

# Geotourism in an Industrial Setting: The South Wales Coalfield Community Geoheritage Network

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Geotourism is normally associated with areas of rural landscape, which often already draw many, more-traditional types of tourist. However, geology is an important factor in the development of industry in areas that would not normally be associated with tourism. Exploitation of geological resources for energy or raw materials can cause ugly scarring and damage to the landscape, which might be thought to be counter-productive for tourism. But these man-made exposures can provide potential for the interpretation of that geology, which can then be linked to culture and industrial archaeology, to provide a holistic story about the history of the area.

South Wales has a long tradition of exploitation of coal and there is a strong link with the history and culture of the area. The British Institute for Geological Conservation is developing a series of interpretive trails within the coalfield to demonstrate the geology and its links with the local society. This geopark-like initiative has the potential for drawing visitors into the area, which has suffered econom-

ically in recent years. It will also generate “internal geotourism” by bringing the geoheritage of the area to the attention of the local people, especially among the younger generations, to help them understand the important role that the natural world has played in their history and culture.

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