



New heritage experience to showcase the best of the Vale of Glamorgan

Explore and More, the new Vale of Glamorgan Heritage Experience, which aims to raise awareness of the area's heritage attractions and increase tourism in the rural Vale, was launched by actor, Ifan Huw Dafydd today (20 May 2011).

Recent studies show that four in 10 leisure visitors cite heritage as the main motivation for their trip to the UK*. The initiative, which forms part of the Creative Rural Communities project, will work to showcase the area's top heritage sites to encourage more visitors to the area.

A new website has been created www.exploreandmore.co.uk and four interactive kiosks featuring guides to nearby attractions and short films starring Gavin and Stacey star, Ifan Huw Dafydd will be placed in key locations (Dyffryn House and Gardens, Cowbridge High Street, St Illtud's Church in Llantwit Major and The Watermill Pub along the Heritage Coast) across the Vale. From piracy on the Heritage Coast to Cowbridge's hidden Physic Garden, the films bring to life the hidden histories of the area and act as an introduction to the area's heritage.

There is also a series of mini feature films featuring local people involved in the heritage attractions in the area, such as the Nash Point Lighthouse and the Llantwit Major Blue Plaque Trail, telling their version of the stories.

The Explore and More initiative has received funding through the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013 which is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

Nicola Sumner-Smith, Senior Rural Regeneration Officer for the Vale of Glamorgan Creative Rural Communities project, said, "The new Explore and More kiosks provide interactive guides for new visitors to the area and locals who are yet to explore the array of fantastic attractions on their doorsteps. What's more the kiosks and website will act as gateways to the area's heritage by highlighting other attractions in nearby areas.

“We’re extremely grateful for the support of the steering group consisting of local churches, local historians and historical societies, key tourism representatives and members of local visitor attractions who have been instrumental in getting the project off the ground. Their dedication and commitment to the project is testament to how passionate they are about the Vale of Glamorgan and its heritage and making its tourism industry a success.”

Leader of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Councillor Gordon Kemp, said: “There is a wealth of natural and anecdotal heritage across the Vale of Glamorgan which deserves to be celebrated. From the dramatic 14 miles of Heritage Coastline to the area’s 26 castles and ruins, each with their own unique hidden tales.

“The Vale is a thriving heritage tourism destination waiting to be explored and this initiative will help put it on the day visitor’s map. We look forward to welcoming increased numbers of tourists over the summer months.”

Members of the public are being invited to get involved in a special Explore & More public launch on Saturday 21 May at Dyffryn House and Gardens. Visitors can take advantage of reduced entry prices of £2 for adults and £1 for children with special activities including quizzes and face painting.

Geraldine Donovan, Site Curator at Dyffryn House and Gardens, said: “We’re thrilled to be home to one of the interactive kiosks which will help put Dyffryn House and Gardens in the context of the area’s rich heritage and share stories that would otherwise be lost. The kiosks, together with the team of volunteers we are currently recruiting, will really help give our visitors a true sense of place and memorable experience.”

Actor Ifan Huw Dafydd who stars in the films said, “I knew a little of the history of the Vale of Glamorgan, but doing these little snippets have opened my eyes to riches that are all round the place. I will certainly be finding out more! I hope others’ curiosity will be aroused too!”

For more information on the Explore and More, Vale of Glamorgan heritage experience, please visit www.exploreandmore.co.uk

ENDS