



1.0 INTRODUCTION

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- 2.5 The Assembly Government's objectives for tourism are
- to encourage sustainable tourism in Wales, promoting local prosperity and supporting community well-being and involvement, while protecting and giving value to natural heritage and culture and
 - to manage the tourism sector in ways which minimise environmental impact.
- 2.6 Land use planning can help to achieve the Assembly Government's objectives for tourism through:
- Ensuring tourism development is sustainable in ways, which contribute to economic development, conservation, rural diversification, urban regeneration and social inclusion.
 - Encouraging appropriate tourist related commercial development in new destinations, including existing urban and industrial heritage areas.
 - Limiting tourism development, which will encourage damage to the environment and the amenities of residents and visitors.
 - Ensuring well-designed and sympathetic tourist development especially when located in rural areas, in the scale and nature to the local environment and the needs of the local community.
 - Promoting development of tourism on previously developed land.

Technical Advice Note 13: Tourism (1997)

- 2.7 Technical Advice Note 13: Tourism (TAN 13) supplements Planning Policy Wales and, sets out the key planning considerations in relation to planning for tourism. The TAN aims to further integrate the links between tourism and sustainable development.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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. Other types of accommodation should also be promoted such as bunkhouses.
- 2.11 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



- **SP9: Linked local and regional attractions and facilities**

This relates to making the most of the existing offer including sites within the HERIAN (Heritage in Action) initiative and attractions such as Big Pit as well as promoting some large-scale projects such as Valleys Regional Park. In parallel, the development of an integrated support network of cultural, heritage, leisure, retail and tourist facilities, within (or linked to) town centres, including places to eat and stay, and provision for business tourism will be encouraged.

- **SP10: An integrated 'offer'**

SP10 refers to working with partners to ensure that there is an increased focus on tourism in the Heads of the Valleys within the context of wider initiatives aimed at promoting the South Wales Valleys as a visitor destination. A unified and coherent, well-branded proposition, which clearly illustrates what the area has to offer, will be developed.

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

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

Capital Region Tourism (CRT)

3.5 CRT is the regional tourism partnership for South East Wales and is responsible for the implementation of the regional tourism strategy. The strategy, reviewed in 2008, is a key plank of the economic framework for the region developed by South East Wales Economic Forum and identifies as priorities for the region Business Tourism and 5 key tourism 'experiences': City breaks, Countryside and scenery, easy activities, 'Browsing' (towns, villages, retail, food) and Culture & Heritage.

Valleys Regional Park

3.6 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. It's objectives are as follows:

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- 3.7 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, Cotswold's, 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, maximizing 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.
- 3.8 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 adventure activities 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.
- 3.9 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 Blaenau Gwent County Borough is included within the VRP area its objectives and strategies should be considered when preparing the Local Development Plan.


4.0 LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT


- 4.1 As a corporate document, the Local Development Plan must have regard to other documents produced by the Council. The relevant documentation in terms of tourism is set out below.


Making a Difference – A Community Strategy for Blaenau Gwent 2010-2030

- 4.2 The Community Strategy builds on the work undertaken by the Community Plan and takes forward the vision of making: Blaenau Gwent a better place to live, work and visit. The Community Strategy has 7 key themes and each theme has its own vision.

 **Lively and Accessible Communities**
Creating communities that people enjoy and want to live in

 **Thriving Communities**
Offering the opportunities, support and resources in our communities for people to thrive

 **Fair and Safe Communities**
Making people feel safer and included in our communities

 **Learning Communities**
Giving people the skills to succeed

- Visiting
- Protecting
- Development

4.9 The tourism element of the Strategy is contained within the 'Visiting' theme and refers to projects such as Bedwellty Park and House and one entitled 'Green Mines'. The latter tourism/heritage project was completed in 2008 and involved officers from Blaenau Gwent working with partners from Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Flintshire to encourage heritage and cultural tourism. Another tourism/heritage project called 'Atlanterra' is a follow-on project from Green Mines with some changes in partners, which will develop tourism opportunities based on our mining heritage.

Blaenau Gwent Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan- Draft First Revision (December 2010)

4.10 The Regeneration Strategy, which was approved in September 2009, identifies an overarching aim and five principles along with proposals to translate them into action. The overarching aim is to 'Share Benefits of Regeneration Widely' and this will be achieved by ensuring that the benefits of regeneration are shared by all those in Blaenau Gwent. The principle relevant to tourism is Principle 1: Diversify the Economy and Develop Manufacturing

Build on the diversification of the local economy by promoting and supporting new areas of opportunity, and developing the strengths of Blaenau Gwent's local economy and heritage.

