



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council,
2 Llys Cadwyn,
Taff Street,
Pontypridd,
CF37 4TH

Meeting Contact: Sarah Handy - Members' Researcher & Scrutiny Officer (07385 401942)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a Virtual meeting of **CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held on **MONDAY, 4TH MARCH, 2024** at **5.00 PM**.

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Thursday, 29 February 2024 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

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1. SCRUTINY RESEARCH

A scrutiny research facility is available within the Council Business Unit to support Members' scrutiny responsibilities and their roles as Elected Members. Such research strengthens Scrutiny Committee work programmes to ensure outcome-based topics are identified. For any scrutiny research requirements please contact scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

3. MINUTES

To approve, as an accurate record, the minutes of the meetings held on the 18th January 2024 and the 1st February 2024.

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REPORTS OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

4. CONSULTATIONS

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

5. BI-ANNUAL CABINET MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

To scrutinise any matters with the portfolio holder responsible and to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to effectively scrutinise the Executive.

17 - 22

OFFICER REPORTS

6. RCT RECYCLING PERFORMANCE 2023/24

To receive an update on strategy development and progress towards the Council's 80% recycling target, with particular focus on the 3 weekly waste collection.

23 - 30

7. HERITAGE SERVICES

To receive an overview of heritage services in RCT.

31 - 56

8. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY ANNUAL REPORT

To receive an update on the process of general maintenance and upkeep of public rights of way.

57 - 72

9. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special

circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

10. CHAIRS REVIEW AND CLOSE

To reflect on the meeting and actions to be taken forward.

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair:
(County Borough Councillor C Middle and County Borough Councillor G L Warren respectively)

County Borough Councillors:
Councillor J Barton, Councillor P Binning, Councillor V Dunn,
Councillor E L Dunning, Councillor G Holmes, Councillor W Hughes,
Councillor G Jones, Councillor A O Rogers, Councillor W Treeby, Councillor R Yeo,
Councillor P Evans and Councillor G O Jones

Officers:
Christian Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services & Communications
Stephen Williams, Director Of Highways, Streetcare And Transportation Services
Alistair Critchlow, Frontline Services
Steve Owen, Service Director Streetcare
Nick Kelland, Principal Librarian
Keith Nicholls, Head of Leisure, Sports, and Parks
Darren Macey, Acting Operational Manager Heritage Services
Jason Bragg, Countryside & Rights Of Way Officer
Jim Bailey, Head Of Planning

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 18 January 2024 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors – The following Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Councillors were present online:-

Councillor C Middle (Chair)

Councillor G L Warren Councillor P Binning
Councillor V Dunn Councillor G Holmes
Councillor W Hughes Councillor G Jones
Councillor A O Rogers Councillor R Yeo
Councillor P Evans

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr A Stone, Head of Flood Risk Management and Strategic Projects
Mr S Williams, Director for Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services

Apologies for absence

Councillor J Barton Councillor E L Dunning
Councillor G O Jones

33 Scrutiny Research

The Members' Researcher and Scrutiny Officer referenced the research facilities that were available to Members within the Council Business Unit. Members were advised that if they have any specific queries to email them to Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk.

34 Apologies

Apologies of absence were duly noted from County Borough Councillors Geraint Jones, E. Dunning and J. Barton.

35 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the code of conduct, there were no declaration of interest pertaining to the agenda.

36 Minutes

The minutes of the 22nd November 2023 were **APPROVED** as an accurate record.

37 Consultations

The Members' Researcher & Scrutiny Officer referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website. Members were reminded that information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis and updated on a fortnightly basis.

38 Pre Scrutiny of the Revised Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) and Action Plan

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications advised Members that the purpose of the report was to pre scrutinise the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) and that Members comments will be fed back to Cabinet. Following this, the Head of Flood Risk Management presented his report to Members and advised that the strategy will subsequently be presented to Welsh Government for Ministerial approval.

Following this, Members had the opportunity to ask questions. The Chair thanked Officers for a detailed overview and praised the strategy. Another Member queried if the wind can exacerbate flooding. The Head of Flood Risk Management confirmed that the wind brings down so much debris that it can block culverted watercourses, but it can also affect the tidal areas etc and increase flood risk.

Discussions ensued and a Member commented that it would be useful if the report contained less abbreviations and more detail of the wording being used. The Head of Flood Risk advised that this is always a challenge and that the summary document, which is currently in draft, will not contain acronyms at all. The summary document will be aimed at members of the public.

Another Member queried how the Council encourages residents to adopt more flood prevention schemes by themselves for example in their own gardens and also how does the Council encourage private developers to adopt more flood prevention strategies. The Head of Flood Risk identified that there are two areas; the already built and the areas to be built. In respect of the areas already built, the Head of Flood Risk identified that communication is key as well as web resources and ease of access. There is also the enforcement side, which is the rules and regulations on existing infrastructure. The main focus has to be education. In terms of building houses, everything has to meet with the Welsh Government standards for sustainable drainage which effectively comes under green infrastructure. The Head of Flood Risk confirmed that this is contained within the LFRMS. There is also a planning guidance being looked through the Local Development Plan and it is also embedded in the Council's Climate Change Strategy. In respect of this, the Chair queried whether there was provision being made within the build of a project for maintenance. The Head of Flood Risk advised that Standard 6 of the Welsh Government Standards is all about the Construction phase and maintainability and Members were reassured

that all of this is now embedded in the LFRMS.

Discussion continued and a Member advised that it would be helpful if the document contained a breakdown of the vulnerability of each ward to the risk of flooding. The Member also queried what responsibility private companies have to ensure that residents properties are safe from flooding and also queried how the residents are being prepared for flood warnings. In respect of graphics by ward, the Head of Flood Risk advised that a ward breakdown is in the current plan on the website, but it does not align with the current data and catchment thinking (water does not obey ward boundaries for example) and that the current LFRMS works in strategic areas and that this is so that RCT can work with larger companies like NRW and Welsh Water can work in a more strategic and targeted way. In respect of private companies and their liability, Members were advised that some companies such as TfW do have an obligation for managing flood risk and that private companies main liabilities are with negligence and they have liabilities under civil law. Further, in respect of communication with the public, the Council's webpage is being upgraded to provide further information about flooding awareness and within those resources are links that will take the user to the NRW's website. The Member further queried how this is communicated to residents to ensure up to date awareness. The Senior Flood Risk Officer advised that as well as the web page, the Council is piloting community sub plans and also encouraging more campaigning and participation events.

Discussions continued and a Member queried how does this strategy compare with other Local Authorities and queried what more the Authority would do if the resources were available. The Member also queried if we have the resources to enforce building and planning flood risk regulations during the planning process. The Head of Flood Risk Management advised that he had a very good Flood Risk Management team and advised that we are in a very good position as an Authority. In respect of extra resources, Members were advised that within the limits of Welsh Government spend, we are in a very good position and that RCT Council is very supportive of allocating the resources needed to manage flood risk. In respect of enforcement, Members were advised that an enforcement officer has been allocated to the team and that since the officer joined the team there has been a clear increase in our enforcement activities as a Council. Matters pertaining to planning enforcement sit with the planning authority. The Director of Frontline Services supported this assessment and advised that as an Authority we have a lot of in house expertise, which puts us in a really good position in respect of flood risk. It was also emphasised that sometimes flooding is outside of the Council's responsibility and will sometimes be the responsibility of other risk management authorities such as NRW.

Discussions ensued and a Member referred back to the abbreviations used in the report and recommended using a glossary of terms at the beginning of the strategy to ensure that it is user friendly for the public to read. The Member queried what is the legal position on the use of abbreviations in a statutory document. The Head of Legal Services advised that abbreviations are needed to make the document more manageable or otherwise the document would become far too lengthy and repetitive. The Head of Legal Services advised that the glossary of terms is at the back of the document and bringing it to the front of the strategy would be a good option. Members supported this recommendation.

Another Member queried whether Officers think the strategy is fit for purpose going forward, particularly as the climate changes at such a fast speed and

particularly in light of budget cuts and austerity measures. The Director of Frontline Services acknowledged that areas that are not currently effected might become at risk of flooding in the future and that resources are limited, however it was emphasised that the document sets out the Council's overarching strategy and puts us in a good position going forward. The Head of Flood Risk Management advised that the Strategy is fixed for approx. 5-6years but the Action Plan isn't and will be amended to reflect up to date funding grants etc. It was also emphasised that the risk analysis data, especially the maps, are updated every 6 months by NRW.

The Chair further queried if all the Section 19 actions have been incorporated into this strategy and action plan. The Head of Flood Risk Management advised that all outstanding actions have now been incorporated into the Action Plan.

Another Member queried if there could be a situation in the future where the Council could store the excess water to get residents through the dry Summer months. The Head of Flood Risk Management advised that the water supply is actually managed by Welsh Water, however, the Officer did acknowledge that in the future this may be a possibility. The Chair further queried how the LFRMS aligns with the Council's Climate Change Strategy. The Senior Flood Risk Officer advised that Chapter 4 in the Strategy is a dedicated chapter incorporating the challenges of Climate Change and Flood Risk. There is also detail in the strategy on how the Council will maximise biodiversity benefits going forward etc.

Discussions ensued and a Member queried whether we are working collaboratively with other Local Authorities to tackle similar issues. The Head of Flood Risk Management advised that RCT has the highest surface water flood risk in Wales. In respect of working collaboratively with partners, Members were advised that neighbouring Local Authorities and partner organisations meet every few months to discuss cross cutting issues and have joint policies/guidance documents. Another Member queried whether RCT has mapping of culverts throughout the County Borough. The Member also queried the Council's response time when the Council does become aware of a flooding issue. In respect of the culverts, Members were advised that over 60% are currently privately owned. The intention is that where there is an issue, the Council will target resources to pick up and collate that information. In terms of response times, Members were advised calls have to be prioritised and that the team has to work within the resources available. The Director of Frontline Services advised Members that they would be welcome to visit the Council's control room and were advised to arrange this through the Council Business Unit team.

Another Member referred the Committee towards reference in the report to the Public Health Act 1946 and noted that this legislation has been repealed. Officers advised that they would email the Member separately to advise on the specific section of the legislation that is being referred to in the Strategy. The Chair further queried if the Council had contingency plans and if these plans involve working with outside emergency services. The Head of Flood Risk advised that the Strategy includes emergency planning and emergency contingency plans.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED:**

- i. To undertake pre scrutiny on the Council's Revised Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan attached at Appendix A; and,

- ii. To provide comment on the report and for feedback to be provided to the Cabinet, at its meeting to be held on the 24th January 2024.

39 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business to report.

40 Chairs Review & Close

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for attending. The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications confirmed that Members comments would be fed back to Cabinet and that a letter would be drafted summarising tonight's recommendations.

This meeting closed at 6.13 pm

**Councillor C Middle
Chair.**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 1 February 2024 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors – The following Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Councillors were present online:-

Councillor G L Warren Councillor P Binning
Councillor V Dunn Councillor W Hughes
Councillor G Jones Councillor A O Rogers
Councillor R Yeo Councillor P Evans

Officers in attendance:-

Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr S Williams, Director for Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services
Mr P Dukes, Principal Carbon Reduction Officer
Mr A Roberts, Head of Energy & Carbon Reduction
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Mr D James, Service Director, Prosperity & Development
Mr A Griffiths, Service Director Highways and Engineering
Mrs J Mynott, Head of Infrastructure Asset Management
Mr T Phillips, Head of Traffic and Transportation
Mrs S Handy, Members Researcher & Scrutiny Officer

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor A Crimmings, Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure
Councillor M Norris, Cabinet Member for Development & Prosperity

Apologies for absence

Councillor C Middle Councillor J Barton
Councillor E L Dunning Councillor G Holmes

41 Welcome

The Vice Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting.

42 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors C. Middle, J. Barton and E. Dunning.

43 SCRUTINY RESEARCH

The Members' Researcher and Scrutiny Officer referenced the research facilities that were available to Members within the Council Business Unit. Members were advised that if they have any specific queries to email them to Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk.

44 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Yeo declared the following interest in respect of agenda item 5: "My employer is 'National Grid Energy Distribution' (Formerly known as Western Power Distribution). I work for the Projects East team, which looks after Major Projects construction. These tend to be large scale projects. So, I am not directly involved with 'Ev charging'. I am also in Administration and have no, 'decision making role'. So, it would be a 'Personal Interest'".

45 CONSULTATIONS

The Members' Researcher & Scrutiny Officer referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website. Members were reminded that information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis and updated on a fortnightly basis.

46 THINK CLIMATE RCT' THE COUNCIL'S TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2022-2025

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications presented his report on the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2022-2025. The Service Director provided an overview and set out the Council's progress in delivering the Council's Climate Change Strategy, '[Think Climate RCT](#)' as agreed in June 2022.

