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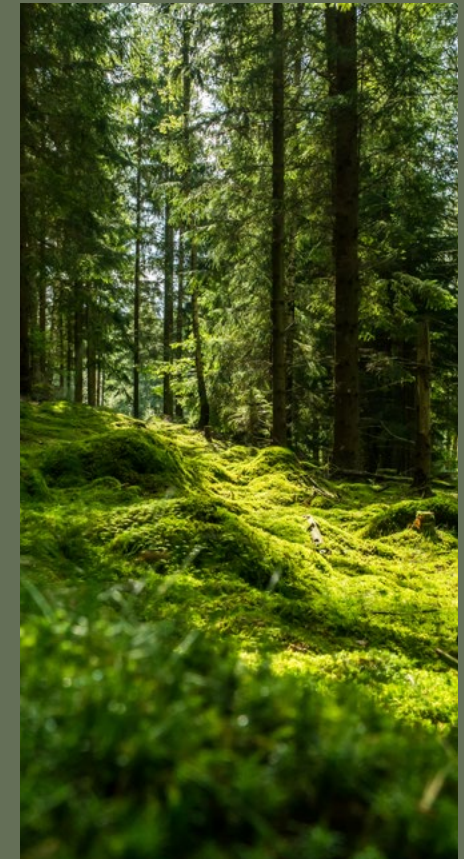
# Cwmcarn Forest Drive, Crosskeys

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**Natural Resources Wales & Caerphilly  
County Borough Council** are working  
in partnership to bring an exciting leisure  
opportunity to the market for the growth  
and development of Cwmcarn Forest Drive.

 Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru  
Natural Resources Wales

 CAERPHILLY  
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CAERFFILI



# Expression of Interest

Land that sits within the heart of its community, the region and Southeast Wales.

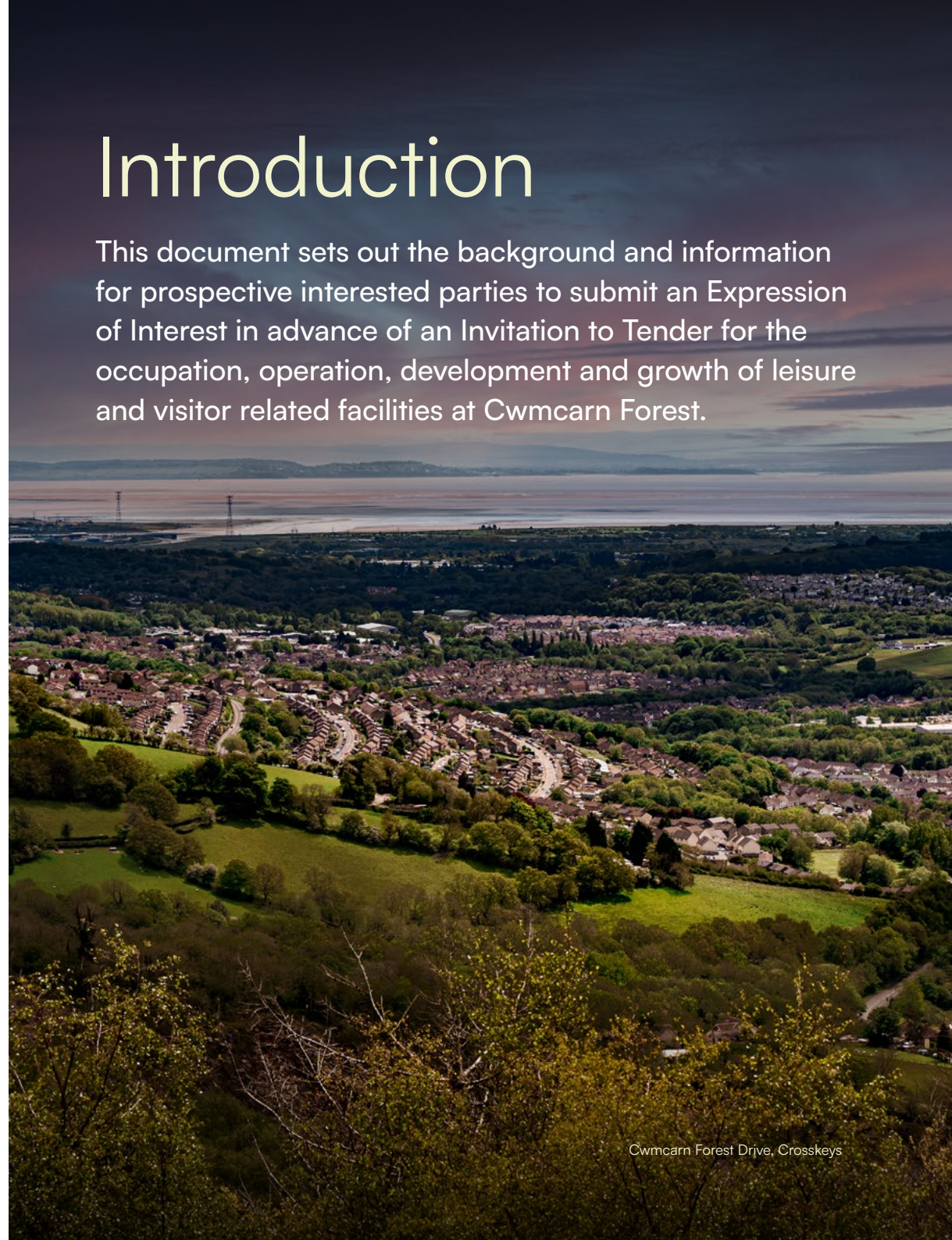
Your Expression of Interest on the future development of Cwmcarn Forest and the opportunity to establish it as a prime destination for recreational activities within Wales and Nationally is sought by the Partnership of NRW and CCBC.

