

Landscape lessons from Europe for Taskforce team

One of the priorities contained within 'Our Valleys, Our Future', the Valleys Taskforce's delivery plan, is to explore the concept of a Valleys Landscape Park, to help local communities build on their many natural assets, including the potential for community energy generation and tourism.

Neckar Park, Stuttgart, Germany, and Hoge Kempen National Park, Genk, Belgium are two global-leading examples of landscape parks, and Alun Davies, as chair of the Taskforce, was keen to learn more about how both celebrate their heritage while supporting local economies.

Alun Davies said:

"I have said all along that the taskforce must make a positive difference to the lives of people working and living in the Valleys.

"We all agree the Valleys should be a place people are proud to call home; a place where businesses choose to invest and operate; where communities are empowered and show pride in their environment, and the environment itself is an integral part of people's lifestyles.

"The areas we visited this week are excellent examples of what could be achieved in the South Wales Valleys. Both parks were developed in former industrial areas, where the heritage was celebrated, rather than left to rot. These inspiring public spaces have enhanced the environmental quality and recreational value of their region for the benefit of their communities and tourists alike."

The Cabinet Secretary pledged to meet with community partners from across the Valleys to discuss his visit and proposals to establish a similar scheme here in the future. Stakeholders will be asked to consider how the concept could work in their community and for contributions to the name and branding.

He said it was essential the people of the Valleys were involved in developing these proposals and building on the distinctive and breath-taking natural and cultural landscapes and fantastic recreation opportunities that already exist there.