

Afan Forest Park Visitor Survey 2009 – Summary of findings

NPTCBC and Forestry Commission Wales commission an in depth Afan Forest Park visitor survey every two years to help understand the needs and wants of visitors to Afan Forest Park. The findings also help to inform any marketing and development work to be carried out in the Forest Park and to evaluate the continued improvements being made.

The general satisfaction with Afan Forest Park and the facilities available is perhaps best demonstrated by the finding **that nearly all (99%) of visitors would recommend Afan Forest Park as a place to visit.**

Summary of Main Findings

- i) **Cycling and mountain biking continue to dominate as reasons for visiting** the Forest Park (62%). Between January and September 2009 an additional 10,380 mountain bikers visited AFP compared to the same period of 2008, therefore 2009 stands to be the most successful year so far for mountain biking within the Forest Park. Complete 2009 visitor figures for Afan Forest Park are due in Feb 2010.
- ii) **Walking is the next most mentioned activity** within the survey with 35% of respondents specifically mentioning an activity connected to walking. (The recently published walking guides produced by Forestry Commission Wales in partnership with Glyncoerrwg Ponds Co-operative, Neath Port Talbot CBC and AFP Visitor Centre will further support the growth of the walking market in the Forest Park).
- iii) **The level of repeat visitors is high:** four out of five (80%) of visitors have been before. Such high levels of repeat visits can be viewed as very positive; new visitors recruited are likely to positively affect visitor numbers on an ongoing basis.
- iv) **Average spend per group at the Forest Park is up** on levels seen in 2007; **from £47 to £58** and this represents a rise above the rate of inflation. Spend varies considerably at the different sites within the Forest Park. At Rhyslyn, where there are few opportunities to spend money, spend was just £4 per group, rising to £39 at Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre and **£111 per group at Glyncoerrwg.** This shows that **visitors to Afan Forest Park spend more on average than those visiting other areas of the County Borough**

(average spend per group in the wider NPT area stands at £31.96 compared to £58.00 in the Forest Park).

- v) As recorded in previous years, **Afan Forest Park continues to appeal more to men than women**; in 2009 just over three quarters of those interviewed were men (76%) and just under a quarter were women (24%).
- vi) Afan Forest Park is **continuing to attract local visitors** with 49% of visitors travelling from within a ½ hour drive time, a higher proportion than in previous years. However, nearly a third (29%) of visitors traveled for over an hour to visit the Forest Park, including 18% who travelled for two hours or more.
- vii) **Mountain biking and cycling draws visitors from a greater distance**, with over a quarter (27%) of those visiting for this reason travelling for two hours or more. (This shows that Afan Forest Park is becoming firmly established as a mountain biking/ cycling destination. NPTCBC is currently leading on the South Wales Off Road Cycling Centre of Excellence bid for Convergence Funding which, if successful, will lead to further investment in Afan Forest Park as major mountain biking destination).
- viii) **The Forest Park impacts positively on the local tourism industry** with just over (54%) of those staying overnight doing so within a six mile radius of the Forest Park. Campsites remain the most mentioned accommodation type: 30% of those who stayed did so at a campsite in 2009.
- ix) Awareness of the www.afanforestpark.co.uk website continues to show a steady increase over time, over half (55%) of visitors to the Forest Park were aware of the site. (The tourism team is currently working on a redesign of this website to ensure that it continues to act as a valuable resource for potential visitors. The website is a key tool for converting potential visitors into actual visitors.)
- xi) Satisfaction ratings for information at Afan Forest Park (boards, signage, maps etc) has shown a marked increase from 2007 to 2009. (This could be due to the fact that there has been investment in interpretation over the last two years).