

# The Management of Blaenavon World Heritage Site 2011-2016

April 2011



**A draft management plan has been prepared to inform the direction and management of the World Heritage Site between 2011 and 2016. Your views on this plan are important to us. If you have any ideas on how Blaenavon should be protected and promoted, or would like to be more involved on a volunteer basis, we would love to hear from you!**

The draft plan can be viewed in an exhibition at the Blaenavon World Heritage Centre between 4 April and 3 May 2011. It is also available online at [www.visitblaenavon.co.uk](http://www.visitblaenavon.co.uk) or at the Civic Centre, Pontypool. This document provides a summary of its content.



Blaenavon was awarded World Heritage Site status in Cairns, Australia, in 2000. These three gentlemen – John Rodger MBE, Cllr Bob Wellington and Dr Clive Grace – accepted the award on Blaenavon's behalf. Councillor Bob Wellington, Leader of Torfaen County Borough Council, is Chair of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership.



**Public meetings will be held at the World Heritage Centre on Tuesday 12 April at 7pm and at Llanfoist Village Hall Thursday 14 April at 6.30pm where you will have the chance to discuss the new plan.**

The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site on 2 December 2000. In the ten years since the prestigious status was awarded much has been achieved in the protection and promotion of the site and in the linked economic regeneration of the area.

*"The process of seeking World Heritage Site status and the responsibility of protecting and promoting the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape has been a continuing challenge; however we are delighted with the progress that has been made. We have seen real change for the better in the fortune of the area. This has been made possible through*

*effective partnership and the hard work of many individuals. The World Heritage Site Management Plan for the period 2011 - 2016 aims to build on what has been achieved and ensure Blaenavon continues to be an exemplar in heritage led regeneration."*

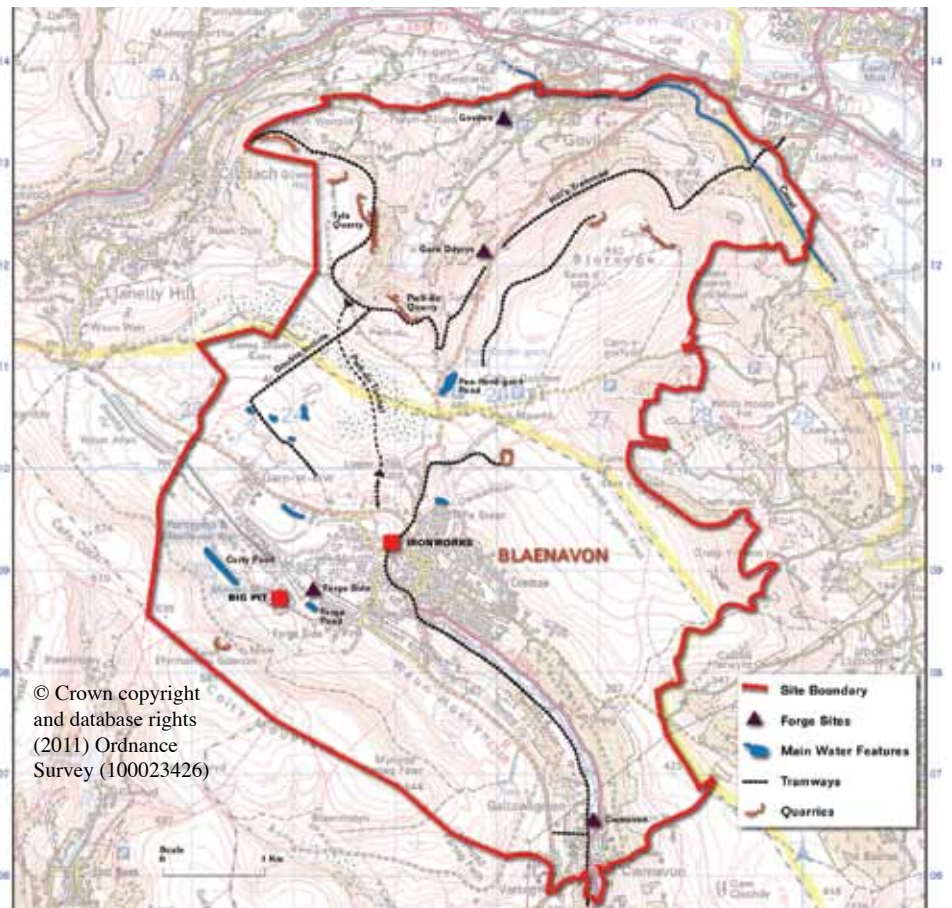
Cllr. Robert G. Wellington, Chairman of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership

