

**Notes of the WHS Partnership Meeting Question and Answer Session
held in the Council Chamber at New County Hall, Truro
On Friday 9th November at 10.30am**

Mark Kaczmarek (Cornwall County Council)

A great deal of work has been done on the recording of Cornish mining activity. It is important that provision should be made for the recording of underground evidence, before land reclamation projects close up all underground access points.

Colin Murley (Cornish Heritage)

Encouraged by the work done so far. No reference to Celts in the DCMS description of the project – is this part of the English campaign to exclude all mention of Celts?

Cllr. Bert Biscoe (Cornwall County Council)

Mr. Murley can be assured that the WHS application will be absolutely accurate in the identification of the peoples who created the sites which will be proposed for WHS status.

Colin Murley

Also need to explain how pre-18th century mining operated.

Cllr. Bert Biscoe

This bid will take account of a very wide range of perspectives, and all contributing organisations will have their input to this process.

John Woodward (Kerrier District Council)

Need some explanation of the constitution and remit of the Area Panels. When will these be set up, how much power will they have to influence the management of their areas and how will it be ensured that they don't overlap with already-existing organisations or committees working towards the same ends?

Jeanette Ratcliffe (Cornwall County Council)

The panels will be based on existing groupings. The Area Panels will be fundamental to defining the boundaries of the components of the WHS and ensuring their appropriate management. These should be in place by the time of the next Partnership meeting, when some draft areas should be available for discussion and comment.

Cllr. Neil Plummer (Kerrier District Council)

Perceives a need to increase dialogue. Would it be possible for a project background and process presentation to be given to KDC members? Given lack of space at KDC offices, would it be possible for this to take place in the CCC Council Chamber, perhaps for two DC's at a time? This would help to increase support for the Partnership.

Jeanette Ratcliffe

Yes, this is a good idea. The team is happy to give presentations whenever requested and is actively undertaking this at present.

Cllr. Bert Biscoe

The work being undertaken at present is laying the foundations for the Bid, but as the project progresses, there will be an increasing need to engage communities and expert opinion.

There is much within the Cornish Industrial Heritage to be proud of, much of which has survived only through the tenacious efforts of a small group of individuals. It is important that this bid goes forward, if only to ensure that the knowledge and expertise of these individuals is passed on.

Stephen Bohane (South West Regional Development Agency)

Concentrating on the economic regeneration aspects of the bid, we have heard examples from Ironbridge, and though it may well be too early to ask for equivalent figures from Blaenavon, are trends being identified?

John Rodger (Blaenavon World Heritage Site)

Extra jobs have already been created at Big Pit. Because of Inscription as a WHS, Big Pit has been taken on by the Welsh Mining Museum and entry made free – a chain of events which has definitely created jobs. We cannot make any extravagant claims at this stage, but would maintain that we are building the conditions which we believe will create jobs and increase prosperity in the future.

The Ironbridge example suggests that this process might take 25 or 30 years to fully achieve – that run-down community has now become prosperous. We do not expect the process to be rapid – indeed we don't want coach-loads of visitors to start turning up, since we don't have the facilities to deal with them yet and the community needs time to establish cafes and other visitor facilities.

The business school at Cardiff University carried out a study of the area who concluded that there would be economic benefits to the area if we could achieve this matrix of proposals, and that includes the short-term during which money is already going to local builders to undertake works as part of the housing programme and is producing local economic effects. Cardiff University also felt that prospects were favourable within the medium term.

Phil Davis (Ironbridge World Heritage Site and Local Authority World Heritage Forum)

A little historical perspective relating to Ironbridge and Telford – the economy is now very successful - not due solely to the WHS perhaps, but in 1981 the town had 25% male unemployment and we turned to tourism – in desperation really, realising that it was the only thing we could be proactive on, given that we were losing our major primary producers – the mines had shut down and so on.

