



Caerphilly County Borough
2nd Replacement Local Development Plan 2020-2035

EB22: Tourism Evidence Paper

October 2026

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Tourism Background Paper

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1. Introduction

This paper is one of a series produced as part of the evidence base for the 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan, 2020-2035 (2RLDP). Each topic paper can be read in isolation or together to gain a wider understanding of how the policies and/or allocations in the 2RLDP have been developed to address issues facing Caerphilly County Borough.

Wales is renowned for its unique and beautiful natural landscape, one that individuals from around the world seek to experience and discover. Tourism adds approximately £3.8 billion to the Welsh economy each year (Visit Wales, Wales Tourism Summit, 2025), so the enhancement of existing tourism assets and the discovery of new tourism opportunities is key to a financially, culturally and socially prosperous Wales.

To support the growth of tourism in Wales, there is an onus on all Local Authorities to maximise the tourism potential within their jurisdiction. In the case of Caerphilly County Borough, there are numerous existing tourism assets, both in the natural and built environment, but also many potential areas for tourism growth. For tourism within Caerphilly to be sustainable, it must consider social, cultural and economic issues that may impact tourism in some form or another. Tourism within the county borough cannot grow if existing, local needs and requirements are not met. The intertwinement of tourism into all aspects of development within Caerphilly is evident, and as such, this background paper comprises one of a series of documents which shall provide evidence alongside one another to maximise growth within the county borough.

The purpose of background papers, such as this one, is to provide context and evidence relating to their subject matter to inform planning policy decisions and how they are made. The adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) contains land use policies and proposals to meet the County Borough's tourism needs up to 2021. The 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan (2RLDP) will cover the plan period up to 2035.

2. Policy Background

In order to meet statutory requirements, LDP's must adhere to relevant legislation, and be consistent with national planning policy published by Welsh Government. Such legislation, policy and associated guidance is contained within many documents that influence planning for tourism, the most significant of which are explored below. As the local tier of the development plan, LDPs (and the policies and sites set contained therein) must be in 'general conformity' with Future Wales 2040 (FW).

2.1. National (UK) Context

UK Government: Tourism Recovery Plan (2021)

The Tourism Recovery Plan outlined a framework for tourism in the UK. The Plan aimed at achieving a "growing, dynamic, and sustainable tourism sector reaching its full potential and driving growth in every nation and region of the UK" (UK Government, The Tourism Recovery Plan (2021), Page 9).

One focus of the Plan was to help the tourism sector recover from the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent restrictions on travel and activities, with a focus on bouncing-back after the pandemic and creating "a greener, more accessible, more resilient, more productive and more innovative tourism industry" (UK Government, The Tourism Recovery Plan (2021), Page 9). Tourism in the UK and the nations within remains a crucial contributor to the national economy, with an estimated 10.4 million visitors to the UK spending an estimated total of £10.2 billion from July to September 2024 (Office for National Statistics, 2024).

The economic, social and cultural benefit that tourism brings to the UK cannot be understated. In order to maintain and enhance the tourism sector, a comprehensive understanding of existing tourism assets and the identification for future tourism opportunities is essential. The Tourism Recovery Plan, whilst not solely directed to Wales, sets out the national provision for the enhancement of tourism in the UK and as such bears great impact on the tourism sector in Wales.

2.2. National (Wales) Context

Welsh Government: Welcome to Wales (2020)

Welcome to Wales is a strategic legislative document put forward by Welsh Government in 2020 that sets out provisions of the “priorities for the visitor economy” (Welcome to Wales, 2020), ultimately seeking to improve and enhance the tourism sector in Wales both for the benefit of the Welsh economy and the visitor experience, from 2020 to 2025. The document aims to achieve this by improving the quality of Welsh tourism assets, supporting local businesses and promoting Wales as an attractive tourism destination thanks to the outstanding natural and built environment that it offers. The plan also acknowledges the contemporary challenges that face the tourism industry, such as climate change and over-tourism. The document is separated into the following sections:

- Ambition and goals
- Approach
- Wales’s core offer
- Brand objectives
- Our visitors
- Key priorities for Visit Wales
- Commercial priorities
- Wellbeing priorities
- Implementation
- Measuring success

The structure of the document allows for all aspects of tourism in Wales to be equally and comprehensively considered. By doing this, Welsh Government maximise their chances to achieve the five main ambitions for tourism in Wales:

- Economic growth
- Environmental sustainability
- Visitor and local satisfaction with tourism, and business confidence
- Social and cultural enrichment
- Health benefits

As mentioned earlier, Welcome to Wales comprises one of two key national tourism legislative documents, from which all regional and local plans must follow. The improvement of Welsh tourism with the above goals in mind is a responsibility for all local authorities and regional bodies.

Welsh Government: Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12) (2024)

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) provides the legislative framework for the planning system in Wales. Tourism falls under Section 5: Productive and Enterprising Places. PPW states that tourism can be “a catalyst for regeneration, improvement and environmental protection” (Planning Policy Wales, p. 88, 2024).

PPW outlines how tourism and planning are interlinked and can work together for the benefit of both sectors. Effective planning can help boost tourism through the enhancement of areas which possess value and interest for tourism. Alongside improving existing areas, directing tourism-related development to new destinations to encourage greater footfall across an area is encouraged. There does exist a need for balance, however, as over-development for tourism in certain areas can negatively impact the character of the area and the amenity of local residents and visitors.

PPW, on the whole, supports sustainable growth in tourism for the benefit of economic growth and the well-being of communities within Wales. Tourism should benefit both the visitors to Wales and the local communities of the areas of which they are visiting. Developments that do not align with the local character of the surrounding area, whilst they may benefit visitors, will negatively impact the local communities. PPW actively tries to avoid this by encouraging reasonable, thoughtful and sympathetic tourism developments that align with an area's values and traditions.

PPW also recognises the consistent need to protect Wales's natural and built environment and protect it from over-tourism and unnecessary forms of development.

Welsh Government: Technical Advice Note 13 (TAN13): Tourism (1997)

Technical Advice Note 13 (TAN13): Tourism provides supplementary advice in conjunction with Planning Policy Wales regarding the promotion of sustainable tourism in Wales. In essence, TAN13 seeks to build on the policies outlined in PPW and provides Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) with more in-depth guidance on how to navigate and promote tourism within their jurisdiction.

TAN13 is split into four key sections, each offering more detailed guidance on issues which may provide difficulty when planning for tourism, such as the use of holiday and touring caravans. Tourism is an ever-changing and ever-growing industry that must be effectively planned for in order for Wales to grow economically, culturally and socially.