The aim with this process is to ensure that when an Invitation to Tender is put to the market in early 2025, the Landowners and stakeholders are committed to the outcome of the process, working together to secure the best future for this site.



# Introduction

This document sets out the background and information for prospective interested parties to submit an Expression of Interest in advance of an Invitation to Tender for the occupation, operation, development and growth of leisure and visitor related facilities at Cwmcarn Forest.



# A Brief History of Cwmcarn Forest

Pre  
**19<sup>th</sup> Century** • **1836** • **1913** • **1940's** • **1950s onwards**

Scattered farmsteads alongside Nant Carn and on upper slopes.

Abercarn Colliery opened (northwest of Cwmcarn Forest).

Cwmcarn Colliery opened using one of the Abercarn Colliery ventilation shafts.

Cwmcarn Forest planted.

Regular programme of felling forestry coupes.

**2005** • World-class extreme downhill trail opens (Y Mynydd).

**2003** • First cross-country mountain bike trail opens (Twrch).

**1972 - 79** • Valley floor reclamation scheme 'landscaped', including creation of lake.

**1972** • Forest Drive and original Visitor Centre opened to the public.

**1968** • Cwmcarn Colliery closed. The buildings were demolished, and the surrounding land restored.

**2006** • New Visitor Centre opened.

**2014** • Second cross-country mountain bike trail 'Cafall' and second downhill mountain bike trail 'Pedalhounds' open. Forest Drive due to close for larch felling.

**2014 - 2021** • Forest Drive closed to allow essential forestry operations to remove 160,000 larch trees infected with *Phytophthora ramorum*, (larch disease).

**2019** • Nine new forest lodges are built to complement the 10 existing glamping pods on site.

**2021** • Forest Drive re-opens after significant investment into new road resurfacing, the building of 6 car parks including additional attractions and three new natural play parks along the 7-mile drive.



To view drone footage of  
**Cwmcarn Forest Drive**  
[Click here](#)



# Location

Nestled in scenic surrounding of South Wales, close to the city of Newport, and forming part of the Valleys Regional Park Network, Cwmcarn Forest is in a perfect location to capitalise on the significant catchment of **4.7 million** people within a **90-minute** drivetime.

