

**COFNOD O BENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO GAN SWYDDOG**  
**RECORD OF KEY OFFICER DELEGATED DECISION**

**Penderfyniad Allweddol | Key Decision** ✓

**PWNC | SUBJECT: A HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF: PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

**DIBEN YR ADRODDIAD | PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:** To seek authority to undertake a public consultation on the Council's Draft Heritage Strategy, as required by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

This report has been prepared to accompany the intended officer decision of the Director Public Health, Protection And Community Services

**PENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO | DELEGATED DECISION:**

To undertake a consultation on the Draft Heritage Strategy via the Council's website and at engagement sessions across the Borough, including at the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2024.

To utilise the feedback from the consultation to inform the final version of the strategy, prior to consideration by Cabinet.



Louise Davies

27th June 2024

**Llofnod y Prif Swyddog**  
Chief Officer Signature

**Enw (priflythrennau)**  
Name (Print Name)

**Dyddiad**  
Date

**Mae'r penderfyniad yn cael ei wneud yn unol ag Adran 15 o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 2000 (Swyddogaethau'r Corff Gweithredol) ac yn y cylch gorchwyl sy wedi'i nodi yn Adran 5 o Ran 3 o Gyfansoddiad y Cyngor.**

The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.

**YMGYNGHORI | CONSULTATION**

*A Crumney*

26<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**LLOFNOD YR AELOD YMGYNGHOROL O'R CABINET**  
CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE

**DYDDIAD | DATE**

**LLOFNOD SWYDDOG YMGYNGHOROL**  
CONSULTEE OFFICER SIGNATURE

**DYDDIAD | DATE**

**WILL THIS DECISION HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE WARD?**  
**A FYDD Y PENDERFYNIAD YMA'N CAEL EFFAITH AR Y WARD?**

**BYDD | YES**      **NA FYDD | NO** ✓

**Any further comments/Need for Local Member to be informed:**  
**Unrhyw sylwadau pellach/Oes angen rhoi gwybod i'r Aelod Lleol?:**

The Heritage Strategy is relevant to the whole of the County Borough.

**RHEOLAU'R WEITHDREFN GALW-I-MEWN | CALL IN PROCEDURE RULES.**

**A YW'R PENDERFYNIAD YN UN BRYN A HEB FOD YN DESTUN PROSES GALW-I-MEWN GAN Y PWYLLGOR TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU?:**

IS THE DECISION DEEMED URGENT AND NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

**YDY | YES      NAC YDY | NO** ✓

**Rheswm dros fod yn fater brys | Reason for Urgency:**

.....

**Os yw'n cael ei ystyried yn fater brys - llofnod y Llywydd, y Dirprwy Llywydd neu Bennaeth y Gwasanaeth Cyflogedig yn cadarnhau cytundeb fod y penderfyniad arfaethedig yn rhesymol yn yr holl amgylchiadau iddo gael ei drin fel mater brys, yn unol â rheol gweithdrefn trosolwg a chraffu 17.2:**

*If deemed urgent* - signature of Presiding Officer or Deputy Presiding Officer or Head of Paid Service confirming agreement that the proposed decision is reasonable in all the circumstances for it being treated as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rule 17.2:

.....  
**(Llywydd | Presiding Officer)      (Dyddiad | Date)**

**DS - Os yw hwn yn benderfyniad sy'n cael ei ail-ystyried yna does dim modd galw'r penderfyniad i mewn a bydd y penderfyniad yn dod i rym o'r dyddiad mae'r penderfyniad wedi'i lofnodi.**

**NB - If this is a reconsidered decision then the decision cannot be Called In and the decision will take effect from the date the decision is signed.**

**DYDDIADAU CYHOEDDI A GWEITHREDU | PUBLICATION & IMPLEMENTATION DATES**

**CYHOEDDI | PUBLICATION**

**Cyhoeddi ar Wefan y Cyngor | Publication on the Council's Website:-** 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**DYDDIAD | DATE**

**GWEITHREDU'R PENDERFYNIAD | IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

**Nodwch: Fydd y penderfyniad hwn ddim yn dod i rym nac yn cael ei weithredu'n llawn nes cyn pen 3 diwrnod gwaith ar ôl ei gyhoeddi. Nod hyn yw ei alluogi i gael ei "Alw i Mewn" yn unol â Rheol 17.1, Rheolau Gweithdrefn Trosolwg a Chraffu.**

**Note:** This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 3 clear working days after its publication to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

**Yn amodol ar y drefn "Galw i Mewn", caiff y penderfyniad ei roi ar waith ar / Subject to Call In the implementation date will be**

3rd July 2024  
**DYDDIAD / DATE**

**WEDI'I GYMERADWYO I'W GYHOEDDI: ✓ | APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION :✓**

**Rhagor o wybodaeth | Further Information:**

Cyfadran   Directorate:	Public Health, Protection & Community Services
Enw'r Person Cyswllt   Contact Name:	Caroline O'Neill and Keith Nicholls
Swydd   Designation:	Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries Head of Leisure, Sports and Parks
Rhif Ffôn   Telephone Number:	07786 523614 07824 496486

# **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION**

**26<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2024**

### **A HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF: PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Author(s): Keith Nicholls, Head of Leisure, Sports and Parks  
Caroline O'Neill, Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek authority to undertake a public consultation on the Council's Draft Heritage Strategy, as required by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To undertake a consultation on the Draft Heritage Strategy via the Council's website and at engagement sessions across the Borough, including at the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2024.
- 2.2. To utilise the feedback from the consultation to inform the final version of the strategy, prior to consideration by Cabinet.