Welsh Government: Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WBFGA) 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFGA) aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The WBFGA is separated into seven clear 'goals' to which the legislation aims to consolidate, for the future generations of Wales to prosper. The goals are as follows:

- A Prosperous Wales
- A Resilient Wales
- A Healthier Wales
- A More Equal Wales
- A Wales of Cohesive Communities
- A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language
- A Globally Responsible Wales

In terms of tourism, the WBFGA does not make specific reference to such, however tourism can be intrinsically linked to all seven of the goals outlined within the legislation. Tourism directly impacts economic, social, cultural and environmental factors in Wales and the Caerphilly County Borough, factors in which the goals of the WBFGA seeks to enhance for the benefit of future generations.

Welsh Government: Future Wales 2040

Future Wales is Welsh Government's national development framework and serves as the national tier of the development plan hierarchy. It is concerned with managing and maximising Wales's economic, social and cultural growth until 2040. Future Wales makes multiple references to tourism in several sections of the document, for example its role in achieving the national strategy of Prosperity for All. Tourism forms a critical part of the Welsh economy and will continue to do so for years to come, which is a central focus of this document. Tourism, together with the other sectors of the foundational economy (care and health services, food and drink, housing, energy and construction) makes up 40% of the jobs in Wales (Future Wales 2040, 2021, pg. 70).

Future Wales outlines the benefit that tourism can bring in the future, stating:

"In particular, tourism and leisure is recognised as a major and growing employer and contributor to the Welsh rural economy. Sustainable forms of tourism, including opportunities for active, green and cultural tourism, should be explored." (Future Wales 2040, 2021, pg. 70).

The economic, social and environmental benefits that tourism can bring for the Welsh economy are evident and need to be focused on for the economy to grow in the coming years.

2.3. Local Context (Caerphilly County Borough)

Caerphilly County Council Adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) 2010-2021

The Caerphilly Adopted LDP serves as the local tier of the development plan and remains in effect until superseded by the 2RLDP. It provides planning policy context for all areas of the county borough, separated into the three key strategy areas: Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area, Northern Connections Corridor and Southern Connections Corridor. The LDP contains 22 Strategy Policies which outline the strategic aims of the plan.

In terms of tourism, the LDP mentions frequently how tourism can be consolidated and developed within the county borough. Policy TM1 is referenced multiple times, under each section of the key strategy areas. Policy TM1 identifies and allocates specific sites in each of these areas which are key to enhancing tourism in the county borough, for example Parc Bryn Bach in Rhymney.

Having tourism intertwined into each strategy area and consistently referenced throughout the plan ensures any development takes into account the impact it could potentially have on the increase of tourism, but also how tourism can impact existing residents and facilities.

The Value of Historic Place – Conservation Strategy for the Historic Environment 2014-2019

Wales's extensive and beautiful historic environment is a key component of tourism within the county borough. Although now outdated, The Value of Historic Place sought to highlight opportunities provided by the county borough's historic environment to help regeneration, tourism and education opportunities.

This conservation strategy allowed for the identification of historic assets which could promote tourism in the county borough, aside from the well-promoted assets such as Caerphilly Castle and Llancaiach Fawr, prior to its temporary closure. Acknowledging the potential that under-promoted historic assets could bring to the enhancement of tourism allowed for the historic environment to become more centralised in the growth of the local economy

3. Trends in Tourism

International Tourism

International tourism in Wales has seen a decline since 2019 and is yet to recover the same visitor numbers as it did pre COVID-19. However, international visitor numbers grew from 2022 to 2023, showing a steady increase in tourism to Wales. Welsh Government states:

“Wales received 892,000 international visits in 2023, down 13% on 2019 but up 30% on 2022, whilst spend reached £458m in 2023, down 11% on 2019, but up 16% on 2022. Wales remains the only UK nation to not recover spend figures from 2019.” (Welsh Government, International Inbound Visits and Spend to Wales).

Tourism to Wales has struggled to recover post-pandemic, however the increase in visitor numbers from 2022-2023 means that tourism is gradually increasing, but needs to be actively enhanced to further increase such numbers.

Great Britain Tourism

Visitor numbers from the rest of Great Britain declined from 2022-2023. Visit Wales states:

“In 2023, there were 117.38 million overnight trips taken in GB by British residents with a total of 340.17 million nights and a total expenditure of £31.25 billion. There were 8.44 million overnight trips taken in Wales with a total of 24.47 million nights and a total expenditure of £2.02 billion. There was a decrease of 3% in the volume of trips compared to 2022, whilst expenditure was 7% higher.” (Visit Wales, Domestic GB Overnight Visitors).

Although the visitor numbers decreased in this time frame, expenditure increased, which is directly beneficial to the Welsh economy. Tourism bringing in more money annually is key to its growth and development in Wales.

Local Tourism

Local tourism levels within Caerphilly County Borough are ever-changing, given the vast tourism assets that the county borough has to offer, which shall be explored in the next section.

In terms of numbers, Caerphilly County Borough attracted approximately 870,000 day and night visitors in 2024, generating more than £134 million for the local economy. Cwmcaern Forest alone welcomed 226,000 visitors in 2023, peaking on weekends and during school holidays.

Tourism within the county borough is a highly valuable asset, so the promotion and protection of valuable tourism assets is crucial. The 2RLDP aims to protect a number of these assets through detailed policies contained within the replacement development plan. These protected assets shall be addressed in due course.

4. Current and Future Provision of Tourism Facilities in CCBC

Caerphilly County Borough has a plethora of excellent existing and potential tourism assets which attract visitors from Wales, the UK and beyond. It is essential to recognise where these opportunities exist in order to plan for tourism growth within the county borough. The following section shall examine the current tourism offer as well as identifying any land use implications that should be addressed through the Second Replacement LDP.

The following areas shall be explored in turn, identifying their current and future provision:

- Natural Environment – Major Attractions
- Heritage and Culture – Major Attractions
- Activities and Adventures – Major Attractions
- Activities and Adventures – Privately Run Attractions
- Events
- Distinctive Destinations

It must be noted that many of the facilities and opportunities identified may not solely fit into one category but could be considered under several different headings.

4.1. Natural Environment – Major Attractions

Bargoed Woodland Park

Set in the heart of the Rhymney Valley, Bargoed Woodland Park presents a juxtaposition of idyllic countryside in an area with a heavily industrial past. The park stands on the site of three former collieries (Gilfach, Bargoed and Britannia) and is surrounded by the communities that once operated them and serves as an excellent green space for walking and recreation, for nearby residents and visitors from further afield.

The park is adorned with 11 sculpted entrances and is home to a plethora of wildlife and biodiversity, including herons, kingfishers, and some elusive rafts of otters. Following the closure of the last colliery on site in 1985, the park was shaped and shifted to reclaim the once industrial land back to nature.

The park possess multiple art installations, such as stone carvings and sculptures of three coal miners, paying homage to its industrial past. The park also forms part of the 32-mile Rhymney Riverside Walk, as referenced within section 4.7 of this background paper.

