

**RESPONSE TO A REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS
REGULATION 29 OF THE CORONERS (INVESTIGATIONS) REGULATIONS
2013**

Please do not include any living persons' names in this document, in accordance with the Chief Coroner's [PFD Publication Policy \(2026\)](#).

THIS RESPONSE IS BEING SENT TO:

The Senior Coroner, Rachel Knight, for the Coroner Area [South Wales Central] in response to a '**REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATH REGULATION 28**' following an inquest into the deaths of **Helen Patching, Rachael Patching, Corey London** that concluded on **22 January 2026**.

1.	RESPONDENT In line with our duty under Regulation 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, [REDACTED], Interim Chief Executive of Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority, provides this response within 56 days (plus any extension granted) of the date of the Report to Prevent Future Deaths. The Authority recognises the tragic circumstances surrounding these deaths and extends its sincere condolences to the families and all those affected.
2.	DATE OF RESPONSE: 8th June 2026
3.	CONFIRMATION OF CORONER'S MATTERS OF CONCERN The MATTERS OF CONCERN were identified in the report are as follows: 1. There is a high rate of accidents, including some fatal accidents, from trips and slips in the area known as Waterfall Country. 2. A previous Prevention of Future Death report has led to the erection of signage concerning the risk of drowning in the water itself. However, the current signage provision does not adequately address the significant additional risk of accidental falling. Many walkers fail to understand the official routes, closed and open paths and the significant risk they face. 3. Serious and fatal accidents will continue to occur unless these risks are addressed;

	4. Mobile telephone signal is poor to non-existent in certain more remote areas, which created delay in alerting emergency services when accidents do occur.
4.	DETAILS OF ACTION TAKEN, how has the concern been addressed. [If no action is proposed please explain why here]. <i>Please note that any links to webpages included in the response will not be checked for sensitive information prior to publication, as the information is already online</i> The Authority has, and continues to take, the following actions in response to the Coroner's matters of concern. These actions include measures already implemented, those currently underway, and those being progressed in partnership with relevant organisations. Response to Matter of Concern 1: There is a high rate of accidents, including some fatal accidents, from trips and slips in the area known as Waterfall Country. Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority, hereafter referred to as 'the Authority', takes seriously all accidents within the National Park and we recognise that there are more accidents of this serious nature within this specific area because of its natural features. It is a river gorge with steep rocky sides. It is also a temperate rainforest, meaning that it experiences relatively high rainfall and humidity, it is wooded and mossy creating slippery conditions with exposed roots and rocks presenting trip hazards, while the steps and pathways down to the waterfalls can be wet, rocky and uneven. These features represent inherent natural hazards which cannot be removed without fundamentally altering the protected characteristics of the area and its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) protected habitat. Annual visitors to Waterfall Country are estimated to number between approximately 250,000 and 350,000. The Authority works in partnership with Natural Resources Wales, hereafter referred to as NRW, who are the principal landowner to provide more accessible routes (the red and green route) which have better surfaced pathways, way marking and safety information. Maps and signage are provided online, at the site and around the walk. Following continued erosion on the route of Footpath 86 in August 2022, the Authority took steps to close and remove the path from the Rights of Way network. This was completed on 1 February, 2024, through legal order and in line with relevant

legislation and consultations. There are several onsite measures to notify visitors of the closure.

NRW, as the landowner, has commenced works to create a new alternative circular route and viewing platform, bypassing the closed Footpath 86 in response to recommendations raised in the Visitor Safety Report commissioned by NRW in 2024/5. This work also includes provision for more permanent infrastructure to impede visitor access from the remaining legal Right of Way on to the closed route.

NRW has also undertaken site-specific assessments and interventions at higher-risk locations, including at Sgwd yr Pannwr, where access to exposed ledge areas is being reviewed and managed. Measures are being implemented to deter access to these locations where there is a foreseeable risk of falling, consistent with the wider approach to reducing access to high-hazard areas while maintaining the natural character of the site.

The Authority, together with NRW and in conjunction with other stakeholders, including Mountain Rescue and the emergency services, undertake regular safety meetings, review feedback from accidents to consider future preventative action and align communications, signage and information. The Authority invests in the provision of wardens and visitor engagement staff at their car parks and those we manage for NRW, to provide face-to-face advice and guidance to visitors; this is funded through car park income but, also through the Authority's core resources.

Matters of Concern 2 and 3 are addressed together, as both relate to route management, visitor understanding, and mitigation of ongoing risk within Waterfall Country.

