Appendix B

Consultation Workshop

Consultation Workshop

A workshop was held at Dare Valley Country Park for contributors from the tourism sector of Rhondda Cynon Taff, the Heads of the Valleys, South Wales and Wales as a whole. It was beneficial to have representatives of tourism at these different strategic levels to ensure a clear and consistent approach was established to the growth of tourism in the study area.

A total of 28 stakeholders attended the workshop the purpose of which was to present for discussion the tourism opportunities the study team had so far identified and to identify further opportunities. This was followed by a discussion on the prioritisation of opportunities with specific regard to available funding.

The broad tourism themes were discussed initially in relation to the identification of Key Assets before an in depth discussion into the key opportunities. The type of opportunities identified are summarised as follows:

- Signage – key to increasing confidence in a locality and essential for tourism orientation.

- Heritage:

  Rhondda Heritage Park – the need to strengthen it as a main hub.

  A layered attraction – attractions need to have a clear sense of place in respect of other related attractions in the study area.

- Natural landscape – needs to be promoted as a main tourist attraction with a full range of natural features.

- Tourism package

  Integration - important to expand linkages between various sectors of tourism for example outdoor activities and accommodation.

  Marketing Strategy – consistent and well branded.

- Accommodation – needs to be more strategically placed along main trails. There is a particular need for small-scale bed and breakfasts and camping facilities. There are perceived barriers to entering the accommodation market.

- Brecon Beacon National Park – improved linkages with Rhondda Cynon Taff.

- Niche markets:

  Equestrian activity - potential to expand the activity further including stronger marketing and improved linkages between necessary infrastructure such as riding stables, trails and accommodation.

  Bird Watching - from Dare Valley Country Park.

- Events

> Venue – an event venue in the North of Rhondda Cynon Taff at Dare Valley Country Park. This would require an increase in car parking spaces, and the introduction of public transport links. The alternative venue suggested was Aberdare Park.

> Perception changing – using events/festivals as a platform to change visitors' perceptions of an area.

Members of the workshop were then asked to indicate which areas they thought most needed action. Those seen as most important were:

- Community involvement in tourism development
- Improving the quality, quantity and location of interpretation / signage
- Improve accommodation (quality and location)
- Improve skills training for maximising opportunities for local jobs in tourism
- Establish a dedicated tourism co-ordinator or department at RCTCBC
- Using events and festivals as a springboard for encouraging visitors to the area and to change negative perceptions.

Appendix C

TIC/Marketing Review

Tourist Information Centres

Pontypridd Tourist and Information Centre

This TIC included a wide variety of events within Rhondda Cynon Taff (in Rhondda Cynon Taff Summer Events booklet), and leaflets specific to the attraction hubs of the Rhondda Heritage Park and Dare Valley Country Park. Five leaflets for attractions outside Rhondda Cynon Taff have also been included such as Caerphilly Castle and Pontypool Town Heritage trail. Whilst the TIC is located within Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, there is a clear consideration for attractions outside the Borough as much as within.

The quality of the marketing material varied considerably. The compliments slip reply to our enquiry was of poor and so too a leaflet on the transport day event at Parc Ynysangharad. However, also accompanying this was Wisdom and Walks, presented by the Heads of the Valleys group of authorities to a high standard.

Merthyr Tydfil Tourist Information Centre

Similar to Pontypridd this TIC sent leaflets that promoted five attractions out of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's boundaries. This included an event advertisement in Swansea city centre and a Big Pit: the National Mining Museum of Wales. Whilst there was a compiled list of 'What's On' in Merthyr Tydfil, the TIC still included the Summer Festivals booklet for Rhondda Cynon Taff. The inclusion of 'Festival Park' leaflet, a factory-shopping village perhaps indicates the appreciation of retail within the tourism offer.

Quality of the leaflets was more consistent. Except for the unimaginative compliments slip, leaflets had been produced at a more strategic level by 'Inspirational Heritage' or Merthyr County Borough Council.

Brecon Tourist Information Centre

Three booklets of promotional material were sent from Brecon Tourist Information Centre. Two of these were specific to the Brecon Beacons – one focusing on walks and events and the other on welcoming the visitor to the area. Reference is however made to the hub of Rhondda Heritage Centre outside Brecon Beacons National Park. Whilst there are not activity centres from which to hire equipment within the study area, we feel the area within the Brecon Beacons could have been promoted more affectively for walking and a variety of other outdoor activities.

The third brochure combines the qualities of the region North of the national park rather than the South entitled ' Mid Wales and the Brecon Beacons; National Park – Natural Splendour'. Whilst it is important to acknowledge mid Wales as an attractive visitor destination, the section of the study area South of the Brecon Beacons could also have been included. This indicates the relatively unexplored relationship between Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council and the Brecon Beacons. It is also worth mentioning an accompanying letter was included, offering a bed booking service,

accommodation list and guidebooks for sale. It was a welcoming response to our enquiry and provided positive first impressions.

Caerphilly Tourist Information Centre

The information received has a very strong emphasis on the County Borough's boundaries. The 'What's On' brochure contains a detailed events listing at locations within the Borough, and whilst 'Great Attractions and Activities' mentions locations outside the Borough the way the information is presented implies Caerphilly County Borough ownership.

Despite efforts to promote attractions within the boundaries, there was not any personal letter or at least a compliments slip to accompany the promotional material.

