



TOURISM

DEPOSIT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN UP TO 2021

October 2008

TWRISTIAETH

CYNLLUN ADNEUO DATBLYGU LLEOL HYD AT 2021

Hydref 2008



**CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
Up to 2021**

**BWRDEISTREF SIROL CAERFFILI
CYNLLUN DATBLYGU LLEOL
Hyd at 2021**

BACKGROUND PAPER 11 TOURISM

PAPUR CEFNDIR 11 TWRISTIAETH

**LDP DEPOSIT
October 2008**

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**Pat Mears
Chief Planning Officer
Planning Division
Directorate of the Environment
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Pontllanfraith House
Pontllanfraith
Blackwood
NP12 2YW**

**Pat Mears
Prif Swyddog Cynllunio
Is-Adran Cynllunio
Cyfadran yr Amgylchedd
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili
Ty Pontllanfraith
Pontllanfraith
Coed Duon
NP12 2YW**

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 For the purpose of this background paper travel and tourism comprises: *“the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes”*. [Source: World Tourism Organisation (2001)].
- 1.2 Tourism perhaps more than any other industry relies upon the quality of the natural environment. Here, beautiful landscapes and coastlines are at the heart of attracting visitors. Sustainable tourism however needs to address social, cultural and economic issues as well as environmental. To be sustainable, tourism will need to consider the needs and quality of life of local communities, enhance and respect culture and local traditions, contribute to local economic prosperity as well as minimise damage to the environment.
- 1.3 This background paper is one of a series of supporting documents for the Local Development Plan (LDP). The purpose of each paper is to set out background information and issues relevant to topics such as tourism and to provide a context for planning policy decisions to be made. The Local Development Plan contains land use policies and proposals to meet the County Borough’s tourism needs up to 2021.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE AND LOCAL STRATEGIES

In order to meet statutory requirements, the Local Development Plan (LDP) must take into account legislation and planning guidance issued by European, Central and Welsh Assembly governments. Such guidance is contained within a large number of documents and publications that influence planning for Tourism, the most important of these being listed below, together with a summary of contents and relevant requirements.

2.1 European Union: 'A Renewed EU Tourism Policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism' (2005)

Tourism is a strategically important sector for the EU economy and as such is a clear priority within the renewed Lisbon growth and jobs strategy. Tourism represents more than 10 per cent of the EU's GDP and employment and has further significant growth potential.

The European Commission has presented a clear policy framework for tourism entitled "*A renewed EU tourism policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism*". The thrust of the policy is to create a momentum to support tourism in the EU by both responding to the challenges faced by the tourism industry and destinations through various EU policies and measures, in collaboration with all stakeholders and by getting all stakeholders including the member states' authorities to recognise the value of the tourism industry for their economies.

A number of EU policies already actively contribute to the development of tourism, such as regional and rural development, transport and education and training. The tourism industry, composed essentially of small enterprises, will also be a prime beneficiary of the better regulation agenda – an ambitious plan to cut red tape, simplify rules and insist upon the availability of impact assessments, to ensure that decisions are taken in full knowledge of the consequences.

2.2 Central Government – Department of Culture, Media and Sport: 'Winning: A Tourism Strategy for 2012 and Beyond' (2007)

The Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) put in place a wide-ranging 'Tourism Reform Programme' in 2002, based on a strong relationship with its partners in both public and private sectors, to be driven by improvements in delivery in key areas. Emerging from this programme, this document aims to maximise the financial benefits in particular of the London 2012 Olympic Games for the tourism industry across every region of the UK.

It is estimated that the Olympics and Paralympic Games could generate £2.1 billion in additional tourism benefits for the UK over the period 2007-17. While the 2012 Games will largely be located in London, they provide an opportunity for the whole country to upgrade tourist facilities. Other cities that have hosted the games have shown how a strong marketing and branding campaign can help to sustain an increase in visitors. It is possible that some of this market could filter to Caerphilly from some of the events held in Cardiff for example.

2.3 Welsh Assembly Government – 'Wales Spatial Plan' (2004)

The Wales Spatial Plan sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's planning agenda at a strategic level. In relation to the south east area, the Wales Spatial Plan's vision is to provide:

“An innovative skilled area offering a high quality of life - international yet distinctively Welsh. It will compete internationally by increasing its global visibility through stronger links between the Valleys and the coast and with the UK and Europe, helping to spread prosperity within the area and benefiting other parts of Wales.” [Source: WAG (2004), Wales Spatial Plan p49].

The WSP highlights the importance for Wales as a whole that Cardiff becomes significant internationally. However, to do this requires a much greater ‘mass’ of population and activity. Already, Cardiff has a close functional relationship with its immediate neighbouring towns, particularly Barry, Pontypridd, Caerphilly and extending to Bridgend. This relationship needs to be built on constructively, making Cardiff the focal point of a coherent and successful urban network in South East Wales, all of which is able to share in its prosperity.

The WSP states that the tourism and leisure sector has the potential to contribute to a much greater extent to the area’s economy. This should include heritage, culture, events and countryside based activities and destinations. The Wales Tourist Board, Welsh Assembly Government, Local Authorities and Countryside Council for Wales underline the need to develop tourism strategies, and to create coherent network of routes, destinations and facilities including the detailed project implementation and development at the local level.

2.4 Planning Policy Wales (2002)

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) is the principal land use planning document setting out Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) policy for local authorities. It provides guidance on preparing development plans and determining planning proposals.

PPW recognises that tourism is a major element in the Welsh economy, particularly in rural and coastal areas. It is a significant and growing source of employment and investment, based on the country’s cultural and environmental diversity. Tourism can be a catalyst for environmental protection, regeneration and improvement in both rural and urban areas.

The Assembly Government’s objectives for tourism are:

- To encourage sustainable tourism in Wales, maximizing its economic and employment benefits, promoting tourism in all seasons, and encouraging its development in non-traditional destinations, while safeguarding the environment, and the interests of local communities.
- To manage change in the tourism sector in ways which respect the integrity of the natural, built and cultural environment to provide for economic growth, employment and environmental conservation.

Tourism covers a wide range of activities, facilities and types of development. It affects all parts of urban and rural Wales and the planning system should encourage sustainable tourism in ways that enable it to contribute to economic development, conservation, rural diversification, urban regeneration and social inclusion. In addition to supporting the continued success of existing tourist areas, appropriate tourist related commercial development in new destinations, including existing urban and industrial heritage areas, should be encouraged.

Much of the existing provision of facilities and accommodation for tourism occurs in urban locations, including areas of historic interest. In some places there may be a need to limit new development to avoid damage to the environment (for example in undeveloped rural areas) and the amenity of residents and visitors. In others, there

will be scope for tourist development, providing well-designed facilities to help bring about regeneration, particularly of former industrial areas.

Planning authorities should provide the framework for well-located, good quality tourism. The areas and facilities provided in both rural and urban areas should be sensitive to the needs of users, attractive, well designed, well maintained, protected from crime and vandalism, safe and accessible by people whose mobility is restricted and by a variety of sustainable means of travel. Long distance routes, rights of way, disused railways and waterways are important tourist facilities in their own right and as a means of linking other attractions. In rural areas in particular, the scale and nature of such development must be sensitive to the local environment.