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 As a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Priority Area, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council received a solicited invitation to apply to the NLHF for grant funding towards a project of our selection that would look to rebuild capacity within Rhondda Cynon Taf and the community in relation to heritage. The 'Altered Images' project was developed as a result of this approach and was awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £250,000 for a three-year project in August 2021.
- 3.2 One of the project's key objectives is the development and formalisation of a heritage strategy and creating connections with the sector to gain a fuller understanding of RCT's heritage and those involved in its management. Engaging and involving the public in the development of that strategy is a key expectation.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Following discussions with NLHF, the Rhondda Cynon Taf Heritage Service was appointed to guide the development of a community-led Heritage Strategy and the following key objectives were agreed upon:

- To produce a strategy and action plan which will define a shared vision of Rhondda Cynon Taf's heritage and set out practical, long-term objectives.
- To work in partnership with stakeholders and to support them in using heritage to achieve social, cultural, educational and economic gains.
- To understand what heritage means to the community and what it values.
- To understand the issues surrounding RCT's heritage, its benefits and challenges.
- To promote and raise the profile of RCT's heritage by proposing ideas, e.g. for improved interpretation, events, and the use of social media/technology.
- To complete a mapping exercise of RCT's heritage assets.
- To provide guidance on how to manage and market heritage assets to maximise their community and commercial benefits.
- To propose a framework to guide and monitor the long-term progress of the Heritage Strategy and Action Plan.
- To provide documents in an engaging and readily accessible format that can easily be reviewed and updated by RCTCBC and are compatible with the Council's systems.

## **5. PROGRESS SO FAR**

5.1 In the development of the draft Heritage Strategy, an on-line survey and engagement sessions were held between July 2023 and March 2024 and asked key stakeholders their views of heritage in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The following responses were received:

- Online Survey – 520 responses received.
- Engagement Sessions – 14 sessions held and 369 interactions (248 adults and 121 children and young people).

5.2 The vision, as set out in the Heritage Strategy, is to:

“To celebrate and value the rich heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf by showcasing our cultural legacy, recognising the people and stories that shape our history and preserving our buildings, collections and physical assets for the present and future generations.”

5.3 Four strategic priorities have been identified with target outcomes and identified actions that will formulate the annual Implementation Plan:

- Safeguarding - ensuring that we adopt the highest standards of conservation in our: collection management; preserving and protecting our built environment; and documenting our living history for posterity.
- Advocacy - communicating the vital importance of our heritage to all.
- Knowledge - researching the status of our heritage and identifying those areas in decline or in imminent danger of being lost.

- Engagement - actively raising awareness and interest in our heritage with communities and visitors, creating opportunities to get involved.

5.4 The draft Heritage Strategy is available at Appendix 1 for consideration.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and the Heritage Strategy has a neutral or positive impact on the protected characteristics; therefore, a full assessment is not required at this time.

## **7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed and the Heritage Strategy has a neutral or positive impact on the language.

## **8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

8.1 There has been public involvement in the development of the Draft Strategy, as set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report. The views of respondents to a public consultation on this Draft will be considered in preparation of the Final Strategy.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to the proposal in this report.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

10.1 There are no legal implications aligned to the proposal in this report.

## **11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

11.1 A Heritage Strategy for the Borough supports the delivery of the new Corporate Plan 'Working with our Communities', particularly the Culture, Heritage and Welsh Language Wellbeing Objective, ensuring that we recognise and celebrate our past, present and future.

11.2 Furthermore, the Heritage Strategy will contribute to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act's seven national wellbeing goals, particularly that of a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

11.3 Developing a strategy for heritage is consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:

- Long-term – providing volunteering, learning and heritage engagement opportunities that look to rebuild capacity within Rhondda Cynon Taf and the community in relation to heritage.



- Prevention – by understanding our heritage, sense of place and belonging, alongside our community’s knowledge, understanding and needs, we can provide engagement, participation and volunteering opportunities that address the early intervention and prevention agenda.
- Integrated – through community engagement work with key partners and contributing more effectively to a range of local, regional and national strategic priorities in an integrated and coherent way.
- Collaboration – through creating and working with our communities and heritage professionals with whom we can work in partnership to achieve our goals.
- Involvement – developing opportunities to learn, record, understand and experience the rich heritage of the Borough.

**12. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS (please specify)**

12.1 The Heritage Strategy is relevant to the whole of the County Borough.

**13. CONCLUSION**

13.1 This report provides information on the development of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Heritage Strategy, led by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council’s Heritage Service, supported by the ‘Altered Images’ project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grant and managed by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council’s Library Service.

13.2 The Rhondda Cynon Taf Heritage Strategy will identify and celebrate the importance of RCT’s heritage; provide strategies to protect and enhance it; consider how best to interpret it for the benefit of the community, visitors and the local economy; and produce an Implementation Action Plan to realise its ambitions alongside strategic partners and stakeholders. The views of respondents to a public consultation on the Draft Strategy will shape the final document to be presented to Cabinet in due course.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**A DRAFT HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF: PUBLIC  
CONSULTATION**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**26<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2024**

**Background Papers:**

None

**Officer to contact:**

Keith Nicholls  
Caroline O'Neill

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee:**

Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH  
COUNCIL  
HERITAGE STRATEGY  
2024-2030

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## **Our Vision:**

“To celebrate and value the rich heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf by showcasing our cultural legacy, recognising the people and stories that shape our history and preserving our buildings, collections and physical assets for the present and future generations.”

# Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf is a destination of rich cultural and historic heritage whose increased visibility and appeal is the overriding aim of this strategy. Our heritage shapes our identity and fosters a sense of community.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's Corporate Plan 'Working with our Communities 2024-30', sets out the Council's Vision that:

"All people, communities, and businesses can grow and live in a healthy, green, safe, vibrant, and inclusive County Borough where they can achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives and work, both now and in the future".

Heritage and culture are recognised as one of the four Wellbeing Objectives of the Corporate Plan, acknowledging that:

- Culture and heritage are vibrant, and difference is celebrated in strong communities that enhance well-being.
- We celebrate and preserve the cultural, industrial and sporting heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

This is an ambitious strategy that will require collaboration, innovation and involvement from our communities, residents and visitors, private business and third sector organisations. Issues related to accessibility, inclusion, and diversity are at forefront of this strategy as we continue to seek out new ways to accommodate people with different needs. A stronger, more robust approach to inclusion will require a comprehensive reassessment of the ways our tangible and intangible heritage can be made accessible to all, regardless of disability, identity, or background.

This strategy represents our shared vision for positive management, conservation and promotion of the Council's heritage and sets out how our heritage can positively contribute to the development of vibrant and sustainable communities across Rhondda Cynon

Taf. By creating and supporting effective partnerships and resilient communities, we aim to sustain and protect our heritage, and work together to promote understanding and knowledge of it through education and involvement activities. The Strategy aims to embrace all aspects of the Council's heritage including natural, built, industrial, cultural, sporting and community elements, and encourage wider participation in heritage across the borough.

The new Heritage Strategy is being developed in the year that Rhondda Cynon Taf hosts the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol, Europe's largest and oldest touring cultural festival. The Eisteddfod Genedlaethol is a unique part of Wales' and RCT's heritage, where the first modern-day Eisteddfod was held in 1861. The borough has much to offer its residents and visitors alike, and the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol affords us the opportunity to showcase our people and places – key aspects of our heritage – and use its legacy to inspire engagement and support the achievement of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy ambitions.

In creating the Heritage strategy, Rhondda Cynon Taf adopted a place-based and people-centred approach. The strategy is informed by an engagement process with stakeholder groups and residents:

- Online Survey from July 2023 to March 2024
- 'Our Heritage' engagement sessions at locations across RCT
- Stakeholder group engagement meetings

The process focused on asking the question: 'What is the heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf?', seeking to identify what the term 'heritage' means, and how we collectively define and identify tangible and intangible heritage as sets.

This strategy adopts a broad definition of heritage, to include:

- built environment (including our historic buildings and monuments).
- artefacts and materials (from museums and archival collections to online resources).
- and intangible heritage (local stories, people, traditions and practices).



Heritage can provide a historical perspective and offers us an understanding of who we are today and our place in the world. The strategy aims to not just provide us with a context as to where we came from, but to also stimulate our future hopes and aspirations, and to reinforce our pride in place. People and communities, stories and traditions, culture and Welsh language, are our heritage.

The strategy recognises how our historic built environment is a powerful resource for economic development, regeneration, supporting business and enterprise, tourism, and attracting people to live, work, visit and invest in the borough. This strategy therefore has strong links to the Council's Tourism Strategy, published in September 2021, that sets out to establish RCT as:

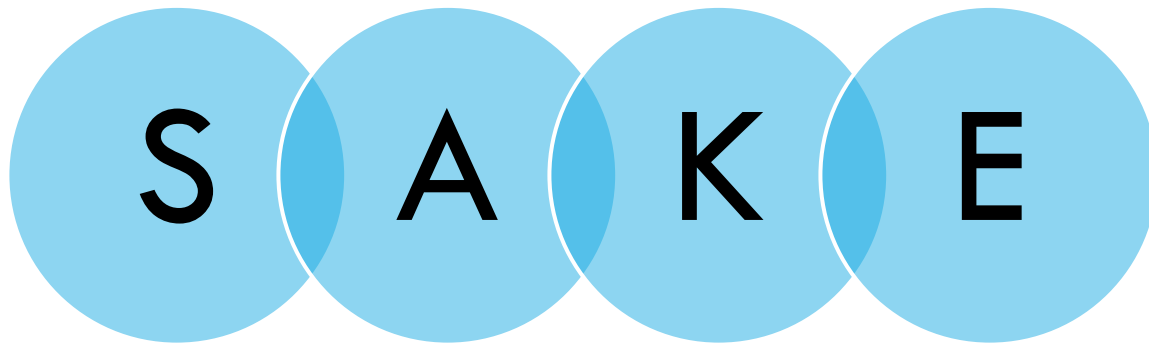
**“The premier destination in the UK for “experience” based visits and vacations showcasing our first-class landscape, culture and heritage.”**

The Heritage Strategy 2025-2030 also aligns with our Corporate Plan 2024-2030. In doing so, it sets out actions that seek to ensure the sustainable conservation and management of our heritage assets, as well as objectives that can add value to the well-being of our communities.

We have identified four strategic priorities that will support achievement of our Heritage Strategy vision over the next 5 years:



## Our Strategic Aims





**S**afeguarding – to ensure we adopt the highest standards of conservation in our collection management; and work in partnership to preserve and protect our built historic environment; and document our living history for posterity.