Discussions ensued and the Vice Chair queried how the Council is working with the private sector to reduce the Carbon Footprint throughout the County Borough. The Service Director advised that this could potentially be a piece of work for the Committee to look into in the future and emphasised the agreement of the Senior Leadership Team that whilst the Council can reduce its Carbon Footprint, it is important to work collaboratively with the private sector to achieve Climate Change aims.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED**:

- i. To consider the information contained within the report.
- ii. To take a view on the potential areas for further consideration as part of the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.
- iii. To note the work to progress and further embed the Council's response to Climate Change into the business of the Council as part of the development of the Council's new Corporate Plan.
- iv. To consider whether Members wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report in line with the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

EV CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN COUNCIL ASSETS

The Director of Corporate Estates and the Head of Carbon Reduction Officer presented the report to Members and provided an update on progress made in the field of Electric Vehicle Charging, within Council Assets, in working towards to the Council's publicly stated EV charging goals. The Director also provided Members with a Power Point presentation in respect of EV Charging points throughout the County Borough.

Discussions ensued and a Member queried how closely the Council is working with car manufacturers to find out how EV Charging is developing and progressing. The Director of Corporate Estates advised that we are engaging with the Director of Cardiff City Region who do a lot of research in this area and also advised that the Council has a piece of software to enable to measure and manage the demand for EV chargers. The Head of Energy and Carbon reduction also advised that the Council works closely with TfW in this area and that the software predicts future trends in EV Charging and transport in general. Members were advised that a company called Senex, which is UK Government sponsored, works with all the manufacturing bodies as well to monitor trends in this area., This guidance is used to inform the Council's investment profile going forward. The Member further queried that if we were to look 5 years in advance what is this information telling us. The Officers advised that they would access the data and come back to the Member with information.

Discussions ensued and a Member query if one EV Charging point in Ty Elai car park is sufficient and also queried whether EV Charging bays in Trealaw cemetery would be for public use or Officer use. In respect of Ty Elai, Members were advised that recently EV charges have been installed that will be ready for Fleet and the public. With regards to Trealaw, Members were advised that it is intended for Fleet use but there are two bays there that will also be made available for public use as well.

Discussions continued and a Member queried if there was a long term plan to have EV Charging points at Schools, hospitals ad GP surgeries and also queried if there was a plan in place to provide communities that don't have public car parks with EV Charging points. The Director of Corporate Estates advised that we have a design brief for all new Schools in the County Borough and there is also a process of rolling out EV Charging to other suitable Schools in conjunction with Education colleagues. In respect of hospitals/GP surgeries, the Director confirmed that the Council does work in collaboration with the Health Board but that it would not be the Council who would install the EV Charging points. In respect of communities that do not have public car parks, the Director confirmed that there is a good coverage of EV points so far and that this installation will continue. The Director further confirmed that they are also in the process of installing fast rapid charges in Town Centres too. It was also confirmed that there are talks ongoing to liaise with community centres to also install EV Charging points.

Another Member queried what the legality is of installing a EV Charging line in Terraced house. With regard to private resident charging, Members were advised that the Council has no remit to be able to provide this but also advised that the National Grid have advised that anyone who wants to charge their vehicle at home the power can be provided for them. The problem in terraced

houses is not having a dedicated parking space outside their property and that this raises Health and Safety concerns in respect of charging cables. The Director of Frontline Services advised that you could potentially charge your car from a Terraced house but there is not a designated parking space or you could create a trip hazard or create a situation where emergency vehicles are restricted from accessing the terraced street. The Director of Frontline Services emphasised that the complexities around it are significant and there is a duty on the Council to also protect highway users.

Another Member queried what the cost is to the Council of installing EV Chargers per unit. The Director of Corporate Estates advised that they do not have the information to hand but will obtain the information and distribute it by email following the meeting. Members were advised that the Council has been fortunate up until now to obtain CCR and Welsh Government grant funding.

The Vice Chair welcomed further comment from the Principal Carbon Reduction Officer in respect of earlier discussion. It was confirmed that by 2030 it will be required to have just over 1500 charge points in RCT. and at the moment there is approximately 110 in RCT.

Discussions continued and a Member advised that for someone to have EV Charging in their house it would require a substantial power upgrade. The Director of Corporate Estates advised that he recently met with an Officer from the National Grid and was reassured that their 5 year plan is regularly reviewed and that a wealth of information about EV Charging is available on their website. Members were also informed that the National Grid have made a connectability pledge and that this makes it easier for all customers to install EV Charging and heat pumps.

Another Member pointed to how fast modern technology advances and queried if the Council is monitoring the developments as one day it may be that EV Charging points are no longer required. The Director of Corporate Estates acknowledged the speed at which progress is happening in the industry and are proportionate in what we are doing and every decision made is informed by the data coming back from current EV Charging points.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED**:

- i. To note the contents of this report, and an accompanying presentation, as part of the ongoing work in response to the Council's EV charging ambitions set by the Climate Change Strategy and the EV Charging Strategy and Implementation Plan.
- ii. To receive further report(s) to provide updates on progress as/when deemed appropriate.

48 The Welsh Government 20mph Speed Limit Roll Out

The Head of Traffic and Transportation presented his report to Members and gave a Power Point Presentation in respect of the Welsh Government's 20mph Speed Limit Roll Out in RCT.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions. A Member queried if there had been a big cost to the Authority in respect of the

vandalism of signage and queried if in RCT residents will have more of a say on speed restrictions on roads in their own communities. Members were advised that the Deputy Minister has recently advised residents to actively engage with Local Authorities in respect of their opinions on road restrictions in their area. In respect of vandalism, the Head of Traffic advised that fortunately it has mainly been paint spray so the cost to the Authority has been minimal.

Discussions continued and a Member noted the importance of the Committee having a further review in 12 months time in respect of seeing the impact on road accidents and deaths in our communities and the Member also emphasised the importance of reviewing the impact on journey times being reduced for buses and taxi drivers and the impact this has on their income.

Another Member queried if there was an opportunity to have more road signs put up. Members were advised that like the old 30mph signs, the Council is committed to the signage at the entrance and the road markings and that the Council cannot erect repeat 20mph signs unless there is no street lighting.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED**:

- i. To consider the contents of the report;
- ii. To consider whether they wish to scrutinise further the impact the scheme has had on the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT); and,
- iii. To receive a further report to Scrutiny in the 2024/25 Municipal Year outlining the impact that the scheme is having on public transport and residents in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

49 Highways Investment Scheme

The Service Director, Highways and Engineering presented his report to Members in respect of the Highways Investment Scheme in RCT. Members were provided with a Power Point Presentation.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member queried what justification is needed for a member of the public to request investment or resurfacing on a particular road in their area. With regard to adopted highways, the Service Director advised that the best approach is for the Local Elected Member to write in to the Council and the Council will then investigate and assess it. The Highway Inspectors will also assess the highways on a regular basis. The Member added that there is a benefit to the Council in repairing the potholes as this will lead to less residents taking legal action for the cost of repairs to their vehicles. The Service Director acknowledged this but also added that it all depends on the monies available and that the amount of money needed to keep the highways as they are now is significant in these times of austerity measures.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED**:

- i. To Scrutinise the update on highways infrastructure within the County Borough with particular reference to the asset

management strategy and investment strategy; and,

- ii. To Scrutinise the expenditure required to maintain the highway infrastructure asset.

50 Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund Annual Report

The Service Director, Prosperity & Development presented his report to Members and provided an update in respect of the delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund.

Members then had the opportunity to ask questions. The Vice Chair queried if we were likely to still get funding after 2025. The Service Director advised that this is a replacement programme for EU funds and so the Council is confident that there will be some funding after 2025, however there is still a lot of uncertainty around this and the Council is working closely with the WLGA to raise these questions with UK Government.

Following discussions, Members **RESOLVED**:

- i. To consider the contents of the report; and,
- ii. To consider whether they wish to examine in greater depth any further matters arising from the report.

51 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to report.

52 CHAIRS REVIEW & CLOSE

The Vice Chair thanked Officers for providing such detailed reports and reminded Members that the next meeting will be held on the 4th March 2024.

This meeting closed at 6.34 pm

Vice Chair. Councillor G Warren



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

CLIMATE CHANGE FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4TH MARCH 2024

BI-ANNUAL CABINET MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. To scrutinise any arising matters with the portfolio holder responsible for Development and Prosperity and to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to effectively scrutinise the Executive.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Scrutinise the Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity in respect of matters considered and agreed by Cabinet, and any key decisions taken, during the period 11th May 2023 – 4th March 2024; and,
- 2.2 Identify any areas arising from those matters determined within this period which Committee wish to further scrutinise, as part of revisions to the committees published work programme, in relation to Development & Prosperity.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To provide the Climate Change and Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the Cabinet in respect of the decisions taken in the defined decision-making period.
- 3.2. The recommendations seek to provide a structure to these sessions, to enable discussion and challenge to be focused upon a defined period and those individual decisions taken.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1. As part of this Council's ongoing commitment to improve the function of Scrutiny as a critical friend of the Council, this item is being brought before the Climate Change Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee as part of Cabinet and Scrutiny engagement.
- 4.2. Such an approach will provide Scrutiny Members with the opportunity to further challenge the Executive, as the Cabinet Members can provide details relating to the investments being taken forward within the portfolio and the challenges faced by the Council.

5. SCRUTINY OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

- 5.1. The role that the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee can play in holding the Council's decision-makers to account makes it fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy. Scrutinising the Executive serves an important purpose in ensuring that decision makers of the Council are held accountable for their actions and decisions.
- 5.2. By Scrutinising the Cabinet Member for Development & Prosperity, the public can gain a better understanding of their decision-making process and hold them accountable, which will promote openness and transparency within the Council. It will also ensure that those in Leadership positions are acting in the best interests of their constituents.
- 5.3. Scrutiny can also identify areas for improvement and drive positive changes, strengthening our governance arrangements. Effective scrutiny helps secure the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements within the authority itself. Conversely, poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership, and service failure.
- 5.4. Under the [Terms of Reference](#) of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee, Members have the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge areas that fall under the remit of the Cabinet Member for Development & Prosperity. The main responsibility areas of the Cabinet Member for Development & Prosperity cover the following areas:
 - Inward Investment
 - Enterprise & Economic Regeneration Funding
 - Town Centres
 - Business Support
 - Planning and Development

- Planning Strategy
- Building Control
- Housing Strategy & Policy
- Tourism

5.5 Scrutiny in various forms is essential to ensuring accountability, transparency and fairness and ensures that political decisions are taken in the best interests of our residents.

5.6 **Decisions taken forward by the Portfolio holder for Development & Prosperity under the Committee's Terms of Reference during the period 11 May 2023 - 4th March 2024:**

The decisions can be found by clicking on the following links below:-

- 18/12/23 [Aberdare Town Centre Strategy](#)
- 20/11/23 [Management of the Council's Land and Buildings Portfolio: Interim Update on Progress](#)
- 23/10/23 [CIL Annual Monitoring 2022/2023](#)
- 18/09/23 [Acquisition of Land to the East of Cenarth Drive Cwmbach, Aberdare](#)
- 17/07/23 [Renovation and Redevelopment of the Rock Grounds Buildings, Aberdare](#)
- 17/07/23 [Cardiff Capital Region Housing Viability Fund](#)
- 28/06/23 [Aberdare Town Centre - Draft Strategy](#)
- 15/05/23 [The Council's Office Accommodation Strategy Workspace Plan: Fit for the Future and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Operating Model and Working Arrangements Policy](#)
- 15/05/23 [Pontypridd Placemaking Plan - Southern Gateway Project Progress Update](#)

The following Officer Delegated Decisions were also taken forward to which the Cabinet Member was a consultee:

- 08/09/24 [Energy Company Obligation](#)
- 26/07/23 [Re-development of the 42-43 High Street, Former Rates Building, Aberdare](#)

- 23.05.23 [RCT Observations To Welsh Government Regarding Proposed Amendment Of Planning Policy Wales](#)

5.7 Questions should be focussed in respect of the above decisions taken by the Cabinet Member, to enable effective scrutiny of those decisions by committee members.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 None arising as a direct result of this report.

7 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

7.1 There are no consultation requirements emanating from the recommendations set out in this report.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 The report has been prepared in accordance with paragraph Part 4 of the Constitution (Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules).