LDPs should consider the scale and distribution of facilities and activities in the area, and provide for the accommodation and management of future needs in ways which limit environmental impact, and protect the landscape, biodiversity, the coast, the historic environment, areas of special interest and the interests of local communities.

2.5 Technical Advice Note 13: Tourism

One of a series of documents expanding upon PPW guidance, Technical Advice Note (TAN) 13: Tourism, sets out the key planning considerations in relation to planning for tourism. WAG have revised TAN 13 and consulted upon this in July 2006, but is yet to publish the revised version. Future planning policy is likely to be based upon this draft as it is more comprehensive and specific than the previous TAN. The TAN aims to further integrate the links between tourism and sustainable development.

TAN 13 highlights that tourism comprises a range of different, but interdependent activities and operations that overlap with sport, entertainment, and the arts as well as other recreation and leisure activities. It makes a major contribution to the Welsh economy, provides employment in a wide variety of occupations and can bring benefits to local economies and communities in urban and rural areas. It is subject to change in the type of holiday taken and the length of the holiday season.

While it cannot be regarded as a single or distinct category of land use, the issues it raises should be addressed in preparing or revising development plans and may feature in development control decisions. Development plans may provide guidance on opportunities for larger scale or innovative projects, appropriate facilities for the countryside or designated areas and the provision of facilities in historic towns.

Hotel development can bring benefits for the local community and support amenities and activities for residents and tourists. Such development should be compatible with neighbouring uses. Care should be taken not to use the planning system to perpetuate outdated accommodation for which there is no longer a market demand.

In preparing development plans, local planning authorities should investigate the adequacy of facilities for both static and touring caravans and reconcile these needs with the protection of the environment. Holiday and touring caravan parks are an important part of the self-catering holiday sector and can contribute as much to the local tourism economy as serviced holiday accommodation, while using less land for the purpose. Holiday caravan sites can be intrusive in the landscape, particularly on the coast. Special consideration needs to be given to proposals for

new sites, especially in National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast and sites of national and international importance designated for their natural features.

2.6 'Shaping the Way We Work, Rest and Play: Practical guidance on delivering sustainable development through the planning system' (WLGA, 2007)

Wales has substantial environmental and heritage assets, and tourism jobs account for over 10% of the workforce. The tourism sector is identified as having major growth potential. Traditional skills can contribute to the upkeep of assets that are attractive to tourists, as well as maintaining culture and community heritage. The need to maintain diversity and prevent clone towns is essential if Wales is to have a competitive advantage.

Modern "greener" industries have the potential to create high-skill jobs and economic growth that do not damage the assets that underpin tourism and general quality of life. Eco-parks can further reduce environmental impacts, and working from home reduces the cost and impact of travelling.

2.7 Heads of the Valleys Programme: 'Turning Heads – A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020' (2006)

The Heads of the Valley Strategy sits within the context of the Wales Spatial Plan and sets out a broad framework for change in the Heads of the Valleys (HoV) area. Within the context of Caerphilly County Borough the HoV strategy includes the Upper Rhymney Valley, the Upper Sirhowy Valley, Princetown, Fochriw, Deri, New Tredegar, Bargoed, Aberbargoed, Gilfach, Argoed, Markham and Hollybush.

The main objectives of the HoV strategy relating to tourism are as follows:

- Linked local and regional attractions and facilities
- A unified, coherent, well-branded tourism offer.

The HoV strategy and its objectives should be considered when preparing the Local Development Plan due to the impact it will have on the northern area of the County Borough.

The Local Development Plan should seek to ensure that the Heads of the Valleys becomes characterised as an attractive place to live and stay, offering local people and visitors high quality facilities and attractions, including cultural events. The tourism sector should play a more significant role in the economic prosperity of the area, with activities complementing the offer elsewhere.

2.8 Valleys Regional Park

The Valleys Regional Park concept (VRP) is a funded scheme that has arisen from the Heads of the Valleys Strategy. The Valleys Regional Park vision is of a high quality, sustainable network of greenspace offering outstanding recreational opportunities which will change the image and perception of the Valleys in the long term. Its objectives are as follows:

- improve the quality of life, health and well being of local people
- generate pride in the area
- create an environment that stimulates inward investment and becomes an attractive destination for visitors
- putting the Valleys on the map internationally and for all the right reasons
- tackling historic landscape scale problems that cross political divides

- providing an opportunity to demonstrate that, in keeping with a duty to deliver sustainable development, a significant piece of environmental infrastructure alongside other plans for social and economic investment is being created.

Many other parts of the country have outstanding scenery and countryside which has attracted tourists for many years and are well established brands – the Lake District, Cotswolds, Snowdonia or more locally the Wye Valley, Brecon Beacons, and Gower peninsula. To be successful the Valleys must strive to ‘raise the standard’ and become an established destination in its own right, maximising the potential of existing tourism activity. The Valleys Regional Park can enhance existing tourism destinations and linkages, for instance, the potential to rejuvenate cycle trails.

The Valleys Regional Park will serve both local residents and visitors although, in the short term, its priority should be to improve the quality of experience for existing users and to target the inactivity of those who currently do not use the countryside. For the visitor, however, the landscape offers outdoor facilities for a whole range of pursuits including walking, cycling and even extreme sports for those seeking adventure in world-class settings. Any new facilities need to be of the highest quality that will improve the overall reputation of the Park and increase its attractiveness for visitors and local people.

It is intended that a Valleys Regional Park would incorporate an area extending from eastern Carmarthenshire to western Monmouthshire, roughly equating to the historic coalfield boundaries. The designation would include land north of the M4 motorway and along the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road. As the whole of Caerphilly County Borough is included within the VRP area its objectives and strategies should be considered when preparing the Local Development Plan.

2.9 Caerphilly County Borough Community Strategy

Under the Local Government Act, 2000, Caerphilly County Borough Council has a duty to prepare a community strategy for the County Borough. The Community Strategy sets out the overarching strategic framework for all other plans and strategies for the County Borough, including the LDP.

Four themes have been developed in the Caerphilly Community Strategy, each with objectives relevant to tourism as listed below:

Living Environment –

- Increase awareness of opportunities for safe access to the countryside and open spaces
- Encourage the improvement of town and village centres as a focus for community pride, accessible facilities and activities

Regeneration –

- Support town and village centre and other area based regeneration and develop sustainable tourism opportunities
- Generate sustainable, accessible and varied, well-paid employment opportunities locally, to encourage economic prosperity whilst reducing the need to travel

Education for Life –

- Increase appreciation of environmental assets and utilise their potential for enhanced quality of life and sustainable tourism opportunities

- Increase opportunities for and participation in leisure, sport, cultural and arts activities

Health, Social Care and Well-being –

- Reduce health inequalities by tackling deprivation and the wider determinants of health
- Improve public health by promoting factors that contribute to healthy lifestyle and well-being

[Caerphilly County Borough Community Strategy, 2004]

In order to achieve these objectives, the strategy advocates vision statements for the County Borough that include tourism aspirations as follows:

Living Environment Vision

- A substantial tourism industry with an 'outdoor pursuits' focus is creating opportunities for jobs directly and in related activities (such as catering, bed and breakfast, retail, crafts, bike hire, stables).

Vision for Sustainability

- Value our unique environment and mining heritage and take advantage of the easy access to the countryside for recreation and tourism and enjoyment of plants and wildlife.