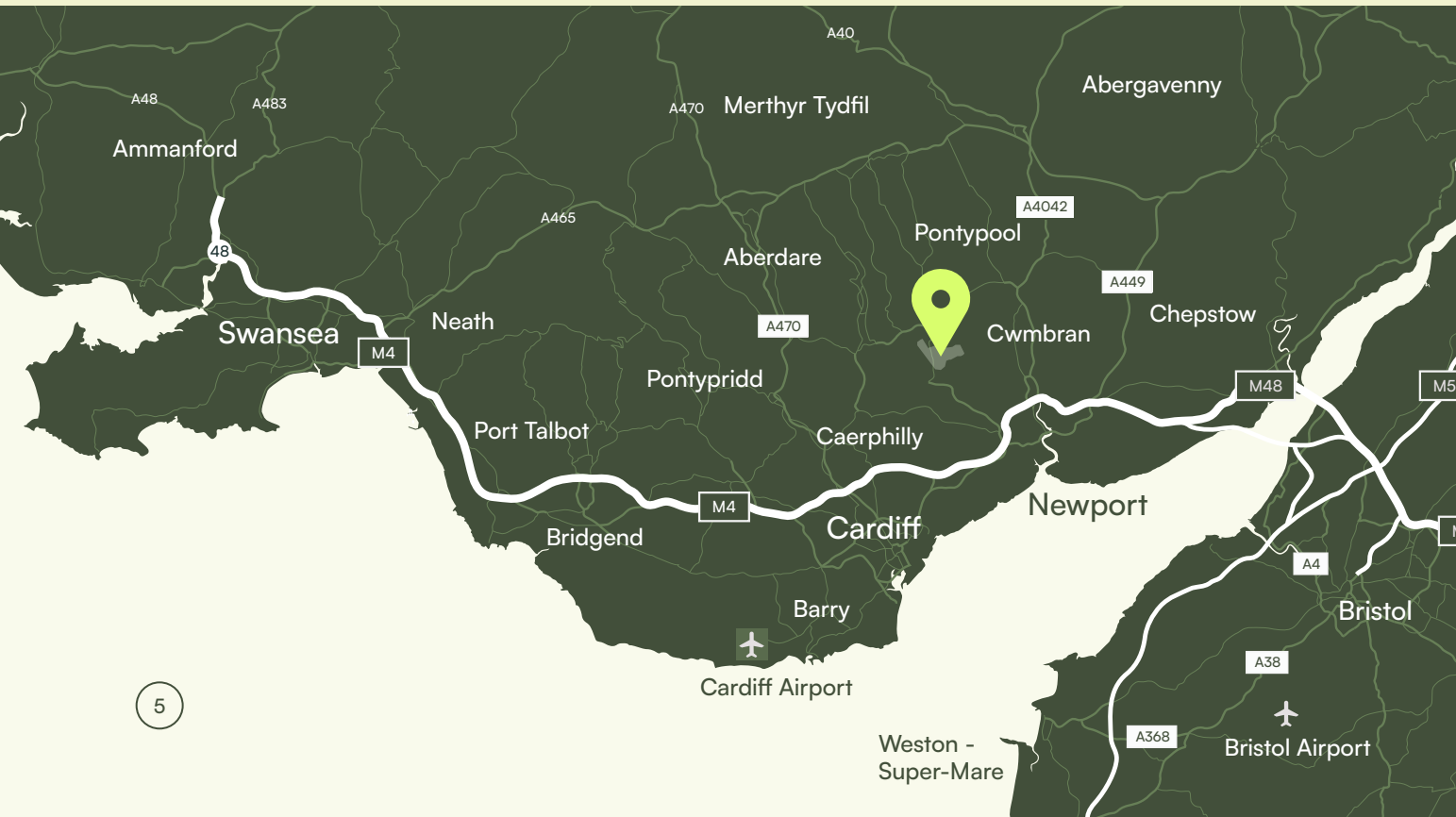
The property is only half an hour from the **Severn Bridge** and ten minutes from the **M4 motorway**, which provides onward, straightforward travel to neighbouring cities and

significant conurbations including **Cardiff (17 miles)** **Bristol (40 miles)** and **Swansea (54 miles)**.