Parc Cwm Darran

Tucked away in the Darran Valley, Parc Cwm Darran is a peaceful, picturesque country park and a winner of a Green Flag Award. Located in the site of the former Ogilvie Colliery, the park has remnants of its industrial past, with interactive displays and a wealth of information providing each visitor with a comprehensive view of the role the Ogilvie Colliery played in the Welsh Valleys' rich industrial past. Ogilvie Lake nestles in the valley bottom surrounded by the lakeside path.

Parc Cwm Darran also possesses a visitor centre, an abundance of wildlife and the large Wild Boar Amphitheatre, which features a 35-metre-long earthwork sculpture designed by the artist Mick Petts. The amphitheatre pays homage to one of the Roman legions which once occupied the valley.

Parc Penallta

Parc Penallta lies in the centre of the county borough, just north of the principal town of Ystrad Mynach. Carved from a former coal tip, Parc Penallta possesses not only excellent walking and cycling opportunities, but also features 'Sultan the Pit Pony', one of the largest figurative earth sculptures in the country. The High Point Observatory located within the park provides excellent views across the nearby valleys.

4.2. Heritage and Culture – Major Attractions

Llancaiach Fawr, Nelson

Llancaiach Fawr is a major tourist attraction within Caerphilly County Borough and comprises an excellent example of 16th century Tudor architecture. The manor house was constructed for the Prichard family and was built to be defended, with 1.2-metre-thick walls and a strategic 'division' located in the centre of the manor. Llancaiach Fawr forms a crucial educational facility which is frequently visited by local schools and

tourists alike, seeking to learn about the manor's rich history. The manor also provides guided tours.

In December 2024, Caerphilly County Borough Council temporarily closed the venue due to funding issues. The official statement on the Llancaiach Fawr website is as follows:

“Caerphilly County Borough Council made the difficult decision to mothball the site from the end of December 2024 while it explores options to operate the venue in a different way in future.” (Llancaiach Fawr Website, 2024)

Llancaiach Fawr manor is currently undergoing a transition of ownership and is likely to reopen under private proprietorship. There are no scheduled events at Llancaiach Fawr until this transition has been completed.

Prior to its temporary closure, Llancaiach Fawr attracted over **61,000** visitors from 2023 to 2024 (Avison Young, Llancaiach Fawr, 2025). Llancaiach Fawr underwent extensive restorations from 2013 to 2015 and the unexpected closure has damaged the tourism economy in Caerphilly over the past year. The potential reopening of Llancaiach Fawr will be greatly anticipated and the return of the venue as a key tourist attraction shall help boost tourism in Caerphilly in the future.

Caerphilly Castle, Caerphilly

Caerphilly Castle is an internationally recognised historic attraction and is the defining feature of the excellent historic environment located in Caerphilly County Borough. The magnificent stronghold is the second largest castle in the UK by occupied land area, second only to Windsor Castle, and one of the largest castles in Europe. Construction began in 1268 under the supervision of Marcher lord Gilbert de Clare, in response to aggression from Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Gwynedd turn Prince of Wales, amidst the Norman conquest of Wales.

Caerphilly Castle occupies a total area of 30 acres, three times larger than The Principality Stadium in Cardiff (Cadw, Caerphilly Castle, 2025). Huge defensive walls, towers and gatehouses alongside an extensive water defence system all comprise the architectural components contributing to the castle's 800-plus year existence. Caerphilly Castle's very own leaning defence tower, slanting at an angle greater than that of the leaning tower of Pisa, has become a defining feature of the castle and a cultural phenomenon of Wales's historic environment.

Caerphilly Castle is essential to the tourism economy in Caerphilly and serves as the county borough's most recognisable and defining tourism asset. The Castle is vital in marketing the County Borough to visitors from the UK and beyond. There are no recent visitor numbers to showcase the footfall at Caerphilly Castle, however Cadw reported

that over 1.1 million visits were made to 23 staffed Cadw sites between April 2022 and March 2023, as well as an estimated over 1 million visits to unstaffed Cadw sites during the same period. Cadw reported that visitor numbers recovered to 92% of pre-Covid levels within the last few years (Cadw, Visitor Numbers to Cadw Sites on Track to Full Recovery Post-Covid, 2023). Based off these reports, it can be concluded that visitor numbers to Caerphilly Castle have steadily increased post-Covid, considering the site's significance to the historic built environment of Wales.

The Castle's economic benefit is not restricted to the site itself, either. The Castle provides long-term benefits for businesses located within Caerphilly town centre; due to the large visitor numbers and subsequent footfall that the Castle brings into the town. The Castle's location in the very heart of Caerphilly town centre is excellent for the wider economic scope of the town, as visitors are in proximity to local businesses and restaurants upon completing their visit to the Castle, further boosting footfall to these facilities. Furthermore, the Castle's location fulfils a wider role within the town, as it forms a natural background for events such as Caerphilly 'Big Cheese' and national events such as the BBC Proms in the Park and the Tour of Britain. Caerphilly Castle is not only the symbol of the county borough, but also a symbol of the great historic environment present throughout Wales.

The Castle is also surrounded by excellent natural spaces, such as Dafydd Williams Park and Owain Glyndwr Park, which are both attractive elements of Caerphilly town centre. The Castle and its nearby natural environment require sensitive management to ensure that their beauty is preserved for future generations to enjoy. Caerphilly Castle is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is a Grade I Listed Building, two high-level designations that seek to actively protect the Castle's beauty and form.

Caerphilly Castle has recently undergone extensive works as part of the 'Caerphilly Castle Regeneration Project', a scheme which has brought in £10 million worth of investment to bring 21st Century facilities to the medieval site, whilst actively preserving the Castle's historic antiquity (Cadw, Caerphilly Regeneration Project, 2021). The Caerphilly Castle Regeneration Project has been ongoing since 2023, following acceptance of the plans in 2022. Cadw provide an interactive timeline of the progression of the works on their website, allowing interested parties to keep up to date with the progress of the project. The Castle has remained open to visitors whilst the works are ongoing. The restoration of the Castle's Great Hall was completed in the summer of 2025 and was formally reopened to visitors on the 15th July 2025. The regeneration of Caerphilly Castle is part of a wider regeneration scheme for the whole of Caerphilly town centre, however takes precedence over other aspects due to the site's historical and economic significance to the town and wider county borough. Upon completion of the works in the coming years, the regeneration project seeks to boost the visitor economy of Caerphilly by enhancing and promoting its current assets and solidifying its place as a cultural and tourism hub of the valleys and the South Wales region.