2.10 Caerphilly County Borough Council: The Smart Alternative (2005)

The proposals contained in this programme are based on six regeneration principles specially developed to respond to the County Borough's various needs - and these vary as it contains many different communities - and to capitalise on the many opportunities open to it. The main report contains a detailed explanation of the principles, and the challenges and opportunities facing the County Borough. The regeneration principles are:

- Capitalise on proximity to Cardiff and Newport
- Strengthening the economy of the Mid Valleys Corridor
- Build a lifelong learning culture
- Diversify and strengthen the economy
- Re-establish town centres as foci of economic activity
- Community led regeneration throughout the County Borough

The strategy outlines that local people and companies need to be outward looking and able to take advantage of the opportunities that come their way. This does not mean being dependent on Cardiff and Newport, but it does mean making sure that the County Borough makes the most of having these two cities so close. This especially applies with respect to tourism where the County Borough may be able to capitalise on being so close to Cardiff both by providing a niche offer for the capital's population and by ensuring that tourists who visit Cardiff might also visit Caerphilly County Borough. Highlighting the tourism offer in three particular areas of the County Borough – Caerphilly Town, Llancaiach Fawr and Cwmcarn – will be essential to achieve this.

The tourism offer of the Corridor can also be improved, firstly by implementing current plans for expansion/improvement of facilities at Llancaiach Fawr and promoting the Manor through Herian, the new heritage tourism initiative, and secondly by consciously seeking to strengthen commercial leisure facility provision in Blackwood.

The County Borough's retail provision is spread across a number of smaller towns including the two main centres of Caerphilly and Blackwood. This has resulted in people regularly travelling to the two nearby cities of Cardiff and Newport and further to shop. In comparison to the nearest comparable towns of Cwmbran, Merthyr Tydfil and Pontypridd, there is less retail provision in Caerphilly and Blackwood although both have showed significant improvements.

Towns in Caerphilly County Borough also tend to suffer from a lack of commercial leisure facilities despite being well placed to capture economic spillover from Cardiff. Specific proposals are made with regard to this in Caerphilly where the opportunities are strongest (such as the new multiplex cinema and retail plateau at Bargoed), however they exist in many other town centres, albeit on a smaller scale.

2.11 Caerphilly Rural Development Partnership: Local Development Strategy 2007-2013

The County Borough possesses some exciting leisure and tourism venues and events. These include the forest recreational areas, country parks, manor houses and castles and events such as the 'Big Cheese'. More than 80% of the County Borough is rural and provides an attractive backdrop for economic regeneration and a major opportunity for tourism and leisure, which should continue to be a major element of the County Borough's economic regeneration effort.

The County Borough has one of Wales' most widely recognised verbal associations or 'brandings', the name 'Caerphilly' itself (because of the cheese). It already has a well-developed and expanding package of tourism and recreation offers and has been successfully targeting the short breaks market in recent years. It has one of South Wales' major tourism attractions: Caerphilly Castle; one of its most innovative: Llancaiach Fawr Manor; and a growing range of modern leisure facilities: e.g. the Cwmcarn Forest complex and the Bryn Meadows golf course. It also has an expanding range of accommodation.

There is an intensive network of small heritage attractions including Butetown, the Elliot Colliery Winding House and others that enhance the County Borough's offer. The area offers a number of long distance trails such as the Rhymney Valley Ridgeway, the Sirhowy Valley walks and part of the Celtic Trail. There are five country parks, extensive areas of upland common and over 1,000km of public rights of way.

The County Borough has developed a successful programme of events over recent years, led by the Caerphilly 'Big Cheese'. This has quickly become well established and can attract more than 80,000 people over a weekend. Together with other events such as the Festival of Light at Christmas season and the Blackwood 'Big Balloon', the County Borough is more than capable of hosting and organising a number of high quality entertainments.

Despite these undoubted successes there are additional opportunities to improve and expand this sector of the economy so that income per visitor increases. This can be achieved by continuing existing marketing strategies aimed at selected tourism markets, and developing new and complementary facilities. By intensifying promotion of local attractions to overnight and day visitors it is hoped to encourage short term visitors to stay longer.

2.12 Caerphilly Loops and Links Project

The Mid Valleys Rural Village Strategy, commonly known as 'Loops and Links', improves access between towns and villages in Caerphilly County Borough and the National Cycleway. This innovative scheme allows people using the cycleway easier access to facilities in towns and villages. It also opens up the spectacular countryside and tourist attractions that lie along the cycleway. The National Cycleway runs for 134 miles across South Wales. The section that runs through the Caerphilly County borough is 12 miles long and is a relatively easy flat route.

The three key objectives for the project are:

- Develop the economic prosperity of villages located along the National Cycle Route through the creation and safeguarding of retail, service sector and hospitality related businesses.
- Enhance the relationship between tourism facilities and local villages by developing the cycle route as a link to help aid the vitality of village centres.
- Develop the tourism draw of the area to attract investment and increase consumer spending.

There are also a number of plans to enhance the cycle route within Caerphilly County Borough which include:

- Introduction of information boards and signposting in village centres. This will reflect the rural setting and history of the local area providing basic information on village amenities and also directional signage to the National Cycle Route.
- Environmental improvements to the entrances to village centres. It is fundamental that these approaches are made attractive and welcoming to visitors, improving the sense of vitality in the villages.
- To promote the cycle way between the various tourist attractions to encourage local people to use the cycle route for leisure and health pursuits. This will also promote the route as an alternative means of transport between communities, thereby supporting sustainable transport.

The Local Development Plan should include provisions for the development of the Caerphilly 'Loops and Links' project for the benefit of tourists. This will mainly be by means of Transport policies and especially the development of National Cycle Network routes through the County Borough.

3.0 TRENDS IN TOURISM

Tourism is an integral part of the economy and is one of the most important sources of employment in Wales. It is predicted that employment in tourism or tourism related industries, will continue to grow for the foreseeable future as people's leisure time increases. By improving the image of an area, tourism produces a spin off effect on other industries that are more likely to invest or retain investment in the area.

Tourism can be divided into two types of activity, these being development and practice. From a development perspective, tourism is often the driver behind significant infrastructure growth. However, from a practice perspective tourism can have a negative influence on the environment if the impact of tourists, whether in small or large groups, is not effectively managed.

Development of the County Borough's tourism industry is inevitable and necessary. However, the LDP should seek to protect the integrity of the existing countryside and encourage tourism development that does not have a detrimental effect on the surrounding environment.

3.1 Economic Influences

Tourism contributes more than £2 billion directly to the Welsh economy – equivalent to 7% of GDP. It is an industry dominated by small independent operators but supports up to 100,000 jobs directly and indirectly in the Welsh economy, more than 10% of the workforce. The industry is well placed to make an even greater contribution to the economic and social well-being of Wales. Given the availability of additional funding, by 2010 tourism in Wales could support up to an additional 22,000 jobs (15,000 full time equivalents) and increase its proportion of a rising GDP to 8% based on estimated total tourism receipts of £3.2-3.5 billion. [Source: WAG (2000), *Achieving Our Potential – A Tourism Strategy For Wales*].

