



Ms. R. Knight
HM Coroner for South Wales Central
Coroner's Office
The Old Courthouse
Courthouse Street
Pontypridd
CF37 1JW

Dear Ms Knight,

Response to Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths
Inquests into the deaths of Helen Patching, Rachael Patching, and Corey
Longdon (the deceased)

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council ("NPT") wishes to thank the Coroner for writing to us and bringing to our attention the various matters of concern that were prompted by her investigations into the tragic deaths of Helen, Rachael, and Corey.

Our thoughts continue to be with the families and friends of Helen, Rachael, and Corey.

We acknowledge the Coroner's concerns in this matter and have accordingly considered our role within Waterfall Country and any additional safety measures that can be put in place in light of the circumstances concerning the deaths of Helen, Rachael and Corey.

We can confirm that we are liaising and will continue to support National Resources Wales (NRW), Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority (BBNPA),

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCTCBC) and Powys County Council (PCC) relating to safety measures that can be put in place in Waterfall Country.

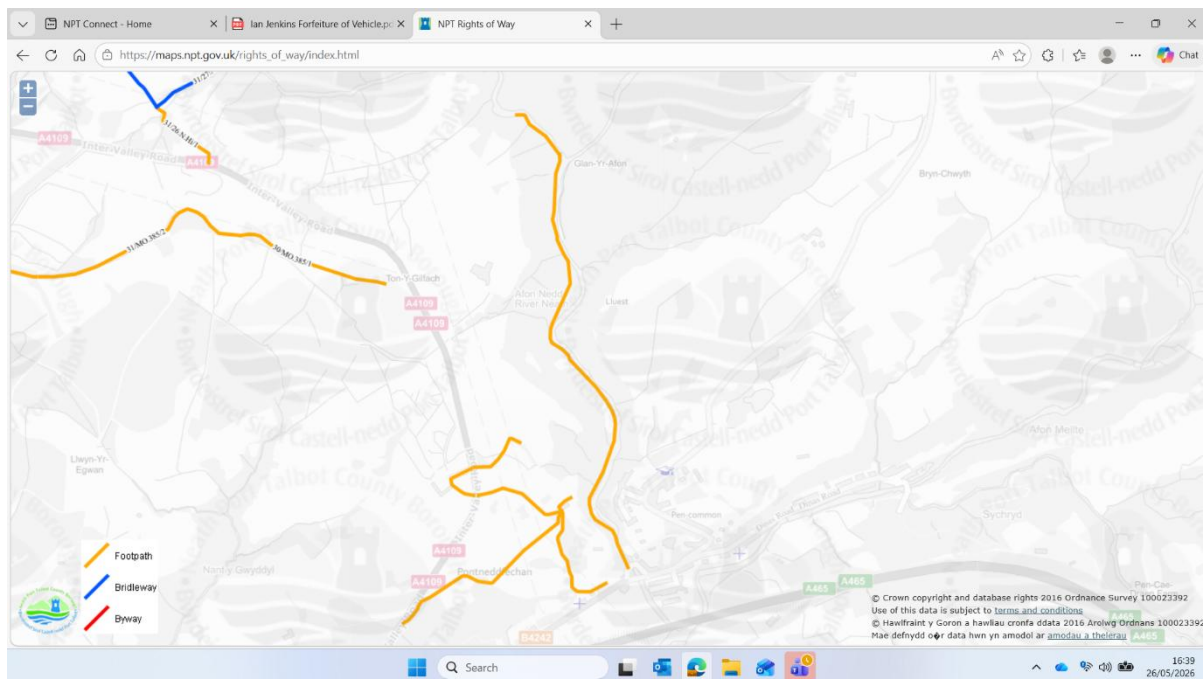
In relation to the specific concerns raised by the Coroner in his Regulation 28 Report, NPT can respond as follows:

1. NPT has responsibility for registered rights of way within its county borough area, including the section of the Waterfall Country as shown below:



2. The hatching of the plan above shows the area for which NPT is responsible. This includes a Special Area of Conservation and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
3. The screenshot below shows the rights of way for which NPT has

responsibility within Waterfall Country (these can be found on [NPT Rights of Way](#)):



4. As NPT, one of our responsibilities is to maintain the surface of the footpaths within the above area and ensure that they are signposted accordingly from the highway. We also have responsibility for the maintenance of a number of bridges within the area, together with parking enforcement on the highway, the provision of public toilets, and investment and managing the leasehold of the new Visitor Hub. All Public Rights of Ways (PROWs) are signposted with the following sign:



5. Although there is no legal requirement to warn users of the PROW network of the risks of using the rights of way, we are taking steps to try to improve awareness of the risks, particularly surrounding the risks of entering the water.
6. The Dramatic Heart of Wales ([Waterfall Country Pontneddfechan | Neath Port Talbot Destinations](#)) (a website designed and hosted by NPT) now contains a revised warning on the page relating to Waterfall Country which provides:

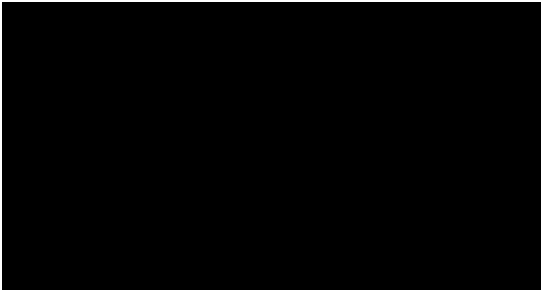
Entering the water poses a serious risk of life-changing injury or death due to cold, deep, fast-flowing conditions and hidden hazards. Do not swim, jump into pools, or wade into rivers. Do not enter the water unless taking part in activities if properly trained or with a licensed operator. Take care to avoid slips and falls, wear suitable footwear and remain on designated paths.

7. The new Visitor Hub is currently subject to an active procurement process however is designed to manage visitor activity more effectively and reduce pressure on the local community within Waterfall Country. Amongst other benefits to the local vicinity within Waterfall Country, it will provide clear visitor information and safety guidance, promoting responsible behaviour and safe enjoyment of the area.
8. Further, collaboration is ongoing with NRW, BBNPA and other neighbouring local authorities in relation to signage and visitor information.
9. The Council is also committed to developing and agreeing Water Safety Policy this financial year as a direct response to the National Drowning Prevention Strategy. This will help to further strengthen the measures in place across the whole of NPT.

As already outlined, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is committed to working collaboratively with all our partners in this matter to reduce the risks in this particular area and we are (and continue to be) in the process of doing so to try to minimise any such future incidents.

We hope that this information is sufficient for the Coroner.

Yours faithfully



Chief Legal Officer
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council