# Location and Boundaries

The Blaenavon World Heritage Site falls within the boundaries of two Unitary Authorities: Torfaen County Borough Council (1804 hectares) and Monmouthshire County Council (1486 hectares) of which 1458 hectares falls within the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. The boundaries of the World Heritage Site represent the full extent of the historic landscape associated with Blaenavon Ironworks. This is defined principally by the boundaries of land historically leased or purchased to provide the minerals, energy and infrastructure for the Ironworks, and by additional land used in direct association with the Ironworks.

## Key Features of the Heritage Landscape

- Blaenavon Ironworks
- Big Pit National Coal Museum
- Blaenavon World Heritage Centre
- Blaenavon Heritage Town
- Blaenavon Community Heritage and Cordell Museum
- The Relict Landscape
- Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal
- Blaenavon's Heritage Railway



Cast Houses at Blaenavon Ironworks  
(photograph by Chris Morris)

# Why does Blaenavon have World Heritage Status?



**To be on the UNESCO World Heritage list a site must meet stringent criteria and be accepted as being of 'Outstanding Universal Value'. Blaenavon was accepted for the following reason:**

*The area around Blaenavon is evidence of the pre-eminence of south Wales as the major producer of iron, steel and coal in the 19th century. All the necessary elements can still be seen, coal and ore mines, quarries, a primitive railway system and canal, furnaces, workers' homes, and the social infrastructure of the early industrial community. The site is one of the prime areas in the world where the full social, economic and technological process of industrialisation through iron and coal production can be studied and understood.*

Blaenavon's heritage is of more than just local or national importance, **it belongs to the world!**

## Why must we have a Management Plan?

Under the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention every World Heritage Site must have a Management Plan to show how the site will be protected, preserved, conserved, promoted

and presented; particularly as an educational resource for all the peoples of the world. Management Plans have to show how organisations and the community will work together. The Management Plan must be regularly updated and show short and longer term aspirations for the site.



# Looking after Blaenavon's Heritage

Managing a World Heritage Site is a major responsibility. The role of looking after the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape is carried out by the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership, a group of interested public bodies and organisations. The Partnership, led by Torfaen County Borough Council and chaired by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Bob Wellington, was formed in August 1997 with the aim of obtaining World Heritage Status for Blaenavon. Since inscription in December 2000, the various partners have continued to work together to protect and promote the site and to make sure that Blaenavon is a place where people wish to visit, work, live and invest.