- 5.2 This fine example of an Iron master's residence nestles in six acres of Victorian parkland that includes one of the few remaining Ice Houses in Wales. Amongst its many period features are a grotto, arboretum, block of coal mined for the 1851 Great Exhibition, and Long Shelter. The Bandstand, refurbished to its Victorian splendour, is the focus of summer Sunday afternoon concerts.
- 5.3 A £5.5 million project is due for completion in April 2011 to restore Bedwellty House and Park to transform it into a high quality heritage centre and make it a major tourist attraction for Blaenau Gwent.

Guardian, the memorial to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Six Bells mining disaster of 1960 towers 20m over the former colliery site and was unveiled in June 2010. The statue has since become a popular landmark and an important stop-off point on the Ebbw Fach Trail.

Accommodation

- 5.15 The accommodation provision within Blaenau Gwent is improving, although more is needed to take full advantage of the potential for tourism development. Blaenau Gwent contains one hotel and one lodge, which are both located in Ebbw Vale as well as 3 graded guesthouses, a bunkhouse, holiday cottage and caravan and camp site. It is necessary to improve the accommodation offer in order to capitalise upon the tourism potential of the area and there are opportunities to build a hotel at Parc Bryn Bach. Please refer to Appendix 1 for a schedule of all tourist accommodation in Blaenau Gwent.

Recreation Sites

- 5.16 In addition to parks and visitor attractions, Cwmcelyn Pond at Blaina, Cwmtillery Lakes, Roseheyworth riverside walk at Abertillery, St James reservoir and Sirhowy Woodlands at Tredegar are popular areas for walking, fishing and having a picnic.

National Events

National Eisteddfod

- 5.17 Blaenau Gwent hosted the National Eisteddfod of Wales in 2010 at the Works, Ebbw Vale, the former steelworks site. The Eisteddfod is a national cultural festival, and attracted visitors from both Wales and worldwide, bringing a range of cultural and economic benefits to Blaenau Gwent.

Abertillery Blues Festival

- 5.18 The Abertillery Blues Festival has become one of the biggest Blues events in Wales bringing top quality live music to Blaenau Gwent. In 2010 it was headed up by legendary guitarist Andy Fairweather Low and fans of blues music traditionally flock to Abertillery for this annual event, which is now firmly established on the UK music calendar.

UK triathlon

- 5.19 Parc Bryn Bach is now established as one of Wales's top venues for triathlons after hosting many national events such as the British Decathlon Championship, the Corus Elite Series and Welsh Triathlon Championship.

Regional Events

Go Wild', Tredegar

- 5.20 'Go Wild' is an annual event held alternately by Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly Council. When hosted by Blaenau Gwent the event takes place at Parc Bryn Bach, Tredegar and provides a family day out with an abundance of wildlife fun with activities and attractions for everyone. The event has an educational aspect, encouraging visitors to take an interest in local wildlife.

Local Events

Aberfest

- 5.21 Aberfest is a festival, which takes place on an annual basis in Abertillery and celebrates all that is good about the area. Activities include heritage walks, sports events, outdoor activities, craft fairs, quizzes right through to concerts featuring the cream of local and international talent.

Parc Bryn Bach

- 5.22 The Park hosts a variety of events throughout the year, which include, Parc Bryn Bach Open Day, cycling races on the newly opened cycling circuit, which also plays host to the Junior Tour of Wales. There are also rallies, fun runs, art exhibitions, fishing competitions, triathlons, BMX events, charity events, and environmental days organised by the Local Authority and local groups.

FUTURE PROVISION

- 5.23 A successful tourism and leisure sector base could be created around the natural and historical assets of the County Borough, the Valleys Regional Park concept and the gateway role Blaenau Gwent can play in terms of access to nearby national attractions such as Brecon Beacons National Park and the World Heritage Site at Blaenavon. It is proposed to establish a large parking/picnic area to act as a stop-off place near the High

5.31 **Atlanterra Project**

Heritage tourism will also be promoted through the Atlanterra Project, which will enable the delivery of several capital projects that will benefit the heritage and communities within Blaenau Gwent. The project includes six different Work Components, four of which (Archives, Records and Genealogy, Tourism and Promotion, Cultural activities and Valorisation of mining heritage) Blaenau Gwent will be taking part in.

6.0 **KEY ISSUES IN BLAENAU GWENT**

6.1 Pre-deposit participation undertaken between July and August 2007 has provided a clear indication of those land use issues that key stakeholders consider to be of primary importance in Blaenau Gwent.

