



Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Steering Group

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, Coalbrookdale

Wednesday 21st May 2025, 14:00 – 16:00

Members **(IN ATTENDANCE)** **(APOLOGIES)** (*Microsoft Teams)

Ken Sloan (KS) – Chair	Cllr Carolyn Healy (CH) – Telford & Wrekin Council
Rory Hunter (RH) – Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust	Cllr Angela McClements (AM) - Telford & Wrekin Council
JP Brayford (JB) – Severn Gorge Countryside Trust	Ed McGregor (EM) – English Heritage
Mary Lewis (ML) - Coracle Trust	Peter Boland (PB) – Historic England
Maureen Bragg (MBR) – The Gorge Parish Council	Andrew Gittins (AG) – Telford & Wrekin Council
Cllr Rae Evans (RE) – Madeley Town Council	Valerie Hulme (VH) - Telford & Wrekin Council
Cllr Caroline Bagnall (CB) – Shropshire Council	Barbara Johnson (BJ) – Telford & Wrekin Council
*Helle Jorgensen (HJ) – University of Birmingham	Adrian Corney (AC) Telford & Wrekin Council
Ioanna Katapidi (IK) - University of Birmingham	Sarah Bird (SB) Telford & Wrekin Council
Andy Wigley (SC) - Shropshire Council	Daniel Trewin (DT) – Environment Agency
Becky Jones (SC) – Shropshire Council	*Viv Rowland (VR) - Environment Agency
Louise Evans (LE) – Shropshire Council	Jon Bielstein (JB) – Telford & Wrekin Council
Angela Bainbridge (AB) Ironbridge Business Consortium	

1.	Introductions and apologies • Welcome from KS. Chair thanked Kate Chetwood from Severn Gorge Countryside Trust for hosting the meeting in JP's absence whilst on annual leave. Chair welcomed Su Evans Turner (SET) -who was the new representative from Broseley Town Council. SET replaces Ian West on the Steering Group after Ian chose not to stand for re-election. Chair wished to formally place on record his, and the group's gratitude to Ian for his service. • Survey on Future Ways of Working (including initial priorities) • 1:1s with the Chair & Coordinator (KS managed to meet with some members with the remainder to be arranged and held before Christmas). • Apologies received from Members highlighted above. • KS suggested that we host a half-day away day to review the Management Plan including Actions in the New Year following Chair's 121, in order to reset. Cllr Healy confirmed that her primary objective was to get a new Management Plan adopted asap. RH was supportive subject to a Coordinator being in post to provide a clear steer. VH confirmed that subject to having the Coordinator in post this should be possible. PB was also supportive to ensure we are all clear on what the purpose and objectives we are seeking to achieve.
2.	Minutes of last meeting • On the basis of the above it was proposed and agreed that the amended minutes were a true record.

3.	Shropshire Homes AGA Consultation Masterplan
	Shropshire Homes delivered a short update on their Masterplan for the Former AGA site followed by Q&A.
4.	Proposed Academic Research on the River Severn
	Dr Simon Segar (Harper Adams University) delivered a short update on a piece of academic research he is conducting in respect of the River Severn followed by Q&A.
5.	Partner Updates
	a. Telford & Wrekin Council i) Coordinator Update - Our new Coordinator is due to start mid-July. The success applicant comes with a wealth of knowledge and experience and we look forward to offering a warm welcome in July. - WHUK Coordinators Forum 05.02 and 07.05 with updates from WHUK, Government and Agencies (DCMS, HE etc.) and Coordinators. No updates of direct relevant to the IG to be reported. Next Forum 10.09 and Annual Conference 9th and 10th Oct. ii) Other Updates • Planning - Jiggers Bank BESS – scheme was refused on geotech, impact on setting of WHS/CA and limited public participation. Committee Report was balanced but felt the benefits outweighed harm. Members took an alternative view. The refusal has been appealed, preparation and submission of statements to PINS took place over the last two weeks. Hearing will be held at Ramada Hotel in Town Centre on Wed 2nd July. Seven Members of Committee attending plus Little Wenlock PC and Ward Member, Cllr Thomas. - AGA – initial 2025 pre-app response was negative to re–design, but SH have gone away to take a bottom-up fresh approach to the site layout. It excludes the area sensitive to archaeology and retains this as POS and better feeds into the site's historic narrative. SH are presenting an evolving scheme today – latest plan not yet reviewed by TWC. Not seen any elevs etc. Generally speaking, TWC and HE are both supportive of this fresh approach to the layout but without having commented on the latest more formalised version. UNESCO is being consulted through HE. Public consultation due soon also. • Development Plans - LPR publication version (Reg. 19) closed for public comments on 5th May 2025. The Council will now be considering all comments received on matters of soundness and legal compliance and working towards submitting the Plan to the Secretary of State. https://www.telfordandwrekinlocalplan.co.uk/ • Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery <u>PROW</u>