In order to help promote Caerphilly as a cultural and tourism hub, the Second Replacement Local Development Plan (2RLDP) should identify opportunities that can be explored to identify potential developments that can improve the tourism attractiveness of the area surrounding the Castle. Proposals need to be identified that:

- Increase the dwell time in Caerphilly town
- Improve the footfall in and around the Castle (alongside the regeneration project)
- Improve the night-time economy
- Make provision for new visitor accommodation in Caerphilly town to help sustain increased visitor numbers
- Enhance the attractiveness of the town as a destination in its own right

Caerphilly Castle's position as one of the premier tourism destinations within the county borough requires protection through specific policies within the 2RLDP. Policy TM4: Protection of Significant Tourist Assets seeks to protect specific tourism assets within the county borough and support proposals for their enhancement. Caerphilly Castle shall be protected under this policy for its tourism uses to continue throughout the 2RLDP period, ensuring that this valuable asset continues to enhance and facilitate tourism levels within the county borough.

Aber Valley Heritage Museum and National Mining Memorial, Senghenydd

The Aber Valley Heritage Museum is a showcase of the rich heritage of the Aber Valley in Caerphilly, focusing on two mines in particular: The Universal Colliery in Senghenydd and the Windsor Colliery in Abertridwr.

The museum is largely community driven, with local individuals donating a plethora of photographs, artefacts and memorabilia, which all display a snapshot of the history of the two mines and their impact on the surrounding community. The Windsor Colliery was the larger of the two mines, once dominating the Aber Valley.

The museum also provides a three-mile walking trail for visitors to enjoy upon completion of their visit to the museum, titled 'Walking Through Time'. The trail begins at Memorial Garden and visits 30 points of interest through Senghenydd and Abertridwr and seeks to educate visitors about the history of the Aber Valley, through a more natural and tangible setting in the valley where the mines once operated.

The Aber Valley Heritage Museum provides an excellent local perspective on the South Wales Valley's rich coal mining history and serves as a key tourist destination within the county borough.

Ruperra Castle, Lower Machen

Ruperra Castle is a significant Grade II* Listed Building located in Lower Machen, in the south-east corner of Caerphilly County Borough. Ruperra Castle is one of the only Pageant Castles in the UK, structures built entirely for show rather than defence. The Castle was constructed in 1626 by Sir Thomas Morgan and has remained an excellent display of opulence from the renaissance period.

The Castle has a rich and diverse history, from operating as a family home and hunting lodge, to hosting Charles 1st and military branches during WWII. Unfortunately, in 1941, the Castle was ravaged by fire and stands as a derelict but romantic ruin and is at severe risk of collapse. Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust is actively working to save the structure, seeking to run the heritage site for public benefit rather than private profit.

Substantial funding is required to preserve the Castle and prevent its collapse, with even greater funding required for any plans to restore the iconic site. Ruperra Castle would stand as a key tourist destination within the county borough if such funding was acquired, however there are currently no plans set out to obtain this funding in the current economic climate and as such, tourism allocation for the Castle within the 2RLDP is not required.

4.3. Activities and Adventures – Major Attractions

Centre for Sporting Excellence, Ystrad Mynach

The Centre for Sporting Excellence (CSE) in Ystrad Mynach is the county borough's flagship sporting facility since it opened in May 2014. The facility features 3G football and rugby pitches, conference rooms, fitness facilities and two grandstands on each pitch allowing seating for 500 people.

The facility is the training base for the Dragons RFC, with senior, academy and age grade programmes based at the CSE. During evenings and weekends, the CSE is open to community clubs within the county borough, such as Cascade YC Ladies, Trethomas Bluebirds and Caerphilly Athletic, who all call the CSE home for training and competitive matches. The Centre for Sporting Excellence also proudly supports disability sport, with events such as the Caerphilly Disability Six Nations School Festival and the Sport Caerphilly Disability Football Festival being hosted at the facility.

The CSE has hosted numerous events since its creation, as follows:

- **Wales Women vs Japan Women**, 11th June 2017
- **Inaugural U18 Six Nations Festival: Round 1**, 31st March 2018
- **Dragons RFC vs Emirates Lions**, 22nd January 2023
- **Wales U18 vs Scotland U18**, 3rd March 2024

The CSE is not only the flagship sporting facility for the county borough, but also the training base for numerous local sports teams and actively promotes accessibility for disabled individuals to enjoy the facility. The CSE and the events held at the facility provide excellent tourism opportunities for sports fans from across the county borough and beyond.

Cwmcarn Forest, Cwmcarn

Cwmcarn Forest is a 7-mile scenic route through one of Wales's largest urban forests. Combined with a three-star campsite nestling along the banks of the Nantcarn Stream, the Forest is an excellent location for leisure and holiday trips. Facilities at the Forest include car parks, picnic sites, walking routes, a campsite, visitor centre, fishing/angling facilities at the Cwmcarn Forest pond and a single-track cross-country mountain biking trail.

The cross-country mountain biking trail covers around 1400 hectares and is an internationally renowned centre for mountain biking situated between Newbridge and Risca, two major urban centres in the south-east of Caerphilly County Borough. The addition of the Cafall Trail, a new pump track, designed to offer a smooth transition to tackling the cross-country trails and the adrenaline fuelled downhill trails opens up more than 15 kilometres of additional trails within the park, increasing the tourism offer significantly.

Management of the Forest is naturally complex due to a large number of varying landowners and interested parties involved in the site. These include: Caerphilly County Borough Council, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), private landowners (Pontypool Park and Llanover Estates), Cadw (Twmbarlwm Hill Fort – Scheduled Ancient Monument) and local communities (Cwmcarn and Pontywaun).

In terms of annual visitor numbers, Cwmcarn Forest attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors per year. In recent years, official visitor numbers have been recorded via till transactions as opposed to physical laser-counters since the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, visitor numbers since covid have not been as accurate as pre-covid, however the till transaction numbers still provide a detailed view of the number of visitors Cwmcarn Forest attracts. The visitor numbers since covid are as follows:

- 2021 – 2022: **126,342**

- 2022 – 2023: **385,355**
- 2023 – 2024: **226,277**
- 2024 – 2025: **122,815**

The visitor numbers in 2024-2025 are lower than previous years due to a new till system being installed on site and subsequent data loss due to the equipment transition.

2022-2023 attracted the most visitors in recent years, which can be attributed to the relaxation of lockdown measures in 2021, leading to increased tourism in the following year. The Forest has consistently attracted over 200,000 visitors since 2022, assuming the trend continued in 2024-2025 despite the loss of data. This firmly cements Cwmcarn Forest as a tourism hotspot for the county borough and displays clearly its contribution to the tourism economy of the surrounding area. Preservation of the forest and the promotion of tourism facilities therein is essential for the upkeep of tourism on site and county borough-wide.

Cwmcarn Forest's position as one of the premier tourism destinations within the county borough requires protection through specific policies within the 2RLDP. Policy TM4: Protection of Significant Tourist Assets seeks to protect specific tourism assets within the county borough and support proposals for their enhancement. Cwmcarn Forest shall be protected under this policy for its tourism uses to continue throughout the 2RLDP period, ensuring that this valuable asset continues to enhance and facilitate tourism levels within the county borough.