In terms of visitor spending, tourism spend across the County Borough has steadily increased in the last 5 years generating a significant income to the rural economy. Day visits are responsible for 42% of all tourism spend in the County Borough [Source: Caerphilly Local Development Strategy (2007), section 4.2.69]

Therefore there is a need to build upon the success of day visits by increasing the length of stay and visitor-spend within the County Borough. This objective can be achieved by:

- Encouraging the development of a wide range of accommodation within the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area
- Capitalising upon the County Borough's close proximity and transport links to Cardiff, especially in the Southern Connections Corridor
- Focusing infrastructure and tourism-related commercial development around key attractions currently within the County Borough

3.2 Leisure Influences

Caerphilly County Borough is rich in sites of historical and natural interest, particularly sites from the pre-industrial era. Its other visitor attractions include country parks and woodland that plays an important part in drawing 750,000 visitors to the area each year. In addition, the area's geology and natural features make it attractive for more formal recreation-based tourism that are increasingly

popular and require land-use provision with little adverse impact on the environment and can bring significant income into the area.

Built development for tourism and leisure uses should, where appropriate, be located on previously used land. In all cases, tourism development should be the subject of robust design policies and present evidence of a demonstrable long-term need, in order that proposals such as caravan parks or holiday chalets are sympathetic to the environment as well as the economy.

It is likely that the County Borough's leisure facilities will come under the spotlight in 2010, when the Ryder Cup golf tournament is held at the Celtic Manor course in the adjacent city of Newport. It will be important to cater for the likely explosion of interest in the sport of golf across the entire region on the occasion of this world-renowned event. This places importance upon the need to maintain the County Borough's current leading golf facilities (for example Bryn Meadows Golf Club and Spa, Blackwood Golf Club).

4.0 CURRENT AND FUTURE PROVISION OF TOURISM FACILITIES IN CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH

In order to capitalise upon the tourism potential of the County Borough, it is important to recognise where opportunities exist. This section will examine the current tourism offer within the County Borough as well as identifying any land use implications that should be addressed by the emerging Local Development Plan.

4.1 Major Attractions

Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area

Winding House, New Tredegar

The Winding House is part of the old Elliot Colliery and contains a magnificent Victorian steam-winding engine. It is being redeveloped into a museum exploring the history, heritage and culture of Caerphilly County Borough. The facilities on offer include a library, activity room, atrium and Café bar, which will hopefully generate a number of jobs for local people.

The Winding House project is a key component in the regeneration of the New Tredegar area, which has witnessed the rehabilitation of the former colliery site and its surroundings. Construction of the A4049 White Rose Way, tree planting and other environmental improvements have transformed this particular section of the northern Rhymney Valley.

The Winding House Museum will provide a new facility designed to service the whole of the County Borough. The Winding House is an important development occurring during the Local Development Plan period. As such the Plan should identify the land affected and specifically designate it for tourism purposes.

Northern Connections Corridor

Llancaiach Fawr, Nelson

Llancaiach Fawr is situated in South East Wales in the small valley of the Nant Caeach, a stream from which it takes its name. The house is mainly of the early 16th century, with early 17th-Century modifications. It was built on the site of an earlier medieval dwelling and was mentioned in John Leland's Itinerary of 1537.

Fig 1: Visitor numbers to Llancaiach Fawr Manor House

2004	2005	2006	% difference between 05/06
51,275	52,366	46,109	-11.9%

[Source: WAG (2008), Visit Wales]

Llancaiach Fawr is a popular visitor attraction but has experienced a slight decline in visitor numbers over recent years. This in part can be attributed to building work, with the completion of a recent extension to convert surrounding outbuildings into indoor facilities. Whilst the recent extension has improved facilities at Llancaiach Fawr, the venue is still not large enough to accommodate a number of events. Therefore, in order to bolster visitor numbers, Llancaiach Fawr requires land to the west to accommodate outdoor events. This will help increase the Manor House's popularity and enable it to offer more diverse entertainment including shows and re-enactments. The emerging Local Development Plan should therefore consider allocating land for this purpose.

Nantcarn Valley, Cwmcarn

Cwmcarn Forest Drive is a 7-mile scenic route through one of the country's largest urban forests. Combined with a three star campsite nestling along the banks of the Nantcarn stream, the Forest Drive is a good location for pleasure, leisure and holiday trips. The centre offers a wide range of facilities including car parks, picnic sites, walking routes, a campsite visitor centre, fishing/angling facilities at the Cwmcarn Forest Drive pond and a single-track cross-country mountain bike trail.

The cross-country mountain bike trail, which was completed in 2000, covers around 1400 hectares and is an internationally renowned centre for mountain biking situated between Newbridge and Risca, in the south-east of the County Borough. Part of the area currently occupied by the Forest Drive was once the site of Cwmcarn Colliery. Planting of the forest that covers the hillsides had begun in the 1920-30s to provide props for this and other local coal mines.

Following the colliery's closure in 1968 and subsequent demolition of the pit head buildings, the Forest Drive was created by the Forestry Commission in 1972. Further extensive reclamation and landscaping works took place before an informal countryside facility was opened by one of Caerphilly's predecessor authorities, Islwyn Borough Council, in 1984. A visitor centre was built in 1990.

Management of the facility is complex due to the number of landowners and interested parties involved in the site. These include: Caerphilly County Borough Council, Forestry Commission, private landowners (Pontypool Park and Llanover Estates), Cadw (Twmbarlwm Hill Fort – Scheduled Ancient Monument) and local communities (Cwmcarn and Pontywaun).

Fig 2: Visitor numbers for Cwmcarn Forest Drive

	2004	2005	2006	% increase between 05/06
Total Bikes (Mountain Track)	21293	43099	54544	+21%
Total cars past visitor centre*	N/A	10758	74662	+86%

**The total figure for cars past visitor centre could also include visitors in cars also using the Mountain Track)*

[Source: WAG (2008), Visit Wales]

The visitor numbers for Cwmcarn Forest Drive place it among the country's top tourist attractions. There is a need to build on the recent market success of Cwmcarn Forest Drive by sustaining visitor footfall and specifically increasing the length of stay and visitor spend in the vicinity. Cwmcarn Forest Drive presents a significant opportunity to capitalise on additional tourism related commercial development within the area.

Nantcarn Valley is a facility of national and international repute, it is important that the future development of this facility is carefully managed, and that the significance of this site is not diluted with the over-concentration of outdoor leisure pursuit facilities within close proximity.

The emerging Local Development Plan should consider including this area as a tourism allocation to control the scale of future expansion.

Caerphilly Castle, Caerphilly

Caerphilly Castle is a world class historic attraction that gives the whole area a defining image. Dating from the 12th century, this is one of the largest castles in Europe and the second largest in Britain after Windsor Castle. This is primarily due to the extensive network of water and earth defences that surround the building. In total the site covers over 30 acres and together with the stone built elements, the overall defences are shaped in a series of concentric rings.

Dating back to Roman times, there is a long history of fortification on the site largely because of its location near the centre of the Caerphilly Basin, at the lower end of the Rhymney Valley. Over the centuries, the site was besieged and occupied many times with the main building taking place during the Norman invasion. Begun in 1268 by the Anglo-Norman lord Gilbert de Clare, the castle was built. It was situated in the then lordship of Senghenydd, in order to defend the extensive surrounding lowlands.

