

# **NEWS FROM RCT COUNCIL**

## **Members Update From The RCT Labour Group (January 2019)**

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## Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre Re-Opens

Tylorstown is now home to the largest Leisure for Life gym in RCT - and the only indoor International Rugby Board-accredited 3G pitch in the Valleys, thanks to the Labour-led Council's £1m investment at Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre.

With bold ambition, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and its contractors have worked over the past year to deliver a centre of sporting excellence in the Rhondda Fach.

The facilities opened on Monday, January 14th, and over 1000 visitors have already enjoyed the brand-new facilities in the first seven days, with many also having their first session free of charge!



In addition to the free taster sessions, which can be used at all Council-owned Leisure Centres, the Labour administration has also removed both induction and joining fees for all Leisure for Life memberships, to further incentivise the offer.

The Centre also boasts not one, but two exceptional sporting attractions - in addition to the huge new gym packed with equipment that cannot be found elsewhere in Wales, the Leisure Centre is also home to two indoor 3G pitches, which are fully accredited by the IRB for contact rugby training and more.

The impressive refurbishment has also seen the creation of a brand new reception area and, in addition to the gym, a modern Spin Studio which is fully interactive for users, allowing them to compete against each other and train in "virtual" landscapes.

Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre's ground floor gym is now the largest of all nine of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Leisure for Life gyms and features an 80-station facility, including a huge cross-training rig, which is the largest in Wales.

It also features the largest range of plate-loaded fitness equipment, including chest, leg and shoulder press machines, and a massive range of running, rowing, step and biking equipment – along with a free weight area.

The gym and spin rooms, entered via a new and improved leisure centre reception area, provide the perfect complement for teams and clubs that want to enjoy the only indoor IRB-approved artificial pitches in the Valleys.

The two indoor pitches at the Centre have been inspected and accredited by the International Rugby Board, making them perfect for contact rugby training and more.

This means teams and players can take advantage of exceptional training and practice facilities on the pitches, whatever the weather, and develop their fitness and athletic aims in the gym.

## **A4119 Exhibition**

The Council will host public exhibitions in Ynysmaerdy and Coedely during early February 2019, where residents will be able to view future plans to dual a section of the A4119 Ely Valley Road.

The events are part of a week-long opportunity, **from Monday, February 4<sup>th</sup>**, for residents to have their say on the plans.

The dualling of a section of the A4119 was a core commitment of the Labour Group under the #Ambitious4RCT manifesto and Cabinet Members are continuing to progress this major scheme in a future financial year. It will see a 1.3km section of the A4119 dualled, from Llantrisant Business Park to Coedely Roundabouts, to improve traffic flow at peak times.

To date, a total of £3.08m has been allocated to the project – following the latest Welsh Government contribution of £434,000, which was confirmed in December 2018 as part of its Local Transport Fund.

In June 2018, Cabinet approved proposals to progress the project, and the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) Stages 1 and 2 are complete. The upcoming public exhibitions are part of the scheme's ongoing detailed design phase, while land purchase also continues. Members of the public are welcome at either exhibition, which take place at:

**Ynysmaerdy Community Centre, Glan-Yr-Ely, Ynysmaerdy, CF72 8LJ.**

Monday, February 4 – 11.30am to 6.30pm.

**Coedely Community Centre, Tonyrefail, Porth, CF39 8BE.**

Friday, February 8 – 11.30am to 7pm.

Those attending will be able to view plans for the dualling scheme, and speak to Council Officers about any queries they have. Residents who cannot attend will be able to view plans and have their say on the Council website during the consultation week. This opportunity will end on Monday, February 11.

This process will also present the first opportunity for residents to view the Council's proposals to remove the roundabout near South Wales Fire and Rescue Service's headquarters, as part of the wider dualling scheme.



## Phase II of Llantrisant Community Route

Work has begun to create three new links to the existing Llantrisant Community Route, to further improve accessibility to the popular pathway.

In December 2017, the nearly mile-long Route opened for pedestrians and cyclists – starting at Cowbridge Road to the west and Westfield Court to the east. The path runs past the rear of Glamorgan Vale Retail Park and parallel to the A473, spanning the Llantrisant Town and Talbot Green electoral wards.



The Labour-run Council will now add three new links to further increase the Route's accessibility for local residents. This £154,000 scheme has been wholly funded by the Welsh Government, and **works got underway on Monday, January 21**. The scheme is scheduled to last up to six weeks.

The new links will be added at Burgesse Crescent, Green Park Housing Estate and the Glamorgan Vale Retail Park. The scheme also includes the installation of new fencing and gates, along with footpath construction and provision of new traffic signage. The Llantrisant Community Route will remain open throughout the scheme, and there will be no carriageway disruption at the three locations of work.