Horse Riding

The county borough has many bridleways, cart road footpaths and dedicated trekking routes. Supplementing this are Rockwood Equestrian Centre and Sunnybank Equestrian Centre which are both based in Caerphilly.

Cycling Events

Cycling, within Caerphilly County Borough, has grown in popularity over recent years with significant events taking place within the county borough. In September 2025, Stage Six of the Tour of Britain saw professional cyclists compete through the streets of Caerphilly County Borough on the route from Newport to Cardiff, passing through towns such as Blackwood, Rhymney, Ystrad Mynach and Caerphilly. The cyclists also summited Caerphilly Mountain as part of the route. The Tour de France is scheduled to pass through the County Borough in 2027.

Hosting cycling events such as the Tour of Britain promoted the excellent cycling routes on offer within the county borough, significantly boosting its publicity as a cycling hotspot.

In terms of cycling routes, Caerphilly County Borough has numerous routes which explore the natural and built heritage of the area. These cycling routes shall be explored in Section 4.7: Tourism Links.

Well-being Centres

Caerphilly County Borough Council has been working on a new, financially sustainable and accessible Leisure and Well-being Hub (L&WBH) for the people of the county borough and beyond.

The leisure and wellbeing offer will be attractive to a wide range of consumers:

- Businesses: Corporate Memberships
- Residents: Memberships and access to a range of free and low-cost services
- Sports clubs
- Community groups and a range of public sector partners, such as schools, GP referrals and social prescribing, youth services, skills providers and third sector organisations.

The Leisure and Wellbeing Hub, located on land at Caerphilly Business Park, close to Caerphilly town centre, will provide a high-specification building offering an inclusive, accessible and needs-led leisure offer, including:

- A six-lane community swimming pool with pool pod access, learner pool, leisure pool with flumes and interactive water features.
- Express wellness spa including spa pool and heat treatments.
- Children's adventure soft play integrated with sensory components.
- Tag Active Arena.
- Four-court sports hall.
- Two squash courts.
- 110-station fitness suite/gym.
- Multi-purpose community room (for multi-agency working, community events, children's parties etc)
- Future studio/group exercise studio, cycling studio and consultation room.
- Changing rooms, in addition to a reception area and café providing community space.

The hub will also offer a multi-agency led health and wellbeing scheme that complements the leisure offer, with the intention of supporting residents to become

more physically and economically active. Services delivered by the hub will align with local needs and system priorities:

- Providing a base for public and community partners to deliver programmes, including the local health board and third sector organisations (delivery of wellbeing programmes e.g. smoking cessation and National Exercise Referral Schemes).
- Gateways to employment, through the delivery of skills training, events and support and the creation of meaningful employment, apprenticeship and volunteering opportunities.

The hub will possess strong linkages to the regeneration of Caerphilly town centre, with the hub being located directly within the town's active travel corridor, with connections to existing footpaths, cycle routes and the enhanced public transport network via the Transport Interchange Hub. The hub will utilise renewable energy in the form of air source heat pumps to achieve high levels of energy efficiency, resulting in an A rate EPC, in addition to six EV charging points and bicycle storage.

4.4. Activities and Adventures – Privately Run Attractions

Colliers Farm, Nelson

Colliers Farm is a private, family-run adventure farm located in Nelson, in the north-west corner of the county borough. The Farm is a popular local attraction which provides a mix of animal experiences, play areas and community events. The Farm is very popular with local primary schools, with numerous school trips taking place at the venue.

In terms of attractions, Colliers Farm offers the following:

- Animal Encounters: Children and families can meet, pet, feed and help care for farm animals under supervision.
- Indoor and Outdoor Play Areas: These include inflatable pillows, zip lines and traditional play equipment.
- Colliers Rest Café: A dog-friendly, cyclist-friendly café which serves homemade food.
- Events: The Farm hosts seasonal events such as Halloween, Christmas and birthday parties.
- School Trips and Parties: Alongside the attractions listed above, the Farm also provides two party rooms which are available for hire.

Colliers Farm is located next to Parc Penallta, a beautiful country park popular amongst cyclists, joggers and walkers. The proximity of Colliers Farm to Parc Penallta makes it easy for families to combine an excellent day out for the kids and a walk in one of the most scenic parks of the South Wales Valleys.

4.5. Events

CCBC has put on several events in the county borough's main towns in recent years and plans to continue with a similar programme in the foreseeable future, in order to encourage tourism and boost the overall tourism capacity of the area.

The CCBC event timetable for 2026 is packed with seasonal events and locally significant events, such as the Caerphilly Cheese Festival. The aim of the events timetable is to boost the economic output of the chosen towns and increase footfall with individuals from the county borough and beyond, in turn boosting the overall tourism capacity. Events such as the ones listed above are crucial for increasing the attractiveness of the county borough as a vibrant, culturally rich area with great tourism opportunities and activities. In turn, increasing the footfall of the main towns helps support surrounding infrastructure and the economic output of principal and local town centres.

Some of the events are funded by CCBC, with others funded by local town councils but organised by CCBC.

4.6. Distinctive Destinations

Butetown

Butetown is a small hamlet located in the very north of the county borough, west of Rhymney. Butetown was developed in the 1830s as a 'model village' and has a distinctive charm which has survived to this day. The original layout consisted of 48 dwellings arranged in three rows, creating a symmetrical and attractive place to live. The population of Butetown ranged from 195 to 430, peaking in the 1870s during the coal mining boom of the time. Butetown was designated as a Conservation Area in 1972 and all buildings within Butetown are listed, for their architectural and historic distinctiveness.

Butetown has become synonymous with the coal mining heritage of the South Wales Valleys and is preserved as a gateway into the industrial past of the surrounding area.

Butetown remains an active settlement, with individuals living within the listed terraced houses.

There exists a twisted chimney sculpture located in proximity to Butetown, constructed in 2010 by artist Brian Tolle. The chimney is 8 metres tall and serves as an artistic symbol and tribute to the industrial heritage of the settlement and the Rhymney Valley. In 2012, Butetown was featured in the Doctor Who episode "The Crimson Horror".

Butetown is not a large tourism asset for the county borough but serves more as a distinctive destination which individuals visit to catch a glimpse into the industrial heritage of the county borough. Having historically significant areas such as Butetown helps to increase footfall in an area not deemed to possess significant tourism opportunities.

Gelligroes Mill

Gelligroes Mill is a Grade II* Listed Building located in Pontllanfraith in the centre of the county borough. The water-powered corn mill was built around 1625 for the purpose of grinding barley and wheat. The mill was granted listed building status in 1962 on the merit of its architectural and historical significance.