- DMMO published to add a footpath from the Memorial Bridge to Coalport Bridge; received a number of objections, Statement of Case to be sent to PINS.
- DMMO to add a footpath from Dale End Car Park to the River confirmed following no objections. Deed of Dedication also sent to IGMT to provide further access to the River.
- The RoW Team attended a recent Gorge PC meeting to discuss setting up a Parish Paths Partnership scheme in The Gorge.
- In process of making a permanent Traffic Regulation Order to prohibit use of the riverside path behind the Water Rat; this will be accompanied by associated fencing to prevent access. The reason being that the erosion of the path has led to a hazard to users – there have been two occasions where users have fallen in the River, and our Geotechnical Engineers have confirmed that there may be a risk of collapse on sections of the path. The engineering solutions to restore the path, if possible at this location, are likely to be costly. We are currently investigating alternative routes to keep as much of the riverside path in use. The path, although closed to the public, will remain a highway at this time, and the Council will require any unlawful obstructions and notices to be removed.

Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)

Undefended properties in the Gorge (flood risk management scheme):

- The scheme is for a mix of property level protection and floodwalls for the highest flood risk properties in the Gorge. Property surveys have been undertaken and TWC are in the process of procuring delivery contractors for property level measures (some of which will also require planning permission). Investigation work for the floodwalls has started, with a drone survey of the culvert taking place at Bower Yard completed and ground investigation works planned to determine what foundations would be required.

• Environmental and Neighbourhood Services (Adrian C)

- Dale End Park – we have removed the roses from two tired, old rose beds around the benches which will be replanted very soon with a mixed scheme that we hope will better cope with the more frequent flooding events. New roses have been supplied by David Austin and were planted in early April as a central area to an existing flower bed.
- New play area within installed within the park last autumn proving very popular with residents and visitors alike
- Bank below the memorial by the Ironbridge – new temporary sign installed explaining the need for membrane that the ground cover plants are grown through (whilst getting established)
- Replacement steps, paths and bench at Lodge Fields & The Beeches LNR's

• EV chargepoints (Heather B)

- Through grant funding, we have agreed plans to install EV chargepoints in three car parks – Dale End, Ironbridge Central (Station Yard) and The Wharfage. Once we have confirmed build dates we will share them.

- **Culture (Jon B)**

- T&WC Culture Service is currently drawing up its Culture Strategy for the borough. Over the coming months we will be consulting with our culture partners across the gorge to engage them in the development of the strategy.
- T&W Events team were approached by the Coracle Trust to help with the running of Ironbridge Coracle Regatta which this year will move date to form part of the annual T&WC coordinated Ironbridge Festival in September. Both the Coracle Regatta & Ironbridge Open Day (With Wharfage Road closure) will this year be on Sunday 14 September. Other festival activity includes Ironbridge Dog Show, Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Heritage Open Days, Ironbridge Walking Festival Walks, Spoken word, Poetry events, including the annual Poetry Slam.
- The Ironbridge Festival is the main way the the Culture Service engages with partners in the Gorge. In addition we work closely with the Visitor Economy and Place team and the Pride in Our High Streets and the Gorge Parish Council to bring additional events and activities to the gorge.
- Telford Walking Week 26 May –1st June takes place next week across the borough with a number of walks in the gorge from partners including SGCT, IGMT, and one featuring the story of the Coalport Ferry disaster.
- The Event team also oversees event bookings by external event organisers on council owned land with Ironbridge WWII weekend taking place in Dale End Park 24 & 25 May.