The location offers downhill exhilarating mountain biking, epic views and convenient, inclusive access to nature.



[cwmcarnforest.co.uk](http://cwmcarnforest.co.uk)



# Situation

Once a coal colliery linked to Abercarn and Newbridge, Cwmcarn Forest was reclaimed for leisure in **1972**. Since then, it has become a popular location for tourism and recreation, featuring a unique **seven-mile-long** Forest Drive, which immerses visitors in an outstanding natural upland environment.

Tourism in the county is thriving, with latest estimates of over **870k** day & night visits per annum, generating over **£134m** of GVA.

# Exciting Current Developments at Cwmcarn Forest

Since 2004, a programme of significant capital investment has revitalised Cwmcarn Forest and its visitor infrastructure.

A new visitor centre opened in 2006, boasting a modern cafe, retail area, offices, and more, thanks to over **£1m** of Objective 1 funding.

A further investment of **£2m** from WG and Objective 1 Funding enabled developments which included three luxury lodges, the redevelopment and landscaping of the lakeside facilities, new footpath links around the site, a blue grade family cycling trail and 35 additional parking spaces on site.

Additional funding was secured for the addition of the remaining 6 luxury lodges (9 in total) which added to the existing glamping pods and expanded camping facilities, boosting annual income to circa **£130,000** per annum.

## There are eight buildings on site, varying in size and age including:

- Visitor Centre Reception, retail, coffee shop, and more.
- Office
- Retail unit and toilets
- Lakeside changing rooms
- Camp-site facilities
- Pay lodge for Forest drive
- Workshop
- Waste disposal for the camp-site

## Brilliant Basics Tourism Fund 2024 - 2025

Work is currently underway to install an additional two large sculptures on site to complement the Legend of Bran interpretation trail. These add to the existing sculptures at the Visitor Centre that form part of the beautiful Twmbarlwm walk. They also add to the collection of inspirational urban artwork located around the park.



## Cwmcarn Visitor Centre

Cwmcarn Forest boasts a modern visitor centre experience with spacious information point stocked with maps and local information. The contemporary gift shop has a range of quality gifts. Raven's Café offers hot meals and cold snacks along with delicious homemade cakes and a great selection of hot and cold drinks. A meeting room is available to hire for training courses, conferences and meetings.



## Luxury Lodges

Nine new lodges now complement Cwmcarn Forest's visitor accommodation offering. Sleeping from 2 — 6 people, the lodges are fully furnished and finished to a very high standard. Each has a fitted kitchen and bathroom along with TV, a full size double bed and living area with sofa bed (in lodges sleeping 4+). Double doors open out onto a decked veranda with seating area.



## Glamping Pods

Nestled in the forest floor are ten glamping pods, which have a contemporary decor and comfortable double beds along with a mini fridge, kettle, refreshment tray, electricity and heater.



## Caravan and Motorhomes

Three large hardstanding pitches all of which is suitable for caravans, motorhomes & campervans.



# Outdoor Adventures



## The 7-mile Forest Drive

The only one of its kind in Wales — this tarmac road was given a brand-new lease of life in 2021, when it underwent a £2m, 12-month re-development and was significantly transformed.

This significantly improved Drive hosts six new car parking areas, three new adventure playgrounds, a woodland sculpture trail, and several barbecue spots.



## Mountain Biking

Since the late 90s, Cwmcarn Forest has been a hotspot for mountain biking. With five key trails ranging from moderate to extreme, and a pump track, the site offers a range of trails to suit all abilities.

There are five key mountain bike trails in Cwmcarn Forest, ranging from a blue-graded (moderate) to double-black (advanced).



To view **Cwmcarn Forest Drive Mountain Biking Trails** [Click here](#)



## Walking Trails

Explore an extensive network of walking trails of varying lengths and difficulty, each offering unique scenery and experiences.

**Twmbarlwm:** This 2 hour walk will take you up to the top of the Iron Age hillfort of Twmbarlwm. It was once a centre for the Silurian Celts who fought a 25-year war with Rome. From the top are views, over Cardiff Bay to the south and towards the Brecon Beacons to the north.