**A**dvocacy – to champion our role as custodians of heritage and communicate the vital importance of our heritage to all.



**K**nowledge – to promote education and understanding of our heritage, encourage involvement in activities and research about our heritage.



**E**ngagement – to work with residents, visitors, communities and partners to create opportunities to get involved with heritage, to promote health and wellbeing and protection of the built historic environment.

# Strategic Aim

**Safeguarding:** to ensure we adopt the highest standards of conservation in our collection management; and work in partnership to preserve and protect our built historic environment; and document our living history for posterity.

Preserving our physical assets relates both to conservation and preservation. All assets, including cultural and industrial heritage, are a part of telling the story of Rhondda Cynon Taf and its people, and define the character and identity of the borough.

In safeguarding our heritage, we will ensure we engage in meaningful intergenerational engagement, positive steps to preserve collective memory and pass down skills; action to safeguard knowledge and intangible culture; community development; and the principles of financial and environmental sustainability. There are substantial policies, strategies, and legislation in place at national and local levels in order to protect tangible and intangible heritage assets (see Appendix 1).

However, addressing '*Heritage at risk*' in RCT remains a fundamental part of the strategy and will continue shape the creation and implementation of future Safeguarding Action Plans.

## Outcomes:

- The creation of a risk register that will chart our achievements, challenges and flexible approach to our priorities.
- The identification of problems and their causes, and how to manage them through positive action where possible or enforcement measures where necessary.
- Assess the relationship between a building's use, ownership and condition, and how we can balance these elements in order can be managed to give provide a sustainable future.
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of owners, private, third sector the Welsh Government or and the Authority's'.
- Coordinate the Authority's approach to Listed Buildings at Risk in terms of conservation, planning, housing, regeneration and development.

- It is vital that we engage our communities in making decisions that affect our heritage assets; advising owners, occupiers and agents, as well as local communities and third sector organisations, that have a vital role in caring for listed buildings at risk.

**Safeguarding Action Plan 2025-2030**

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
Identify funding to audit, rationalise and digitise RCT Council Collections.	Years 3
Develop a policy for Contemporary Collections e.g. Covid-19	Year 1
Working with our elected members and communities to develop criteria to determine the priority and status of our Council-owned listed building heritage sites.	Years 1
Undertake condition surveys on Council-owned listed buildings and develop a plan for development.	Year 3
Identify funding to safeguard preservation of key heritage sites for future generations, including consideration of Council funding were required to match external applications.	Years 5
Support community groups and responsible organisations to safeguard non-Council owned 'at risk' memorial assets.	Years 5

# Strategic Aim

**Advocacy:** to champion our role as custodians of heritage and communicate the vital importance of our heritage to all.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has nationally recognised award-winning parks and accredited museums, designated conservation areas, listed buildings, monuments and a varied and rich heritage; all of which are a strong advocacy asset highlighting the rich heritage of our borough. **See Appendix 1: Heritage Assets** In the context of the Corporate Plan and this Heritage Strategy, establishing strong advocacy offers three central benefits:

- Civic pride and wellbeing – making RCT a better place to live, work and visit.
- Economic regeneration – growing our local economy through tourism and inward investment.
- Conservation – engaging our communities in the preservation and protection of our heritage.

Beyond our physical landscape, RCT also has deeply held traditions and a wealth of collections and stories that describe the lived experience of people who are part of our heritage. This new strategy signifies our collective ambition to reinvigorate heritage provision across the authority, representing a commitment to collaboration, and transforming people and place through embedding heritage at the heart of place-making and people centred approaches to community development. Hosting the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2024 at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park in Pontypridd highlights this, attracting up to 170,000 visitors to the Maes and over 200 stalls, it provides ample opportunities for our heritage to be appreciated.

Ynysangharad War Memorial Park's Canolfan Calon Taf, a heritage and educational centre generously funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Welsh Government Transforming Towns, and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, has proved to be a vibrant hub of activity and learning. Heritage takes centre stage with regular history talks covering fascinating topics like the Tunnellers of Pontypridd, Ynysangharad Fields, and Pontypridd in the 1960s. The centre provides numerous courses and activities. An example

of the levels of engagement, the 'poppy crafting project' witnessed the collaboration of schools and the wider community come together to create 100 ceramic poppies that were displayed for Remembrance Sunday.

Led by a team of dedicated volunteers, the Friends of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park gardening enthusiasts, benefit from classes and workshops in the greenhouse and garden area. 'The Friends' have also facilitated a series of planting activities for children and cooking demonstrations. In order to enrich visitors' experiences, interpretation boards have been installed throughout the park, offering insights into landmarks such as The National Lido of Wales, Evan James & James James, the Bandstand, the Sunken Garden, and the park's sporting history as well as its' deep connections to Memorialisation.

Additionally, Calon Taf has hosted numerous heritage pop-up shops where park visitors are encouraged to share their memories and photographs of the park. These contributions have significantly informed and enriched our interpretative displays around the park.

### **Altered Images**

The development of the Altered Images project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, has provided us with a template for future public engagement. Challenging ideas about our heritage, raising awareness of and exploring the tangible and intangible, it has captured our history through working with communities and partners. The project has engaged with people of all ages and abilities on an array of creative, innovative, and educational heritage-themed activities, including workshops, training sessions, and performance/interpretation opportunities, which engaged with diverse audiences and contributed to improving the health and wellbeing of participants. With a focus on memorials and statues, and stories, myths and legends, the project worked with hundreds of local people to research and interpret our area's heritage and history.