10 CONCLUSION

10.1 To provide the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise, challenge and make recommendations for policy improvement under the remit of the Cabinet Member for Development & Prosperity.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES AND PROSPERITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

4th March 2024

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND
COMMUNICATIONS**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

**CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE
SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

4th MARCH 2024

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
HIGHWAYS, STREETCARE, AND
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

Agenda Item No: 6
REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S RECYCLING PERFORMANCE 2023/24

Author: Alistair Critchlow – Temporary Head of Streetcare Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on the Council's Recycling performance for the year 2023/24.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report:
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise, in greater depth, any further matters.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan, ***Making A Difference (2020 - 2024)*** sets out the Council's commitments to Keeping RCT clean through efficient street cleaning services, minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint.
- 3.2 Additionally, the Welsh Government's strategy to make the circular economy in Wales a reality, ***Beyond Recycling***, stipulates the next minimum target for the recycling of household waste is 70% by 2025, as we look to maintain our trajectory towards a zero waste nation by 2050.
- 3.3 Furthermore, the Council strategy; ***Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030***, commits the Council to ensuring it recycles or reuses 80% of all municipal waste by 2025 by supporting residents and businesses on initiatives that promote waste minimisation and reuse of materials, as well as investing in technology to increase the amount of waste we recycle and reuse locally.
- 3.4 All Welsh Local Authorities work towards recycling targets set by Welsh Government and as noted above, the next milestone target is for 2025 where 70% of waste collected must be recyclable. (Failure to reach these targets will result in the Council being issued with heavy financial penalties).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council collects recycling and waste as follows:

Type of Recycling / Waste	Collection Frequency	Container
Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR)	Weekly	Clear bag
Food Waste	Weekly	Food waste bag
Green Waste	Weekly (Summer)	Green sack
Absorbent Hygiene Products, (AHP), / Nappies	Weekly	Purple bag
Refuse	3-weekly	Black bag / wheelie bin

- 4.2 The current situation sees domestic waste in the Rhondda collected via black bags with the Cynon and Taf having collections via wheelie bins.
- 4.3 The Council's Recycling and Waste Service comprises 165 operational staff based in 3 main depots – Rhondda, (Dinas Depot, Porth), Cynon, (Ty Amgen Depot, Llwydcoed) and Taf, (Ty Glantaf, Treforest Estate), and is responsible for the collection and management of household waste and related services.
- 4.3 The Council also provides 6 Community Recycling Centres and 3 Re-Use facilities for residents to take their household items not collected as part of normal kerbside collection service for recycling, re-use or disposal.

5. **UPDATE AND CURRENT POSITION**

- 5.1 The Council continues to exceed the current Welsh Government recycling target of 64% as we work towards the next target of 70% by 2025.
- 5.2 However, after a slight drop in recycling tonnages from 2021-22 to 2022-23, the current year, 2023-24 has seen the Council's recycling rates markedly improve.
- 5.3 There were a number of reasons and mitigating factors for the previous fall in recycling rates, including: -
- Fewer awareness raising campaigns, (e.g., door knocking), to further highlight awareness of recycling services available to residents, as the Service continued to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The ongoing cost of living crisis, which impacted some specific materials that contribute to higher recycling levels – namely wood and rubble – this challenge remains.
 - Less food waste being presented for collection.
- 5.4 To help combat some of these issues and increase recycling performance, the Waste Management and Enforcement Service have implemented a number of key strategic and operational changes in the 2023-24 year to date, including: -
- The introduction of the collection of residual household waste on a 3-weekly basis for all domestic waste collections. (More information: <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Newsroom/PressReleases/2023/January/CabinethaveagreedChangestoWasteandRecycling.aspx>).
 - The implementation of a free online booking system for the collection of green waste during the winter months, (November – February): <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/RecyclingandWaste/WhatcanIrecycle/KerbsideRecycling/GreenWaste/GetaGreenWasteCollection/WinterGreenWasteCollections.aspx>.

- The introduction of revised, more efficient, AHP, collections. (Further information: (<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/RecyclingandWaste/WhatcanIrecycle/KerbsideRecycling/NappyRecycling.aspx>).
- The employment of a dedicated team of Waste Awareness Officers to work in the community raising awareness of the importance of recycling, (especially with regard to the importance of food recycling, in relation to which there has been a dedicated media campaign involving a local celebrity; more information regarding this can be found here: (<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Newsroom/PressReleases/2023/November/BOXINGChampionJoinsFIGHTAgainstWASTE.aspx>).
- The introduction of small Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment, (WEEE) recycling facilities at the seven main Leisure for Life Leisure Centres across RCT. (More information on this can be found here: <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/RecyclingandWaste/WhatcanIrecycle/OtherRecycling/SmallElectricalItemsWEEERecycling.aspx>).

5.5 The table below shows the Council’s recycling performance during the **full year 2022/23 as 64.97%**, with performance improving to **67.44% for April to December of 2023/24**.

Year / Recycling Stream	Recycling Rate	Food Waste	Absorbent Hygiene Products, (AHP)	Green Waste
2020-21	66.74%	12,957.46	2,154.82	8,449.49
2021-22	67.23%	12,306.52	1,949.88	7,163.12
2022-23	64.97%	11,483.92	1,890.30	5,655.03
Q1-Q3 2023-24	67.44%	8,884.80	1,500.53	5,115.73

5.6 The Materials Recovery Facility, (MRF), at Bryn Pica has gone a long way in helping us maintain our performance and recover high levels of recycling.

5.7 The tables below illustrate the tonnages for **food waste, AHP, and green waste**.

Food Waste	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2020-21	3,218.88	3,064.56	3,301.48	3,372.54
2021-22	3,080.86	2,970.98	3,171.60	3,083.08
2022-23	2,816.72	2,743.40	2,969.58	2,954.22
Q1-Q3 2023-24	2,742.34	2,905.34	3,237.12	-

AHP	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2020-21	522.16	511.08	534.94	586.64
2021-22	497.50	462.10	499.64	490.64
2022-23	460.16	465.98	460.34	503.82
Q1-Q3 2023-24	481.46	538.75	480.32	-

Green Waste	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2020-21	2,827.43	3,496.82	1,034.57	1,090.67
2021-22	2,685.15	2,678.68	1,076.82	722.47
2022-23	2,090.50	2,185.04	912.84	466.65
Q1-Q3 2023-24	2,141.58	2,055.66	918.49	-

6. REVISED WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – 3-WEEKLY REFUSE COLLECTIONS

6.1 Since July 2023, the collection of residual household waste has been undertaken on a on a 3-weekly basis, including strict volume controls, namely:

- (a) A maximum of 3 black bags per household, (for those properties with existing black bag waste collections),
- (b) A prohibition of “side waste” for those households with large 240L wheelie bins, (with 1 bag of side waste being permissible, for those with the standard 120L bins).

- 6.2 It was recognised early in the planning process that such a significant service change affecting all residences, (approximately 115,000), across RCT, would have implications that cut across many different Council functions. Consequently, a Project Board consisting of Senior Council Officers from across a range of different Council departments, (Frontline Services, HR, Finance, Procurement, Corporate Communications, ICT, Customer Care, etc.), and also the Cabinet Member as well for political oversight, was set-up to help deliver the change.
- 6.3 As a result, the service change was successfully delivered and included a comprehensive communications plan with the launch of our “up our recycling game” campaign.
- 6.4 A full review of the collection rounds, (recycling as well as refuse), was also carried out in order to balance the rounds and the workload between our 3 waste depots, altering routes to make them more efficient and to reduce the number of vehicles required to undertake the revised collection rounds.
- 6.5 Furthermore, the service change was greatly assisted by significant digital innovations, which make better use of all the data gathered from collection rounds via in-cab technology; this helped the Service make more informed decisions based on robust quantitative information.
- 6.6 Following the introduction of 3-weekly refuse collection, on average, each week, around 100t less residual waste tonnage is being presented for collection, with corresponding rises in dry mixed recycling, (no Council in Wales collects more than RCT does), and food waste in particular. This equates to an average weekly recycling performance increase of 4.83% since the beginning of Q2 2023/24.

7. FUTURE WASTE TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

- 7.1 Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond, the Service is now seeking, via a new Waste Transformation Board, to introduce further operational efficiencies and strategic changes to its waste management strategy, with a view to achieving further financial savings, whilst at the same time increasing the overall efficiency of the service in line with Welsh Government and the Council’s priorities.
- 7.2 Future operational efficiencies will consider initiatives and service changes to commercial cardboard collections, trade waste charges and collections as a result of new Welsh Government legislation being introduced from April 2024, green waste and refuse collections via black bags.

8. CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT

8.1 There are no requirements for consultation in respect of this report.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY)

9.1 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010, Local Authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
2. Advance equality of opportunity.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

9.2 There are no equality, diversity or socio-economic duty implications associated with this report.

10. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report. However, although the recommendations with regards to the update on the Council's recycling performance do not have any direct impact on the Welsh language, opportunities for the Service to maintain, grow or upskill Welsh speaking staff will remain a priority.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are financial implications, (heavy financial penalties), if the Council fails to achieve the Welsh Government's statutory recycling target of 70% by the end of March 2025.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

12.1 The Council, as a designated Waste Collection Authority, has a duty to collect household waste, under section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended (EPA 1990).

13. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN, NATIONAL PRIORITIES, AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015.

- 13.1 The Council has committed to minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint. This supports the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' – 2020-24.
- 13.2 This report reflects the Sustainable Development principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and its work contributes to all seven national goals.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 The Council is proud of its recycling services and how it continues to perform well in delivering services for our residents and meeting statutory targets against the backdrop of ongoing financial challenges and cost of living pressures.
- 14.2 The Council continues to exceed the current Welsh Government recycling target as we work towards the next target of 70% by 2025 and, after a drop in recycling tonnages in previous years, the Council's recycling rate has increased by almost 5% since the beginning of Q2 2023/24.
- 14.3 To help further improve recycling performance, the Waste Management and Enforcement Service have implemented a number of key strategic and operational changes in the 2023-24 year to date, with further service transformation initiatives planned for 2024-25 and beyond.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

**CLIMATE CHANGE FRONTLINE
SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

DATE: 4th MARCH 2024

**The Climate Change Frontline Services &
Prosperity Scrutiny Committee**

Agenda Item No 7

AN OVERVIEW OF HERITAGE
SERVICES WITHIN RHONDDA
CYNON TAF

Author(s): Keith Nicholls - Head of Leisure, Sport and Parks, Chris Richards - Visitor Attractions, Events and Heritage Services Manager, Darren Macey – Heritage Operations Manager,

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide the opportunity for Members to scrutinise the Heritage Services in RCT including:

- An overview of the progress on the War Memorials project,
- Blue Plaques
- Digitisation at The Rhondda Heritage Park Museum,
- Current community regeneration projects
- Creation of a new heritage strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members

- 2.1 Scrutinise the progress made in safeguarding, preserving and making accessible heritage attractions, collections, artefacts, War Memorials and monuments as a direct result of the investment programme throughout the County Borough as noted in this discussion paper.

3. **BACKGROUND**

This year has seen the Heritage and Outreach Services continue to support the delivery of significant external funding in RCT. In doing so the Service has provided technical and tactical advice to numerous community groups across the authority seeking to commemorate and regenerate their own built environment. In addition, the Service has been successful in obtaining substantial grant funding both for The Rhondda Heritage Park Museum, and for RCTCBC's own public history projects.

Broadly speaking the Heritage Service operates with two guiding principles uppermost in our minds.

- **Heritage should be a tool for both Income and 'interest' generation.**
- **Heritage should be relevant, relatable, and progressive.**

Well-being of Future Generations Act

This Welsh Government Act offers RCTCBC heritage services several development opportunities:

- Alignment of goals: The Act's seven well-being goals (prosperity, resilience, improved health, greater equality, cohesive communities, vibrant culture and Welsh language, and global responsibility) can all inspire innovative heritage programming and activity.
- Legitimacy in local planning: RCTCBC, like all Welsh councils, must work towards these goals. Heritage cannot be dismissed when there is a direct goal to promote cultural vibrancy and cohesive communities.
- Collaboration potential: The act encourages significant opportunities for partnerships inside and outside of the council.
- Long-term survival: The Act requires considering the long-term impact of all its goals. RCTCBC's heritage services are ideally positioned to showcase positive, multi-generational benefits. This can strengthen budget justifications by reframing expenditure as long-term investment in RCTCBC's social and cultural wealth.
- Funding streams: Showcasing how heritage activity aligns with the Act increases access to funding opportunities against those that offer vague notions of community benefit. The Heritage Service has seven broad aims.

- 3.1 To increase Civic Pride by making Heritage accessible and relevant to the borough's residents and visitors through a range of exciting community focused projects and community partnerships. Providing a sustainable, innovative and cost-effective heritage output, by working with Partner organisations and a diverse combination of funders across the heritage sector and beyond. Examples of this can be seen in (**Appendix: Heritage Overview - 3.1**).
- 3.2 To manage the boroughs significant artefact collection in line with National Museums Accreditation Standards. Examples of this can be seen in (**Appendix: Heritage Overview - 3.2**).
- 3.3 To contribute to the success of the borough's heritage tourism offer by working closely with Visitors Attractions Managers and Economic Development colleagues in developing the quality of heritage interpretation. Examples of this can be seen in (**Appendix: Heritage Overview - 3.3**).
- 3.4 To manage the boroughs War Memorials, Monuments and Blue Plaque scheme, ensuring that they are recorded, accessible and safeguarded for future generation and through working with national bodies such as the National War Graves Commission and the boroughs Armed forces Officer. Examples of this can be seen in (**Appendix: Heritage Overview - 3.4**).
- 3.5 To develop the boroughs heritage educational offer through close partnerships with educational bodies and to meet with the opportunities presented within the Curriculum for Wales. Examples of this can be seen in (**Appendix: Heritage Overview - 3.5**).
- 3.6.1 Engaging with residents across RCT to inform RCT's approach to heritage delivery. With reference to the creation of a new Heritage Strategy. Examples of this can be seen in (**Appendix: Heritage Overview – 3.6**).
- 3.7 To engage with, and provide context for, RCT's Heritage in terms of previously underrepresented groups. (**Appendix: Heritage Overview - 3.7**).