10.5KM

**1807:** A 9 mile walk starting from the visitor centre, taking in historic features, woodlands and the views. There are steep climbs and descents with this walk.

14.5KM

**Bluebell:** A serene 1.2-mile walk through woodlands, ponds, streams and valley view

1.9KM

**Nantcarn:** A short, picturesque 1-mile stroll

1.6KM

**Escape to Twmbarlwm:** A 6.5-mile climb to Twmbarlwm Mountain.

**Pwca:** (blue/moderate grade) climbs up from the visitor centre car park and includes some technical sections to develop skills and confidence before its descent back to the start.

**Cafall:** (red/difficult grade) goes to some of the most remote areas of the forest and offers a real sense of adventure with its tough climbs, tight hand-built singletrack sections, and steep and technical descents.

**Twrch:** (red/difficult grade) is almost entirely on a purpose built single-track which hugs the sides of steep wooded side slopes and sweeps along open ground with dramatic views

**Pedalhounds:** (black/severe grade) is a linear cross-country trail, accessed via the Cafall Trail but requiring more advanced riding skills.

**Y Mynydd:** (double black/extreme grade) is a downhill route full of features including berms, switchbacks, a tunnel and rock steps.

**Pump track** is also at the site, built in 2014 to provide a skills area for the younger / novice riders and this has proven popular with locals and visitors of all ages.

**This progressive and diverse range of graded mountain biking trails offer users the opportunity to develop their abilities on one site and therefore attract many repeat visits.**



## An Increasingly Popular Site

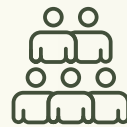
In 2023, approximately 226,000 visitors stayed an average of 3 hours. Weekends and school holidays are bustling, with a steady weekday footfall too.

The site is a magnet for mountain bikers, families, and dog walkers who are drawn to its extensive, well maintained network of 'walking trails, cycle paths, play areas, and picnic spots—all within easy reach from multiple car parks.



Three main car parks hold **180 cars**, generating **£75k** annually.

Six additional car parks in the Upper basin hold up to 120 cars, ensuring plenty of space for everyone.



Visitors have increased from **118k** (2006) to **226k** (2023)



Income increased from **£134k** (2006) to **£603k** (2023)



