

An aerial photograph of the Coalport China Museum. The image shows a large, dark blue river flowing through a lush green forest. In the center, there are several large, multi-story brick buildings with distinctive conical chimneys. To the right, there is a parking lot with several cars. The background consists of rolling hills covered in dense green trees under a clear blue sky with a few clouds.

SECTION 3

CURRENT MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Coalport China Museum

This section describes the roles and responsibilities of the organisations and agencies involved in the management of the WHS together with the statutory designations and planning framework that relate to the area.

3. CURRENT MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

3.1 Ownerships and interests

3.1.1 The Ironbridge Gorge WHS is an extensive and diverse area with a great many different ownerships and interests. There are a few major landowners, notably Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (which owns and manages nine museum sites within the WHS), Ironbridge (Telford) Heritage Foundation (which owns the museum properties formerly the property of Telford Development Corporation), Severn Gorge Countryside Trust (which owns and manages 285 hectares of woodland and open space within the WHS) and Telford & Wrekin Council. The remainder of the area comprises hundreds of individual land and property owners.

3.1.2 Within the WHS, there are also numerous loosely-defined groups and organisations with different and sometimes conflicting interests. These include residents, businesses, academics and researchers, tourists and visitors, leisure and recreational groups and bodies with statutory responsibilities.

3.1.3 There have been several changes in local government since the designation of the WHS in 1986. Telford Development

Corporation was wound up in 1991 when its properties in the WHS passed to Ironbridge (Telford) Heritage Foundation and Severn Gorge Countryside Trust. In 1998 a unitary authority, Telford & Wrekin Council, was established, which is responsible for all local government services in the WHS, except for those in the small area south of the River Severn which remains the responsibility of Bridgnorth District Council and Shropshire County Council.

3.2 Management responsibility

3.2.1 There are a range of Government departments and agencies, local authorities and other organisations with management responsibilities for or interests in the WHS, namely:

3.2.2 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport takes the lead, in consultation with other Departments, in the UK Government's compliance with the World Heritage Convention. It is responsible for responding to requests from UNESCO for information about the condition of the UK's World Heritage Sites, and for ensuring that Management Plans are produced and implemented. For cultural sites in England, it is advised on Management Plan issues by English Heritage, and also provides funding to ICOMOS UK for general advice on WHS issues. **The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions** sets

the national planning policy context for WHS and provides guidance to local planning authorities on their planning responsibilities in relation to such Sites.

3.2.3 English Heritage is the Government's statutory adviser on the historic environment. The organisation was created in 1983 to 'protect the country's historic environment and to promote the public access to, and enjoyment of the cultural heritage'. Current concern is with the contribution of heritage to social and economic regeneration, creating the climate for successful and sustainable renewal of areas in decline. Although the Iron Bridge is owned by Telford & Wrekin Council it is in the guardianship of English Heritage on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

3.2.4 ICOMOS UK, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, is a worldwide body of conservation professionals with national arms in about 105 countries around the world, including the UK. The organisation advises UNESCO on Cultural World Heritage Sites. The Government's Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) particularly mentions ICOMOS's role in providing advice and assistance in carrying forward the work of ensuring that Management Plans for WHSs are put in place.

3.2.5 English Nature is the Government's statutory adviser on nature conservation designating and exercising control over Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), of which there are a number within the Ironbridge Gorge WHS.

3.2.6 The Environment Agency's wide ranging regulatory responsibilities have a significant impact upon the environmental quality of the Gorge. The Agency regulates abstraction of water from the Severn and controls discharges to it. It also regulates air emissions from Ironbridge Power Station (just outside the WHS Boundary), and has various responsibilities in relation to waste management, flood defence, fisheries, conservation and recreation.

3.2.7 Telford & Wrekin Council is the Unitary Local Authority for the majority of the WHS. The Council is responsible for the full

range of local authority functions within its area, including planning and conservation, lifelong learning, highways and engineering, leisure and recreation, economic development and tourism.

3.2.8 Shropshire County Council and Bridgnorth District Council are responsible for local authority functions in that part of the WHS outside Telford & Wrekin.

3.2.9 The WHS includes parts of the areas of five Parish Councils. The largest part of the WHS lies within **The Gorge** parish with smaller areas within **Madeley, Broseley and Barrow** parishes and a very small area within **Sutton Maddock** parish. These local councils play a key role in representing the interests of local residents and businesses within their areas and may undertake a range of responsibilities which can enhance the functions of the major local authorities, including the development of culture, leisure and tourism. The extent of involvement by Parish Councils in the management of the WHS varies. The Gorge and Madeley Parish Councils, within whose areas most of the population of the WHS live, are most active and have access to the greatest resources with which to undertake projects and activities.