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 There is no requirement for consultation in respect of this report as the contents of the report are for information purposes only at this stage.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 5.1 There are no financial implications as the contents of this report are for information purposes only at this stage.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Members scrutinise the content of the report and the work being undertaken by the Heritage Service team in safeguarding, preserving, and making heritage accessible to the residents and visitors of the County Borough.

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Appendix 3.1

In order to deliver a diverse heritage programme for the residents and visitors of the County Borough, the need for employing a team of heritage professional with a diverse range of skills became evident when the service transferred to the Visitor Attractions Service in 2018.

In 2020, the opportunity arose to undertake a staff restructure and utilising existing budgets, the process began in creating a new heritage service team who could deliver for the future.

Our Educational officer left the Service in July, as all other team members are on parttime contracts as stopgap these hours were redistributed between the other team members. It is however our intention to fill the post as soon as we are able.

Heritage Service Team:

- **Darren Macey** - Heritage Operations Manager, P/T – Qualified & experienced historian, specialist in race & equality heritage, educational specialist & lecturer, and funding.
- **Rhiannon Seymour** – Memorials & Monument Officer P/T – qualified and experienced Archaeologist, community engagement and funding.
- **Rhian Hall** – Collections & Artefact Manager P/T – qualified historian and in Collections Care. Experienced curator and in funding applications.
- **Kath Lewis** – Outreach Officer P/T – experienced schools and community outreach

The following information are examples of exciting community focused projects delivered by the Heritage Service.

Community engagement

Lead – Darren Macey

As a service we are acutely aware of both the financial restrictions and statutory responsibilities of the Authority. We see our role in terms of both income generation, supporting and advising funding bids across RCT and 'interest' generation. Addressing the latter we consistently seek the most cost effective way to generate interest via

external funding, working with colleagues across the Authority including in our town centre regeneration, highways and engineering teams. To that end we are supporting the delivery of heritage interpretation on the following projects.

- Robertstown Bridge
- Castle Bridge
- Rhondda Fach Active Walkway

We are, as per the below examples display, focused on working with community groups across the Authority seeking to use heritage as a tool for regeneration and community cohesion.

Rhondda Radio Heritage Trail

When, some months ago, Rhondda Radio won a major grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop a Rhondda Heritage Trail and associated broadcast and audio archive, the support of Rhondda Cynon Taf Heritage and Outreach Services was absolutely crucial.

Not only did we receive a really helpful letter of support, but the whole ethos of our application was inspired by a number of discussions we were privileged to have with RCT's Heritage and Outreach team before submitting our bid, and especially by the guiding principle which they talked about of transforming heritage 'from nostalgia to relevance'.

I believe it was this idea which gave our bid its convincing coherence in the estimation of the NHLF and won the grant.

Since the award of the grant, RCT's Heritage and Outreach Services has continued to offer us a fantastic level of support, as a sounding board for our ideas, as a guarantor that our plans accorded with Council strategy and policy, and at a very practical level in determining where to locate the 'Heritage Stations' which are at the heart of our Project.

Operational Manager Darren Macey and the team could not have been more helpful in making themselves available on numerous occasions, and often at short or no notice, to give us advice, to pass on useful local contacts and for site meetings etc.

We are truly grateful to them.

Dr John Geraint

Project Overview

The **Rhondda Heritage Project** is funded by a major grant awarded to Rhondda Radio, the Valley's community radio station, by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The grant was secured with a letter of support from Rhondda Cynon Taf Heritage and Outreach Services, and we have been in constant dialogue with council officers, both before and since the award of the grant.

The Project has three interconnecting strands: a **physical Heritage Trail**; a **training programme** upskilling volunteers to identify and record oral testimony related to Rhondda's heritage; and a year-long 'festival' of **heritage programmes** which will be broadcast by Rhondda Radio in 2024, and available online in perpetuity.

The **training programme** is now complete, and more than 100 pieces of oral history have been recorded and prepared in audio form for broadcast and online publication.

Broadcasts of the weekly 'live' **heritage programmes** began on 3 January 2024. We are liaising with RCT's Heritage Project Co-ordinator to incorporate the online archive of our audio within a dedicated website which is being developed for the 'Altered Images' project.

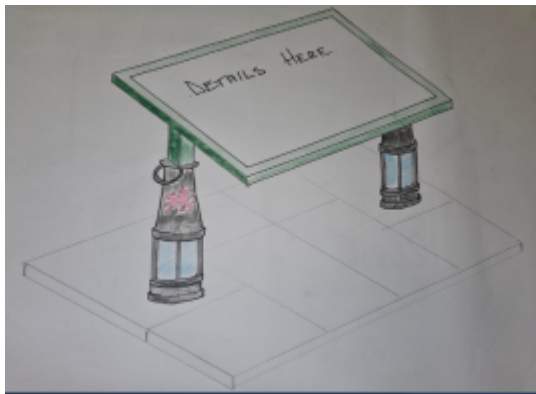
The **physical Heritage Trail** is intended to reconnect this iconic mining valley to its past. We are confident that it will prove to be an attractive, popular and educational feature, for both residents and visitors alike.

The Trail will be organised thematically with twelve 'Heritage Stations' at key locations throughout both Rhondda Valleys.

This document gives details of the proposed sites.

At each site, the Project will install an information board similar to many already in place throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf, but with a distinctive design element incorporated into the box section legs. At each site, the design of the legs will reflect a particular heritage theme, appropriate to the location.

The frames, including the box section legs, will be manufactured in stainless steel. Sitting atop the legs will be an aluminium panel measuring approximately 1200mm wide by 850mm (covered by 3mm sheet of acrylic for protection). This surface board



will carry fully bilingual information (in Welsh and English) specific to the site and a QR code linking to the online audio archive.

An impressionistic drawing of one of the information boards – the one intended for the Rhondda Heritage Park site – is pictured

here.

The design element on the legs is purely illustrative and will be varied from site to site. The following pages detail the suggested locations for the twelve 'Stations'.

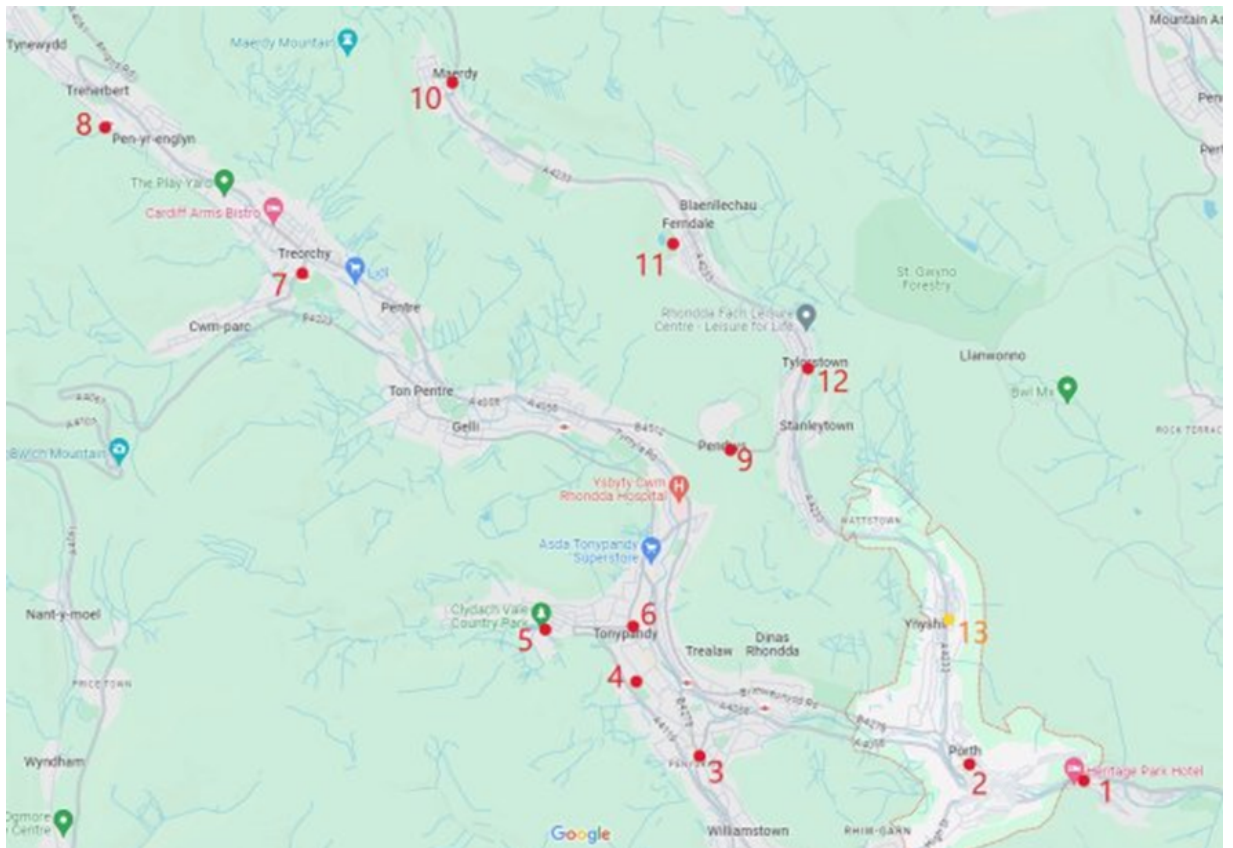
1. Rhondda Heritage Park Mining Museum at Trehafod
2. Porth Transport Hub
3. Soar Centre, Penygraig
4. Mid-Rhondda Athletic Field, Tonypandy
5. Cambrian Lakes, Clydach Vale
6. Pandy Square, Tonypandy
7. Treorchy Park and Dare Theatre
8. Welcome to the Woods, Treherbert
9. Penrhys Statue Car Park
10. Maerdy Gateway Miners' Memorial

11. Darran Park, Ferndale

12. Tylorstown Welfare Hall

Bonus station

13. Workers Gallery, Ynyshir (this will not be a physical structure, but an image displayed in the Gallery)



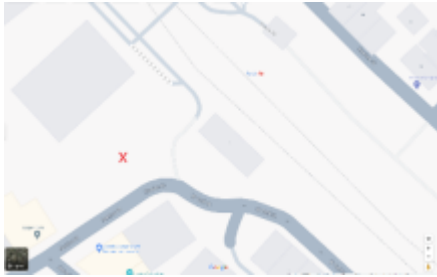
1. Rhondda Heritage Park Mining Museum at Trehafod



Off the public highway, adjacent to the main entrance doors of the Museum

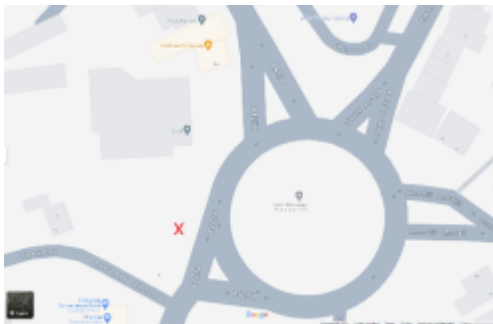
(exact location to be discussed)

2. Porth Transport Hub



On the 'island' outside the passenger terminal building

3. Soar Centre, Penygraig



Off the public highway, near the entrance gate, within the perimeter of the Valleys Kids property.

4. Mid-Rhondda Athletic Field, Tonypany



Off the public highway, within the perimeter of the Athletic Field.

(Exact location to be discussed)

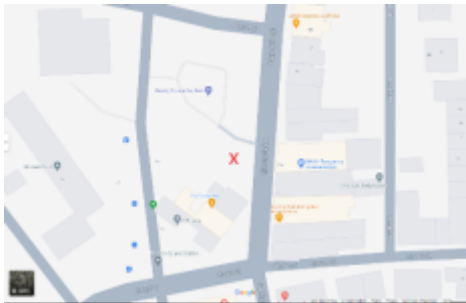
5. Cambrian Lakes, Clydach Vale



Off the public highway, within the Cambrian Village Trust site.

(Exact location to be discussed)

6. Pandy Square, Tonypany



Set back from the public highway, on the paved area next to the existing visitor information board.

7. Treorchy, Park and Dare Theatre



Set well back from the public highway, against the back or side wall of the existing open and paved seating area between the north-east side of the Theatre and the bridge over the river.

8. Welcome to the Woods, Treherbert



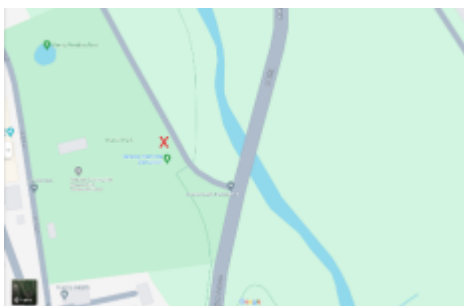
Off the public highway, on the Welcome To The Woods site, beyond the railway level crossing.