In order to maximise defensive opportunities, the castle's construction involved damming streams to create a series of lakes. The main castle itself was built on an island within these lakes, and the small township now known as Caerphilly grew up around its outer walls.

One of the castle's most striking features is the partly blown up south-east tower which leans outwards at a dramatic angle. This occurred during a renewed period of use for Civil War purposes, when it is also believed that an earthwork (or 'redoubt') was constructed to the west of the castle. Following this brief reactivation, the castle again became a largely forgotten ruin. In ensuing years the lakes were filled in and some of the stonework was removed for use in several local buildings as the town of Caerphilly grew around it.

It was during the late 19th century, after the building had come into the ownership of the Marquis of Bute, that the castle's fortunes changed significantly. During an age of medieval styles of architecture were revived, the Bute family had an interest in the history of their properties. The third Marquis, with the assistance of Victorian architect William Burges, undertook the restoration of several castles including Caerphilly.

Rebuilding work was on a massive scale and continued into the early 20th century. A number of the larger towers, the gatehouses/apartments and Great Hall were roofed and restored, the latter becoming an important and well-used civic facility for the town of Caerphilly. Also the lakes were recreated and pleasant areas of park landscape laid out around the castle. In latter years, the castle passed from the Bute family to the State, which has continued to devote substantial resources to consolidate and preserve the remains. It is currently managed by CADW, the Welsh Historic Buildings Agency.

Fig 3: Visitor numbers to Caerphilly Castle

2004	2005	2006	% increase between 05/06
92,412	87,812	90,914	+3.5%

[Source: WAG (2008), Visit Wales]

As its single most recognisable symbol, Caerphilly Castle is a vital element in marketing the County Borough to visitors. With a consistently high volume of

tourists equivalent to its international renown, Caerphilly Castle benefits from a town centre location and extensive grounds.

Not only are the castle buildings a popular historic attraction, but the surrounding lakes and open spaces (such as Dafydd Williams Park and Owain Glyndwr Park) are an attractive element of Caerphilly town's central area. Both the castle and its wider setting require sensitive management in view of a series of designations relating to its intrinsic historic and conservation value (eg Scheduled Ancient Monument).

The castle provides long-term economic spinoffs for town centre businesses as it attracts consistently high visitor numbers to the town. In addition to boosting town centre business, the castle fulfils a wider role within the town. The building forms a natural backdrop for Caerphilly County Borough's flagship annual event – the Caerphilly 'Big Cheese' Festival (see para 4.6). Also a formal circular walk has been constructed around the castle site as allocated in the Unitary Development Plan, and a feasibility study has been conducted into the potential for pleasure craft to use the castle lakes, commonly known as 'Boat on the Moat'.

As the County Borough's main icon, care must be taken to ensure that Caerphilly Castle's tourism potential is maximised without detriment to its historic value. It is a unique feature within the South Wales Valleys, in an area famed more for its industrial heritage rather than buildings of great antiquity.

Within the Local Development Plan, provision can be made to highlight the castle and its grounds for a range of tourism activities that occur within the building and surroundings. This will help promote the castle as a useable asset, whilst protecting it for future generations. It is clear that it can act as a venue for further tourism activity and is more than a local asset for the immediate town.

4.2 Valleys Regional Park

Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area / Northern Connections Corridor / Southern Connections Corridor

The concept of a Valleys Regional Park is currently being developed. It shares similar objectives to those of National Parks. There are large expanses of land within the Valleys of significant landscape, ecological, historic, cultural and tourism importance. A single park designation would seek to protect these areas and offer a unified network of high quality facilities under the highly marketable Valleys Regional Park theme.

As such the Council's leisure policies will need to take account of the Valleys Regional Park's significant tourism potential. It is proposed that the emerging park strategy will be the subject of a strategic policy within the Local Development Plan that will acknowledge its intended impact upon local leisure and tourism facilities. Caerphilly County Borough would be included in its entirety, and the existing major outdoors activities provision would be standalone elements of this wider entity.

Caerphilly County Borough contains a significant amount of accessible countryside, parks and common land (eg Gelligaer, Rudry) and other green spaces that would be involved. Also, the network of major attractions, including historic buildings listed above, could form vital elements of the Valleys Regional Park.

4.3 Country Parks

Country parks are a significant element of the County Borough's leisure provision but are also major visitor attractions in their own right due to the variety of activities on offer in an attractive landscape setting. As such the Council's leisure policies will need to take account of country parks' significant tourism potential. The emerging local development plan should therefore protect country parks for this purpose.

Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area

Bryn Bach Park, Rhymney

Bryn Bach Park is situated between Rhymney and Tredegar, the majority of the site lies within the neighbouring local authority of Blaenau Gwent County Borough. Bryn Bach Park is a reclaimed former colliery site, and the proportion lying within Caerphilly County Borough boundaries includes grassland and mixed woodland at the western end of a central lake.

This section of the park has been identified as having scope for an afforestation project, involving tree planting, landscaping and the laying out of walks, cycle paths and bridleways. In order for this proposal to be realised, land should be allocated in the emerging local development plan.

Parc Cwm Darran, Deri

Parc Cwm Darran is tucked away in the Darran Valley, two miles north of Bargoed. The park is accessed midway between Deri and Fochriw. The park is home to lakeside paths, woodland and the Cwmllydrew Meadows Local Nature Reserve. The lake is one of the park's main features and has recently been de-silted and refilled to create an open water area and a wetland area for wildlife. The park is linked to a series of cycle tracks and scenic trails that lead further north in the Rhymney Valley. The park has the following facilities: healthy walking route, way-marked trails, cycle route, toilets, parking, picnic areas, campsite (seasonal opening) and a café.

Parc Coetir Bargoed, Bargoed

Parc Coetir Bargoed is located off the A469 Bargoed and the A4049 Aberbargoed. The park was created on the site of three collieries and is Caerphilly's newest park it boasts 11 sculpted gateways and is situated next to the River Rhymney, which is alive with dippers, herons kingfishers and otters. The park has the following facilities: public art, surfaced paths and 'healthy walking' route.

Northern Connections Corridor

Parc Penallta, Ystrad Mynach

Parc Penallta is situated within the northern connections corridor accessed off Penalltau Road, midway between the settlements of Ystrad Mynach and Gelligaer. Parc Penallta is carved from a former coal tip and offers spectacular views across the County Borough. The park is home to one of the UK's largest figurative earth sculptures – 'The Sultan'. Parc Penallta is linked to Route 47 of the National Cycle Network, joining the Sirhowy Valley Country Park in the east and the Taff trail in the west. The park has the following facilities: public art, healthy walking route, way-marked trails, cycle route, bridleway and parking.

Penyfan Pond, Croespenmaen

Penyfan Pond is located in the Northern Connections Corridor, located to the north of the Penyfan Industrial Estate, signposted from Oakdale on the B4251. The Pond

is one of the last remaining canal feeder reservoirs in Wales. Penyfan offers safe, flat, open spaces for recreational activities including fishing. It is located in historic countryside around Manmoel for which experienced walkers can use the pond as a base. The park has the following facilities: café kiosk, picnic area, parking, 'Alien Invasion' trail and a 'healthy walking' route.