The mill is an excellent example of infrastructure of the time, complete with an overshot waterwheel with an iron frame and wooden buckets. During full operation of the mill, there existed two pairs of millstones for the grinding of crops.

Over time, the mill was altered multiple times to accommodate changes in purpose. In the early 1900s, generators were installed at the mill to charge batteries for radios before mains electricity reached the area. The mill is considered to be the last mill operating commercially in the old county of Monmouthshire, operating until the late 1980s when it fell into disuse.

Gelligroes Mill has connections beyond its own significant history, as the birthplace of Artie Moore, the individual who, in 1912, famously picked up the distress call of the Titanic, making him the first individual in Britain to learn of the disaster.

Gelligroes Mill was restored in 1992 and now houses a local candlemakers'. The mill includes a radio museum and candle-making workshop akin to its current use.

Gelligaer Roman Fort

Gelligaer is a small community located in the west of the county borough, north of Ystrad Mynach and possesses a rich Roman history. The Gelligaer roman Fort is

located on a ridge between the Taff and Rhymney Valleys and was a crucial part of the Roman military network that controlled the area for over 40 years. The fort provided strategic views of the surrounding landscape, which was heavily wooded during Roman times.

The stone fort was built between 103 and 111 AD during the reign of Emperor Trajan, who was a very successful soldier-emperor who ruled during one of the greatest military expansions in Roman history, reaching the height of the Roman Empire's territorial extent. The fort covers an area of around 1.4 hectares, one of the smallest Roman forts in Wales. Predating the stone fort was an earth and timber fort, likely built around 74-78 AD during the Roman conquest of Wales. This fort was located northwest of the stone fort and was able to accommodate 1000 infantry or 500 cavalry troops. The stone fort housed a *cohors quingenaria*, an auxiliary infantry unit of around 500 men.

Fast-forwarding to modern times, the original stone fort is no longer standing, however the earthworks and foundations are still present, but are covered over by grass. The site stands as an open-air archaeological site, with the earthworks and foundations appearing as grassy bumps across the site. To aid visitors with visualisation of the fort, there are information boards and glass screens which provide visitors with a detailed depiction of the fort laid over the site behind. The proximity of the Roman fort to nearby landmarks such as Llancaiach Fawr, Parc Penallta and the Aber Valley Heritage Museum provides visitors with an excellent, heritage-filled day out in one of the most historically significant areas of the county borough.

4.7. Tourism Links

Rhymney Riverside Walk

The Rhymney Riverside Walk is a long, scenic walk that spans from the Rhymney River headwaters in Tredegar, Blaenau Gwent, through our county borough, and finishes at St Ederyn's Church, Llanedeyrn in northern Cardiff.

The walk is a linear walk and comprises part of the Valleys Regional Park, an area designed for countryside access and recreation. The terrain of the walk is varied, ranging from riverside paths and disused railway lines to wooded areas and sections of old coal mining landscapes. The walk is easily accessible, with multiple bus and train stops located along the route.

The Rhymney Riverside Walk is very popular for individuals within the county borough and beyond, as it provides easy access to the county borough's excellent natural

environment. The walk helps boost footfall borough wide, due to the walk's extent, stretching all the way from the north to the south of the county borough.

Cycle Routes

Caerphilly County Borough is home to an extensive network of national and local cycle routes, providing excellent active travel opportunities.

National Routes

In terms of national routes, the Celtic Trail, part of the National Cycle Network, passes through Caerphilly on its 220-mile span from Chepstow to Pembrokeshire. The route is mostly traffic free and offers excellent family-safe cycling opportunities right through the heart of South Wales.

Local Routes

Caerphilly County Borough has multiple local cycling routes. The Aber Valley Cycling Route runs from Caerphilly to Senghenydd via Abertidwr Heritage Park and spans approximately four kilometres. The route passes wildlife sites and historically significant locations such as the former Windsor Colliery and the Senghenydd Mining Disaster Memorial.

In the north of the county borough runs the 7-kilometre Darran Valley Cycling Route, from Bargoed to Fochriw through Parc Cwm Darran. The route features disused railway lines, historic bridges and a large man-made lake in the country park.

The Cwmcarn Forest Twrch Trail spans 13.4 kilometres of single-track mountain biking. The trail is graded 'Red/Difficult' by the International Mountain Biking Association and comprises of 440m of elevation gain, providing residents of the county borough and beyond a challenging mountain biking experience in the heart of one of Caerphilly's most scenic landscapes.

Scenic and Challenging Cycling Loops

Caerphilly County Borough also possesses long and challenging cycle routes. The Hengoed Viaduct to Cwmcarn Campsite Loop comprises 37-48 kilometres of excellent cycling opportunity, with most of the loop consisting of paved surfaces and is considered an intermediate to expert level of difficulty. The Hengoed Viaduct is one of the best-preserved viaducts in South Wales and forms the perfect start for a beautiful bike ride.

Staying on the theme of historically significant start points, the Caerphilly Castle and River Rhymney Cycle Trail Loop is the quintessential cycle route of the county borough. Starting at the most distinctive landmark and winding its way north via the beautiful River Rhymney Trail, this route seamlessly combines outstanding heritage

and riverside scenery. The loop spans approximately 48 kilometres and is one of the core cycling routes within the area.

The Eglwysilan Loop is the second-longest cycling route that passes through the county borough, spanning approximately 47 kilometres. The loop climbs Mynydd Eglwysilan, a 355-metre-high hill located south of Nelson in the west of the county borough.

Tourism Opportunities

Cycling routes such as the ones explored above are an excellent tourism asset to the county borough for a variety of reasons. At their core, the routes offer excellent cycling opportunities for families and fanatics alike, which individuals would travel from outside of the county borough to experience. Having assets like the Cwmcarn Forest Twrch Trail mountain biking route is excellent as it provides individuals with a difficult trail, different to that of the ever-popular Bike Park Wales in the nearby Brecon Beacons.

Furthermore, possessing an extensive cycling route network increases active travel and allows individuals to explore all areas of the county borough, from north to south, along designated routes and loops. This, in turn, increases footfall in many areas of the borough, with visitors stopping in local towns and at local landmarks to appreciate their surroundings whilst on their cycle trips. Providing active travel networks which benefit the county borough's tourism capabilities is one of the core benefits of the cycle routes we possess.

Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal is one of the finest artificial waterways in Wales. The canal stretches from Brecon, through Abergavenny and Monmouth, and exits into the mouth of the River Severn via the River Usk in Newport. A small section of the canal, the Crumlin Arm, diverts west from the main body of the waterway into Caerphilly County Borough, towards Cwmcarn.

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal spans 56 kilometres in total and was built in the late 18th Century, originally as two separate canals, incorporating the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal into its route. The canal served as an industrial corridor for transporting coal, iron and limestone during the Industrial Revolution.