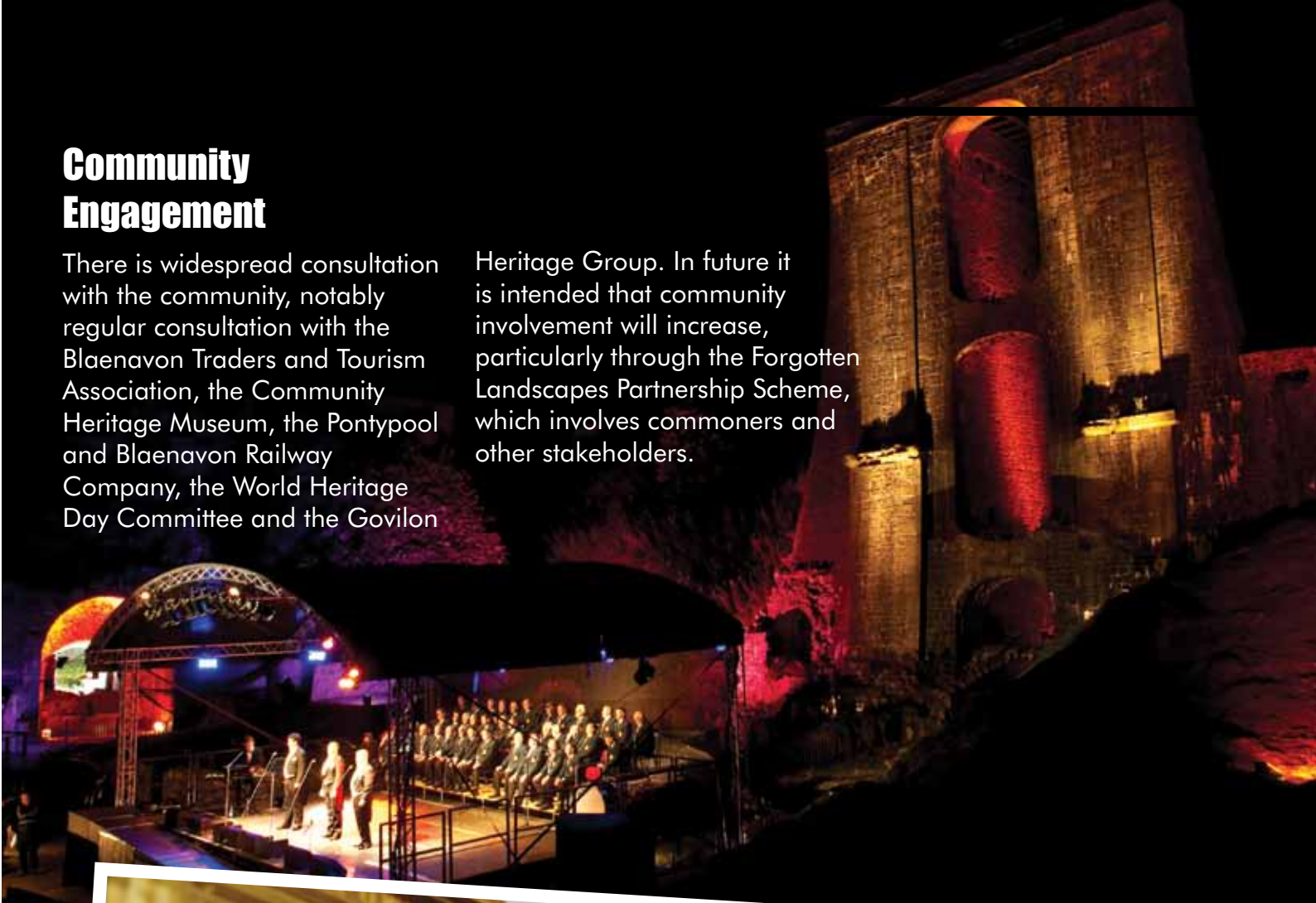
## Members of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership

Torfaen County Borough Council (Lead Partner)	Visit Wales
Monmouthshire County Council	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority	National Museum Wales
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Countryside Council for Wales
Blaenavon Town Council	Welsh Assembly Government: Department for the Economy and Transport
Cadw	British Waterways Board

## Community Engagement

There is widespread consultation with the community, notably regular consultation with the Blaenavon Traders and Tourism Association, the Community Heritage Museum, the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway Company, the World Heritage Day Committee and the Govilon

Heritage Group. In future it is intended that community involvement will increase, particularly through the Forgotten Landscapes Partnership Scheme, which involves commoners and other stakeholders.



*"The prime aim of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership is to protect this cultural landscape so that future generations may understand the outstanding contribution south Wales made to the Industrial Revolution. By the presentation and promotion of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, it is intended to increase cultural tourism, provide educational opportunities and change perceptions of the area to assist economic regeneration."*



# Review of the First Ten Years: Building a Future on the Past

**Managing Blaenavon World Heritage Site is not just about conserving and preserving the past. The aim is not to turn Blaenavon into a 'living museum' but to improve the standard of living and economic prospects for the residents and traders of the area.**



In the late 1990s the socio-economic plight of Blaenavon was plain to see. Eighty years of economic decline had left its toll on this once prosperous industrial area. The town, with its rundown appearance, epitomised the negative stereotype of a depressed post-industrial community. The Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership realised that achieving World Heritage Status could be key to the solution of Blaenavon's woes. Indeed, World Heritage Site status has proved to be a catalyst for attracting funding from bodies including the European Union, Welsh Assembly Government and the Heritage Lottery Fund, among others.