Southern Connections Corridor

Sirhowy Valley Country Park

Sirhowy Valley Country Park is located in the Southern Connections Corridor, just off the A4048 road at Cross Keys. The park is a great base for walking and cycling and is linked to cycle route 47 of the National Cycleway which links to Parc Penallta and beyond in the west or south to Newport. A former railway track runs through the park leading to Flatwoods Meadows Local Nature Reserve which is situated alongside the River Sirhowy. The park is also home to the recently restored Penllwyn Tramroad Bridge. The park has the following facilities: public art, 'healthy walking' route, way-marked trails, cycle routes, toilets, parking and picnic areas.

4.4 Other attractions

Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area

Butetown/Y Drenewydd, Rhymney

Part of a planned new town development built in the early 19th century, Butetown consists of three rows of 2/3 storey cottages with spaces between each row. Public buildings were also erected including a church (St Aidans), a post office and former board school, currently used as a community centre.

Construction began in 1802 when a dramatic rise in population accompanied rapid industrial growth (particularly ironworks and coal pits) in the Rhymney area. Hitherto workers' accommodation was often hurriedly built, cramped and close to the workplace.

Butetown however represented a radical change as a local industrialist, Richard Johnson, sought to house workers in a more attractive, cleaner and better quality environment. The original intention was for a far larger development but unfortunately, Johnson's death left no one to continue with this worthy project, leaving the tiny hamlet seen today.

A museum operated at the village until recently, but comparatively low visitor numbers and the imminent opening of the County Borough museum at New Tredegar led to its closure in 2006. As such there are no current plans to develop the tourism element at the site until potential funding and thus a viable commercial operation can be firmly re-established.

Northern Connections Corridor

Gelligroes Mill and Candle Workshop, Gelligroes

Gelligroes Mill and candle workshop is situated near Pontllanfraith, the Mill is a seventeenth century built watermill which was a source of grain milling for the local crop farmers. There is also a candle workshop that demonstrates various techniques and makes candles for film and TV productions, a gift shop, souvenir centre and a tea room. Unfortunately tourism activity has tended to contract at this

location and, based on current trends, it is not anticipated that any specific land use provision will need to be made here in the near future.

Maesycwmmer Mill, Maesycwmmer

Maesycwmmer Mill is in a striking location under the Hengoed Viaduct – an attraction from the 19th century, formerly carrying a railway and now part of the National Cycle Network. It is a water mill on the River Rhymney which originally ground corn before being adapted for woollen manufacture. It was built in 1750 and is in an attractively secluded location. The Mill should be highlighted for its tourism potential and as such reference should be made in the emerging local development plan.

South Wales 2000, Mynyddislwyn

South Wales 2000 is a clay shooting facility which caters for both experienced or beginner. The clubhouse and annex offers hot and cold food, and is easily accessible to the disabled customer.

Southern Connections Corridor

Ynys Hywel Activity Centre, Ynysddu

The Ynys Hywel Activity Centre offers a wide range of adventure activities including gorge walking, canoeing, Coasteering, rock climbing, kayaking, abseiling, caving, abseiling, surfing, teambuilding, mountaineering, mountain biking, orienteering and hill walking. Accommodation and catering facilities are also available.

Riverside Fishery, Llanbradach

The Riverside fishery is located along the A469 road east of Llanbradach and contains many fish including carp, tench, bream, roach, rudd and perch. Facilities also include a large fishing lodge with a licensed bar which also serves cooked meals.

Caerphilly Riding School, Caerphilly

The Riding School and Trekking Centre is located in Ty Canol Farm, Caerphilly. There is an indoor arena that has been purpose built with the approval of the British Horse Society. It offers tuition to all ages and abilities. There are other activities on offer such as gymkhana, summer camp, picnic rides, BBQ rides and birthday parties.

4.5 Accommodation

Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area

Accommodation provision within the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area is poor in comparison to the two other strategy areas. A study undertaken by Cardiff Business School has highlighted that the lack of provision within the Heads of the Valleys Area could jeopardise the region's position to take full advantage of investment for tourism under the Heads of the Valleys investment programme. The Heads of the Valleys Area contains 2 small independent hotels and only 5 guesthouses. Here, the accommodation offer needs to improve in order to capitalise upon the tourism potential within this strategy area.

Northern Connections Corridor

The Northern Connections Corridor contains 3 independent hotels that cater for both the business and leisure user. Bryn Meadows Hotel offers the highest standard of accommodation within the borough with 4* accommodation which includes a fusion spa and wellness centre.

There are guesthouses dispersed throughout the Northern Connections Corridor that operate as independent businesses. The number of guesthouses located within this strategy area demonstrates a clear demand for such accommodation here.

The provision of self-catering accommodation is limited to a single facility in Manmoel. Penyfan Caravan Park and associated campsite are near Penyfan Pond Country Park. Visitors utilise the recreational facilities on offer, which includes fishing, cycle-tracks and healthy walking routes.

Southern Connections Corridor

The Southern Connections Corridor contains 3 hotels, owned by the major chains, Travelodge and Premier Inn. Both chains provide en-suite accommodation, which is most commonly associated with the 'business user'. Demand for this type of accommodation in the Caerphilly town area has led to the recent development of the Travelodge Caerphilly and the Premier Inn Caerphilly Crossways. This could be attributed to the fact that the Southern Connections Corridor adjoins Cardiff County Borough and is within easy commuting distance of the business district of Cardiff city centre.

There are a number of guesthouses dispersed throughout the Southern Connections Corridor that operate as independent businesses. The number of guesthouses operating within this strategy area demonstrates an obvious demand for such accommodation.

The provision of self-catering accommodation within the southern connections corridor is located in the east, with accommodation provided in Risca and Crosskeys. The accommodation in Crosskeys is often utilised by visitors to Cwmcarn Forest Drive.

Cwmcarn Forest Drive is one of the UK's major tourism attractions, attracting walkers and mountain bike enthusiasts alike. The campsite at Cwmcarn services the accommodation needs of visitors to the centre. Broadening the type of accommodation on offer is a potential commercial opportunity for tourism within the area.

Please refer to Appendix 1 for a schedule of all tourist accommodation

4.6 Tourism Links

A number of routes including waymarked foot/cycle paths have been defined as specific links within various tourism strategies. Some are under development and thus require provision within the Local Development Plan in order to protect and promote their roles within the tourism network. These often connect the County Borough's main tourist attractions and aim to contribute to promoting walking and cycling amongst visitors as well as residents. The main long distance and themed trails (including those being developed) are listed below.

Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area

Rhymney Riverside Walk

Rhymney Riverside Walk extends from Rhymney in the north to Cefn Mably at the County Borough's southern boundary with Cardiff and thus straddles the 3 strategy areas. Already partially in place as an allocation made in the Caerphilly County Borough Unitary Development Plan, the Rhymney Riverside Walk is a linear route that requires protection as a long distance footpath. This will help facilitate the completion of its proposed course along the banks of the River Rhymney, which links into a network of informal green spaces.

The Rhymney Riverside Walk is complete through the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area and thus no allocation for new development is made here. Although there is a lack of other defined long distance tourism links in this strategy area, the development of the strategic National Cycle Network will provide increased opportunities for cycling (see Transport background paper).

'Loops and Links'

Increasing numbers of people are pursuing a healthy lifestyle and appreciate the wonderful countryside the County Borough has to offer. To this end the Council has created the Mid Valleys Rural Village Strategy known to many people as 'Loops & Links'. The scheme created a number of cycle tracks to promote outdoor recreational activities.

