

MINUTES OF THE IRONBRIDGE GORGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE STEERING GROUP MEETING

HELD AT IGMT Coalbrookdale on 16 February 2018

PRESENT:

Prof. Les Sparks

Anna Brennand – Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Cllr Nicola Lowery – Telford & Wrekin Council

Val Hulme – Telford & Wrekin Council

Andy Wigley – Shropshire Council

Cllr Alan Mackenzie – Madeley Town Council

Cllr Heather Oldershaw – Gorge Parish Council

Cllr Simon Harris – Shropshire Council

Peter Boland – Historic England

Tom Jones – English Heritage

Barbara Taylor – Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

APOLOGIES: **Sir Neil Cossons, Chris Turley** – Telford & Wrekin Council, **Joy Tetsill** – Shropshire Council, **Russell Rowley** – Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, **Phoebe Farrell** – Telford & Wrekin Council, **Tim Slator** – English Heritage, **Matthew Vella** – English Heritage, **Cllr Alan Taylor** – Broseley Town Council

Intro: Les Sparks welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Tom Jones from English Heritage who will be reporting on the Iron Bridge Project in the absence of Tim Slator who could not make the meeting. Tom Jones is Public Relations Manager West for the Iron Bridge Project.

Iron Bridge Conservation Project

The project remains on schedule and good progress is being made. The road surface has been lifted and grit blasting to the paint work has commenced. English Heritage launched its Crowd Funding bid on 13 November for the final £25K needed to allow the Project to commence following the major donation of €1m from the Hermann Reemtsma Foundation in Germany. The initial £25K target was met within 48 hours and the closing total was £47.5K from 911 supporters making this the most successful English Heritage giving campaign ever. The campaign also prompted a number of associated donations and particularly a great response from the local community and Tom Jones expressed his thanks to the local community and local stakeholders on behalf of English Heritage. All the monies will be invested directly into the Conservation Project.

The Hard Hat tours offered as part of the funding incentive have received a large uptake and are currently being re-scheduled, along with further Hard Hat tours for invited guests and interested parties. Following feedback from local businesses, temporary lighting has been installed for the footpath across the Bridge. Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust have produced a replica radial, for demonstration purposes, which was cast at the foundry at Blists Hill Victorian Town. Severn Trent Water have now engaged with the project and have agreed to replace one of the two cast-iron water pipes. A full opening of the walkway, which will include interpretation, is still planned for Easter. Volunteers are being recruited with support from the Museum, to support English Heritage staff to help interpret the Bridge works and assist visitors on the walkway. Press visits are planned ahead of the opening of the walkway.

Power Station

Shropshire Council reported that the Prior Notification application for the demolition of the Power Station was determined on 6 November 2017. This was linked to a Section 106 Agreement that required the following:

- Pre-demolition historic building recording of the Ironbridge B station in accordance with historic England's guidance. Uniper have agreed to publish an academic paper summarising the findings in a suitable peer review journal to ensure the research outputs (which form part of the public benefits) of this work are fully realised. A full photographic record of the demolition process, from commencement to completion, will also be provided.
- The retained Pump House and bridge from Iron Bridge A will be subject to regular structural inspections on a four year cycle and major defects rectified. The initial inspection has been completed and the Pump House windows have also now been fully boarded up to protect them and exclude birds from the building.
- A fixed viewpoint photographic survey to provide a photographic record of the site from key viewpoints prior to demolition and photomontages of the situation post demolition. The survey has now been completed by Lathams. These viewpoint can also be used to assess the effects of any subsequent redevelopment of the site.

Negotiations regarding the sale of the Power Station site remain ongoing and no public announcements have been made. Likewise, no date has yet been given for the commencement of the main phase of demolition works (although some demolition of conveyor belts has been undertaken as part of the preparatory work).

AOB

Les Sparks stepped down as Chair of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Steering Group. A successor is actively being sought from Steering Group member contacts. Les Sparks was thanked for his independence, scrutiny and strong leadership of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Steering Group over many years.

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