9. Penrhys Statue Car Park



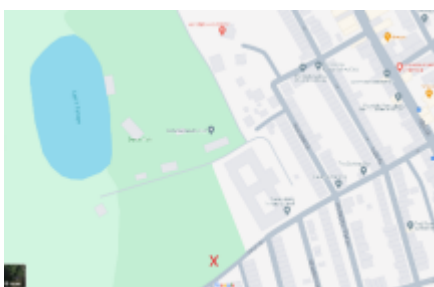
On the grass verge, next to the existing visitor information board.

10. Maerdy Gateway Miners' Memorial



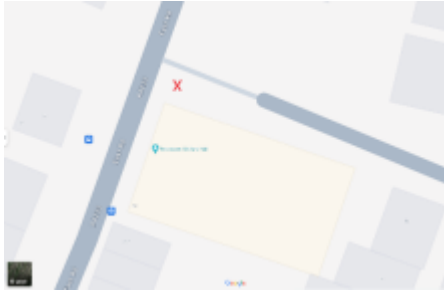
On the slightly flatter grass area uphill beyond the pit wheel and planters.

11. Darran Park, Ferndale



Near the entrance opposite Tudor Street, on the grass near the existing information board.

12. Tylorstown Welfare Hall



Over or behind the grey railings, so as not to obstruct the pathway.

Project outcomes include:

- Oral history recordings
- Educational output - education materials.

Mid Rhondda partnership

The Heritage Service are supporting several organisations writing an initial funding bid for £250,000 with the intension for a further bid of £4-5 million in 2027.

Tylorstown Welfare Hall

The Heritage Service are currently supporting a funding bid if £5 million.

Appendix 3.2

The following information gives an indication of the duties carried out by the Collections Manager.

Raising the care standards - National Museum of Wales Accreditation Status.

It was important that in 2018 at time when the management of Heritage transferred to Visitor Attractions that the change signified a change in direction and aspiration within the service.

Achieving a national standard of excellence had been discussed since the opening of Rhondda Heritage Park Museum in 1993 but had never achieved despite previous support from National Museums Wales.

In 2018, after working with advisors from the National Museum Service, significant work was undertaken, creating safeguarding systems and processes, which ensured that the Museum now operates to the highest of nationally recognised standards and once implemented were subject to a quality audit by NWS inspectors.

Rhondda Heritage Park achieved National Museum Accreditation status for the first time in 2018 and continues to maintain and retain this status.

Managing work of the Collections Manager consists of managing the three museum artefact collections based at Rhondda Heritage Park, Cynon Valley Museum and National Lido of Wales, consisting of over 34,155 artefacts.

Managing and maintaining the Rhondda Artefact Collection to National Museum Accreditation standards, and to ensure reaccreditation in 2025.

Undertaking a rationalisation programme to better improve the quality of the Rhondda Collection.

To work with the Cynon Valley Museum Trust in managing and presenting the artifacts of the Cynon Collection.

To provide guidance and support to public enquiries in relation to managing artefacts.

To develop volunteer opportunities in support undertaking maintenance and research of the Councils Collections.

Collections and Museum interpretation

Lead- Rhin Hall

The Rhondda Heritage Park Museum received Capital Transformation funding of £150,000 from the Welsh Government in March 2023 to upgrade the 'Black Gold' (coal history) exhibition and develop a digital exhibition space. This exhibition will consist of

touch screens containing interactive digital content (interpretation text in timeline and map formats, relevant images of objects from our collection, historical videos, and audio files) mirrored on to large TV screens. For example, one screen will cover the female experience of the 1984-85 miners' strike and feature portraits of the women and oral history interview files of their memories. Visitors will be able to interact with this in multiple inclusive ways, via multiple languages and BSL, which will improve access and understanding for current and new users.

Furthermore, the digital equipment will improve collections care practice by providing the opportunity to share digitised objects that cannot be displayed due to fragile condition, allowing access and preservation for future generations.

The digital format will improve the efficiency and speed of creating and manipulating content in a way that would be impossible with physical interpretation. This will also create endless opportunities to collaborate with regional and national museums and organisations by featuring their content and objects in the exhibition, or as part of events, workshops, and lectures.

Appendix 3.3

Following the transfer of management responsibilities of Rhondda Heritage Park Visitor Attraction in 2016, it was found that the infrastructure at the Council's main heritage visitor attraction was in desperate need of safeguarding and product development.

The Council's cabinet committed to safeguarding, preserving and developing the facility for its visitors and future generations, and a significant investment of £500k was undertaken in 2016/17, which resulted in significant improvements to both the visitor experience as well as safeguarding the facilities key heritage infrastructure.

This investment and subsequent improvements led to a significant increase in visitor numbers as well as a reduction in operational costs as indicated below, and the expectations are for this trend to continue.

In addition to reducing costs and increasing visitor numbers, the attraction benefits from superb customer feedback.

As part of the development, the introduction of cutting-edge technology was introduced as part of the guided tour, enhancing the visitors experience and presenting heritage in a new and interactive manner.

Temporary Exhibitions

This permanent exhibition space was designed in a manner that also created a temporary exhibition space at its centre. This space would enable the development of a range of temporary exhibitions that delve deeper into the subject matter and enable a celebration of the mining and community heritage in a wider sense.

Fourteen exhibitions have been produced so far and are displayed on a rotational/ seasonal basis in order that the heritage offer at the facility remain fresh for visitors, as indicated below.

1. Land of Bards and Singers
2. Miners Fortnight
3. Women of the Valleys
4. Wildlife and industry
5. Making Medicine
6. From Pit to Port
7. Education: A Class Act
8. Rhondda Remember
9. A Christmas Carol 2019
10. When war came to the Rhondda
11. Last Voices of Rhondda
12. Proud Valley
13. Hidden Voices
14. Lewis Merthyr Colliery 60th Anniversary

March 5th, 2024 sees the opening of an exhibition featuring the sights and sounds of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike. The exhibition features images taken by Richard Williams, a young photographer working for the Western Mail at the time. The photographs are combined with a soundscape that includes contemporary music, speeches, news reports and oral testimony created by former BBC producer John Geraint.

The Coal Society Exhibition area.

The creation of the Coal Society Exhibition area outlines the impacts that came with the creation of new communities including home life, religion, births deaths and marriages and unionism. The use of digital technologies again features throughout the exhibition space.

Current projects

The following outlines a range of the key projects that are currently being undertaken.

Safeguarding the Miner's story - Digitisation of guided tour

One of the biggest challenges that lay ahead in terms of customers and future generations getting to hear the real-life experiences of former colliers.

Due to the fact that the majority of Coal Mining finished in the early 1990's in South Wales, the vast majority of those who worked as miners are well beyond retirement age. The current tour guides age range from 65yrs - 82yrs of age.

Recruitment of former miners has proved almost impossible in recent years, and it is anticipated that we are likely to lose half our current staff to retirement within the next two years, and before the end of this decade there will be no former coal miners available to act as guides.

The Visitor Attractions service have embarked on an ambitious project to safeguard the precious heritage, by digitally capturing the existing guides delivering their tour, in a way that that will ensure that at the point in the near future when the last of our guides retire, we will still have the ability to ensure

that customers of the future will be able to digitally meet with, see, and listen to the experiences of our current guides, providing a very similar experience to that currently available, albeit through a self-led tour.

3.4 Memorialisation in RCT

Lead Rhiannon Seymour

The recently created post of Monuments and Memorials Officer has begun the process of cataloguing all the memorials, scheduled monuments, blue plaques and listed buildings within RCT.

The purpose of the role is to document all Monuments and Memorials, recording details of all listings, undertaking conditional surveys, producing long-term safeguarding maintenance processes, undertaking funding applications and also creating engagement and interpretational opportunities for residents and visitors and in particular working with armed services personnel, both serving and veterans along with Royal British Legion and other interested parties.

This year the Councils Cabinet has supported the creation of this new post, along with an additional £100k capital fund that will be used to undertake essential maintenance on Memorials, create community engagement projects and friends' groups in support of maintaining and celebrating memorials.

In addition, the creation of a dedicated website that will enable greater engagement, interpretation, and research opportunities for future generations.

Blue plaques

The Heritage Service works with a committee made up of representatives from our community, the Blue Plaque Committee. Applications are made directly to the Heritage Service who pass these on to the Blue Plaque Committee which sits biannually, April and October, to consider applications. All decisions regarding the recipients of Blue Plaques are made independently of the Heritage Service by this autonomous committee. Applications received between October and March are assessed in April, with those received between April and September assessed in

October. Each application is considered on its own merit as evidenced by any and all information provided to the committee.

Usually, the council fund four blue plaques per year but during September 2024 round, two plaques were tied. It was decided that, on this occasion, the council would fund an additional blue plaque to represent the views of the blue plaque committee.

The blue plaques funded during the last year are for:

Name of person plaque dedicated to	Date of person plaque dedicated to	Location of plaque	Date of unveiling	Information regarding person
Gwilym Elfed Davies	1913-1992	Stanleytown	14/10/2023	Lord and Baron of Penrhys Labour Party Cabinet Minister Advocate for mineworkers' rights Chair of Tylorstown Colliery N.U.M. Lodge
John Haydn Davies	1905-1991	Treherbert	21/10/2023	Headteacher, historian, and conductor of the Treorchy Male Choir
James Egan	1858-1916	Treforest	24/01/2024	A Rorke's Drift defender in the Anglo-Zulu war (22 nd -23 rd January 1879).
Keith Gregory	1936-2004	Pontygwaith	Waiting for date of unveiling	The Rhondda Valley's only apprentice cooper at Fernvale Brewery, Pont-y-Gwaith, in 1957

Ceridwen Brown	1896-1976	Aberdare	08/03/2024	Activist, campaigner, and community organiser
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To be considered for one of the four blue plaques the council fund a year, there is a set of criteria which must be met. The blue plaque officer will check this basic criterion before the application can be sent to the blue plaque committee - criteria outlined in table 1. Once it is determined these have been met, the blue plaque committee will take additional evidence into consideration to determine who has been successful. These applications are decided on twice a year (April and September). The monuments and memorials officer will then have to decide on the wording for the blue plaques, ensure this is translated, design the plaque, liaise with highways to ensure it is placed on the correct building at the correct time and liaise with the applicant to insure there is a successful unveiling event. The blue plaque coordinator will also ensure all relevant councillors are invited to the event.

Blue plaque type	Criteria
Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evident the person has completed work worthy of lasting recognition. - Prominent in a public sphere. - Deceased for at least 10 years. - Strong connection with the building/structure plaque is being placed on.
Place/ location/ building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must be locally or nationally recognise as having special significance worthy of lasting recognition.
Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least 10 years must have lapsed since the event. - Event must be demonstrably important on a local or national scale.

War memorials

The monuments and memorials officer has set up a programme ensuring all war memorials are visited and checked annually. This ensures any issues regarding the structure can be identified early.

Example

The Maerdy war memorial head was removed and required replacing. Due to the urgency in replacing the memorial and that unfortunately, no financial help was available from the war memorials trust the Authority has had to fully fund a replace memorial. A local stone mason is currently working on the memorials to ensure it is placed in Maerdy within the next couple of months.

Due to the work on memorialisation being predominately focussed on military personnel, there has been close collaborative work between the monuments and memorials officer and local veterans. The memorials officer regularly attends veterans meeting to discuss how they can work together to ensure memorials are protected. A group of volunteers from the veteran community, alongside the memorials officer, have begun cleaning the memorials within RCT. The volunteers focus of memorials where inscriptions have been obscured by mould. The volunteers use soft cleaning techniques to ensure there is no damage to the memorial. They also sand/ paint any metal railings and weed the area surrounding the memorial. For more technical issues, the memorial officer liaises with the trees department to cut back trees surrounding memorials and the highways department to repoint the area and replace slabs. It was during one of the cleaning sessions it was noticed the railings from Ynyshir cenotaph had been damaged. The memorials officer liaised with the highways department and replaced the railings with funding from the war memorials funding.

The primary focus of the monuments and memorials officer, regarding war memorials, is the war memorial digitisation project. This was launched in November 2023 with the aim to digitise all war memorials within RCT and provide each person with a base line level of information. This project is an extremely successful initiative with where there are almost 200 volunteers taking part. These volunteers range from school year groups to WI groups, and individuals. The role of the monuments and memorials officer is to project manage and fact check all the research. Two regular research groups have been set up in local libraries, school visits including object handling, and a guest speaker from the women's peace petition has been arranged for the volunteers.

Young archaeologist club

A monthly, free, archaeology club is run by the monuments and memorials officer. This club had been partly subsidised by the council of British archaeology, to ensure the club is free for participants. The club is open for participants aged 5-15 and each session focusses on a different archaeological theme each month. During the session participants will then complete a complimentary craft to take home. There are currently 15 participants who attend the club.