**Councillor Andrew Morgan, Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Highways**, said: "The Council has welcomed important Welsh Labour Government funding, secured to carry out this additional scheme on the Llantrisant Community Route. This is another example of the Council pursuing external funding in order to complement #RCTinvest and its £23.6m Highways Capital Programme for 2018/19.

"The Council has also recently started significant site clearance work in order to extend the Llantrisant Community Route in the future, through Penygawsi and Cross Inn. This will further increase the area's Active Travel offer, linking the path to the existing Church Village Bypass Community Route.

"The Route has proven very popular since it opened in late 2017, and this additional scheme will further increase accessibility for local residents."



## Exciting Plans for Mountain Ash

The Labour Cabinet have approved ambitious plans to redevelop the heart of Mountain Ash town centre, supporting exciting new opportunities and schemes in the area.

Proposals include the complete transformation of Rhos Square (Guto's Square) in Oxford Street, creating additional parking closer to the town centre and improved access for visitors and shoppers.

Rhos Square provides direct access to the town from the two main car parks and railway station, and is also the location of the town's weekly open-air market as well as the town's public toilets. The plans to deliver improved car parking will allow better access into the town for shoppers and visitors alike.



The proposed Mountain Ash town centre framework aims to bring together a series of investment projects that will improve access to the town centre and realign key services for local people - including exciting opportunities which are being presented through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the Valleys Taskforce.

This includes substantial investment in public transport, such as an increased train service from two trains per hour to four trains per hour at Mountain Ash railway station, which is situated in the town centre.

Other key schemes included in the draft Mountain Ash town centre regeneration framework, to be considered by Cabinet, are:

- The development of a **Community Hub**, bringing a range of community-based services into one ideally-located building to serve the people of the area.
- The **Town Centre Maintenance Grant Scheme**, providing financial support to traders, property owners, including vacant properties in order for them to undertake minor improvements and maintenance works, along with improvements to the external fronts of town centre properties.
- Plans to develop **Extra Care Housing for the Elderly and Vulnerable** in the area, delivering new and affordable flexible and adaptable accommodation.
- The multi-million pound **Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link**, improving accessibility and connectivity in an area where limited cross-valley linkage currently causes significant congestion at peak times.
- The development of an **Integrated Primary Care Facility**, providing state-of-the-art healthcare facilities in the heart of the town centre for the benefit of the wider community.

In order to facilitate the proposals for Rhos Square, Cabinet has approved the draft plans and agree to submit a planning application for the proposed redevelopment

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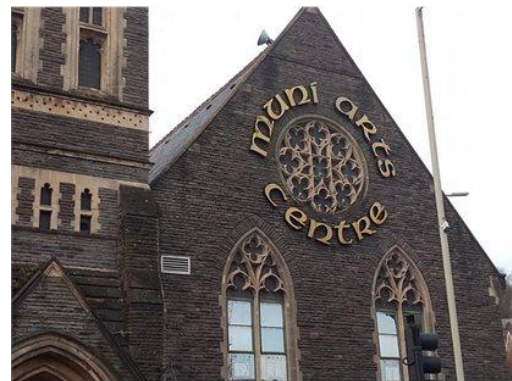
## **Muni Arts Centre Statement**

Following the recent closure of the Muni Arts Centre, the Council has opened the formal process to secure a new leasehold tenant for the Muni Arts Centre.

The 14-day 'window of opportunity' will allow interested parties to formally submit their expression of interest to deliver a sustainable future for the Muni Arts Centre as an artistic entertainment venue.

The commencement of this process is another important step to ensure the Muni re-opens its doors. The Council will aim to work with a preferred tenant by March 2019, with a view to completing a leasehold transfer by May 2019 (which may be subject to change depending on the proposals received).

**Councillor Rhys Lewis, Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being and Culture,** said: "From January 14<sup>th</sup>, the Council will provide a 14-day 'window of opportunity' for any commercial or community groups, and social enterprises, wishing to submit an initial expression of interest in the potential leasehold transfer of this building.



"This is another positive step forward in the process to re-open the Muni Arts Centre's doors to the public.

"A key part of this process will be the need to evidence a commitment to work with community partners, alongside the development of a viable business plan supported by strong governance arrangements.

"Through this process, the Council is looking for innovative, creative and sustainable proposals from either commercial or community-based organisations to re-develop this key music and entertainment venue, based in the heart of the Town Centre.

"Pontypridd is already benefitting from significant investment including the redevelopment of the Taff Vale site and the YMCA; the ongoing development and restoration of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park; and the newly established ADDO Creative's co-working space.