Project volunteers took thousands of photographs to produce an up-to-date visual record of RCT's statues, memorials, and monuments. Volunteers also conducted interviews with local people and recorded the stories and reminiscences of members of our communities to create an oral history archive which captures the social history of RCT. All their work will feature on the new 'RCT Our Heritage' website, launching in January 2025, which will showcase and celebrate the rich and diverse culture, heritage, and history of RCT.

## Outcomes:

- Improve the public perception of, and engagement with, our shared heritage.
- Identified existing and new opportunities for projects and provision that improves access to and engagement with our heritage.
- A greater focus on community Heritage, collaboration and coproduction. Working with private, third sector heritage groups, historical societies, social/health-facing activities, and the performative arts, among others, to encourage a “sense of place”.
- Bringing our communities together through a shared interest in, and engagement with, our local heritage for local benefit.

## Advocacy Action Plan 2025-2030

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
Establish a database that records and identities intangible and tangible heritage across RCT	Years 3
Deliver actions that increase accessibility to Council managed heritage across RCT for all sectors of the community	Years 5
Identify opportunities to maximise our heritage offer to include seeking additional funding to develop projects.	Year 3
Develop a framework that ensures we recognise and celebrate the people who contribute to the heritage of RCT e.g. Blue Plaque, Hall of Fame and Sporting Heroes schemes	Year 1
Develop an action plan with partners and communities that identifies milestones to promote and maximise the heritage offer within RCT	Year 1



# Strategic Aim

**Knowledge:** to educate and promote understanding of our heritage, encouraging involvement in activities and research about our heritage.

The global significance of our rich, vibrant and diverse heritage provides an opportunity to gather, share and increase knowledge amongst our residents, learners and visitors. For example, the Curriculum for Wales lends itself to providing learners at schools across RCT with a knowledge and understanding of their local heritage.

There is a wealth of history and knowledge amongst our residents and communities, and each year, visitors to the borough come seeking this, and to support us in enhancing our understanding. The visit of the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2024 to Rhondda Cynon Taf has developed a greater understanding of the history of eisteddfodau across the borough, and visitors will undoubtedly share their stories of connections to the area which add value to our heritage offer. Each year, places such as the Welsh Coal Mining Experience at Rhondda Heritage Park and the Library Services Local Studies department attract contacts from across the world in search of information about or to share information in relation to our people and places. In 2023/24, 73,202 visitors were recorded at Rhondda Heritage Park Museum alone.

There is an opportunity to embed innovative digital technologies within infrastructure to support physical regeneration, and to learn from several good practice models that have used such technology as augmented reality to anchor heritage as a key driver in place-making. Working with creative partners and community groups can unlock innovative projects.

The Altered Images project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, has worked with partners to creatively gather knowledge across the generations, and an RCT Our Heritage website will archive visual and audio records of our heritage as seen, heard and told by our communities.

We will continue to develop the use of QR codes and GPS technology in the process of updating, recording and reviewing our built heritage assets.

Located in our parks, churches and on roadsides, the 117 War Memorials in Rhondda Cynon Taf allow our residents and visitors to engage with our heritage in an incredibly diverse setting. Commemorating the fallen from wars in the nineteenth century, World Wars I and II, they also honour those who fought in the Falklands War, the Spanish Civil War, and dedications to more recent conflicts.

In the last 18 months, the Armed Forces Team have worked closely with Councillors, local community groups and our Highways Team on a number of war memorial projects that have included a range of improvement works and maintenance. In addition, the team provided support to the community in Cwmparc on the opening of their new war memorial.

In commemorating those who fought and sadly lost their lives in conflict, digitisation of war memorials will ensure knowledge is available and shared, via QR codes that link to the new 'Our Heritage' website where we can learn about the lives and the stories behind the names. Digitised ways of archive management and data collection will be identified, such as SCRIPTI used by Bereavement Services to digitise death records for all cemeteries in the borough.

## Outcomes:

- Schools and colleges across RCT recognise, use and celebrate our heritage in their delivery of the Curriculum for Wales
- Educational resources created in partnership with educational organisations in RCT.
- Digital innovation used to embed heritage as a key-driver in place-making, and in the recording and reviewing of our heritage assets.
- We will adapt a partnership approach to data collection. This will ensure that all parties are informed by and adhere to clear policies in order to clarify adequate data sharing and disclosure policies. The community and/or those with lived experience will provide a valuable input in developing procedures. Involving our communities throughout will provide us with both an authentic and measured understanding and is an essential component to understanding community engagement.

### Knowledge Action Plan 2025-2030

Actions	Delivery Date
Create resources and support in partnership with the education sector.	Year 3
Identify funding to create opportunities for all to access and increase knowledge and understanding of RCT's heritage.	Year 5
Conduct a review of all resources and provision linked to heritage across the Authority.	Year 1
Map, improve and increase adult education in relation to heritage.	Year 5
Build from the Eisteddfod Legacy and seek opportunities to further promote Welsh language and cultural activities across RCT.	Year 5
Implement the digitisation of war memorials in RCT	Year 3

## Strategic Aim

**Engagement:** to work with residents, visitors, communities and partners to create opportunities to get involved with heritage, to promote health and wellbeing and protection of the built historic environment.