3.5 Education projects delivered at Rhondda Heritage Park Museum

Lead- Kathrin Lewis

A range of educational workshops are delivered by the Heritage team. The new Curriculum for Wales provides a real opportunity for both RHP and the Heritage team to significantly increase schools' engagement as the new curriculum is adopted within schools.

Range of school's workshops and loan box scheme.

List of school workshops & loan boxes

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. A Head for Heights | 11. Victorian Household |
| 2. Coal - A Titanic Story | 12. Victorian Schools |
| 3. Coal Scientists | 13. Meet the Romans |
| 4. Gallery Worksheet | 14. Tudor's |
| 5. Making a Miners' Helmet | 15. WWI |
| 6. Mrs Thomas' Washday | 16. WWII |
| 7. Rhondda Landscapes | 17. Mr Thomas' Day |
| 8. Rhondda Portraits | 18. Women's' Voices |
| 9. Tramroad Walk | 19. Paul Robeson |
| 10. Victorian Toys | |

'Pwll Back Cwm Rhondda: Virtual Interactive Coal Mine'.

Funded via a successful Heritage Lottery Fund application (£50,000) the first educational virtual reality mining experience in the UK. The VR mine consists of a valley vista, a lamp room, and an outside courtyard area. The drift mine itself

consists of over 200 meters of tunnels, which includes an interactive coalface, two horse stables, and five short educational films.

<https://www.visionfountain.com/virtualengagement-3d-vr/>

Project outcomes included:

- Educational materials- the VR Equipment is now offered to schools as a loan following a site visit to RHPM.

Technology and heritage engagement

Richard P Jones of Vision Fountain.

In our commitment to modernizing education and aligning with the evolving priorities of the Welsh curriculum, we embarked on a multifaceted approach to integrate virtual reality (VR) and 3D modelling into educational settings whilst collaborating with museums (namely Rhondda Heritage Park and Amgueddfa Cymru). Our initial extension and outreach efforts saw us bring VR experiences to various educational settings, including Zen Fest, local primary schools, youth groups, and additional learning needs (ALN) environments, as well as libraries in the valleys. Approximately 700 children were able to engage with virtual reality, with overwhelmingly positive feedback indicating its popularity among young people.

Building upon these outreach endeavours, our subsequent pilot program, in collaboration with RHS funded by GEM (Group for Education in Museums), further explored the potential of VR and 3D modelling in education. Engaging 40 young learners from year groups five and six, alongside five teachers, our program centered on Welsh paleontological history, emphasizing the concepts of "place" (cynefin) and the digital competency framework (Cymhwysedd digidol).

Through the "Welsh Fossil Library," students had the unique opportunity to immerse themselves in high-resolution 3D scans of Welsh fossils using Oculus Quest 2 headsets. Despite challenges such as age-related restrictions for VR usage and varying levels of technological familiarity among teaching staff, the program yielded promising results, highlighting the potential of XR technologies in enhancing learning outcomes.

However, alongside the successes emerged challenges and considerations. While VR offers an immersive and highly engaging educational tool, questions arise regarding its effectiveness compared to traditional teaching methods.

Moreover, there is a clear need to bolster digital competency among teachers and museum staff to fully leverage gaming technology and XR in education. Technical and operational challenges, such as managing VR headsets and ensuring software updates, underscore the importance of collaboration with third-party organizations to facilitate smooth operation. This could be overcome with an increase in capacity specifically with regard to provision and understanding of XR tech systems within schools and museum staff.

Looking ahead, there is a pressing need for further exploration of XR integration in education and the cultural sector, particularly to attract new and younger audiences. An expert in the field of XR on returning from Scotland estimated Wales to already be five years behind. We have found, almost universally, that the young love this technology and love to engage with it. Despite logistical constraints and funding challenges, we remain optimistic about the transformative potential of XR and virtual engagement in enriching educational experiences and fostering a deeper connection with our cultural heritage. Furthermore, virtual engagement offers huge potential for those who are geographically or physically isolated to engage with their culture. As we navigate the digital revolution, seizing these opportunities is paramount in addressing societal challenges and ensuring inclusive access to knowledge and learning. - ends

Vision Fountain have collaborated with Rhondda Heritage Services (RHS) on several Virtual Reality community-based projects.

See supporting documents - GEM Cymru Learning Support Grant funded project.

3.6 Heritage Strategy

The Heritage Services, working in collaboration with colleagues from the Libraries Services, have been successful in their application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund that will contribute towards the development of Heritage based activities across RCTCBC. The total project cost is approximately £250,000 and will look at the theme of Altered Images – How views of the past change over time and how understanding the past can challenge our assumptions about where we come from and how our communities developed.

A key 'Project Purpose' is the development of a formalised heritage strategy that will build upon both existing and new partnerships within the heritage and cultural sectors (£37,000).

The Heritage Service are currently in the process of creating a new Heritage Strategy.

Heritage strategy engagement

- Snap survey One (June- August 2023) – 87 responses. (See attached)
- Snap survey two (November – February) – 420 responses. (See attached)
- 'Bagsy: Between the Lines' Heritage and art sessions at Cynon Valley Museum, Rhondda Heritage Park Museum and Calon Taf Pontypridd.
- Craft of Arts sessions at Rhondda Heritage Park Museum. X 3
- Vision Fountain VR Schools and YEPS engagement sessions (See attached)

With several sessions still to run, over 700 residents with ages ranging from 10-94 years old have offered their opinions concerning the future of heritage in RCT.

3.7 Inclusive heritage

Building on our previous projects we strive to work with and represent all sections of our community.

We're collaborating with Myya Helm, Cardiff University Postgraduate Researcher, 2022 British Marshall Scholar. Who is currently creating a database of Black colliers who worked across South Wales from 1861-1980. This database forms part of her comparative PhD research "Beneath the Surface: A Case Study on Migration, Labour, and the Legacy of Black Coal Miners in West Virginia and South Wales,"

which explores the untold stories of Black workers in two areas rich with coal mining heritage.

Her objectives are,

- to investigate the historical and socio-economic factors influencing the migration of Black coal miners.
- to analyse the working conditions, labour dynamics, and community life of Black coal miners.
- And to understand the lasting impact and enduring legacy of Black coal miners on local histories and cultural memory.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (PROW)

4 MARCH 2024

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT, IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNCILLOR
MARK NORRIS

AUTHOR: Jason Bragg

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on Public Rights of Way work within the County Borough.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise the information contained in the report; and,
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise specific areas of Public Rights of Way work.

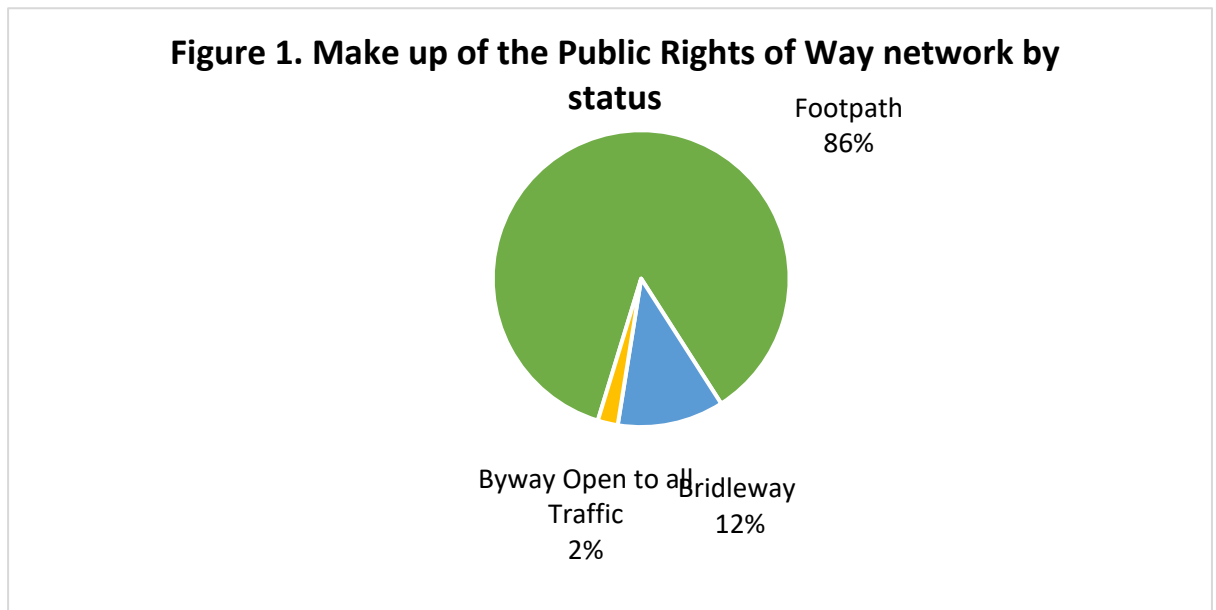
3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A Public Right of Way (PRoW) is a specific route registered on the Definitive Map and Statement under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. It is a path or way over which the public have the right to pass and re-pass.

3.2 There are three different statuses of PRow present in the County Borough:

- Public footpaths that are for pedestrians only.
- Public bridleways that are for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists.
- Byways open to all traffic (BOAT) that can be used by pedestrians, horse riders, cyclists and motor vehicles (but they must be taxed, insured, have a MoT and used by a licensed driver)

3.3 The PRow network looked after by the Council consists of 758 kilometres of PRow, and approximately 86% of that is public footpath.

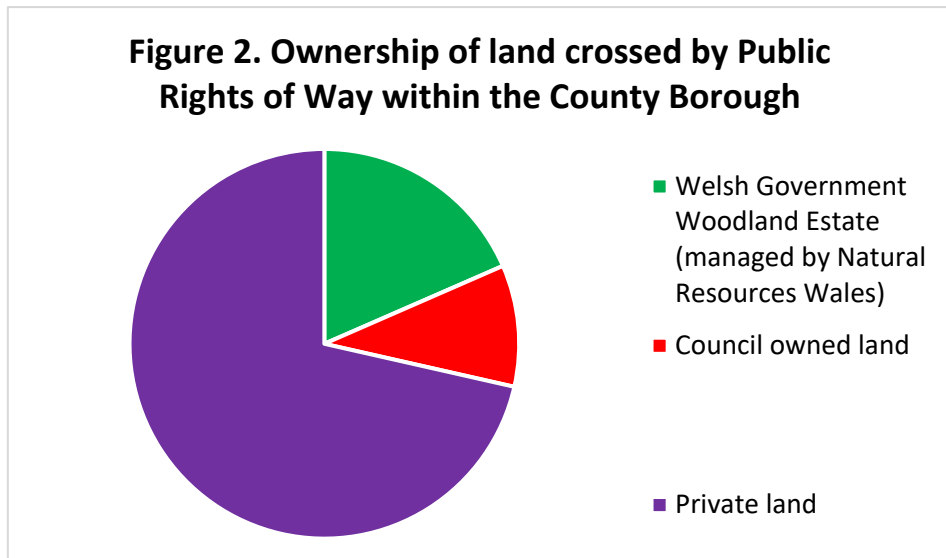


3.4 There are number of permissive paths in County Borough that are not PRow, but instead a path (which are for walkers, horse riders, cyclists, or any combination) whose use by the public is allowed by the landowner.

3.5 The Council's interactive map shows PRow recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement, in addition to any legal authorised changes to Public Rights of Way. It is available for the public to view online ([RCT CBC Maps](#)). It is intended to be used only for leisure purposes and is not suitable for checking the legality of PRow lines.

3.6 It is worth noting that a significant proportion of PRow cross privately-owned land and that both land owners and occupiers and the Council have a shared statutory responsibility to maintain Public Rights of Way as open, accessible, and safe for public use.

Figure 2. Ownership of land crossed by Public Rights of Way within the County Borough



- 3.7 PRow are a valuable public resource giving people access to the countryside, parks, open space, local shops. The popularity of the path network and its importance for physical and mental health was highlighted during the Council's consultation on the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan in 2018, and more recently, during the COVID pandemic where we saw a huge increase in use.

OUT & ABOUT 2': THE RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP)

- 3.8 The Council's ROWIP is a 10-year strategic document that sets out how the Council intends to work with others to help manage and improve the PRow network to make it more useful for the public. The current ROWIP, 'Out & About 2' has been drawn up in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and takes account of guidance published by the Welsh Government. It was adopted by the Council in April 2019.

- 3.9 Monitoring meetings of the ROWIP are held periodically to report on the progress towards the objectives under the Statement of Action (section 5 of the ROWIP) and to consider the detail of the annual Delivery Plan.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY MAINTENANCE & MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- 3.10 In 2010, the Council commissioned Exegesis, a spatial data management company, to create a Countryside and Access Management System (CAMS) for the Council. CAMS is a complete database and map management system for PRow. As part of the project, the company undertook a full condition survey of the PRow network and produced a digital working copy of the Definitive Map. CAMS holds detailed path inventories, condition survey data, a record of legal changes, a record of maintenance issues, and it is used to generate practical work programmes. CAMS has been used to manage and maintain the PRow network since 2011 to help the Council fulfil its statutory obligations.