The aim of the project is to open up towns and villages to people and to also highlight the many tourist attractions we have in the area such as the Sirhowy Valley Country Park. There are currently 10 Loops and Links trails available in the Borough, concentrated in only the Southern and Northern Connections Corridor.

Northern Connections Corridor

Nelson: There are currently two distinct links from Route 47 into the village of Nelson. Each provides easy access into the village centre and both offer visually stimulating views. The first route takes you straight to the heart of the village and the square with its striking mid 19th Century hand ball court. The second link traverses through the picturesque Wern Woodland Park and offers a more scenic route to the village centre.

Ystrad Mynach: There is one distinct link, from the National Cycle Route into the bustling Town Centre. The link provides more downhill municipal route from the main N47 to the village and its numerous facilities.

Maesycwmmmer: There are two distinct links, within the village. The first link allows easy ramped access from the cycle route, off the impressive viaduct, to the village centre and its facilities. The second link provides a more rural link from the cycle route and connects the village with Fleur-de-Lys.

Gelligroes: The National Cycle route runs through the quaint village of Gelligroes along the former railway line and there is a short link off the route into the village. The route traverses down the road past the Siloh Chapel and towards the 17th Century Mill.

Southern Connections Corridor

Crosskeys: Within this particular area the National Cycle Network – Route 47 runs through the village via a picturesque route within Waunfawr Park. The cycleway is linked to Crosskeys to give direct access to the village and its amenities. There is

also a wider 'Loop' that provides a route linking Crosskeys with the scenic Brecon & Monmouthshire canal and the nearby village of Pontywaun.

Risca: The National Cycle Route takes you along the scenic Canal tow-path and offers a number of direct 'links' into the nearby village and its numerous facilities. Each 'link' presents a more downhill municipal route from the main N47.

Wyllie: The new improved link allows quick and easy access from Wyllie onto the National Cycle Way (route 47). The main N47 route runs through a beautiful and quiet area with some spectacular views over the valley.

Ynysddu: This National Cycleway is linked to Ynysddu to give direct access to the village and its amenities. There is also a 'Loop' that provides a safe route linking the village with Cwmfelinfach and the Sirhowy Valley Country Park.

Cwmfelinfach: Within this particular area there is a 'link' and a loop from the National Cycle Route. The link takes you past the historic Babel Chapel to the village and its facilities. The 'loop' allows access between the village and Ynysddu along the picturesque Sirhowy Valley River. The National Cycle Route travels through the spectacular scenery of the Sirhowy Valley Country Park, passing Ynys Hywel Activity Centre.

Wattsville: The link provides direct access from the cycle network and the Sirhowy Valley Country Park to the village. This route takes you via a small bridge, over the Sirhowy River, which is known as the former Penllwyn Tramroad Viaduct. This part of the park provides an ideal area for watching the local wildlife and picnics.

Northern Connections Corridor

Rhymney Riverside Walk

Rhymney Riverside walk extends from Rhymney in the north to Cefn Mably at the County Borough's southern boundary with Cardiff and thus straddles the 3 strategy areas. The Walk is complete through to the mid-Rhymney Valley area but missing sections from here onwards mean that the Local Development Plan should safeguard land for the proposed route. In the Northern Connections Corridor, the gaps in continuity will need to be filled in so that the Walk leads southwards from Tiryberth past Fleur de Lys, Hengoed, Maesycwmmmer to Ystrad Mynach. The walk will comprise of landscaped walkways with observation points, maximising use of the river as a resource for tourists and linking to other paths such as the Rhymney Ridgeway Walk.

Southern Connections Corridor

Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, Crumlin Arm

In 2005 a feasibility study was undertaken on plans to restore the Crumlin Arm of the Brecon and Monmouthshire Canal, the only section of the canal within the County Borough. This is an inland waterway of historic significance, a legacy of the first attempts at creating a bulk transport network in the Valleys.

As its name implies, it is an offshoot of the main route with the original upper terminus being at Crumlin. It was 11 miles long and ran southwards along the Ebbw Valley transporting coal, iron and later stone from Risca Quarry to the docks at Newport for export. The Crumlin Arm was built between 1793 and 1796 and whilst the tram and particularly railway network took away much of its trade, it was still operational until 1930.

Over the years parts of the canal became overgrown and infilled including the northern section from Cwmcarn to Crumlin, which was sold off in 1960. In the 1960s and '70s further road widening schemes and culverting resulted in the dismantling of further sections of the canal. However the importance of the canal was recognised in the 1980s when the section from Cwmcarn to Harry Roberts Bridge (Pontymister) was sold to Islwyn Borough Council (now Caerphilly CBC). This stretch measures around 6 km, of which only 2.5 km (between Pontywaun and Darran Bridge, Risca) remains navigable.

If the plans to restore the Arm proceed, the walkers and boating traffic drawn to the settlements along its banks would be a major boost for local tourism. One of the major elements in the overall project would be the restoration of the historic 'Fourteen Locks' at Rogerstone, which would enable boats to access the section of canal within Caerphilly County Borough from Newport in the south.

With costs estimated at upwards of £25 million to reopen the Crumlin Arm, it is a long-term project that will require collaborative working with neighbouring local authorities within which the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal network runs. A working group has been set up between Caerphilly County Borough Council and its counterparts at Newport and Torfaen.

Approaches have been made to various funding bodies (such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund) for grant. Whilst financial assistance has not been secured at present, there are hopes that in the longer term, a comprehensive bid can be made. This will involve restoring the Crumlin Arm to allow boats to travel from the Newport/Cwmbran to as far north as Pontywaun. Consequently the Local Development Plan will need to define and protect the remaining sections of canal along this route in order to secure this objective.

Rhymney Riverside Walk

Rhymney Riverside walk extends from Rhymney in the north to Cefn Mably at the County Borough's southern boundary with Cardiff and thus straddles the 3 strategy areas. The Walk is complete through to the mid-Rhymney Valley area but missing sections from here onwards mean that the Local Development Plan should safeguard land for the proposed route. In the Southern Connections Corridor, the gaps in continuity will need to be filled in so that the Walk leads southwards from just below Ystrad Mynach past Llanbradach, Bedwas, Machen to Cefn Mably. The walk will comprise of landscaped walkways with observation points, maximising use of the river as a resource for tourists and linking to other paths such as the Rhymney Ridgeway Walk.

4.7 Festivals and Shows

Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area

Bargoed 'Big Bed'

In 2004, a Bargoed town festival was held in the Park whose success prompted the Greater Bargoed Communities First Partnership to set up the annual family fun day 'Bargoed Big Bed' the following year. Activities include a bed race through the park and a fairground, craft stalls, information stands, youth stage, dancing and music from local bands.

Northern Connections Corridor

Blackwood ‘Big Balloon’

The Blackwood ‘Big Balloon’ is South Wales’ largest hot air balloon festival having been reintroduced in 2003, and is held annually at the Blackwood Showground. The event takes place during the August bank holiday and attracts over 35,000 visitors. The 2 day event includes a mass balloon launch, entertainment programme, funfair, music and firework display.