The Issues Paper (July 2007)

6.2 The Issues Paper (July 2007) identified key issues that the Plan needed to address:

- To foster sustainable tourism and leisure in order to boost the local economy.
- To foster sustainable tourism, re-engaging local communities with the natural and built environment.

6.3 A consultation exercise on the Issues Paper asked one question in relation to the provision of tourism:

6.4 Question 7.4 In addition to current provision are there additional opportunities for developing tourism within the Plan area?

The overwhelming majority agreed that opportunities for tourism did exist. Several comments referred to the potential of Parc Bryn Bach suggesting that a high quality hotel and chalets should be lo

7.0 THE PREFERRED STRATEGY

7.1 The Preferred Strategy provided the following policy framework for tourism in

The Northern Strategy Area has experienced high levels of public investment in its infrastructure and this has been accompanied by private sector investment. The development strategy of the Plan seeks to build on major regeneration opportunities in this area to ensure that Blaenau Gwent as a whole benefits.

The Wales Spatial Plan identifies Ebbw Vale as a key settlement that has a critical role to play in the success of the Capital Region. The Strategy recognises the importance of Ebbw Vale and identifies it as the principal hub at the centre of the network of linked hubs across the County Borough. The recent opening of the rail connection to Cardiff, ongoing construction of the Heads of the Valleys Road and the availability of two strategic sites provides major opportunities for Ebbw Vale.

The Principal Town Centre of Ebbw Vale is expected to perform a0c 0.128.21 0

TOURISM BACKGROUND PAPER

The historical legacy provides opportunities to build tourism opportunities around heritage trails such as the Aneurin Bevan Trail and Ironmakers trails.

The location of Brynmawr, at a gateway to the Brecon Beacons National Park, Valleys Regional Park and Blaenavon World Heritage Site provides an opportunity to service visitors either through providing a stop over facility (directing and informing travellers), or by encouraging people to stay over in Brynmawr. Brynmawr etas the

SP2 Southern Strategy Area – Regeneration

Proposals in the Southern Strategy Area will be required to regenerate the area by: -

- a. Ensuring that the district hub of Abertillery is well connected to Ebbw Vale and the wider region through safe, frequent and reliable public transport links;**
- b. Supporting Abertillery District Town Centre in developing complementary roles around culture, leisure and tourism;**
- c. Delivering ‘Activity Tourism’ opportunities in the area;**
- d. Ensuring the removal of dereliction by promoting the reuse of under used and derelict land and buildings;**
- e. Delivering regeneration schemes which provide residential development and infrastructure; and**
- f. Building on the unique identity of the area by protecting the built heritage and the natural environment.**

The main difference between the south and the north is that the south has fewer opportunities for development, is not so well connected and has topographical constraints. The area does, however, have a strong sense of community pride and spectacular landscape. The Strategy needs to build on these strengths to secure regeneration and create sustainable communities.

It is important that this area is well connected with Ebbw Vale and the wider region. There are a number of proposals contained in the Plan for rail, walking, cycling and improvements to the A467 road, which will help address the accessibility issue. There are also plans to improve the bus service along the A467 corridor. With the exception of the cycle and bus improvements all the improvements are expected towards the end of the Plan period (See Delivery and Implementation table in Chapter 9 for further details).

Abertillery District Town Centre will explore opportunities to develop complementary roles around leisure and tourism. One of the strengths of Abertillery District Town Centre is the position of the centre relative to woodland and upland landscapes. There are opportunities to develop new infrastructure to enable people to use these environments and to explore the scope for mountain biking as a way of ‘opening up’ the natural setting of the town. The recent refurbishment of the Metropole and investment in the town centre will enhance the cultural role of Abertillery, in terms of the arts and entertainment. The cultural role has already been enhanced in the southern strategy area through the restoration of Llanhilleth Institute, which was part of an overall regeneration package.



projects, which could increase the visitor numbers to the area. The built heritage provides an important cultural and historical identity that if protected and enhanced could provide tourism opportunities. The LDP will ensure that sites are preserved and enhanced and that a framework is put in place to promote tourism opportunities.