- 3.11 CAMS has become an increasing integral system in managing all remits of PRow work, in turn helping improve the accuracy of PRow data, the

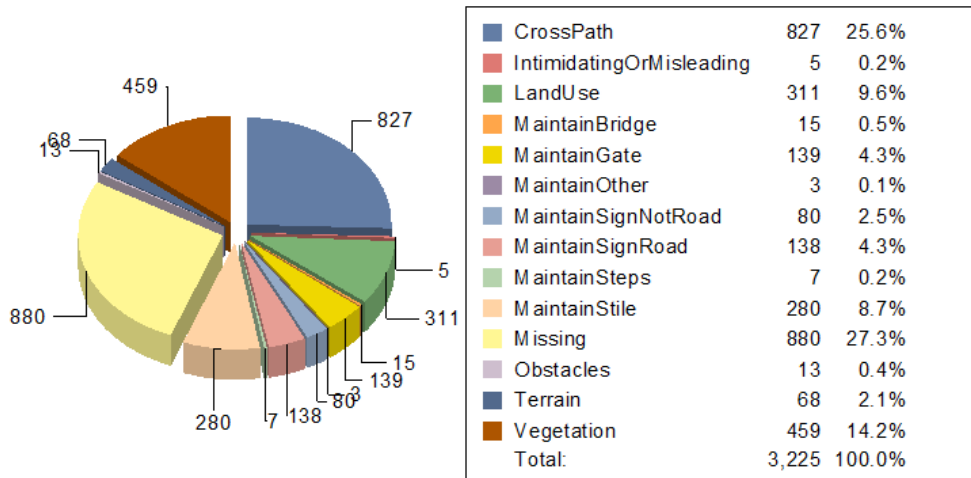
management and maintenance of the PRow network, to target improvements and resources, and to monitor progress.

- 3.12 The size of the PRow network in RCT is vast and significant resources would be required to keep up to date with all maintenance and enforcement issues. As such, there is currently a backlog of cases which are yet to be investigated and/or resolved. We have limited data on the usage and current condition of the full network and as such we rely on reports from the public, user groups and community councils and the findings from Officer investigations to develop practical work programmes which are then prioritised based on Health & Safety, public interest and benefit.
- 3.13 As can be seen from the data, a large proportion of obstructions relate to 'cross-path' and 'land use' issues. Many of these will be substantial (i.e. of considerable size, importance or worth and requiring major engineering works to remove or to reinstate public passage) and longstanding. In such a case, the land owner or occupier will have the opportunity to apply for the path to be diverted satisfactorily instead.
- 3.14 Many PRow cross privately-owned land, which can complicate maintenance as the ranger team and our contractors frequently need to arrange site access (to a potentially remote location) with a land owner or occupier in order to carry out essential maintenance or improvement works to a PRow. However, over the years, the Ranger Team has built longstanding relationships with many landowners and occupiers. Most works carried out on privately-owned land often requires landowner consent and is often the outcome of either enforcement action or the product of negotiations with landowners, which can be a timely process.
- 3.15 The Council continues to operate maintenance agreements with three community councils (Llanharan, Llantrisant and Pontyclun) to assist with the maintenance of footpaths in their areas. Additionally, the Council operates a delegated agreement with the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority relating to our Public Rights of Way within the Park Authority area. The Park Authority is responsible for delivery of all Public Rights of Way functions until the agreement is terminated by either authority.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION/UPDATES

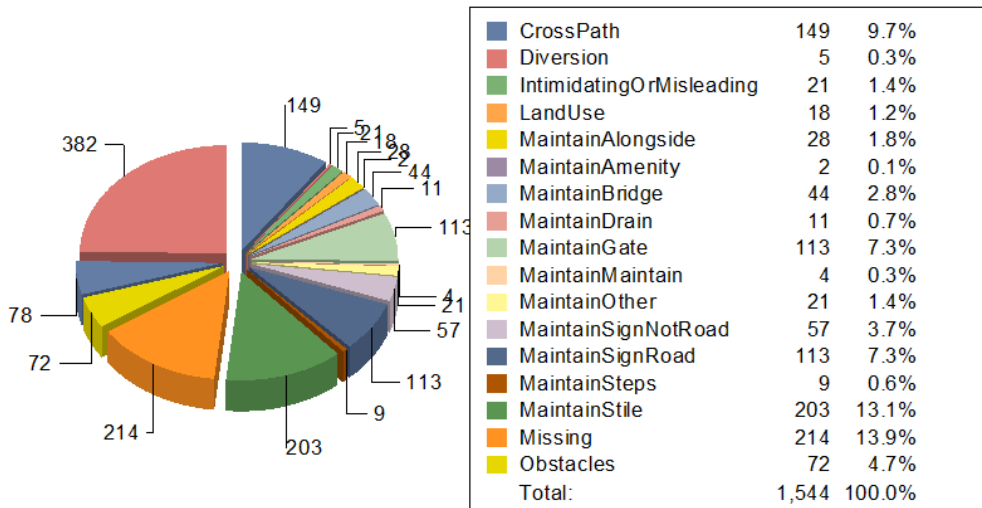
- 4.1 The Countryside Section has continued to invest in CAMS and receives external technical support to maintain and update it.
- 4.2 During the full condition survey carried out in 2010/11, 3225 issues were picked up and recorded on CAMS.

Figure 3. Issues type across the PRow network recorded from the full condition survey



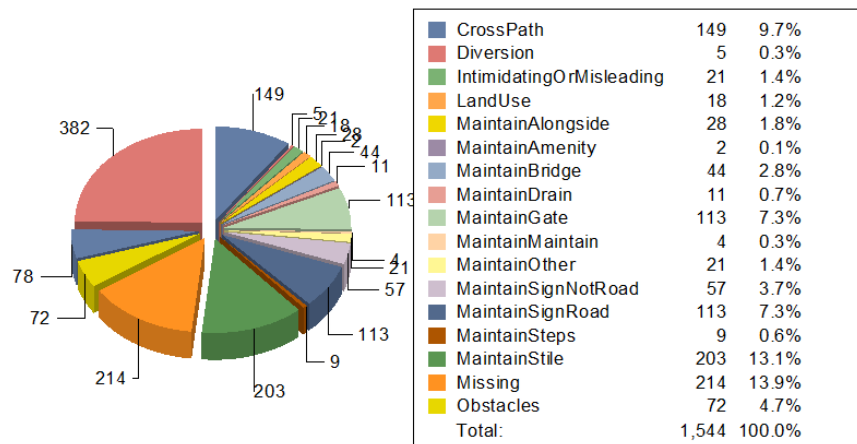
4.3 Since the completion of the survey in the summer of 2011, a further 1315 issues have been logged as of 01 January 2024.

Figure 4. Issues type across the PRow network added post survey

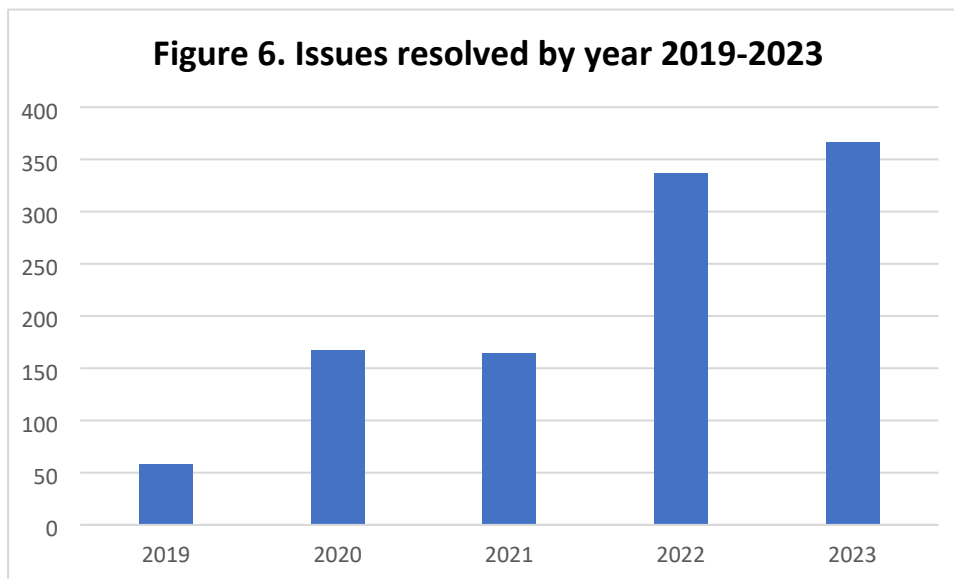


4.4 A total of 1,544 issues have been 'resolved' as of 01 January 2024.

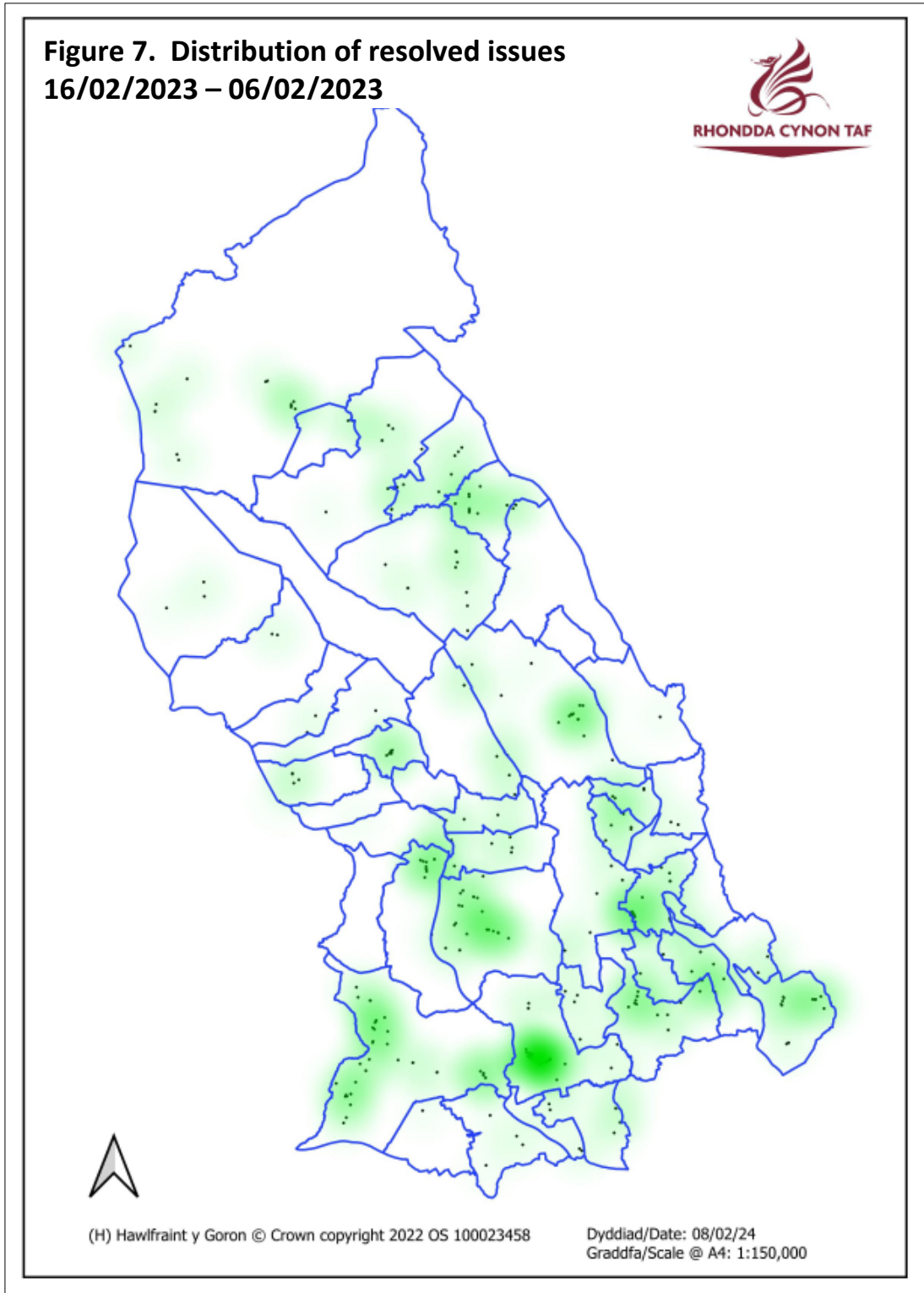
Figure 5. Resolved issues type across the PRow Network