Our heritage offers diverse opportunities for our communities and residents that can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

Engagement with local heritage provides shared experiences and learning, with intergenerational activities connecting generations and strengthening community cohesion. We will increase engagement with heritage, particularly by children and young people, and seek ways to connect all generations with our local heritage, including exploring innovative and creative digital possibilities.

Altered Images, the National Lottery Heritage funded project, has created a series of creative, innovative and educational activities to engage with all ages and abilities, including workshops, training sessions, and performance/interpretation opportunities.

### Events team

As a Council, a series of key events are held each year across our town centres and parks, with the largest and oldest touring festival in the UK, Wales' Eisteddfod Genedlaethol, a prestigious event hosted at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park in 2024. The events

currently organised by Authority's events team afford an opportunity to celebrate our rich local heritage to our residents and visitors, providing a platform within the annual calendar to increase engagement and showcase our heritage. While the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol is by far the largest event of 2024 other events with a heritage aspect have included an 'Easter Egg-stravaganza' held at RHPM with 2,400 in attendance over two days and Whitson half term heritage events at RHPM with almost 400 attendees. There is significant potential further strengthening to the links heritage with other events ongoing across the Authority including for example the Aberdare Festival with a footfall this year of 10,000.

### **Volunteering and Heritage**

Across the borough, there are many who volunteer in the conserving and preserving of our heritage, and we will work with our communities and third sector to enable them to develop and highlight these opportunities to residents and stakeholders, supporting the sustainability of community groups. As discussed further above, the Altered Images project has provided opportunities for volunteers to conduct interviews with local people and record their stories and reminiscences of members of our communities to create an oral history archive which captures the social history of RCT.

Recognising that engagement with heritage has many positive impacts for the sector, our communities and individuals, there will also be a continued commitment to engaging all ages in our heritage through consultations and targeted activity.

### **Health Determinants Research Collaboration: RCT**

The Council is committed to improving the life chances of its citizens and funding has been secured from the National Institute of Health and Care Research to establish a new and innovative Rhondda Cynon Taf Health Determinants Research Collaboration. The HDRC involves teams across the Council, Cardiff University and academia, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTM UHB), Interlink RCT and third sector partners, and Public Health Wales as well as citizens working as a partnership, to break the cycle of poverty and improve outcomes for residents.

Our heritage offers an opportunity to engage with our residents whilst also recognise the value of our heritage in improving health and wellbeing.

**Engagement target outcomes:**

- Create opportunities to engage children and young people in heritage.
- Create and support our communities to provide opportunities for volunteering
- Increased awareness of our heritage within our communities.
- Heritage celebrated at key events across the borough.
- 

**Engagement Action Plan 2025-2030**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Delivery Date Timescale</b>
Consult with stakeholders in relation to celebrating our local heritage.	Years 2 & 4
Inclusion of a heritage offer across all key RCT events.	Year 1
Identify opportunities for volunteers to develop skills and champion RCT Heritage	Year 5
Utilise heritage as a tool for public involvement and participation, recognising its role in improving outcomes for residents, particularly as part of the HDRC.	Years3
	Years 4
	Year 5
Create a stakeholder engagement pathway for the development of RCT Heritage Strategy 2030 onwards.	

# Monitoring and Evaluation

This strategy provides a framework for the future management and development of Rhondda Cynon Taf's heritage. Its delivery will involve our communities and partners from the public, private and third sectors. The Strategic Aims, Outcomes and Actions will be undertaken collaboratively, therefore, a process to monitor and evaluate the delivery of the strategy is vital.

The Council's Heritage Service will lead in the delivery of this strategy and will be responsible for evaluating and reporting on the annual Implementation Plan and quarterly monitoring the delivery of identified actions.

A Progress Update Report and an Annual Implementation Plan will be presented to the Strategic Arts and Culture Steering Group prior to each new financial year.

Furthermore, progress on delivery will be scrutinised periodically at the relevant scrutiny committee.

A new initiative of key stakeholders will form an autonomous RCT Heritage Forum, facilitated by the Heritage Service, representative of the public, private and third sector, capable of pooling resources, expertise and experience, and providing advice and support in the delivery of this strategy to our communities.

A review of the strategy will be undertaken during 2027/28 and reported to Cabinet. The next review to inform a new strategy post 2030 will be undertaken in 2029/2030, aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan timeline.

# Appendix 1: Heritage Assets

## Memorials

There are 203 memorials known to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council:

<b>Number</b>	<b>Dedication of Memorial</b>
1	Royal Family
3	Personal
4	Sporting Figure
6	Historic
9	Structure or individual within construction industry
10	Councillors or Politicians
15	Arts
30	Mining
125	War



## Historic buildings

There are 88 scheduled monuments in Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Council is legally responsible for the protection of 2 of the 88, the:

- Medieval Llantrisant Castle
- Post medieval shrine of St Mary's Well in Penrhys

In addition, the Council owns around 5% of the listed buildings in the borough.

### Rhondda Heritage Park Museum

Owned and managed by the Council, Rhondda Heritage Park Museum is located on the former Lewis Merthyr Colliery site and consists of Grade II listed pit bank and buildings. Established in 1986, the Rhondda Heritage Park Museum 'tells' the social history of the Rhondda Valleys. The collection of approximately 12,500 objects represent various themes including, mining, industry, unionisation, activism, local celebrities and sports personalities, domestic items, fashion, and religion. Since its opening, the Heritage Park has become nationally renowned for preserving social, mining and industrial history and uniquely 'telling' the story of the South Wales Valleys. Over the last decade significant investment and staff restructuring have witnessed continuous improvements and reinvention across the museum and have resulted in the site consistently attracting more visitor year on year (with the exception of Covid).