Nevertheless, although the site appears very pleasant, its context is a reclaimed industrial wasteland – neighbouring areas of East Shropshire were classic worked-out mining landscapes, much as around Blaenavon, and the regeneration process, although in part due to the New Town Corporation, has been helped greatly by the WHS kudos and this ability to sell the area to the rest of the world – this is one of the huge intangibles which can be turned to something more tangible, and I see no reason why that could not be made to work in Cornwall as well.

Chris Young (English Heritage)

The Hadrian's Wall WHS – some ways similar to Cornwall – a long way from the centre of SE England – another large rural WHS, spread out over a long distance. There, we feel that WHS-related tourism supports about 6000 jobs.

Stephen Gill (West Devon Borough Council)

Has personal Cornish connections – the first generation of family in 300 years not to have worked in a mine. Cornish mining history is perhaps unique in that not only the

products and technology were exported but also the miners themselves, as well as their culture. The Cornish culture is everywhere, and the bid ought to emphasise this.

Loveday Jenkin (Camborne School of Mines)

How will the bid cope with the very many linear features which are associated with Cornish mining – e.g. leats, tramways, etc. which link the sites. How do site boundaries cope with this?

Jeanette Ratcliffe

This is a challenge we have yet to face, in the sense that we have not yet started drawing detailed boundaries. Clearly we shall have to get national specialist advice on this, e.g. from DCMS and EH who have experience with WHS, although it has already been acknowledged that the Cornish bid will be different from any undertaken before. As usual, Cornwall is different. This is a challenge, but we see no reason at present why links between mining sites and ports (such as mineral tramways), for instance, should not be incorporated. It should be emphasised that we are thinking in terms of a series of landscapes and sites that will collectively make up the site.

Loveday Jenkin

Obviously one of the key things in the management is telling the story – that has been emphasised by all the speakers – and this involves dynamic movement of people, goods, etc. between sites.

Cllr. Bert Biscoe

Jeanette's map emphasised this – Luxulyan Valley, for instance is included by dint of the railway which ran through it.

Phil Davis

The notion of cultural landscape ought to be useful here. It is clear that the Cornish sites sit within a cultural landscape which will be the responsibility of local authorities to appropriately manage within the context of an overall policy.

We take the view that areas immediately outside our site at Ironbridge can be almost as important as those within its boundary – the power station being one example. Were it to close – a possibility given that it is an old coal-fired power station – archaeological, cultural and planning issues will be raised – the WHS is literally a few metres away. Sites within Cornwall are potentially hugely dispersed, and will need to be linked, but this has been achieved elsewhere in the world.

Jeanette Ratcliffe

Can Chris Young throw any light on this?

Chris Young

One or two general comments. Nice to be back in Cornwall after 20 years, especially to discover that Cornwall Archaeological Unit has grown from 2 staff to 36 in the intervening period.

The Cornish bid probably the most complex bid we have had to deal with, but also the best resourced – very well funded – also very well-worked out programme. The work shown in Jeanette's presentation shows the quality of the site and of the work going into the bid.

Need to demonstrate 3 things to World Heritage Committee: universal quality of the site in the context of the criteria set out in advance – their terms, not ours, but I think

you can do that; second – authenticity not pastiche; thirdly proper management to protect its values – again, this seems to have been taken on board.

Not an easy process – many things of outstanding importance will never be WHS and therefore nothing is a foregone conclusion – need to work hard with the help of the state party and whatever help we can give ourselves. I would recommend using other people's experience wherever possible – Blaenavon important parallel site, also Hadrian's Wall – a big, linear site in a rural area with many stakeholders and local authorities (12 and two National Parks). Needs to be based on consensus and partnership – this is in the WHS operational guidelines now.

Boundaries? Too early to say. Define why the site is of universal significance and use this to define where the boundaries should be. Looking at sites outside the UK may help.

Bob le Marchant (Morwellham and Tamar Valley Trust)

Is industrial heritage only of any value when it's dead? Enjoyed presentation and would like also to ask what is the motivation behind industrial heritage preservation – is it for regeneration or is it for its own sake?