(1) A previous Prevention of Future Death report has led to the erection of signage concerning the risk of drowning in the water itself. However, the current signage provision does not adequately address the significant additional risk of accidental falling. Many walkers fail to understand the official routes, closed and open paths and the significant risk they face;

(2) Serious and fatal accidents will continue to occur unless these risks are addressed;

NRW, as landowner, has adopted the Visitor Safety and Countryside Group (VSG) principles for managing risk in the countryside and in open spaces. Signage has been installed at key decision points along the Four Falls Trail and Four Falls Trail Link trails to highlight hazards and guide visitors along appropriate routes. The Authority's own approach to visitor safety reflects the same principles of balancing risk, conservation, and access, ensuring that visitors are appropriately informed while preserving the character of the landscape.

NRW is undertaking a programme of works to establish a link pathway to create a circular route reducing the likelihood of visitors leaving defined paths to access waterfalls. This includes the installation of fencing at identified locations to discourage access into higher hazard areas and to re-enforce route choices.

Route maps and information boards/panels currently provide key hazard information at relevant and appropriate locations and are aligned to NRW design principles for visitor management. The Authority supports these activities through the provision of information and input from our warden and visitor teams who are on-site daily at the key visitor access points in our management at Cwm Porth and Gwaun Hepste.

Through the Waterfalls Area Safety Advisory Group, the Authority continues to work in partnership with NRW and other stakeholders to ensure a consistent and co-ordinated approach to safety messaging and visitor management. Additional signage has also been installed to clearly indicate permanent path closures and diversions.

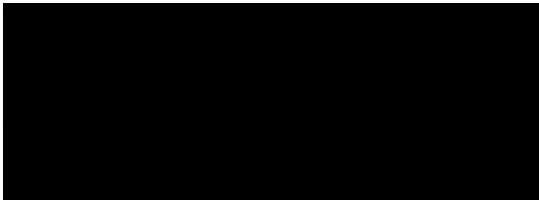
The Authority maintains an active approach to communications and safety advice. This includes the use of interpretive resources, such as a physical waterfall model located at Cwm Porth car park, to demonstrate the hidden risks and dangers associated with entering watercourses, particularly strong and unseen currents associated with waterfalls.

The Authority is working jointly with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and NRW to establish a communications plan for Waterfalls Country to ensure visitors are better prepared before reaching the site. In particular, the plan prioritises shared key messaging so that visitors understand how to stay safe in the area.

The Authority's Rights of Way team is supporting NRW in relation to changes to pathways and will provide advice and oversight where required. Where pathways need to be formally adopted as legal Public Rights of Way, these will be progressed through those processes, as required, to ensure that new pathways are reflected on Ordnance Survey maps.

Mobile telephone signal is poor to non-existent in certain more remote areas, which created delay in alerting emergency services when accidents do occur.

Responsibility for mobile network provision lies with telecommunication providers, however the Authority recognises the implications of limited coverage in emergency situations. In partnership with NRW, work is underway to improve waymarking to

	guide visitors to signposted/marked locations where multi-network emergency signal strength is more reliable, assisting visitors in contacting emergency services and relaying their location. The Authority continues to work with partners to explore further improvements as opportunities arise. Recently EE reception has become available in Ystradfellte for example. In the interim, the Authority has invested in signal-boosting measures and new radios to support the warden and visitor engagement teams. These have significantly improved communications, enabling first responders to contact emergency services sooner. The Authority continues to utilise the Airwave system with Mountain Rescue and the emergency services, supporting effective response times.
5.	DETAILS OF FURTHER ACTION PROPOSED <i>Please note that any links to webpages included in the response will not be checked for sensitive information prior to publication, as the information is already online.</i> The Authority would welcome the opportunity to facilitate a site visit for the coroner or a representative. This would provide an opportunity to offer a guided tour, giving further insight into both the unique qualities of the site and the challenges associated with its management. It would also enable demonstration of the ongoing actions in place to support a safe and enjoyable visitor experience, while safeguarding the special characteristics of the area. The Authority will continue to work with partners on all aspects of managing visitors in Waterfall Country. The Authority will also continue to explore opportunities to improve mechanisms for visitors to report safety concerns and site issues. This includes consideration of accessible reporting methods at key locations, such as digital or on-site tools, to enable timely identification of hazards.
6.	SIGNATURE:  Interim Chief Executive Officer