Abergavenny Tourist Information Centre

The information covered three specific events leaflets, none of which were within our study area. Despite also providing a brochure specific to the enjoyment of the outdoors that includes activities located as far south as Cardiff and as east as Gloucester, it does not mention the substantial opportunity for outdoor activities within our study area.

The promotional material has all been produced to a very high standard and this is consistent with the response letter from the TIC receptionist. It has a very professional feel to the letter and includes good quality services to maximise visitor enjoyment.

Swansea Tourist Information Centre

The information sent through comprised two specific brochures promoting Swansea bay and the surrounding area, one event specific programme for The National Eisteddfod of Wales, and an informative cover letter suggesting particular attractions to visit. Unfortunately whilst the material was well presented in order to explore the Gower and Swansea bay area, no references could be found to the Head of the Valleys or specifically our study area. The relative ease of accessing the Heads of the Valleys area from Swansea Bay and the surrounding area has not been adequately developed; Whilst references have been made to attractions in Swansea Bay from other TICs, the link needs to be reciprocated.

Key Points

- Thematic links should be developed much more. For example, outdoor activities located in or around Abergavenny should identify the strength of outdoor activities within Rhondda Cynon Taff and attract visitors to both areas.

- It is important that TICs do not feel they should be promoting facilities for the County Borough Council they are based.

- The Brecon Beacons National Park have really developed its links with mid Wales and Rhondda Cynon Taff need to work in partnership with BBNP in order to promote the benefits south of the area.

- Including cover letters and offering holiday planning services through a TIC is an excellent way of enticing visitors to the area.

- TICs need to ensure that whilst the Welsh Assembly Government might have grouped sections of Wales together in order to produce brochures, attractions across these borders may be equally accessible as others within the area.

- A substantial amount of promotional material exists, but the availability of it is totally unpredictable.

General Marketing Material

The marketing material available for the Heads of the Valleys and specifically Rhondda Cynon Taff is varied. Most recently Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council have produced two quality documents with two different spatial dimensions. 'Going to Town' focuses on the attractions of eight key town centres, integrating heritage, transport, landmarks and social/cultural attractions. 'Touring Country' on the other hand has devised five thematic tours through Rhondda Cynon Taff but similarly draws on heritage, and social/cultural attractions along a descriptive route. It also introduces regional culinary specialities alongside the tours.

Cordell Country is another marketing initiative, produced by a partnership between valley's local authorities. It provides touring routes for the visitor to discover the locations that feature in Alexander Cordell's novels. These tours span the Heads of the Valleys and acknowledge the TICs in the vicinity as providers of additional information for the area. However, none of the TICs mentioned actually provided the Cordell Country leaflets when requesting information on the area.

Blaenavon World Heritage Site is a good example of how effective branding has encouraged the growth of the attraction. The logo of a miner standing with his spade on top of the coal has proved effective association and making reference to this in marketing of heritage across the Heads of the Valleys.

Appendix E

Bus Service / Frequency Information

Bus Service / Frequency Information

Service	Origin	Via	Destination	Frequency Mon - Sat	Sunday Service?	Bank Holidays
2	Aberdare	Ty Fry	Aberdare	Hourly (until 22:25)	No	No
6	Merthyr Tydfil	Llwydcoed	Aberdare	Half hour (until 18:45)	No	No
7	Penderyn	Hirwaun	Aberdare	Half hour (until 23:00)	No	No
8	Glyneath	Rhigos, Hirwaun, Aberdare	Glynhafod	Half hour (until 18:55)	No	No
9	Merthyr Tydfil	Hirwaun, Aberdare	Glynhafod	Half hour (until 18:45)	No	No
13/ 113	Aberdare	Cwmbach	Aberdare Street Bus	Half Hour (until 23:20)	No	No
78	Pontypridd	Nelson, Treharris, Aberfan	Merthyr Tydfil	Hourly (until 19:20)	No	No
120	Rhondda Fawr	Porth, Pontypridd	Caerphilly	Every 15 minutes (until 23:52)	Hourly	Hourly
130	Pontypridd	Porth, Treorchy	Blaenrhondda	Every 15 minutes (until 23:45)	Hourly	Hourly
131	Cardiff	Porth	Maerdy	Hourly (until 20:50)	1 service	1 service
132	Cardiff	Pontypridd	Maerdy	Every half hour (until 23:57)	Hourly	Hourly
172	Aberdare	Maerdy	Porthcawl	(until 20:12)	Every 2 hours	Every 2 hours
244	Pontypridd	Talbot Green,	Bridgend	Hourly	No	No

		Pencoed		(until 20;08)		
775	Merthyr Tydfil	Hirwaun	Swansea	Every 1.5 hours (until 17:15)	No	No
RL2	Maerdy	Tylorstown	Ystrad	Hourly	No	No
X4	Cardiff	Pontypridd, Merthyr Tydfil	Hereford	Mon Hourly (until 22:55)	No	No
X5	Cardiff	Pontypridd, Mountain Ash	Aberdare	Hourly (until 20:27)	Every 2 hours	No
X8	Cardiff	Porth	Maerdy	Hourly (until 19:15)	No	No
X55	Swansea	Hirwaun	Aberdare	Hourly (until 18:45)	No	No
X78	Cardiff	Pontypridd	Merthyr Tydfil	Hourly (until 18:50)	No	No