"The Council's desire is that the Muni Arts Centre compliments existing and planned cultural provision within the town."

Interested parties will be required to enter an agreement for a minimum 10-year leasehold transfer of the building.

The final date for submission of completed expressions of interest will be Wednesday, January 30, 2019 – by 5pm.

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## **New Footway for Cardiff Road, Nantgarw**

Work to replace a grass verge with a new footway at the northern end of A4054 Cardiff Road, to the south of Nantgarw Business Park has now commenced.

The £40,000 scheme will create a two metre-wide footway next to the northbound bus stop on Cardiff Road, which is located opposite the bus stop serving the southbound lane. The project is being wholly funded by the Welsh Labour Government, in support of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013.

The scheme will link the existing footways to either side of the grass verge, helping to create a safer passage for pedestrians in this busy area.



Works began on Monday, January 14, and are scheduled to last around four weeks. Two-way traffic flow on Cardiff Road is being maintained, although the works require a narrowing of the northbound carriageway.

**Councillor Andrew Morgan, Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Highways**, said: “The Council has welcomed the important funding from the Welsh Labour Government to carry out this footway scheme in Nantgarw. Securing external investment to improve our Highways remains a priority, complementing our own significant #RCTinvest funding and the £23.6m Highways Capital Programme for 2018/19.

“The Labour Council is continuing to support our aim of creating a healthy and active RCT, and we are promoting Active Travel within our local communities. To support this, in February 2018 we submitted our Integrated Network Map to Welsh Government, outlining the cycling and walking routes we plan to deliver in the next 15 years - this plan is available to view online.

“The footway scheme near Nantgarw Business Park will create a safer walking route for pedestrians in a busy area. During the estimated four weeks of work, a two-way flow of traffic will be maintained for traffic.”

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## Discovery Gateway Status for RCT Parks

The Welsh Government has announced that Ynysangharad War Memorial Park - home to the National Lido of Wales, Lido Ponty; and the Dare Valley Country Park have been granted Discovery Gateway status.

A recent announcement that the Council's historic park in the town of Pontypridd is to be developed as a Discovery Gateway site builds on the previous announcement which saw the Dare Valley Country Park in Aberdare identified as one of the first Valleys Regional Park Gateway sites in Wales.

With a total of 9 other named sites across Wales, the Dare Valley Country Park and the Ynysangharad War Memorial Park will share £7m of investment over two years as part of a major project to create a Valleys Regional Park, making the most of RCT's rich natural and cultural heritage to promote tourism and encourage active lifestyles.



Discovery Gateways aim to improve iconic trails that join up the South Wales Valleys through the plans which are set to be supported by £7m capital funding over two years.

In the months ahead, the Welsh Government will work closely with Rhondda Cynon Taf and the other relevant Valleys Local Authorities on the respective development plans for the chosen sites, delivering improvements to provide consistently high-quality facilities and helping to strengthen the visitors experience to the millions of people who already visit the Discovery Gateways sites.

The £7m total investment will start to connect the South Wales Valleys with high-quality walking trails and cycle routes. It will support the development of a high-quality network of uplands, woodlands, nature reserves, country parks, rivers, reservoirs and canals, as well as heritage sites across Wales and connect them with other towns and villages.

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## Council Roundup

At the last meeting of the Full Council on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January, the Labour Group successfully introduced two Notices of Motion - one calling on the UK Government to guarantee that Wales would be no worse off in terms of funding if (and when) any Brexit agreement can be formalised; and the second calling for an urgent review of the police funding formula in light of the massive cuts to frontline police forces over the last nine years.



It was surprising to see that the sole representative of the Cynon Valley Party and the independent Councillor for Tonteg join forces with the two Tory Councillors in voting against the Labour Group's calls to see the crucial funding, which has delivered approximately £4bn since 2000, protected in the post-Brexit landscape.

The second Motion recognised the substantial cuts to police force budgets over the course of the last nine years, which has resulted in almost 22,000 less officers on the streets to keep our communities safe. Whilst the Tories are claiming to have delivered on their promise to provide real-terms protection for English and Welsh police forces, the reality is that they are simply transferring the burden of funding on to the public by empowering Police & Crime Commissioners to double the precept they are able to raise through Council Tax. The Plaid Cymru Group proposed an amendment that would devolve policing functions to Wales, although under the current arrangements, a simple transfer would lead to huge further pressures on the Welsh Government that would not be sustainable.

At the meeting, the Leader also fielded questions on infrastructure developments in the Cynon Valley, the Council's significant investment in structures throughout the Rhondda, and also on the work of the Valleys Taskforce.

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