



**Press Release**  
**21 June 2011**

## **Ride the Wild Boar or take to the Taff Trail this Bike Week**

From world-class trails to extreme downhill tracks, The Valleys isn't just coalmines and choirs, it is home to outstanding cycling too... so head to the hills this Bike Week (18-26 June) and see for yourself.

According to '*Rough Guide to... Wales*' author, Mike Parker, who compiled a list of his Top 50 Valleys Essentials earlier this year in partnership with The Valleys – Heart and Soul campaign, mountain biking is an essential activity to experience when visiting The Valleys.

And when Parker's list was put out to the public to vote for their favourites, mountain biking was named as the 7<sup>th</sup> most popular activity in the area, which spans from Kidwelly in the west to Pontypool in the east.

Speaking of the trails at Cwmcarn Forest in Caerphilly and Afan Forest Park in Neath Port Talbot, Mike Parker said: "The Valleys' topography is ideal for the growth sport of mountain biking, and two of the finest courses anywhere can be found either side of the area."

And with Cognation – mtb trails South Wales - a partnership project between Forestry Commission Wales, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Welsh Government – investing £5million (part funded by the EU's Convergence European Regional Development Fund through the Welsh Government with match funding coming from the Welsh Government and partner organisations) to further improve mountain biking in The Valleys, the area is set to become one of the best places to ride in Europe.

A new bike park, new trails at existing centres, new skills areas, as well as improvements and extensions on current trails and refreshed facilities will all be delivered through Cognation.

Rowan Sorrell, mountain Biker and trail designer said "South Wales is well established as a great destination for mountain biking with trails that cater for the more experienced rider, the new investment in the area is going to help broaden the offer to cater for all abilities and further enhance everyone's old favourites."

## **Get on your bike!**

From a leisurely ride along the Taff Trail to the more extreme tracks for adrenaline junkies, when it comes to cycling, The Valleys' rugged terrain, faced paced hills and beautiful landscapes make it the perfect destination. Here are some of The Valleys – Heart and Soul's favourites:

- If the thought of riding downhill fills you with fear, then opt for a bike ride along the **Taff Trail**. Running along old railways and canal towpaths, this route starts in Cardiff and winds its way through The Valleys before reaching the Brecon Beacons. Don't forget to pack a picnic!
- If you're a bit of a daredevil, then you'll love riding the **Wild Boar at Cwmcarn Forest**. Named after the fearsome wild boar of the Mabinogion legends the trail has it all, testing climbs, swooping descents and demanding technical sections.
- Adrenaline junkies should check out **Afan Forest Park**, which is home to five world class trails and boasts over 100 km of singletrack trails.

The Valleys Heart and Soul is a three year campaign led by partnership organisations from the Western Valleys, Valleys Regional Park and The Valleys Partnership, and aims to change perceptions of The Valleys and bring long-term economic benefits to the area.

**To find out more about The Valleys – Heart and Soul campaign and for a full list of The Top 50 Valleys Essentials, visit [www.thevalleys.co.uk](http://www.thevalleys.co.uk)**

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### **Notes to editors:**

Image: Mountain biker at Afan Forest Park

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The Heads of the Valleys regeneration programme is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund, together with match funding from the Welsh Assembly Government and other partner organisations. The 3-year campaign aims to bring economic benefit to Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend, northern parts of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot and the eastern Valleys of Carmarthenshire.

Aimed at changing perceptions of the Valleys both to local people and outsiders, the campaign will encourage more visitors and attract potential investors.

[www.thevalleys.co.uk](http://www.thevalleys.co.uk)