‘Go Wild’, Pontllanfraith

‘Go Wild’ is a bi-annual event held by the Caerphilly Biodiversity Partnership. The event takes place at the Sir Harold Finch Memorial Park, Pontllanfraith and provides a family day out with a veritable feast of wildlife fun with activities and attractions for everyone. The event has an educational aspect, encouraging visitors to take an interest in local wildlife.

Fig 4: Visitor numbers to ‘Go Wild’ event, Pontllanfraith

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of visitors</i>
2005	3500
2007	4000

[Source: WAG (2008), Visit Wales]

Southern Connections Corridor

Caerphilly ‘Big Cheese’

As part of Caerphilly County Borough’s annual events programme, the town of Caerphilly hosts the ‘Big Cheese’ event. This is within the grounds of Caerphilly Castle, whose extensive grounds are more than fully utilised for the purpose. Since its inception in the late 1990s, the ‘Big Cheese’ has steadily grown into one of the region’s largest festivals. It is a celebration of heritage and culture with an extravaganza of living history (including recreations of medieval soldier encampments with siege engines, catapults and other armoury), music, dance, falconry and food stalls.

Usually held over an entire weekend towards the end of July, the ‘Big Cheese’ is one of the largest annual events in the County Borough, attracting up to 80,000 visitors both from within and outside the area. In order to continue basing this and other revenue-earning events at such an established town centre site, the Local Development Plan needs to safeguard the castle area for particular tourism uses, alongside its protected status.

4.8 Future Opportunities for Growth

There are many exciting current and future projects planned for the County Borough. For example, Caerphilly County Borough Council has received £1m funding from the Heads of the Valleys programme towards strategic tourism projects and has secured £360,000 from the local regeneration fund to regenerate parts of Crosskeys (£250,000 on Cross Keys Corner and £110,000 on Waunfawr Park).

In addition, Markham Colliery is to be redeveloped in a multi-million project to create a country park. Following closure in 1985, Markham Colliery was mostly cleared but the site has since remained vacant. Such a large open area just off a main road offers a significant opportunity to establish a key component of the Valleys Regional Park.

An ambitious reclamation scheme has been drawn up which involves creating an attractive new parkland landscape here with the following facilities:

- new paths, cycle and bridleways
- tree planting/replanting
- installation of water features including fishing pools and footbridges
- visitor centre with interpretation and refreshment facilities
- car park and public conveniences
- viewing platforms, picnic areas and nature trails
- open space/village green area
- reinstated dry stone walling
- possible rural skills centre

A smaller scale country park scheme is proposed at Bedwas. Although described as a 'community' park it would involve implementing an attractive landscaping scheme with both formal and informal areas of open space, which could enhance the area's appeal to tourists. This would incorporate an area of land extending from the existing Riverside Park near Bedwas House Industrial Estate, towards Trethomas and Graig y Rhacca.

Although tourism spend across the County Borough has steadily increased over the last five years, 42% of all tourism spend is generated by day visits. [Source: Caerphilly Local Development Strategy (2007)]. Consequently the priority is on consolidating the County Borough's existing tourist infrastructure catering for this sector in order that a stable and long term market can be established for longer stays.

The sensitive refurbishment and re-use of historic buildings presents particular opportunities for leisure and tourism facilities. For instance, the Newbridge Memorial Hall and Institute has attracted high profile media attention due to a concerted campaign for the building's restoration. There is a wealth of small scale historic buildings across the County Borough including Bedwellty Church, Gelligaer Church and Roman remains, Mynyddislwyn Church, Hengoed Viaduct, Bryngwyn Colliery Engine House and Groeswen Chapel. Such interesting buildings complement traditional attractions such as Caerphilly Castle and Llancaiach Fawr Manor House.

A clear example of heritage based tourism to be implemented during the Local Development Plan is the new County Borough museum at the Winding House, New Tredegar. Here, a prime aim is to stimulate further investment into the area by generating visitors and interest in its industrial past.

As well as rural-based visitor attractions such as country parks and the routes that connect them, the tourism potential of leisure facilities as a whole needs to be maximised. The role of tourism as a means of regeneration cannot be overstated and thus it is important that investment is directed towards a geographically diverse set of attractions so that all parts of Caerphilly County Borough may benefit from the positive impacts.

Appendix 1: List of accommodation

<i>Table of Accommodation</i>			
Hotels			
Facility	Settlement	Strategy Area	Comments
Rhymney House Hotel	Rhymney	HoV	
Park Hotel	Bargoed	HoV	
Bryn Meadows Hotel, Golf and Spa	Maesycwmmmer	NCC	
Llechwen Hall	Llanfabon, Nelson	NCC	
Maes Manor Hotel	Blackwood	NCC	
Travelodge Caerphilly Hotel	Caerphilly	SCC	
Premier Inn Caerphilly Crossways	Caerphilly	SCC	
Premier Inn Caerphilly North (Corbetts Lane)	Caerphilly	SCC	
Guesthouses			
Facility	Settlement	Strategy Area	Comments
Prince of Wales Inn	Princetown	HoV	
Lwyn Iago Farmhouse	Fochriw	HoV	
Wyrloed Lodge Guesthouse	Manmoel	HoV	
Sirhowy Arms	Argoed	HoV	
The Rock Tavern	Argoed	HoV	
Bryn Heulog Guesthouse	Aberbargoed	HoV	
Capel Hotel Gilfach	Gilfach	HoV	
Harley's Sports Café B&B	Croespenmaen	NCC	
Monnington Lodge B&B	Blackwood	NCC	
Stables B&B	Newbridge	NCC	
Ty Charles Guest House	Penpedairheol	NCC	
Highfields B&B	Penpedairheol	NCC	
Halfway House Gelligroes	Pontllanfraith	NCC	
Sergeants Restaurant/Rooms	Nelson	NCC	
Fairmead Guesthouse	Nelson	NCC	
Wern Ganol Farm Guesthouse	Nelson	NCC	
Tir Twyn Farm	Ystrad Mynach	NCC	
Y Fron Guesthouse	Caerphilly	SCC	
The Courtyard, Bryncenydd House	Caerphilly	SCC	
Denehurst B&B	Caerphilly	SCC	
The Cottage Guest House	Caerphilly	SCC	
Lugano Guesthouse	Caerphilly	SCC	
Forgehammer Inn	Risca	SCC	

Ty Castell Guest House	Caerphilly	SCC	
The White Hart Inn	Bedwas	SCC	
Awen B&B	Lanfach, Abercarn	SCC	
Coed Mamgu Guest House	Pontywaun, Crosskeys	SCC	
Westwood Villa Guesthouse	Crosskeys	SCC	
The Forge	Machen	SCC	
The Coach House	Rudry	SCC	
Journey's End B&B	Trethomas	SCC	
Self catering			
Facility	Settlement	Strategy Area	Comments
Gelligoediog Farm	Manmoel	HoV	
Wyrloed Lodge Holiday Cottages & guesthouse	Manmoel	HoV	
Upper Grippath Farm Holiday Cottages	Risca	SCC	
Cwm Hafod Tudor Holiday Lodges	Wattsville	SCC	
Camping/caravan			
Facility	Settlement	Strategy Area	Comments
Penyfan Caravan and Leisure Park	Croespenmaen	NCC	
Cwmcarn Forest Drive Campsite	Cwmcarn	SCC	