

## **1. A new Wrexham Heritage Strategy 2018 – 2028**

### **1.1. Vision**

**‘To enable the full potential of our heritage to flourish, so that it can make the maximum possible contribution and enrich all aspects of life in the County Borough, for the benefit of local residents and visitors alike.’**

### **1.2. Mission Statement**

**‘This vision will be brought about by better conserving, interpreting and promoting the area’s key heritage assets.’**

### **1.3. Recommendations:**

1.4. Our recommendations fall into six areas each with proposals for action. The Action Plan at the end of the strategy lays out in more detail what is needed to make progress in each area with an indication of likely timescales.

### **1.5. Improve co-ordination and consultation.**

1.6. There are a diverse range of organisations and individuals with responsibility for the heritage of Wrexham County Borough. In order for this strategy to make a difference we believe there is a need to establish a new co-ordinating body or partnership to identify key developmental needs; prioritise actions; to identify funding opportunities and to create those vital linkages that will make the whole strategy work. We propose that this new partnership be established immediately and should meet up-to twice a year through the life of the strategy. Membership will be open to anyone with an interest, but representation will be sought from WCBC (Heritage, Conservation, Planning, Education and Destination Management); National Trust; CRT; Visit Wales; Cadw; CPAT; Community Councils; Church in Wales; Heritage Groups (Brymbo, Holt, Cefn Mawr Regeneration Partnership, NWMAT etc.) and the North East Wales Heritage Forum.

### **1.7. Recommendation 1: Establish a new coordinating body, ‘The Wrexham Heritage Partnership’ to drive forward the Strategy.**

### **1.8. Identify Conservation Needs.**

1.9. The conservation and preservation of our surviving heritage assets whether they are ancient monuments, listed buildings, artefacts, archival or oral history must be a basic underlying tenet of any heritage strategy. The conservation and curation of the County Borough Museums and Archive collections is detailed in the services Collections Management Plan, whilst the scope of what we collect is detailed in our Acquisition and Disposal Policies which were last agreed by the Council in 2015 and will be reviewed again around 2020.

- 1.10. In terms of ancient monuments, those monuments deemed to be of ‘national importance’ are known as Scheduled Monuments and are the responsibility of the Welsh Government Historic Environment Service (Cadw). Approximately 10% of the known monument stock is legally protected in this way, where under the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 it is an offence if any ground disturbance takes place within a prescribed legally protected area without the consent of Welsh Ministers.
- 1.11. The other 90% of known monuments are protected under the planning process. In Wrexham, the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) administers the areas Historic Environment Record (HER), a database of known archaeological sites and monitors planning applications for potential conflicts as the archaeological curator. HER should be used to support evidence-based decision making relating to the historic environment and guidance on its use has been produced by Cadw. If necessary, the Trust will recommend to the planning authority that a particular programme of archaeological work takes place to be funded by the developer which could vary between a desk top assessment and excavation. This is carried out by independent archaeological contractors working to a detailed brief prepared by the Trust itself.
- 1.12. In the case of Listed Buildings, that is, buildings deemed by the Welsh Government to be of architectural significance, although under the overall guidance of Cadw, day to day monitoring and control is carried out by the County Borough Council.
- 1.13. Grant aid for specific conservation projects is available from Cadw for works on Scheduled Monuments and from Cadw and the Council for works to listed buildings. The Heritage Lottery Fund can also provide grant assistance where a project satisfies their strategic objectives (see above).
- 1.14. **Recommendation 2: We propose to undertake an audit of key sites in order to identify and cost their conservation needs. Funding will then be applied for to support a rolling programme of work over the life of the strategy.**
- 1.15. **Develop linkages between key heritage assets.**
- 1.16. Heritage sites do not exist in isolation but can be linked to related sites by common themes, common locations, prominent individuals or significant events. Although historically associated, linked sites can be separated by distance. Making connections between such sites, therefore, could both promote longer dwell times in the area and encourage additional visits. This would be economically beneficial to all concerned, especially to related businesses such as accommodation and catering providers. The connections created could, for example, be in the form of trails, promotional literature, websites, ibeacon networks, use of social media and branded road signs.
- 1.17. Potential Heritage Hubs and the sites within them will be decided by the Partnership but are likely to focus on Industrial Heritage; Borderlands; Churches; Historic towns and villages and Wrexham Town Centre.

1.18. **Recommendation 3: Establish of a network of Heritage Hubs and seek new and imaginative ways of linking heritage sites with associated services and businesses.**

1.19. **Identify Key developmental opportunities.**

1.20. In addition to conserving, interpreting and connecting existing heritage sites, there is the potential for progressing key developmental opportunities linked to the heritage hub model detailed above. Bold projects will have to be devised to attract attention from both Visit Wales and other funding bodies. Heritage hubs will also need to create employment opportunities and contribute to an outstanding visitor offer with a regional significance if they are to be supported or have any longevity. This is likely to also require a level of match funding and backing from both this heritage strategy and the Destination Management Action Plan if they are to succeed.

1.21. **Recommendation 4: Identify and seek funding for key developmental opportunities to strengthen the heritage hubs.**

1.22. **To improve the marketing and promotion of our Heritage**

1.23. Throughout the consultation regarding this strategy our correspondents stressed the importance of making linkages between the heritage sites themselves and with other associated businesses. In order for this to be effective we believe that it is essential that a distinctive brand be developed to reflect the area's unique heritage.

1.24. The brand could include a distinctive logo as well as a prescribed pallet of interpretative tools including graphic panel and publication designs, fonts and colours.

1.25. The brand would then be used in interpretative media; social media; publications; road signs and would be an effective way of linking all of the areas heritage attractions under a single unified banner.

1.26. However, there is little point in undertaking a branding exercise unless that branding can be effectively utilised. It important, therefore, that we both know who our prospective customers are (whether they be visitors or our local communities) and we are able to effectively communicate with them (in terms of what they want and learn from their experiences of visiting our heritage). In terms of promoting the brand we will also require an armoury of effective, imaginative and cost-effective methods at our disposal.

1.27. **Recommendation 5: Develop a distinct 'Heritage Brand' for Wrexham's heritage and seek new and imaginative ways that the brand can be marketed and promoted.**

1.28. **Encourage young people to engage with their local heritage.**

- 1.29. We are also keen to develop closer engagement with young people either in formal school-based activities or informal visits and activities. Anecdotally we are aware that approximately 75% of schools who engage regularly with Wrexham Museum are within walking distance of the museum. Other schools further afield either don't visit museums or heritage sites or visit facilities further away such as in Chester, Liverpool or Manchester. One possibility might be for schools to 'adopt' a local monument or Heritage Hub; they could then develop learning resources linked to the site(s), produce guided tours for local people and even develop site-based interpretation.
- 1.30. **Recommendation 6: identify key educational opportunities to increase the number of school visits to key heritage assets.**