Visitors to Rhondda Heritage Park Museum:

2015/16	33591
2016/17	33655

2017/18	41173	
2018/19	46137	
2019/20	52180	
2020/21	1696	Covid
2021/22	34569	Covid
2022/23	66678	
2023/24	73202	

## Challenges

- The site requires significant investment to safeguard its structural integrity.
- Addressing the role of coal mining in climate change.
- The eventual loss of our USP, the Underground Tours led by former miners, due to retirement.

## Current initiatives include:

Supported by a Capital Transformation funding from the Welsh Government. A total of £150,000 invested in developing a digital exhibition space using the 'Black Gold' (coal history) exhibition content. This exhibition consists of touch screens containing interactive digital content (text in timeline and map formats, relevant images of objects from our collection, historical videos, and audio files) mirrored on to large TV screens.

RHPM has begun the process of recording the current guides memories with the long-term aim of both creating a self-lead digital 'Underground Tour' and capturing lived experience of miners for future generations.

## **Future opportunities**

Geoscience is essential to helping us monitor and understand natural earth processes and the impacts of climate change, so that we can support practical solutions to adapt to a changing planet. Working with cultural, heritage or arts organisations and climate or environmental organisations, RHPM can play a key role in stimulating long-term public engagement with our climate.

### **Pontypridd Lido**

Owned and managed by the Council, the 1921 Miners Welfare Fund contributed 86% of the overall costs for the construction of the original Lido building. Almost a century later, a grant of £6.3 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, European Regional Development Fund, CADW and the Council enabled the restoration of the Lido to its former glory. The Grade II listed building, originally built in 1927, underwent meticulous restoration and officially reopened on 24th August 2015.

Retaining its 1920s appearance and architecture, including 'Pantile' roof tiles, wooden cubicles, and original turnstiles, the restored Lido reopened in 2015 as the National Lido of Wales, Pontypridd. Combining heritage with modern comforts, its prominent position in the magnificent parkland setting in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park makes it one of the most iconic open-air lidos in the UK. The 'Lido' is nationally recognised as a successful regeneration model, galvanizing further regeneration in Pontypridd town centre, and serving as an exemplar of best practice in regeneration.

### **Dare Valley Country Park**

Owned and managed by the Council, Dare Valley Country Park is one of the most exciting and diverse destinations in South Wales, with over two hundred acres of open space packed with things to do. Home to the brand-new Gravity Family Bike Park and on-site accommodation the Park is a Dark Sky Wales site, offering perfect night sky conditions for stargazing and constellation-spotting.

The Park is built on land reclaimed from over a century of coal mining in the area, it is a Valleys Regional Park Discovery Gateway site, a key tourism attraction for RCT, and offers access to the wider tourist attractions across the South Wales Valleys.

The Park's Visitor Centre has been in operation since 1985 and there are numerous other historical remnants of the areas coal mining past. This includes colliery coal trams, pit winding gear and the former wooden viaducts, constructed at the height of the industrial revolution by the genius Isambard Kingdom Brunel, form part of the entrance to the park.

### **Cynon Valley Museum**

Owned by the Council and managed by Cynon Valley Museum Trust, the museum is a CADW Grade II listed building and former tram workshop built on the site of the casting house of the Gadlys Ironworks. The building's renovation was completed in 1996 with the museum opening fully in 2000. The Museum tells the story of the Cynon Valley from prehistoric times to the present day, and collects objects that reflect this, with the majority of collections spanning from 1800 – two thousand. The Cynon Valley Museum is a fully Accredited Museum under the Arts Council's Accreditation Scheme; the museum has been accredited since 2006. The Museum has been managed since 2016 by the Cynon Valley Museum Trust under the terms of a Service Level Agreement with RCTCBC. The Trust was awarded £388,178 in 2017 by the Pen y Cymoedd wind farm Community Fund to 'support the Museum to become self-sustainable by diversifying their income streams, increasing the staff team and allowing them to work more with the local community.' The Council owns and continues to care for and manage the collection, working with the Trust to make the collection accessible for the benefit of its stakeholders. There are approximately 22,000 objects in the CVM collection covering several themes, including (but not limited to) mining and industrial history of the Cynon valleys, art, sport, domestic material, fashion, and religion.

## **Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries**

Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries Local Studies Department actively collect documents on all aspects of the borough, both past and present, to conserve for study and research at all levels. These documents are stored in the Local Studies Collections based at Aberdare Library, Treorchy Library and Pontypridd Library. The collections at each of these libraries contain thousands of documents in a wide range of formats, many of which are unique and irreplaceable.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries have used these resources to create inviting opportunities to discover our heritage through a range of on-line experiences. The 'Altered Images' project, funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, updates the current Library Services Our Past and Digital Photographic Archive, providing a new website - RCT Our Heritage - to showcase, record, preserve, and promote the rich and diverse culture, heritage, and history of Rhondda Cynon Taf. It contains RCT Libraries' photographic, video, and audio collections; objects from the collections of RCT's Heritage Service; and educational content and resources that relate to RCT, alongside the Altered Images community heritage projects.

