Aberdare branches of the Glamorganshire Canal and the Merthyr and Aberdare branches of the Taff Vale Railway. The ‘basin’ area is of significant historical importance as the terminus of the world’s first steam railway journey by Richard Trevithick in 1804

The Cynon Trail follows the river Cynon from Hirwaun to Abercynon (NCN478), passing through Mountain Ash, home to the annual Nos Galan races to commemorate the legendary achievements of runner Guto Nyth Bran. The Briars Bridleway runs from Barry Sidings near Pontypridd, through St Gwynnos forest to Dare Valley country Park.

The visitor offer in the Lower Cynon centres on two historical events, Trevithick’s momentus rail journey and the Nos Galan races held each New Years Eve. The large expanse of forestry at Llanwonno offers huge opportunities for the visitor and there are also places to eat and several public houses.

Tourism Offer	Type
TBC once Partnership Meeting 24/04/14	

The Lower Cynon Partnership

The partnership includes members of the community and represents local tourism business and accommodation providers, community organisations as well as public bodies such as Natural Resources Wales and the local authority.

NB – This group is yet to be established, should you wish to become involved please e-mail Tourismenquiry@rctcbc.gov.uk with your details and we will advise you of the meeting dates.

Organisation	Location
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Clydach
Arriva Trains	Cardiff
Keep Wales Tidy	Cardiff

Coleg y Cymoedd	Llwynypia
Mountain Ash Golf Club	Mountain Ash

Chair TBC
Secretary TBC

The Lower Cynon Destination - key tourism priorities

Challenge 1

Researching Lower Cynon as a destination to visit and booking a break

Improving the image of Lower Cynon as a short-break destination through partnership working, positive media management and marketing, improved online booking and short-break itineraries.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Marketing Lower Cynon 'Legends & Landscapes' Promotional Campaign	To Be agreed by Partnership. Promoting the Lower Cynon Destination ...an area with a vibrant social history, in marketing campaigns including RCT Visitor Guide and www.visitrct.co.uk	2014	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Lower Cynon Destination Partnership	Promoting the Brand

CHALLENGE 2

Getting to and around Lower Cynon

Improve visitor information en route and on arrival and offer a warm 'Valleys' welcome and excellent facilities to visitors.

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Travelling by Road Mountain Ash Southern Cross	Provide enhanced access to town centre and	Longer term	WG/Sewta/LDP proposal	Place Building

Valley Link	divert traffic away to enhance	proposal, currently no indication of where funding will come from.		
Travelling by Rail - Key entry points to destination providing public transport links. Abercynon Station Penrhwceiber Station Mountain Ash Station Fernhill Station	Improve welcome to visitors at each station Install 'Welcome' signs/panels at each station to greet visitors and direct them to amenities, attractions, walking and cycling links and TIP's... Welcome to Abercynon and terminus of Trevithick's historical rail journey Welcome to Mountain Ash home to the famous Nos Galan Races Organise clean-ups at the railway stations Improve signage at each station	2014	WG/RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Arriva	Place Building
Tourist Information Points (TIP)	Develop Tourist Information points at :- To Be agreed by Partnership.	2014	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / RCT Library Service / Lower Cynon Destination Partnership	Place Building
Lower Cynon Visitor Map	To Be agreed by Partnership. Develop an 'at destination' visitor information map highlighting key points of interest including:- Trevithick trail Llanwonno	2014	RCT PR Strategy and Tourism / Lower Cynon Destination Partnership	Place Building

	Guto Nyth Bran/Nos Galan Races Cwmaman Trail			
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CHALLENGE 3

Staying in Lower Cynon

Improve and increase a range of graded accommodation in Rhondda Cynon Taf and make the booking process simpler - **See RCT key priorities**

There are a range of places to stay in **Lower Cynon**. The table below shows the accommodation available, rating and occupancy levels.

Accommodation	Type	Rating	Bedrooms	Bed spaces	Occupancy %
Falcon Hotel	Hotel	Not graded	8	12	

CHALLENGE 4

The Visitor experience in Lower Cynon

Things to see and do in Lower Cynon

Project	Project Description	Timescale	Partner Organisations	VW Tourism Priority
Lower Cynon Events programme	To Be agreed by Partnership.	2013...ongoing	RCT Strategy, PR and Tourism / Lower Cynon Destination Partnership	Product Development
RCT Point of Interest Trail.....Lower Cynon Point of interest Interpretation trail	To Be agreed by Partnership.	2014		

Challenge 5

Recommending a visit to the Lower Cynon

See RCT key priorities