3.2.10 The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust was established as an independent trust in 1967 and does not receive significant revenue funding from local or national government. It now operates nine museum sites within the WHS in addition to a number of free-standing industrial remains. The Trust owns many of the most important sites in the WHS and manages others which are in the ownership of the Ironbridge (Telford) Heritage Foundation. It is the lead body in the interpretation of the landscapes and monuments of the Gorge to the public and to educational groups. Within the museums are many collections of machines, products and social artefacts relating to the industries of the Gorge, and all collections are designated as of national significance. Its Library and Archive contain substantial documentation on the industries, buildings and lands of the Gorge and the activities of the people who lived and worked there. The Trust manages a substantial tourist business and has played a very significant role in the regeneration of parts of the WHS.

3.2.11 The Ironbridge Institute is a joint venture between the University of Birmingham and the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust. Based in the Long Warehouse at the Coalbrookdale Museum site, the Institute teaches post graduate courses in Heritage Management and Industrial Archaeology.

3.2.12 Severn Gorge Countryside Trust was established in 1991 to take forward the long term management and conservation of woodlands, grasslands, heath land, pools and public open spaces throughout the WHS and surrounding areas. The landholding includes many areas of high wildlife value, including two SSSIs. The Trust has established working plans for the main woodland sites in conjunction with the Forestry Commission and English Nature and comprehensive management plans for its sites following extensive consultation. Most of the Trust's grasslands are managed under Countryside Stewardship agreements with MAFF. Access work has improved the quality of many paths on Trust land and its local open spaces are managed through regular contract maintenance. The Trust actively involves many local people in its work.

3.3 Planning and policy framework

3.3.1 The UK has a highly developed and comprehensive system of land use planning and environmental conservation and protection. This has evolved over time and provides a significant degree of protection for areas of archaeological, architectural, historic, cultural, landscape and ecological importance. Formal controls include Listed Building, Conservation Area and Scheduled Monuments Consents and Tree Preservation Orders.

3.3.2 The planning system is hierarchical in nature, with the broad planning policies set nationally and more detailed policies produced by local planning authorities. Government Planning Guidance is provided by Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) which set out policies on key issues and provide guidance to local authorities in the preparation of their development plans. PPGs particularly relevant to the WHS are PPG9 (Nature Conservation), PPG13 (Transport), PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment), PPG16 (Archaeology),

and PPG21 (Tourism).

3.3.3 The importance that the Government attaches to WHS status is confirmed in PPG15 which states that "*the outstanding international importance of the site [is] a key material consideration to be taken into account by local planning authorities in determining planning and listed building consent applications, and by the Secretary of State in determining cases on appeal or following call-in*".

3.3.4 PPG15 also states that local authorities should '*develop specific policies for protecting these sites*' and that these policies should reflect the '*outstanding universal value*' of the sites and their importance for future generations. Clearly then, while a WHS is not accorded special legislative protection in the same way as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Parks, for example, it is incumbent upon local authorities to use existing planning powers to maximise the level of protection for the WHS.

3.3.5 PPG16 (Archaeology) advises local authorities to include in their development plans, policies for protection, enhancement and conservation of sites of archaeological interest and their settings. PPG9 (Nature Conservation) requires local authorities to include in their Development Plans policies for the protection, conservation and enhancement of sites of nature conservation value.

3.3.6 The significance of the WHS is also recognised in the statutory Development Plans for the area, namely Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Joint Structure Plan, Wrekin Local Plan, and Bridgnorth District Local Plan.

3.3.7 A number of regional strategies are also of relevance to the WHS, notably the Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Planning Guidance, and the Regional Cultural Strategy. The contribution that the historic environment makes to the quality of life within the region and to the regional economy through tourism is recognised in these strategies. In addition there are also a number of local, strategic documents of relevance to the area's WHS status, including:

- Telford & Wrekin Local Transport Plan
- Shropshire Local Transport Plan
- Local Agenda 21 Strategy
- Community Strategies
- Environment Agency Local Environmental Action Plan (Middle Severn)
- Severn Gorge Countryside Trust Development Strategy
- Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Development Strategy

3.4 Statutory designations

3.4.1 In addition to its WHS status, the area also has a range of other designations of relevance to the Management Plan, namely:-

- Severn Gorge Conservation Area
- Over 250 Listed Buildings
- 7 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- 2 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Tick Wood and Benthall Edge; Lincoln Hill)