

Valleys Regional Park to be source of 'national pride'

Alun Davies set out new proposals to make the most of the natural and cultural heritage of the Valleys, which could have a transformative effect on the local, and national, economy.

Earlier this month, we announced £7m of capital funding over two years, to establish the Valleys Regional Park in the draft Budget. Mr Davies, who is chair of the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys, will set out how that investment will kick start work to put the Valleys in the vanguard globally, with a national and international profile.

We will:

- develop a high-quality network of uplands, woodlands, nature reserves and country parks, rivers, reservoirs and canals, as well as heritage sites and attractions, crucially connect them with our towns and villages;
- connect Valleys with high-quality walking trails and cycle routes;
- invest in existing sites across the Valleys as Discovery Gateways, to encourage more active lifestyles and showcase the best of the Valleys.

The Cabinet Secretary, who visited other regional parks across Europe to help inform this work, described plans as a statement of ambition about what can be achieved in the Valleys.

He said,

“The Valleys Regional Park is not a one-off project or initiative; it is at the very heart of our ambition to help Valleys communities to maximise the opportunities afforded by our natural and cultural heritage to deliver significant social, economic and environmental benefits.

“The Valleys are home to some of the most distinctive and breathtaking natural landscapes in Wales and the UK. But for too long their charm, beauty and cultural heritage; their ability to attract visitors; and to be fully used and recognised by communities themselves, has been overlooked and undervalued. This ends here.

“We will build on the innovative projects already being undertaken and developed by communities across the Valleys – involving more communities, and creating a peer-to-peer, skill sharing network – to get us started.

“We will work closely with local authorities and other partners in the Valleys to identify existing sites which match our ambition and will announce the location of the first phase of Discovery Gateways

by the end of the year.”