The former Steelworks runs along the bottom of the Ebbw Valley to the South East of Ebbw Vale Town Centre. It is about 3 kilometres from north to south and half a kilometre from east to west. The site has the benefit of outline planning permission. The original Masterplan Design and Access Statement sets out a 10-year programme for development divided into 5 phases between 2008 and 2018. The revised masterplan incorporat

- **Environmental Resource Centre** – Provides an education facility for local children and the community to explore the heritage and ecology of the site;
- **Employment** – 5 ha of commercial and business space primarily located adjacent to the hospital site;
- **Residential** – Approximately 520 houses at varying densities across the site built to higher than nationally required standards and including 20% affordable housing;
- **Learning Zone** – The Learning Zone includes the provision of education and training for 14-19 year olds. The Works site will also include a 21st Century 3-16 School over two sites that will provide; primary education; an integrated children's centre, secondary education and the relocated Pen y Cwm Special School (subject to ministerial decision and Judicial Review)
- **Leisure Centre and Sports Fields** – A new leisure centre and sports pitches will be developed to provide new leisure amenities for the community;
- **Arts Centre** – A new arts centre will be developed to provide a community and professional arts/cultural event programme;
- **Basement Strategy** – A range of uses are being considered for the basements including sports and leisure, exhibition space, summer markets for food & craft including a café, education and recreation facilities;
- **Retail** – The retail element will only consist of local convenience facilities, including local shops and smaller commercial units;
- **Energy Centre** – A centralised energy hub.
- **Family History & Genealogy Visitor Centre** – The Former General Offices (Grade II* Listed Building) is to become a visitor centre bringing industrial heritage to life and showcasing one of the largest archives in Wales.
- **Public Realm** – Focus on a sequence of public squares running through the site.

Tourism and Leisure

TM1 Tourism and Leisure

The following sites are allocated for tourism related activities:

- 1. Eastern Valley Slopes**
- 2. Garden Festival**
- 3. Blue Lakes**
- 4. Bedwellty House and Park**
- 5. Parc Bryn Bach (including a hotel)**
- 6. Nantyglo Roundhouse Towers**
- 7. Cwmtillery Lakes**

Eastern Valley Slopes

The Eastern Valley Slopes and its juxtaposition with 'The Works' site Ebbw Vale ensures that the site has tremendous potential for the development of tourism, leisure and education, via promotion of access to the countryside and improvement to the natural environment through woodland planting. Much of the land is managed for pasture, with significant areas open to public access for horse riding, cycling (particularly mountain biking) and walking.

The site provides a physical link between the Environmental Resource Centre at the Works site and Silent Valley Nature Reserve and has an interesting and valuable ecosystem of its own. The Council will work closely with interest groups to develop the sites potential for tourism, leisure and education.

Garden Festival

There are proposals to develop Festival Park into a major tourist destination. The improvement of the shopping offer, enhancement of the café, and provision of outdoor recreation facilities, will attract further visitors to the Festival Park. Other initiatives in keeping with attracting visitors to the park will be encouraged including parkland enhancement by creating woodland walks and linking the park to the shopping area.

Blue Lakes

The Blue Lakes lie adjacent to the Aneurin Bevan Stones, and form an important green space between Tredegar and Ebbw Vale. Ebbw Vale and District Development Trust (EVAD) propose to create a new park and establish a new

visitors centre with a café restaurant. It is also proposed to construct an education and learning centre, create a recreation space for walking and provide an enhanced fishing venue for local people and visitors to the area.

Bedwellty House and Park

Tourism could contribute significantly more to the economy of the County Borough. Attractions such as Bedwellty House and Park, which form part of a network of historic buildings and landscapes, are key to attracting people to the area. This will be achieved by restoration of Bedwellty House to provide a visitor experience, restaurant, gardens and function area. There are plans to transform it into a high quality conference, wedding and visitor centre and make it a major tourist attraction.

Parc Bryn Bach

Parc Bryn Bach is conveniently located just off the A465 and is a major tourist attraction with a lake and visitor centre. The Park offers a wide variety of facilities and activities including walking, cycling,

APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1: LIST OF ACCOMMODATION

No.	Name	Type	Grading
1	Park Hotel, Station Road, Waunlwyd, Ebbw Vale, Blaenau Gwent.	Hotel	VW *** Also fellow of British Institute of Inn keeping
2	Premiere Inns, Victoria Business Park, Waunlwyd, Ebbw Vale, NP23 8AN	Lodge	
3	Roseland, Dukestown Road, Dukestown, Tredegar, Blaenau Gwent.	Guest House	VW ****
4	Ebbw Vale Guest House, Libanus Road, Ebbw Vale	Guest House	VW*
5	Parc Bryn Bach, Merthyr Road, Tredegar, Blaenau Gwent. NP22 3AY	Bunk House	WTB ***
6	Parc Bryn Bach, Merthyr Road, Tredegar, Blaenau Gwent. NP22 3AY	Caravan and Camp Site	WTB **
7	Tynewydd Farm, Nantybwch, Tredegar, Blaenau Gwent. NP22 3BB	Holiday Cottage	WTB ****
8	Soar Chapel Beaufort Ebbw Vale NP23 5JJ	Guest House	WTB ****



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