I've watched Geevor over the years and feel that what has happened there has not been to the satisfaction of those who worked in the industry, and also there are Baseresult at South Crofty who have good intentions, but to my amazement I see that there are people who are trying to put things in their way to trip them up – I can't understand that. I thought everyone was on South Crofty's side.

I would like to introduce a way of looking at industrial heritage which is perhaps a little bit new to many here – it's called Target One Industrial Heritage – the preservation of the men, the knowledge, the artefacts and equipment and the industrial place of the industry – the Danish understand this well and call it Pedagogique – not a term which translates very easily into English. What it means is the handing on of the skills and knowledge of an industry from one generation to another by actually doing it, even if playing at it - actually doing it, and a lot of the initiatives that have taken place in industrial heritage tend to ignore some of those factors.

The men – we have men like Mark here who actually puts himself forward, but many of the men in the mining industry are fairly reticent, and as a result silent, though they are actually fairly uncomfortable with some of the things that are being done in the name of industrial heritage. So when it comes to the men they need to be respected, a connection needs to be kept with them, communication maintained – I don't think we have talked about any of this today. It's a very comfortable middle-class society group of men we are here – the men involved in the industry – they do exist, no-one's talking to them, no-one seems to care about them.

The knowledge and the skills of the men - this can only happen if some involvement in mining is actually taking place, and you look at something like Baseresult and they're doing it because they have an interest and a passion for it – I don't think anyone's going to make an awful lot of money out of it – hard to see that anyone will make any money out of it - but nevertheless, they are doing it because they like to keep the knowledge and the skills of hard rock mining going in Cornwall – that's probably what motivates them.

The artefacts and the equipment – well yes Geevor, Poldark – there are bits of rusty stuff there – most people could barely put a name to them, whatever they are –

perhaps that's being a bit critical - and the industrial base of that industry – once you start taking stuff away and putting it in a museum there's really no point in keeping that stuff at all. Keep those things together – the men, the knowledge, the artefacts, the equipment – Target One Industrial Heritage – it's something we should all be working for. Don't prostitute Cornwall's mining heritage – there's been a lot of gentrification – it's been tidied up, cleared up. I look at Geevor now and it doesn't look like a mining site to me – it looks like a tour club operation. Very sad because it's a wonderful, wonderful place. Cornwall's industrial heritage is very fragile, don't trample on it. Listen to the men who have a passion for it and a knowledge of it. There are some sitting right here.

Nick Johnson (Cornwall County Council)

Thank you very much – the bid process is assessing the past story of mining, whether visible or not and in a sense, the process of definition of the boundaries on the ground will be determined by the remains that still are with us. I'm sure it's the case in other World Heritage Sites that management plans don't run the sites – it's the partnerships of organisations and individuals, whether local authorities or private citizens, that have a stake in running the show. I'm sure that as the bid progresses the importance of people in the story will become more important.

John Rodger

Turning first of all to Blaenavon, is industrial heritage only of value when it's dead? These communities did suffer in their industry – and particularly those of the mining industry in South Wales – and people very much wished to be rid of it – in fact they wanted it to be Slough in South Wales if they could have it, but fortunately some of the heritage has been left to us and it's no use pretending that the miners are there, because if you want to run a coal mine it's not possible to get one.

At Big Pit Mining Museum the stars of the show are its miners, and they interpret the heritage liberally in discussions with the many visitors underground, and so there is a place for ex-miners in telling the story. Interestingly also at Big Pit, around the site there was a certain amount of clearing up in past days, but with the Heritage Lottery bid which is now supporting work at Big Pit, the intention is to make it look more like a coal mine. The fencing which is going back is a sight more tatty than that which might have been, and so we have deliberately not sanitised the environment around Big Pit, indeed we are deliberately not sanitising the environment anywhere.