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/Libraries/Libraries.aspx>

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/Libraries/Archiveandhistoricsearches.aspx>

<https://www.rctourheritage.com/>

## Theatres

The Council owns and operates two theatres, the Park & Dare in Treorchy and the Coliseum in Aberdare. Collectively, the theatres are known as RCT Theatres and are revenue-funded clients of the Arts Council Wales. The history and heritage of both theatres provides evidence of their status in their localities, as a place of learning (through the extensive library, meeting rooms, events and lectures), social gathering, play and entertainment for the local mining community and attracting visitors and visiting speakers from far and wide. Today, the theatres remain bustling venues, hosting a diverse range of events including drama, comedy, music, cinema screenings, school shows and community productions.

The Grade II\* listed **Park & Dare Theatre** comprises two separate buildings; an Institute built in 1892, and a much larger hall and theatre built in 1913. The proscenium arch is a depressed curve, supporting a baroque foliated shield at its highest point, and is attractively decorated over its entire length with plasterwork representing fruit and flowers. In 2020, the lounge bar was converted into a Studio theatre to support the development of new work.

**The Coliseum Theatre** was officially opened on Saturday September 17, 1938. It boasts a unique 1930s art deco design with a 600-seat auditorium and cinema facilities. An extension to the theatre was opened in 1995 adding a bar facility and meeting rooms.

The Council also owns the **Muni Arts Centre** in Pontypridd. A Grade II listed build, its heritage and stunning gothic architecture are an important part of Pontypridd's heritage. The Council secured £5.3m in funding from UK Government's Levelling Up Fund in order to revitalise the Muni Arts Centre in collaboration with the charitable organisation Awen Cultural Trust. This joint approach will ensure the Muni is successfully brought back into use as a cultural venue with a commercially robust and viable future.

Y Muni will reopen in 2024 re-establishing itself as a unique local venue for regional arts and music.

# A sample of some of the independent heritage provision in RCT

## **The Royal Mint Museum and Experience**

The Royal Mint Museum is a registered charity and an accredited museum, based on The Royal Mint site in Llantrisant, south Wales. Established in 1816, the Museum has one of the finest collections of coins and related numismatic material in the world. Further information about the work of the Museum is available at: [www.royalmintmuseum.org.uk](http://www.royalmintmuseum.org.uk)

The Royal Mint Experience is one of Wales' top tourist attractions. Offering highly popular exhibitions and tours and a wide range of events suitable for all ages. The 'Mint' provides a full calendar of activities – ranging from creative workshops to special guest speakers and interactive sessions.

<https://www.royalmint.com/the-royal-mint-experience/>

## **Pontypridd Museum**

Opened in 1986 within the former Tabernacle Welsh Baptist Chapel, Pontypridd Museum tells the story of an area transformed from a quiet Valleys community to a thriving industrial town. Around this industry sprung a vibrant culture of music, art, sport and political activity which still shapes the town.

<https://www.pontypriddmuseum.wales/>

## **Nantgarw China Works**

Their vision is to transform where the world's finest porcelain was made into a vibrant centre for ceramic history and contemporary innovation.

Today, the China Works is an independent museum, as well as a working pottery and an educational institution offering some 500 workshop sessions every year.

<https://nantgarwchinaworksmuseum.co.uk/>

## **St Elvan's Aberdare**

Founded in 1852 and located in the heart of Aberdare, St Elvan's has recently undergone an extensive renovation. The Church's Community Heritage Project was awarded a Vision Fund grant of £491,869 by Pen Y Cymoedd Community Fund, along with £786,700 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, £47,000 from Cadw, £40,000 from the National Churches Trust, and £12,000 from the James Pantyfedwen Foundation. Since reopening, it has provided a vibrant new space featuring concert and conference facilities, an exhibition gallery, meeting rooms, heritage tours & talks, and continues as an active place of worship.

<https://www.stelvans.com/heritage-activities.html>



## Appendix 2: Policies and Strategies

<b>Cadw: Conservation Principles for Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales</b>	<u><a href="#">Conservation Principles for Sustainable Management</a></u>
<b>Cadw: Policy, advice and guidance</b>	<u><a href="#">Policy, advice and guidance</a></u>
<b>Curriculum for Wales</b>	<u><a href="#">Curriculum for Wales</a></u>
<b>Future Wales The National Plan 2040</b>	<u><a href="#">Future Wales The National Plan</a></u>
<b>Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023</b>	<u><a href="#">Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023</a></u>
<b>How to improve energy efficiency in Historic Buildings in Wales</b>	<u><a href="#">Improving Energy Efficiency</a></u>
<b>Local Development Plan (revised RCT 2022-2037)</b>	<u><a href="#">Local Development Plan</a></u>
<b>Place Making Charter</b>	<u><a href="#">Place Making Charter</a></u>
<b>Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 February 2021</b>	<u><a href="#">Planning Policy Wales 11</a></u>
<b>‘Working with our Communities (RCT Corporate Plan 2024-2030)</b>	<u><a href="#">RCT Corporate Plan</a></u>
<b>Supplementary Planning Guidance: The Historic Environment</b>	<u><a href="#">Historic Environment SPG</a></u>
<b>Supplementary Planning Guidance: Designated Canal Structures</b>	<u><a href="#">Canal Structures</a></u>

<b>Supplementary Planning Guidance: Development and the Welsh Language</b>	<u>Welsh Language</u>
<b>Supplementary Planning Guidance: Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance</b>	<u>Buildings of Local Importance</u>
<b>Technical Advice Note 24 (TAN 24) The Historic Environment</b>	<u>Technical Advice Note 24</u>
<b>Well-Being of Future Generations Act (2015)</b>	<u>Well-Being of Future Generations</u>