4.5 A total of 366 CAMS issues were resolved in 2023, more than any previous year.



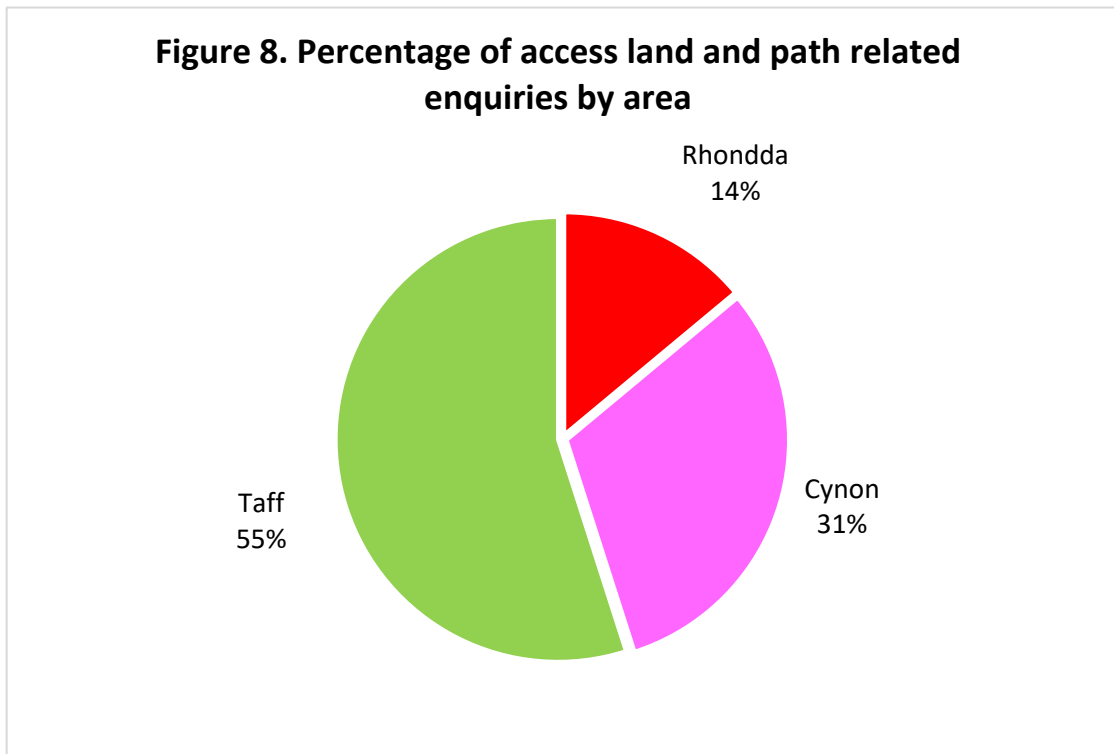
4.6 The heat map below (Figure 7) shows the geographic distribution of CAMS issues which were resolved between 16 February 2023 (the date of the previous Scrutiny Committee) and 06 February 2023.



VOLUME OF CUSTMER ENQUIRIES

4.7 In 2023, the Countryside Section investigated 389 customer enquiries. 293 related to PRow, alleged rights of way or access land and 56 related to permissive paths. (The figure stated only includes enquiries logged as CRMs on the Council’s Customer Services management system.)

- 4.8 Over half of all access land and path related enquiries were generated from the Taf Ely area of RCT.



TEMPORARY TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

- 4.9 A Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) is a legal process used to implement temporary restrictions e.g. closure to a road, footway or a PRow in the interests of public safety. TTROs can be in place for one day up to 6 months for PRow, and extensions can be sought from Welsh Government. Also, the Council has the power to close a road, footway or a PRow with immediate effect for up to 5 or 21 days by way of Emergency Notice.
- 4.10 There are currently 21 closures in operation on the PRow network. In 2023, 15 TTROs and 6 emergency closures were processed, and 37 TTRO extensions were requested from Welsh Government.
- 4.11 10 closures alone are in connection with major infrastructure schemes, which has resulting in major disruption to the PRow network. Key community links affected by the A465 Heads of the Valleys widening works includes the Cynon Trail (using Footpaths 3 Penywaun and 23 Hirwaun) which is a designated Active Travel Route and part of the National Cycle Network. Significant railway infrastructure upgrades to transform the Core Valley Lines, such as works to install overhead line equipment and modify level crossings and bridges, has impacted to varying degrees, all PRow interactions with the railway.
- 4.12 Approval is being sought to increase the charge to applicants for processing TTRO applications to ensure the Council recovers advertisement costs and other costs associated with making of a TTRO.

DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS

- 4.13 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 ('WCA 81') places a duty on the Council to keep the Definitive Map and Statement (DMS) under continuous review and to modify the records by the making of Definitive Map Modification orders (DMMOs).
- 4.14 A DMMO may be applied for by any person wishing to claim a new PRoW, re-classify or delete an existing one. The Council maintains a register of duly made DMMO applications and deals with them in accordance with the Council's adopted Policy Guidelines for determining claims under section 53 of the Wildlife Countryside Act 1981. However, the duty to make a DMMO is sometimes not triggered by an application but is triggered by the discovery of evidence which when considered with all other available relevant evidence shows that an Order should be made.
- 4.15 There are currently 5 on-going DMMO cases. A summary of the live cases is shown in the tables below. The DMMO application cases have been prioritised under the adopted Policy Guidelines.

Figure 9. DMMO application cases

Reference	Location	Intended Effect	Status
A763/3/54	Pond Place/Morgan Row to Bleanant-y-groes Road, Cwmbach	PRoW addition	Order made - Awaiting PEDW decision
A763/3/55	St John's Street, Aberdare	PRoW addition	Decision yet to be made
A763/3/56	Footpath 21 Aberdare/The to Dare Valley Country Park	PRoW addition	Investigation on-going

Figure 10. Non-application DMMO cases

Reference	Location	Intended Effect	Status
PON/111	Footpath 111 Pontypridd	PRoW addition	Decided - Order to be made
ANT/341	Footpath 341 Llantrisant	PRoW deletion (Part)	Decided - Order to be made

PUBLIC PATH ORDERS

- 4.16 The Council has discretionary powers to permanently divert or stop up Public Rights of Way (footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways other than byways open to all traffic) by a legal process known as a Public Path Order.
- 4.17 PPOs for planning purposes are made under the provision of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. PPOs for any other purpose are made under the provisions of the Highways Act 1980.
- 4.18 Upon receipt of a complete application, the Council will consult with key stakeholders to gauge opinion on the proposal.
- 4.19 Before deciding to make an Order, the Council must be satisfied that the legal tests relevant to the particular type of Order can be satisfied. If an Order is made and objections are received and not withdrawn, the Council may decide to refer it to Planning and Environment Decision Wales for a final decision.
- 4.20 A summary of the current PPO cases is shown in the table below. This includes proposals from Transport for Wales/Amey Infrastructure Wales to stop up or divert 3 footpath level crossings along the Core Valley Lines due to the increased safety risks associated with the railway infrastructure upgrades /electrification.

Figure 10. PPO cases

Path Code	Intended Effect	Reason	Status
Footpath 94 Caerphilly (Portabello Level Crossing - CVL)	Railway Crossing Extinguishment	In the interests of the safety of those using or likely to use the crossing due to the electrification of the Core Valley Lines.	Opposed Order confirmed by PEDW.
Footpath 27 P- S-M	Diversion	In the interests of the landowner	Order confirmed
Footpath 21 Llanharan	Diversion	Residential Development	Order confirmed
Footpath 314 Llantrisant	Diversion	Residential development	Order made
Footpath 20 Llanharan (Trenos Level Crossing - South Wales Main Line)	Railway Crossing Diversion onto new multi-user bridge	In the interests of the safety of those using or likely to use the crossing	Decided – Order to be made
Footpath 48 Llantwit Fardre	Extinguishment (Part)	Residential Development	Decided – Order to be made

Footpath 22 Mountain Ash (Glenboi Level Crossing - CVL)	Railway Diversion Order onto new footbridge	In the interests of the safety of those using or likely to use the crossing due to the electrification of the Core Valley Lines.	Decided – Order to be made
Footpath 21 Mountain Ash (Bruce's Upper Level - CVL)	Railway Diversion Order onto new footbridge	In the interests of the safety of those using or likely to use the crossing due to the electrification of the Core Valley Lines.	Decision yet to be made
Footpath 9 Tylorstown	Diversion	Development – Tylorstown Tip Remediation	Decision yet to be made
Footpath 17 Llanharan	Extinguishment (Part)	No longer needed for public use	Decision yet to be made
Footpath 47 Pontypridd	Extinguishment (Part)	No longer needed for public use	Commence pre- order consultation
Footpath 223 Llantrisant	Diversion	Development	Applicant amending proposal

- 4.21 Consideration is being given to increase the charge to applicants, but this time in respect of PPO applications, to ensure the Council recovers advertisement costs and other costs related to the making of PPOs.

RHONNDA CYNON TAF LOCAL ACCESS FORUM (LAF)

- 4.22 Part I of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) requires the Council to appoint a Local Access Forum to advise the Council, Natural Resources Wales and other bodies about making improvements to public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel in the Council's area. These bodies must, by law, have regard to relevant advice given by the Forum.
- 4.23 Following a recruitment drive in 2022/3, the Forum's sixth term began in March 2023; 5 full meetings of the Forum have taken place since.
- 4.24 The Forum meets at least twice-a-year, and the membership is balanced to reflect the concerns of local farmers and land managers, as well as the interests of recreational users in the countryside.
- 4.25 The Forum assists with the implementation of *'Out & About 2': The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf 2019-2029* and considers a wide range of issues and advises on improvements to public access for open air recreation and enjoyment in the Council's area, including PRow and the right of access to open country and registered common land. The Forum will

consider all forms of access, horse riding, cycling and off-road driving, and not just access on foot. The exact nature of this work is decided upon by the LAF itself, in agreement with the Council.

- 4.26 To date, the Forum's work has been focussed on their Annual Report and compiling a Directory of groups and organisations in the County Borough with the specific aim of improving physical health and wellbeing through outdoor recreation. The Forum will be mobilising to input into the revised Local Development Plan once the consultation on the preferred strategy opens.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY COUNCIL WEBPAGES

- 4.27 The new PRoW webpages have been launched on the Council website. A more user-friendly layout and updated content are intended to make it easier to find advice and information on PRoW and report issues.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY SEARCHES

- 4.28 During 2023, the Countryside Section dealt with 27 commercial search requests which are subject to a professional fee. These are in addition to the search requests processed via the Council's central Local Land Charges search system.

THE GREAT GLAMORGAN WAY PROJECT

- 4.29 Originally set up as the Green Trails project with the support of Welsh Government's Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) Grant funding, the project has been rebranded the Great Glamorgan Way. It was developed by the Vale of Glamorgan in collaboration with Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf with the specific aim of expanding the bridleways of the South-Central Wales Region to create a new regional trail ideal for long distance mountain biking and horse riding. ENRaW funding for the project ended in June 2023 and no comparative alternative sources of funding has been identified to continue the project in County Borough. Nevertheless, a dedicated project team is still employed by the Vale of Glamorgan to roll out and promote the project across the five counties, and the Countryside Section continue to support the project where possible as it is considered a major asset for tourism and outdoor recreation within County Borough.

- 4.30 The new Great Glamorgan Way website has been launched in which it promotes several routes within the County Borough.

MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEME UPDATES

- 4.31 Devil's Bridge replacement carrying Footpath 17 Llantwit Fardre was opened on 09 February 2024.



(Photograph supplied by Transport for Wales/Amey Infrastructure)

- 4.32 Penydarren Trampoad bridge carrying Footpath 35 Aberdare opened in October 2023 following its restoration. A4059 underpass which forms part of the same path was renovated as part of the scheme.



Tuesday, 17 October 2023
Rhondda Cynon Taff



Tuesday, 17 October 2023
Rhondda Cynon Taff

4.33 New multi-user bridge constructed over the new A465 road carrying the Cynon Trail and National Cycle Route 46 using Footpath 23 Hirwaun, opened in April 2023.



(Photograph supplied by Future Valleys Construction)

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENTS

4.34 Examples of paths and sites which have been improved and made more accessible by the Countryside Section can be viewed on the [PRoW](#) webpages.

5.0 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

5.1 The Welsh Government has awarded the Council funding over three years to make access improvements to Public Rights of Way and open access land: £63,241 in 2022/23, £77,639 in 2023/24, and £77,639 in 2024/25.

5.2 An additional one-off £60,000 has been invested in Public Rights of Way infrastructure from Council capital funding. The budget is supporting the main Public Rights of Way revenue.

5.3 £42,000 was granted to the Council as part of the ENRaW grant funded Cwm Taf Nature Network project to make access improvements at specific Countryside Section managed sites before the expiration of the project in June 2023.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 The report is for information purposes as such there are no negative or adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report.

7.0 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

7.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

8.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This report is for information purposes as such a Welsh Language Impact Assessment is not required.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

11.1 LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

11.1. The well-being objectives set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015; the Council's Corporate Plan, and Out & About 2: The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf 2019-2029.

12.0 STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

12.1 The Public Rights of Way network is of strategic importance across the whole of RCT.

13.0 CONCLUSION

13.1 Members scrutinise the contents of the report and agree that further Public Rights of Way updates are provided on an annual basis.