As far as the experience of visitors to Blaenavon is concerned, we hope very much that the people of the community, as they are now, will tell the story. But time does move on. We are talking about the significance of Cornwall and Blaenavon particularly from 1750 to 1900 and the world has moved on, so obviously the place of the men must change and the story must be told differently.

I was recently in Germany and I compared a young student who was describing a coal mine in Germany with the story which was being told by the miners in South Wales – this young man had so much enthusiasm and understanding of the subject that he was able to project the people's story. So time must move on. In Blaenavon we are trying to keep the people's spirit and traditions alive if we can, and further than that in South Wales we are trying to establish something we call a industrial trust which accesses modern industry as well as historic industry in a seamless thing and that's been developed with a chap called Peter Mitchell who has a background in industrial archaeology in South Yorkshire.

Phil Davis

I think that was a very interesting contribution, because it posed many of the questions we have been grappling with in Ironbridge and in the wider community, but certainly I'm very committed to telling the story of working people – male or female – because they're the people I come from and the gentleman who mentioned his mining background here – that 's the connection which really matters, that's why people are interested in history isn't it? Because it rings a bell. It's about that experience which your dad or your grandmother never told you about and of course the best industrial heritage lies in combining the preservation of the artefacts, even though they may be dead - though I have to say there's a strong tradition still in Ironbridge of showing the industrial processes – whether it's brick-making , whether its iron-making, which is difficult as you might imagine, because the skilled people are dying out in terms of wrought iron making , or indeed coracle-making, which has been going on along the River Severn for centuries.

So that's the best kind of industrial heritage and I think we can, if we resource things properly, do that sort of stuff, and of course the other side of that is to map the social history and the oral history - and the Ironbridge Gorge Museum has an extensive oral history library which is based on making sure that the recollections of those people who worked in the museum and in our area are fully recorded for future generations.

In terms of what we can recreate, the truth is we can't recreate, can we? Only by playing at it. I run a steam engine at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, and I'm conscious that to replicate the experience, we'd need some kids running round with rickets, all sorts of conditions which we're very glad are no longer present. So there is a degree to which we do play, but of course if you can underpin the more touristic element with sound scholarship and with a respect for the traditions, and with a genuine wish to tell the real story, then I think that's all right. In the end you've got to make it pay, haven't you? So if you're running a museum, as you well know and local authorities are increasingly aware these days, getting paying people through the door is essential. That's the way the world's moved. You've got balance those factors and there are real political issues to address there.

At Ironbridge Gorge Museum we are shortly to help to launch a book written by the director of the People's Museum in Manchester, and his book will be about rural workers in England, with particular reference to Shropshire and the area. That is the sort of connection we need to make so that the story is told – to make the story accessible to the rising generation. In the end there will always be problems about how we preserve the heritage.

A big problem we have currently just up the road in Shrewsbury is the preservation of the Didderton (?) flax mill, which is the grand-daddy of all skyscrapers - it's the world's first iron-framed building, and it's been a hell of a job for English Heritage, the RDA and other key partners to put together a funding package to turn it into a commercially useable centre which will preserve the integrity of the building but give it some viable commercial use, because it's sitting empty at the moment. Those are the problems we all have to grapple with and they won't go away. What we have to do is create a framework so that they're more easily understood and the government is more willing to back them, because its regeneration that they want – we have to pin the heritage spend on that without losing sight of a need for proper conservation and curatorial standards. And that's a political issue too, and you'll have to work that out as you run through your process in Cornwall, just as we're still addressing it – it's an issue which never goes away and for which there are no easy answers.

I think we should say to the government that they should take these issues more seriously in resourcing, and one of my hopes is that if we see more English regional government that – and reference was made to the Cornish assembly earlier on – there will be an opportunity to lobby more effectively for greater resources for supporting culture more generally and particularly in your own area the industrial culture which is very important.

Nick Johnson

I'm afraid we have run out of time, so must close now. I think it is important to stress that we are three months in to a four year project, and we wanted the opportunity for the project to say what the progress is so far. As was said at the beginning we shall meet again in the Spring.