



## Press Release

### **These Valleys are made for walking!** *(The Valleys launches its seventh annual walking festival)*

With an estimated 28 million annual walking trips made to the Welsh countryside contributing £632 million to the Welsh economy\*, the seventh annual Wales Valleys Walking Festival is hoping to make 2011 its best year yet.

The annual festival supported by The Valleys Heart and Soul campaign will take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> September 2011. It highlights the hidden treasures and scenery that can be discovered in the south Wales Valleys and last year more than 300 people took part and this year that number is expected to increase.

This year sees the addition of nine new walks to the Festival's portfolio including a new 18 mile walk on 3<sup>rd</sup> September across the Sirhowy Valley. In total there are 38 different walks for people to take part in ranging from easy to strenuous. Each walk is free and is led by experienced guides. See [www.thevalleys.co.uk](http://www.thevalleys.co.uk) for details of all walks.

The walks will take place at various locations throughout The Valleys and will encompass the region's industrial heritage and historical landmarks as well as local produce such as ice cream and cider. You could even re-trace the steps of Wales' best-loved weatherman, Derek Brockway, in The Footsteps of Derek Brockway walk taking place on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September at Treherbert.

Each walk is colour coded to reflect difficulty, from easy green walks through to a more strenuous blue walk. Walkers are also being encouraged to go on line and take part in the Valleys Trekker Test quiz before selecting their walk to determine their Valleys character and suggested walking routes.

The quiz will ask walkers a series of fitness, culture and personal interest questions to determine whether they are a Betty the Beginner or a Strenuous Steve. \*\*

Kevin Oates, festival chairman, said: "The Valleys Walking Festival is a hidden gem in the annual walking calendar and this year's festival is bigger and better than before with nine additional walks to last year's itinerary. We have such a wealth of scenery and landscape here that appeals to a variety of walkers whether they are experienced or just starting out. Where else could you take in the beauty of natural waterfalls one minute and the next retrace old mining routes.

"We hope that people visiting The Valleys through-out September will include one of our walks on their itineraries. We are confident that they will be so impressed they will want to come back for more!"

The routes can be chosen based on ability and personal interests. There is the Castle to Castle walk on 8<sup>th</sup> September which is a seven mile circular route taking in 480 million years of history in one day, or The Chartist's Cave walk on 15<sup>th</sup> September which offers the chance to visit the famous but elusive Chartist's Cave on the Trefil Las moorlands. For those that like a little refreshment on their walks there is the Wild Whiskey walk on 13<sup>th</sup> September where each participant will be treated to a little tipple while walking around the Penderyn area.

All walks during the festival are free but some walks have limited numbers so walkers are advised to book onto the walks. To request a booking form contact [walkingfestival@thevalleys.co.uk](mailto:walkingfestival@thevalleys.co.uk) or call 01443 838632. Visitors can also find Wales Valleys Walking Festival on Facebook.

To take the 'Valleys Trekker Test', download a Wales Valleys Walking Festival brochure or to find out more about the events in The Valleys, visit [thevalleys.co.uk](http://thevalleys.co.uk). For the latest updates, follow @LovetheValleys on Twitter or find Love the Valleys on Facebook.

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

\*Ramblers Cymru  
\*\* Characters  
Betty the Beginner  
Take it Easy Tony  
Adventurous Ann  
Strenuous Steve

- Ends -

**For further information please contact Helen Newton or Kate Sullivan at Equinox Communications on 029 20764100 or email [valleys@equinoxcommunications.co.uk](mailto:valleys@equinoxcommunications.co.uk)**

The Heads of the Valleys regeneration programme is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund, together with match funding from the Welsh 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)