Cwmcarn Forest Drive, Crosskeys



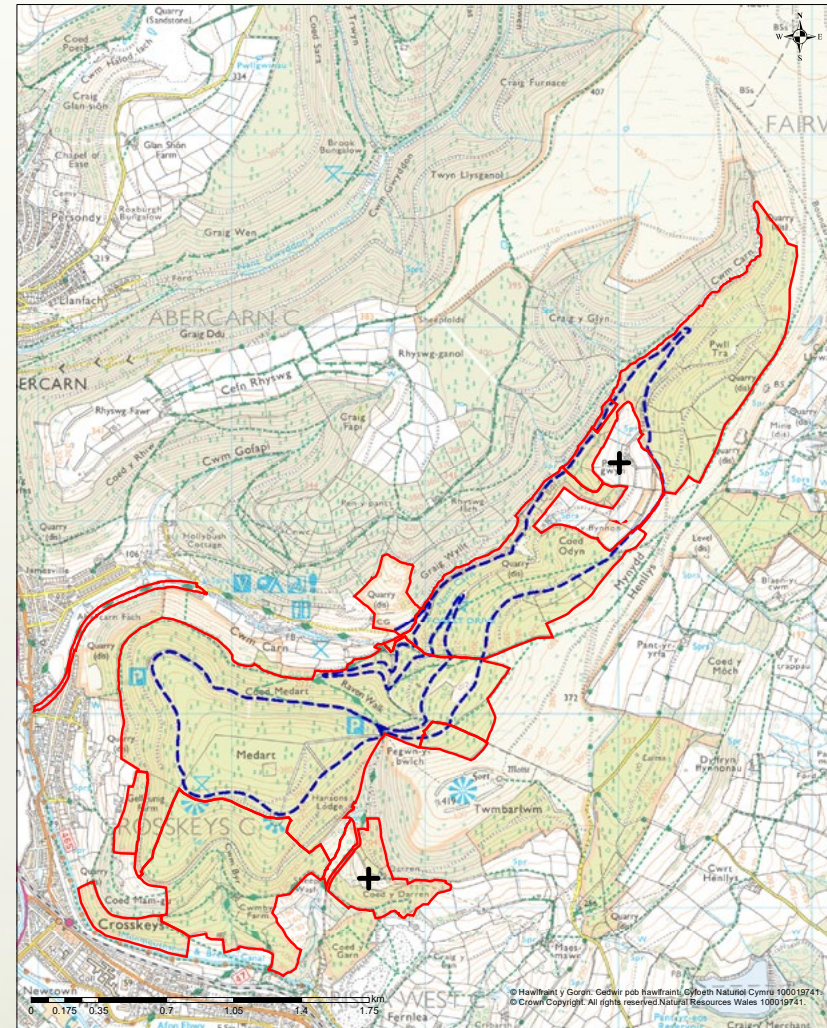
# Opportunities

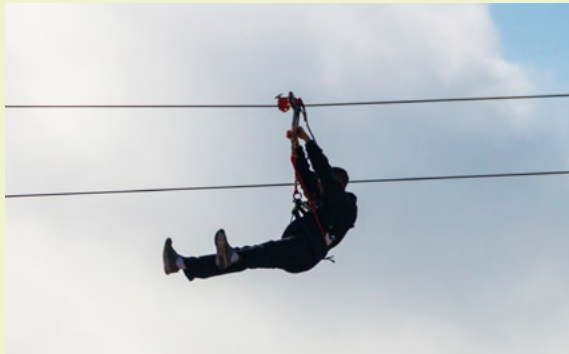
The Cwmcarn Masterplan, pivotal for the Levelling Up Fund submission in 2022, aimed to establish Cwmcarn Forest as a top national destination with plans that include:

- Forest Coaster - A concept design for the **UK's longest Alpine Coaster at 1.1km** (including both lift and run).
- A scenic **Aerial Walkway** weaving through the forest, offering diverse and accessible experiences.
- **Visually striking Towers** providing access to the walkway and stand-alone attractions.
- Thrilling **Zip Wires** and **Bungee Jump** - potentially the **UK's tallest and longest**, set against a dramatic landscape.
- The team consulted locals to support a plan to boost Cwmcarn Forest and Caerphilly tourism, worth **£134 million** annually.



## Cwmcarn Opportunities Boundary





# The Landlord Partnership

Cwmcarn is co-owned by both **Natural Resources Wales** and **Caerphilly County Borough Council**.

Through our Expression of Interest process we are looking to hear from the market in terms of what is the best fitting development for this significant and exciting opportunity.

## Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

The biggest Welsh Government Sponsored Body focusing on tackling climate change, preserving nature, and reducing pollution. Our mission is to protect and enhance Wales' environment touches our communities, wildlife, and future.

We are the custodians of 7% of Wales' land, including the Welsh Government Woodland Estate, flood defenses, and National Nature Reserves. Our key goal is to follow the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) as laid out in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.



## Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC)

Caerphilly County Borough Council was created in 1996 with a mission statement of working together for the good of all, serving over 175,000 residents.

Bordered on three sides by major Welsh roadways and situated just 8 miles from the centre of Cardiff, Caerphilly County Borough sits in the perfect place to access and explore the South Wales Valleys and with such an ideal location at its heart, the Council's Regeneration Services department has developed an exciting Masterplan for Cwmcarn Forest.



Cwmcarn Forest Drive, Crosskeys



visitwales.com



cwmcarnforest.co.uk

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# Further information



Please submit your Expressions of Interest by completing a questionnaire via Forms which can be accessed here

[Completing questionnaire →](#)

*(8 weeks from document release)*

Access to a suite of useful information, including plans and a copy of the Cwmcarn Masterplan is available by request via Avison Young.

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