- **Visitor Economy and Place (Sarah Bird)**

- T&Ws tourism team continue their work to support sustainable growth of the visitor economy in the area, especially around Ironbridge Gorge. The sector growth plan is part of the Visit Telford umbrella tourism and place programme and follows the 5-Year Destination Management Plan (2024–2029), created in collaboration with local tourism partners and national research.
- T&W is also leading the new Telford and Shropshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), a nationally recognised tourism group accredited by VisitEngland and working with partners across Shropshire.
- Distinctive Destinations program - Work is starting soon to package with distinctive our key tourism destination towns to elevate place profile and the visitor experience in key areas including Wellington, Newport, and Ironbridge Gorge. It will use local stories, business partnerships, and themed itineraries to make these places more appealing to visitors. The project will include the development of new Town Maps, Interpretation Boards and Visitor Information and commissioning of new image and video assets and toolkits.
- Ironbridge Gorge Summer Campaign - Will launch in June 2025, this campaign aims to attract more visitors and boost local spending over the summer. It will promote Ironbridge's heritage, family attractions, and events through: Influencer collaborations, themed content on Visit Telford platforms, joint promotions with local businesses, provide business support via Invest and Visit Telford, link to the Park and Ride and other local initiatives. The campaign is being run in collaboration with Pride in our High Street.

- Ironbridge Gorge Park and Ride and Hop on Hop off service - From 19 July to 14 September, a weekend and holiday Park and Ride service will run to help reduce traffic and improve the visitor experience. The service will include a Hop on Hop off service across all the hot spots of the Gorge. It will play a vital role in attracting longer visitor dwell time and increasing footfall and spending in the destination and its businesses. The service includes unlimited travel in Ironbridge for £2 per adult (hop on, hop off), Free for children and concession, Free parking at Jiggers Bank, updated maps and signs at the site and extra services for major events. More info and the full timetable: www.telford.gov.uk/ironbridgeparkandride
- Visit Telford: Year-round Marketing for Business - Visit Telford, deliver year-round marketing with targeted seasonal campaigns to inspire and convert visitors. Visit Telford has 300 local businesses on the platform, receiving year-round and seasonal marketing and promotion. Here are some key stats on our marketing reach:
 - Organic social media impact with Facebook 580K, Instagram 63K (2024)
 - Over 365,00 page views annually on the official tourism website (2024)
 - Over 14,000 unique visitors per month to www.visittelford.co.uk
 - High click-through rates from website listings to partner websites
 - Regular marketing emails to a growing subscriber base of over 69K

• **Investment and Business Support (Joy McGeown)**

- Pride in our High Street (PIOHS) Visited every shop to advise of the grants available to businesses in the Borough towns. These are Eco, Digital, Façade and Start-Up grants.
- Working with Sally Themans from Good2Great to deliver a £10k package (funded by PIOHS) to provide marketing and business support to Ironbridge. This will include a summer trail during August (4 weeks) where families will be encouraged to find the colourful Ironbridge images in shop windows and will get a treat at the end. This will also be run for Autumn for two weeks at Half Term. The aim is to boost dwell time and encourage visitors and local residents to walk Ironbridge.
- A sculpture project is also being created for Ironbridge by PIOHS. This will be 10 x 1.5m statues of Coracles strategically placed around the Gorge to help encourage footfall and dwell time. A formal trail guide will be created – similar to the Quakers project (from PIOHS) with the ducks around Ironbridge. The Coracle Trail should be ready for Spring 2026. This will involve local artists and schools competing for the designs of each coracle.

Environment Agency

- **(Daniel E)** flood barriers deployed in Ironbridge, a scene experienced too often sadly, this particular event was shorter and river levels thankfully lower than previous events. Severn Valley Water Management Scheme a long term project looking at the storage of a significant amount of flood water to hopefully alleviate flood issues downstream. Bathing Water data collected (May – Sept) to gain clarification on water quality published on SwimFo website. Not just of interest to bathers but dog walkers, and water based activities (canoeing, paddle boarding) etc.

IG Business Consortium

	- (Angela B) A grant has been awarded to Angie & Steve Bainbridge for merchandise for an exciting marketing project they are delivering in June. The marketing project is the Billy & Richmond Project and will involve 2 characters (Billy & Richmond) who will be at some of the shops. There will also be a film curated for the launch. I am meeting with the film director and designer Leo Wright on 9th May and I have extended this invite to Cllr Carolyn Healy and Cultures Team. The launch will be 13th June and they are hoping for TV coverage.
6.	AOB
	No update.
7.	Date of next meetings
	• September 16th, 2025 1300-1500 (in person) • March 11th, 2026 from 1300-1500 (in person)