## Achievements between 2000 and 2010

- National monuments saved, conserved and interpreted
- Derelict former Council Offices and former St. Peter's School restored
- Tourism product extended and improved. Tourism spend in Torfaen is worth £48m (STEAM 2009)
- Major repairs to 500 older properties
- Renewal of the most derelict town centre properties
- Significant improvements in environment and facilities, e.g. car parks
- Jobs created annually in construction
- Conservation skills developed by local builders
- Jobs safeguarded and created in tourism
- New businesses created in town centre
- End of property market stagnation
- Commencement of new developments
- Property values increased above UK average
- Annual visitor numbers doubled to over 200,000
- 'Destination Blaenavon' brand established
- Educational programmes developed
- Way marked walks and cycle ways established
- Annual events programme established
- Community participation achieved
- Firm base established for further regeneration



## The Blaenavon World Heritage Site has achieved national and international recognition

*"Blaenavon has built a reputation as an exceptional case study of how heritage can drive economic development. The stakeholders in Blaenavon believe that the factors in their success are simple: they had a clear regeneration need; an overall strategy; leadership from the principal local authority; they actively pursued WHS status as a socio-economic catalyst; they had a committed partnership and effective coordination... Blaenavon probably offers the best model of the potential for WHS heritage-led regeneration in the UK."*

International Study carried out by Rebanks Consulting Ltd for the Lake District Proposed World Heritage Site (2009)

# Issues Affecting the World Heritage Site, 2011-2016

The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape faces numerous challenges in the years to come. Below are the seven key issues, identified in the new Management Plan, affecting the World Heritage Site and how the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership intends to address them.



## Maintaining appropriate management arrangements for the World Heritage Site

The Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership will formally approve the Management Plan. The Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership will be fully integrated with the Forgotten Landscapes Partnership (see page 10) and will consider the World Heritage Site's relationship with adjoining heritage areas, particularly Valleys Regional Park. The Partnership will continue contact on World Heritage matters, nationally and internationally and will continue to endeavour to secure funding for the World Heritage Site.

## Access and visitor management

The Partnership will coordinate, expand and maintain the marketing and promotion of the World Heritage Site, linking together all of the attractions within the landscape. The Partners will encourage more accommodation facilities and services. More will be done to portray Blaenavon as an attraction for all seasons. Visitor numbers will be monitored and visitor profiles analysed.

## Preservation of the World Heritage Site's special character

The Partnership will utilise conservation plans and studies to ensure repair and new development is not detrimental to the World Heritage Site. The Partnership will combat illegal motorcycle activities and fly tipping on the landscape. The conservation of 'intangible heritage', including cultural and social history, will also be developed.



## Coal reserves and potential for recovery

The Partnership considers that opencast operations within the World Heritage Site would be detrimental to the internationally recognised values of the area. The position at this time is arguably less problematic than it was at the time of nomination for World Heritage Site status.

## Integration of the Management Plan with other strategies, plans and policies

The Partnership will ensure that Local Development Plans and other strategies include effective policies to protect and promote the values of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site. Proposals from relevant studies and Forgotten Landscapes will be incorporated into the Management Plan.

## Risk management

The Partnership will continue to monitor risks and ensure procedures are in place to alleviate problems. Contingency plans will be made for disasters.



## Information management and monitoring

Information concerning the World Heritage Site will be increasingly digitised. The Blaenavon website, [www.visitblaenavon.co.uk](http://www.visitblaenavon.co.uk), will continue to be developed and digital links will be forged with other World Heritage Sites. The Partnership will also consider the further development of 'E-Trails'.



# Forgotten Landscapes



**A major driver in achieving effective management of the World Heritage Site over the next three years is the Forgotten Landscapes Partnership (FLP) Scheme. The FLP will be fully integrated with the management of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site and will bring a £2.47 million investment to**

**the site and parts of the surrounding area.**

The Heritage Lottery Fund has provided 60% of the funding with the rest coming from bodies including the Welsh Assembly Government's Heads of the Valleys Programme, Valleys Regional Park, the Environment Agency and the Countryside Council for Wales.