The Crumlin Arm was crucial for the transportation of coal from local mines to Newport Docks. The coal mining heritage of the county borough owes much to the Crumlin Arm of the canal for the export of coal from nearby collieries, facilitating massive economic growth in the area during the industrial boom.

The Cefn Flight of Fourteen Rocks, located in Rogerstone, just outside of the county borough's boundary, is one of the engineering highlights of the original Monmouthshire Canal system.

In contemporary times, much of the Crumlin Arm is disused, however restoration projects aim to revive sections of the canal for leisure purposes and as a heritage attraction. The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal is not connected to the wider UK canal network, making it quieter and ideal for leisure cruising. The Crumlin Arm of the canal offers residents of Caerphilly a glimpse into the industrial heritage of the past, in the form of beautiful scenic walks along the canal banks or on its waters. The canal is an excellent tourism asset for South Wales, and the Crumlin Arm provides the county borough with access to the canal within its boundary and a section that we can call our own.

4.8. Accommodation

Accommodation within Caerphilly County Borough is essential for the enhancement and productivity of the tourism sector within the area. A 'bedstock survey' highlights the accommodation capacity of an area, with the most recent bedstock survey in CCBC was conducted in January 2024.

A bedstock survey provides a snapshot of the availability of visitor accommodation within a destination. CCBC has conducted a county-wide bedstock survey in 2016, 2018, 2021 and 2024. The 2021 survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the impact of lockdowns and related measures on the tourism sector being considerable. The challenges for the tourism sector to recover from such restrictions has been extremely challenging. A quick introduction to the 2024 bedstock shall follow, with data from each sub-category of accommodation being explored in due course.

The 2024 survey identified 43 accommodation providers within the county borough, compared with 47 in 2021 and 51 in 2018. The gradual decline in providers can be attributed to the closure of businesses or to self-catering providers, transferring from direct selling to exclusive selling via online travel and booking agents (OTA's). Hotel accommodation continues to dominate the availability of bedrooms and bedspaces. In 2024, out of a total of 385 bedrooms and 938 serviced accommodation bedspaces, there were 291 hotel bedrooms and 737 bedspaces to book. The provision of visitor accommodation by inns decreased from 12 providers in 2018 to 9 in 2021 but increased to 10 in 2024. In terms of Airbnb's, accurate figures obtained from Airbnb show that 295 bookings were made in the county borough in 2023.

Breakdown by Sub-category: 2024 Survey

Serviced Accommodation

Category	No. of Providers	No. of Bedrooms	No. of Bedspaces
Hotels	6	291	737
Budget Hotel	3	178	511
B&B	7	30	66
Inn	10	65	135
Total	23	386	938

Self-Catering Accommodation

No. of Providers	No. of Self-Catering Units	No. of Bedrooms	No. of Bedspaces
15	52	77	155

Caravan and Camping

No. of Providers	No. of Lodges/Pods Onsite	No. of Bedrooms	No. of Bedspaces	No. of Tent Pitches	No. of Touring Pitches	No. of Tent/Touring Pitch Bedspaces
5	25	27	49	390	23	1701

Number of Providers – Comparison with Previous Surveys

Serviced Accommodation

Category	2016	2018	2021	2024
Hotels	7	7	7	6
B&B	11	9	7	7
Inn	11	12	8	10
Total	29	28	22	23

Self-Catering Accommodation

Category	2016	2018	2021	2024
Providers: House/Cottage/Apartment/Lodge	15	14	22	15

Caravan and Camping

Category	2018	2021	2024
Self-Catering Units e.g. lodges/pods		15	25
Glamping/tent pitches	264	114	390
Touring Pitches		76	23

Note: Blank spaces indicate that there was not a sectoral breakdown of data in 2018.

Closures

Category	2021	2024
Serviced		7
Self-catering		8
Caravan and Camping		1
Total	8	16

There was an increase in closures in 2024 compared to 2021, largely due to poor trading, concentration of core business and facilities being sold/on market but not actively trading.

Number of Bedrooms/Bedspaces – Comparison with Previous Surveys

Serviced Accommodation

Category	2016 Bedspaces	2018 Bedspaces	2021 Bedspaces	2024 Bedspaces	2024 Bedrooms
Hotels				737	291
B&B				66	30
Inn				135	65
Total	881	1014	887	938	386

Self-Catering Accommodation

Category	2016 Bedspaces	2018 Bedspaces	2021 Bedspaces	2024 Bedspaces	2024 Bedrooms
Self-Catering Units	125	147	228	155	77

Caravan and Camping

Category	2016 Bedspaces	2018 Bedspaces	2021 Bedspaces	2024 Bedspaces	2024 Bedrooms
Self-Catering lodge/pod onsite				49	25
Tent/ Glamping Pitches				1560	390
Touring Pitches				92	23
Total	1468	1612	964	1701	438

Total Bedspaces Across All Sectors – Comparison with Previous Surveys

2018	2021	2024
2930 including Airbnb	2334 including Airbnb	3662 including Airbnb
		2794 excluding Airbnb

Overview of Visitor Accommodation

Serviced Accommodation

In 2024, the total number of serviced accommodation providers was 23 (compared with 2021: 22, 2018: 28) and all were bookable direct. Complementing the independent B&B stock, there are several inns offering accommodation as ancillary income to their core business. Inn accommodation is available direct or some use OTAs. Two 14 B&B businesses were shown to have chosen to sell exclusively via OTAs in 2024 and were transferred to the Airbnb category.

The provision of visitor accommodation by inns decreased from 12 providers in 2018 to 9 in 2021 but increased to 10 in 2024. Alongside this, inns provided 65 bedrooms and 135 bedspaces in 2024 compared with B&B provision of 30 bedrooms and 66 bedspaces. However, it should be noted that 2 providers in the inn section, Wingfield Hotel and Brewers Lodge, classify themselves as a hotel/inn with a combination of 28 bedrooms and 50 bedspaces. Should the two inns be reclassified, this increases the dominance of the hotel sector and inn bedspaces (85) will still outnumber B&B bedspaces (66).

Self-Catering Accommodation

There appeared to be a decrease in the number of providers offering self-catering units direct to the public; 15 providers in 2024 compared with 22 in 2021. In 2024, 8 self-catering providers were found to be concentrating on distribution via OTAs and were transferred to the Airbnb category.

The majority of 15 self-catering providers were micro businesses. There was one new provider Lodge on the Lake which makes available 24 new lodges and an estimated 48 bedspaces out of a total of 155 bedspaces in this category.

Caravan and Camping

The growing interest in glamping is being promoted in Caerphilly County with two sites increasing the number of furnished or unfurnished pods, lodges or tents.

The 2024 survey shows one addition Under the Oak Glamping and one closure in the short term. Ebbw View Eco Stays, whose owners have responded to current trends, but the site is currently closed. The number of glamping/tent pitches decreased from 264 in 2018 to 114 in 2021, it was suggested in the 2021 survey that this reduction of 150 at one site was due to the pandemic.

