

IRONBRIDGE GORGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE



Management Plan

IRONBRIDGE GORGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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FOREWORD

by The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP,
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

I am delighted to present this Management Plan for the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site.

Ironbridge Gorge is well known throughout the world for its significant contribution to the Industrial Revolution that started in Britain in the 18th century and subsequently spread across the globe. The unique landscape of furnaces, works, dwellings and transport systems in the Gorge, and, in particular, the great Iron Bridge at the heart of the Site, are powerful and evocative symbols of the Industrial Revolution which laid the foundations of modern life today. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee recognised this in 1986 when the Site, part of the first tranche of UK nominations for World Heritage status, was added to the World Heritage Site List as a Site of *outstanding universal value*.

The Government is accountable to UNESCO and the wider international community for the future conservation and presentation of this important site. It is a responsibility we take seriously. This Management Plan has been developed in close co-operation with the organisations responsible for the day to day care of the Site, together with the local community and others with a special interest in it. The Plan aims to ensure that the conservation and management of the Gorge is undertaken in a sensitive and appropriate manner. It highlights the key issues affecting the Site both now and in the future, and outlines how these will be addressed.

I am extremely grateful to those bodies and individuals who have worked so hard to produce this Plan, in particular English Heritage, ICOMOS (UK), Councillor Philip Davis, and the other members of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Strategy Group. I feel sure that this document will prove to be an invaluable management tool to all those involved in the presentation and conservation of this very special place.

Tessa Jowell.

THE RT HON TESSA JOWELL MP



PREFACE

by Councillor Philip Davis, Leader of Telford & Wrekin Council and Chair of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Strategy Group.

Those of us living in Telford and East Shropshire are privileged to have inherited a rich industrial culture which we hold in trust for the nation and the world. The Ironbridge Gorge gave iron mass production to the world, from which flowed technical and social developments that created the modern world. No Ironbridge, no space shuttle, no industrial revolution, no 21st century information revolution – or at least, not in our lifetimes.

As the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport notes in her Foreword, the outstanding global significance of the Ironbridge Gorge was recognised in the first group of UK World Heritage Site inscriptions. Since then, quite rightly, UNESCO has required all World Heritage Sites to meet management criteria designed to protect their unique character and quality.

This Management Plan marks both an end and a beginning. It closes the essential first phase of identifying key aims and objectives. The Plan marks the culmination of a number of years' work by partner organisations involved in the day to day management of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. The commitments and proposals contained within the Plan reflect the views and priorities of those organisations and of the wider community, which has also been involved in its development.

Although the publication of this Management Plan is an important milestone, it is not the end of the journey. Ahead of us lies the ongoing task of implementing the Plan. Just as the production of the Plan relied upon partnership and co-operation, so will its implementation. Individual organisations and groups and the wider community will each have their own role to play in helping to ensure that the Plan is translated into action on the ground. The Plan will provide a guide and context for the many organisations and individuals that make decisions affecting the World Heritage Site. The Plan will help us to make these decisions in a co-ordinated and consistent way.

The management of the World Heritage Site will continue to be overseen by the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Strategy Group, assisted by the World Heritage Site Co-ordinator. All the Strategy Group partners will continue working together to secure the effective protection and interpretation of the area's historical significance. We also aim to enhance the area as a vibrant, living community while continuing to attract visitors in ways which respect the area's historical importance and the quality of life of its residents.

An 18th century visitor to the Gorge described it as “the most extraordinary district in the world”. We take pride in our World Heritage status. It is both a celebration of this globally significant past and, via the Management Plan, an opportunity to protect and interpret the Ironbridge Gorge for the next generation. Few tasks can be more important.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip Davis".

COUNCILLOR PHILIP DAVIS

VISION

The Ironbridge Gorge can offer a powerful insight into the great cycle of industrialisation that had its eighteenth-century roots in Coalbrookdale and shaped Britain's destiny uniquely in the nineteenth century. Excellence in this mission will be achieved by bringing the intense experiences of the conserved factories, furnaces, monuments, dwellings and working machines together with a broad interpretation of the industrial landscape and its settlements and communities. The prize will be one of the most complete and ambitious interpretations of early industrialisation in the world, within a vital, living valley secure in its unique heritage. To these ends, the following organisations are committed to working together to:

- **Safeguard the unique industrial heritage and character of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site for present and future generations**
- **Strengthen the World Heritage Site as a vibrant living and working community**
- **Interpret the World Heritage Site in ways which ensure its accessibility to all**

Bridgnorth District Council

English Heritage

Environment Agency

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

International Council on Monuments & Sites UK (ICOMOS UK)

Ironbridge Gorge Chamber of Trade

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Parish Councils within the World Heritage Site

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

Shropshire County Council

Telford & Wrekin Council

The Green Wood Trust

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