*Bracken rolling in the landscape*

**The Forgotten Landscapes team will be based at the Blaenavon World Heritage Centre for the duration of the three year project. During this time a range of regeneration and conservation projects will be delivered including:**

- The conservation and restoration of historical features such as the Pwll Du Tunnel which was used to transport coal, limestone and pig iron between Blaenavon Ironworks and Garn Ddyrys Forge.
- Conservation of the important upland habitats and wildlife including the restoration of heather moor land and the recovery of the declining red grouse population.
- Management of bracken on the mountainside to improve grazing and to promote the return of Welsh mountain ponies.
- Improved access to the landscape and its features.
- Educational projects and improved facilities such as providing countryside skills training for local people.
- A micro-hydro project above Forgeside Community Wood which will generate enough electricity to power around 35 homes and prevent the emission of 70 tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The money earned from electricity sales will be used to resource the ongoing conservation of the heritage landscape.

## Integration and Proposed 'Buffer Zone'

The effects of the Forgotten Landscapes Partnership Scheme will hopefully continue well beyond the end of the project in 2013. Therefore integration of the Forgotten Landscape Project proposals within the World Heritage Site Management Plan is necessary and important. The Forgotten Landscapes area is twice the area of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape. It is proposed that the wider area becomes a 'Buffer Zone' to the World Heritage Site or

perhaps, in the longer term, a possible extension of the World Heritage Site. By considering the adjoining areas as a buffer zone, the whole Forgotten Landscapes Project Plan area can be considered as one unit – a core site and a buffer zone. This will enable similar standards of management supported by shared policy commitments between the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership and the Forgotten Landscapes Partnership.



*Restoration to the southern portal of the Pwll Du Tunnel*



*Clydach Gorge*

# Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site

## New Management Plan: Projects and Aspirations for the Future

The new Management Plan for the World Heritage Site includes some definite projects, for which funding has been secured but also sets out more ambitious proposals for which money has not yet been found. The plan aims to meet our obligations to UNESCO to continue protecting the character of the World Heritage Site and promoting the area as an internationally important visitor destination. Most importantly, however, the plan aims to ensure that residents of the town and surrounding area continue to see change for the better so that Blaenavon is a place where people want to live, work and enjoy their leisure time and will be a place where people wish to invest in the future.

Over one hundred projects have been listed in the Management Plan, which can be viewed online at [www.visitblaenavon.co.uk](http://www.visitblaenavon.co.uk) or can be seen at the Blaenavon World Heritage Centre, where there will be an exhibition outlining the proposals between 4 April and 3 May 2011.

## Summary of Key Proposals

Working together the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Partnership will

- Continue to build the Blaenavon World Heritage Site 'brand' and develop a more joined up approach linking the main visitor attractions
- Continue improvements and maintenance to the major visitor attractions – Blaenavon Ironworks, Big Pit National Coal Museum, Blaenavon Heritage Railway, Blaenavon World Heritage Centre, Blaenavon Heritage Town, the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and the relict landscape
- Help commoners to deal with problems in the landscape and support local producers and products
- Attract more visitors to the Blaenavon World Heritage Centre and more community use of the facilities
- Continue a programme of repair to important monuments, buildings and features in the World Heritage Site
- Encourage more community involvement in the management, protection and promotion of the site and provide assistance through training programmes
- Encourage the digitisation of Torfaen and the use of ICT within the community with increased use of digital media to record local history and to promote the World Heritage Site.
- Ensure plans for protecting and promoting the site are consistent with other strategies and development proposals for the area
- Continue to ensure that any repairs, improvements and new developments are carried out to a high quality, consistent with the area's international importance
- Continue to develop Blaenavon as a 'gateway' to the wider heritage of south Wales

**All comments and views on the future of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site are welcome.**

**Please address to:**

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Alternatively send an email to Cath Thomas  
c/o [nathan.matthews@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:nathan.matthews@torfaen.gov.uk)

For more information please visit the  
Blaenavon World Heritage Centre  
or go online to [www.visitblaenavon.co.uk](http://www.visitblaenavon.co.uk)

Comments to be received by Tuesday 3 May