

Report To: **Cabinet**

Date of Meeting: **25 June 2019**

Lead Member / Officer: **Councillor Bobby Feeley /Tony Ward, Head of Highways & Environmental Services**

Report Author: **Huw Rees, Countryside and Heritage Services Manager**

Title **Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site Management Plan**

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1. **What is the report about?**

For members to endorse the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site (WHS) Management Plan (Appendix 1) prior to its submission by the World Heritage Site Board to the Welsh Ministers and the Department of Digital Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

2. **What is the reason for making this report?**

The County of Denbighshire has within its boundary over 10 miles of the Llangollen Canal which is part of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal WHS. Denbighshire County Council is one of the four main partners on the WHS Strategic Board and contributed to the resourcing of the WHS Management Plan.

The Plan will provide a clear framework for decision-making by the four partner organisations involved in Management of the World Heritage Site and its surrounding buffer Zone namely the Canal & River Trust, Denbighshire County Council, Shropshire Council and Wrexham County Borough Council.

3. **What are the Recommendations?**

That Members endorse the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal WHS Management Plan 2019–2029 to enable Denbighshire County Council as one of the partners on the World Heritage Site Strategic Board to approve its submission to the Welsh Ministers and the UK Governments Department of Digital Culture, Media and Sport.

4. **Report details**

The Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2009, as a masterpiece of historic transport development and an outstanding example of the advances in canal building in the Industrial Revolution, one of the fundamental turning points of human history. It is an 11 mile (18 km) linear stretch of canal and associated features, combining the northern end of the Ellesmere Canal and the Llangollen Canal that joins it at Trevor Basin. The majority of the World Heritage Site (10.5 miles) lies within Wales, with the remaining 0.5 miles within England. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) advocate the production of a Management Plan for each World Heritage Site to bring together all responsible parties and enable a co-ordinated approach to the management of the site ensuring that the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site is maintained, sustained and communicated.

Arcadis Ltd. was appointed to develop the new 10 year Management Plan. The appointment was made on behalf of the World Heritage Strategic Board by a task and finish group representing the four partners organisations. Arcadis Ltd. has undertaken an independent review of the existing Management Plan, an initial series of consultation workshops and drop-in sessions before producing the Draft Management Plan, which was, then subject to formal, public consultation.

The Management Plan (Appendix 1) provides a brief resume of the reasons for inscription, its Outstanding Universal Value, cultural significance, its attributes, authenticity and integrity. It summarises the policy planning and context within which the site is protected. It details the vision and objectives and identifies by theme the issues and opportunities that may potentially affect the World Heritage Site during the Management Plan period. It provides an Action Plan that identifies lead organisations, timescales for delivery and sets out a monitoring process.

The Management Plan reiterates the Vision for the World Heritage Site “To inspire people to celebrate, enjoy and value the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site safeguarding it for future generations”.

The World Heritage Site will continue to be managed by an effective partnership, working together to seek:

- A community with a vital sense of its own culture and heritage;
- The sustainability and preservation of the World Heritage Site itself; and
- Enjoyment of the optimum economic, social and environmental benefits that heightened status can bring to the people of North Wales and North Shropshire.

**5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

The WHS Management Plan contains actions that specifically contribute to the Environment priority in the Corporate Plan. Particularly ‘increase the biodiversity of important habitats’ and ‘Raise the profile as a location to visit, in order to capitalise on Denbighshire’s economic potential’.

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

Any resources required to implement the Action Plan will be sought through a combination of cash limited budgets, external grant funding and by working collectively with the other three partner organisations.

**7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

A Well-being Impact Assessment has not been completed for this report. The reason for this is that the WHS Management Plan has been developed taking into account ‘Managing Change in World Heritage’ The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the seven Goals set out in The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the appropriate goals from the seventeen contained in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2015.

The Management Plan sets out ten themes and objectives and links them to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals 2015.

- *Theme 1 - Conserve and Maintain*  
*Objective - Protection and conservation of the assets, which make up the World Heritage Site and its landscape*
- *Theme 2- Protect the Outstanding Universal Value*

*Objective* - Protection and conservation of those elements that comprise the Site's OUV while accommodating appropriate change.

- *Theme 3 – Strengthen understanding and awareness*

*Objective* - Develop and strengthen the understanding of the Outstanding Universal Value and the role the World Heritage Site played in the development of civil engineering.

- *Theme 4 – Promote sense of place*

*Objective* - To use the character and distinctiveness of the place and the landscape to attract people to live, visit and invest in employment and leisure opportunities promoting the site as a gateway to the natural, built, social and cultural heritage of North Wales and North Shropshire.

- *Theme 5 – Enhance health and well-being*

*Objective* – to develop opportunities to promote the health and well-being of local communities.

- *Theme 6 – Improve accessibility and connectivity*

*Objective* – Make the site physically and intellectually accessible to as wide a population as practicable.

- *Theme 7 – Realise economic benefits*

*Objective* – Supporting local communities and businesses in realising the economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits the site can enable, building on existing strengths.

- *Theme 8 – Encourage environmental stewardship*

*Objective* – Safeguard and manage the natural environment, whilst promoting the biodiversity value of the World Heritage Site.

- *Theme 9 – Prepare for risks*

*Objective* - Identify, remove and where possible mitigate the risks to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

- *Theme 10 – Share responsibility*

*Objective* – to continue the collaborative approach between those organisations with a responsibility for managing the World Heritage Site.

The Action Plan has drawn together actions from other relevant documents in order to provide a consistent approach to the management of the WHS e.g. the Destination management Plans for Wrexham and Denbighshire as well as the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan.

The Actions have been prioritised into Short (1-2 years), Medium (2-5 years) and Long (5 years +) and the responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Management Plan lies with the World Heritage Site Strategic Board. This reporting includes the submission of the Periodic Report to UNESCO every six years in accordance with Article 29 of the World Heritage Convention with the next one due in 2020.

## 8. **What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

The Management Plan has been developed in close collaboration with stakeholders and the surrounding local communities. Workshops were held for representatives of stakeholder organisations including local Town and Community Councils within which the World Heritage Site and its Buffer zone sits, local Authority Elected Members and Officers, and community groups. Drop-in sessions and events were undertaken by the appointed consultants, Arcadis Ltd. to ensure that community groups, civic societies and local businesses identified community interests, issues and opportunities for inclusion in the World Heritage Site Management Plan.

The Draft WHS Management Plan was subject to a consultation period of just over two months and was live on the WHS website [www.pontcysyllte-aqueduct.co.uk](http://www.pontcysyllte-aqueduct.co.uk) between 21st December 2018 and 1st March 2019. Stakeholders were informed of the consultation period via email and social media and press releases. An online response form was available to enable structured feedback on the draft document to be provided. A series of drop-in sessions were held for informal feedback at various community locations along the whole 11 miles of the site.

The consultation draft was generally well received and the feedback has been taken into account in the development of the final Management Plan.

The Management Plan has not been considered by a Scrutiny Committee.

9. **Chief Finance Officer Statement**

The report makes clear that DCC's part in implementing the Action Plan will be contained within existing cash limited budgets, augmented by external grant funding and by working collectively with the other three partner organisations. On this basis the recommendation is supported.

10. **What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

Failure to have an appropriate Management Plan would be identified by UNESCO through the Periodic Reporting and could result in concerns being raised with DCMS about the effective management of the site and the protection of its Outstanding Universal Value. The Management Plan needs to be endorsed by the four main partners so it can be submitted to DCMS.

11. **Power to make the Decision**

Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000. The Local Authority has the power to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of economic, social or environmental well-being of their area.