

Adventure hub to celebrate the best of Valleys natural resources and heritage

This week, Tourism Minister, Lord Elis-Thomas visited Pontymoile canal basin, Pontypool to meet with project partners and see the plans for the area.

The Joint project between Caerphilly County Borough Council; Torfaen County Borough Council and Glandwr Cymru – Canal and River Trust in Wales, is part of a wider Welsh Government EU funded Tourism Attractor Destination programme, led by Visit Wales, which aims to create 11 must see destinations across Wales. The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle project aims to develop outdoor recreation, tourism and leisure activity along the Monmouthshire & Brecon canal in Torfaen and Caerphilly and connecting upland area of Mynydd Maen.

Through investment in infrastructure and adjacent visitor hubs, the project will help develop the economic potential of the canal as a prime location to visit, live and work generating investment and employment for local communities. Visitors will be encouraged to take up adventure sports by making the most of the natural upland landscape and rich heritage that exists between Torfaen and Risca.

The main elements of the project are as follows:

- the construction of a Visitor Activity Centre at Pontymoile canal basin in Pontypool,
- infrastructure to enhance access to a new canal basin development at South Sebastopol,
- restoration of the canal in Cwmbran and along the canal corridor.
- increasing the navigable length of canal to form a working heritage attraction,
- providing additional visitor accommodation (glamping) and adventure hub at Cwmcarn Forest. This will link with new car parking and improved walking and cycling routes from the canal into the wider landscape.

The Valleys Taskforce has also this week published a first-year progress report, detailing the breadth of the work over the last 12 months. The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal is a key project that will deliver on the commitment within Our Valleys, Our Future to increase tourism in the South Wales Valleys.

Tourism Minister, Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

“Projects such this one are at the heart of our ambition to help Valleys communities celebrate and make the most of their natural resources and heritage. Our aim through the Tourism Attractor Destination programme is to focus efforts and investment on key projects in each region so we have a real impact on Wales’ profile

in this globally competitive market. This development will give people compelling reasons to visit the area and I look forward to plans which I have seen coming to fruition.”

Councillor Fiona Cross, executive member for the environment at Torfaen council, said:

“In Torfaen we can offer a huge variety of adventure sports, from hiking, mountain biking, fell running and even paragliding in the hills of Blaenavon, to water sports on the canal and Llandegfedd reservoir in Pontypool. We also have our own ski slope and some of the best cycling routes in south Wales.

“This project will allow us to connect visitor facilities across Torfaen and Caerphilly using the canal and Mynydd Maen as a focus for water sports, walking, cycling and in some places horse riding between the various locations. The improvements it will allow us to make along the canal will also help support new local businesses and create local jobs.”

Cllr Sean Morgan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Caerphilly County Borough Council with responsibility for economy and tourism said:

“I am delighted that the Mon & Brec Canal Adventure Triangle has been awarded EU funding, as this investment will encourage more visitors to explore the fantastic natural landscape that the area has to offer, as well as the superb facilities on offer at Cwmcarn Forest. The funding will enable a number of projects including the building of additional glamping pods and an adventure hub at Cwmcarn Forest. The new hub will provide a fantastic opportunity for informal recreation which includes an exciting new zip wire facility”.

Richard Thomas, Glandŵr Cymru regional director, says:

“The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal is one of the most beautiful canals anywhere in the world. It’s full of activity, wildlife and offers a completely different pace of life. We’re delighted that it’s been awarded this funding. The adventure hub will bring further interest to the canal, meaning more people can enjoy it and get the health and well-being benefits from its unique environment.”