There has been a planning application to expand Penyfan Caravan Park, but this was turned down in Autumn 2023. The 2021 survey reports that there are 36 static caravans at this site however research shows that the site has a capacity for 152 static caravans. The figure cannot be confirmed as it has not been possible to speak to the owner/manager onsite

Sustainable Businesses

In general, tourism businesses across the UK are working towards and promoting their green credentials but in Caerphilly County this did not appear to be a priority. Just one caravan and camping provider Ebbw View Eco Stays, advertised on their website 'Finalist National Environmental Awards 2021' but this site is currently closed.

Distribution via Airbnb

Working with Visit Wales, extremely useful, accurate data was obtained from Airbnb. The list of Airbnb bookings in 2023 showed 295 bookings in Caerphilly County, the majority in self-catering units with just 30 bookings under B&B accommodation.

By identifying duplicate provider names in the listing, this figure was reduced to 217. This figure is of course uncorroborated, but it is a much higher than the figure of 56 reported in the 2021 survey.

Using desk research, it was found that many providers worked with online booking agents such as booking.com, Tripadvisor, a few exclusively rather than be available for direct booking.

Looking to the Future

In 2021, two thirds of accommodation providers surveyed were reported to have carried out renovations or upgrades to their businesses 2018-2021. However, the landscape has changed considerably since the pandemic. In 2024, the majority of providers did not have ambitions to invest in their businesses in the short term and had not considered upgrades or new developments. Just one provider was developing a new self-catering unit and a total of 9 providers requested more details on the new tourism grant.

The migration to online booking channels is a significant one and should be addressed while planning future strategies. The quality of visitor accommodation could be questioned with few officially graded providers. Addressing current trends such as businesses improving sustainable business practices does not appear to be a priority.

Cwmcarn Forest Accommodation

Cwmcarn Forest has recently undergone significant upgrades to its accommodation facilities. The Forest now provides six luxury lodges, fully furnished with the capacity to accommodate 2-6 people. The luxury lodges compliment the natural beauty of the forest through careful and effective design and allow visitors to appreciate the stunning nature of the forest with outdoor seating included. The lodges are in proximity to the children's adventure playground, water-based activities, walking and cycling trails, Raven's café and the visitor centre. The lodges start at £180 for two nights during off-peak times.

In addition to the luxury lodges, Cwmcarn Forest also offers glamping pods to visitors. These pods are nestled deep within the forest, are furnished to a high standard and have the capacity to sleep two adults and two children. There are 10 pods in total, starting at £50 per night as a more affordable alternative to the lodges. The forest also offers unfurnished pods, allowing visitors to bring their own camping equipment, with three of these pods being pet friendly, allowing visitors to bring their much-loved pets.

For a more traditional experience, the forest also has a traditional campsite, with level, landscaped pitches which are well maintained throughout the year. The toilet and shower facilities are graded 4 stars by Visit Wales, alongside laundry and kitchen and chemical waste facilities to ensure the forest is kept in pristine condition year-round. The forest also provides 3 hardstanding pitches, one suitable for only small caravans and the other two able to accommodate motorhomes and larger caravans.

The excellent accommodation facilities provided at Cwmcarn Forest are essential for boosting the tourism capabilities of the site. Having an extensive range of facilities on offer means provides the opportunity for visitors to stay for as long as they like within the forest, alongside the multitude of daily visitors the forest attracts. The tourism capabilities of the forest would be significantly limited if the overnight stay opportunities were not provided, hence why the forest has undergone significant upgrades in recent years to comprehensively take advantage of the tourism possibilities the forest possesses.

5. Opportunities

The role of tourism for the local economy and as a means of regeneration cannot be overstated, and identifying opportunities for the enhancement of tourism assets is crucial.

As mentioned previously, the key tourism assets of Caerphilly Castle and Cwmcaen Forest shall be protected within the 2RLDP under Policy TM4: Protection of Significant Tourist Assets, which seeks to not only protect these valuable assets, but support proposals for their enhancement to ensure their tourism uses continue throughout the 2RLDP period.

Key tourism opportunities such as events timetabling shall continue, building on the extensive list of events taking place in 2026. The ongoing preparation of the financially sustainable Leisure and Well-being Hub (L&WBH) shall seek to increase leisure tourism within the county borough, through providing an accessible and state-of-the-art hub for a wide range of consumers to enjoy.

Beyond the county borough, there are significant tourism developments which will, by proxy, increase tourism within Caerphilly County Borough, through the increase of footfall and visitors to these attractions seeking nearby accommodation. The most significant of these is the proposed Rhydycar West project in Merthyr Tydfil, which plans to create the UK's longest indoor ski slope, along with a tropical water park and 30 woodland lodges. Caerphilly's proximity to Merthyr Tydfil as a neighbouring county positions it in a prime location to benefit from the proposal, once again through increased traffic and footfall through the county borough from the city of Cardiff and potential accommodation sought by visitors to the facility. To capitalise on this opportunity, it is essential to ensure that the state of visitor accommodation within Caerphilly County Borough is maximised and enhanced wherever possible.

6. Conclusion

This background paper seeks to provide context to the current state of tourism within Caerphilly County Borough and provide insight into future provision also, to ensure tourism levels within the county borough are maximised and enhanced wherever possible.

This paper also seeks to inform the production of the Tourism policies contained within the 2RLDP, as follows:

TM1: Managing Tourism Growth

The Council will seek to expand and enhance sustainable tourism in the County Borough through:

- A Facilitating the development of sustainable visitor attractions and events;**
- B Facilitating the development of visitor accommodation in appropriate locations;**
- C Improving accessibility to visitor attractions and events through maximising sustainable transport and active travel; and**
- D Protecting and enhancing the County Borough's natural and historic assets that give the County Borough its unique identity.**

TM2: Tourist and Visitor Economy Development

Development proposals that support and enhance the County Borough's tourist and visitor economy will be permitted where:

- A The proposals promote sustainable forms of tourism;**
- B The proposals do not prejudice regeneration proposals or existing tourist facilities;**
- C The proposals do not result in unacceptable environmental and landscape impacts;**
- D The proposals do not adversely impact surrounding land uses.**

TM3: Protection of Existing Tourism Facilities

Proposals that would result in the loss, or reduction in scale, of an existing tourist facility will only be permitted where:

- A The loss would not adversely affect the range and quality of tourism facilities available within the locality and the County Borough; and**
- B It can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer suitable or financially viable and could not be expected to become financially viable for tourism use.**

TM4: Protection of Significant Tourist Assets

The following significant tourist assets are identified to protect their tourism use and proposals for their enhancement will be supported:

TM4.1 Cwmcarn Forest

TM4.2 Caerphilly Castle