



ST HELENS BOROUGH HERITAGE OPPORTUNITIES

JUNE 2019



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VE Day celebrations on Queen Street, Gerard's Bridge, St. Helens; (photo: St. Helens Local History & Archives. Ref. MCL/1/15)

PREFACE

This report was prepared by S.G. Lingard Consultancy for St. Helens Council in April, May and June 2019, based on research in February and March. The consultants who worked on the project were:

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All photographs are by Stephen Lingard, unless stated otherwise. Use of them elsewhere is subject to an appropriate photo credit.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Arts Council England	ACE
Canal & River Trust	C&RT
Conservation Area Advisory Committees	CAAC
Conservation Area Appraisal	CAA
Conservation Area Management Plan	CAMP
Heritage England	HE
Heritage Lottery Fund (now rebranded NLHF – see below)	HLF
Liverpool & Manchester Railway	L&MR
Liverpool & Manchester Railway Trust	L&MRT
Liverpool City Region	LCR
Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project	MHCP
National Heritage List for England	NHLE
National Lottery Heritage Fund	NLHF
National Planning Policy Framework	NPPF
Newton & Earlestown Community Group	NECG
North West Museum of Road Transport	NWMORT
Sankey Canal and Restoration Society	SCARS
Sankey Link and Restoration Community Interest Company	SCLCIC
The World of Glass	TWOG
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation	UNESCO

INTRODUCTION

St. Helens Borough has a fascinating history that has shaped its landscape, its communities and their sense of identity. There is evidence of human occupation in what is now Newton-le-Willows from pre-history; the town was in the Domesday book. Bold, Eccleston, Haydock, Parr, Rainhill, Rainford, Sutton and Windle were already old when Queen Elizabeth I reigned.

St. Helens itself grew from a cluster of houses near a chapel, at a crossroads where four townships abutted. It began to grow in the 18th century, as it and its neighbour townships found new demand for the coal beneath their feet. The settlements that make up the modern Borough played a leading role in driving the industrial revolution, through finding new ways to exploit the coal, and other natural resources. They worked with merchants from Liverpool, Manchester and Cheshire to develop the first modern industrial canal on this island; they hosted the Rainhill Locomotive Trials, which helped shape the future of travel the world over, becoming

forever associated with that legendary example of industrial ingenuity, Stephenson's *Rocket*; and they worked with skilled craftsmen from mainland of Europe to develop what would become a world-leading glass industry.

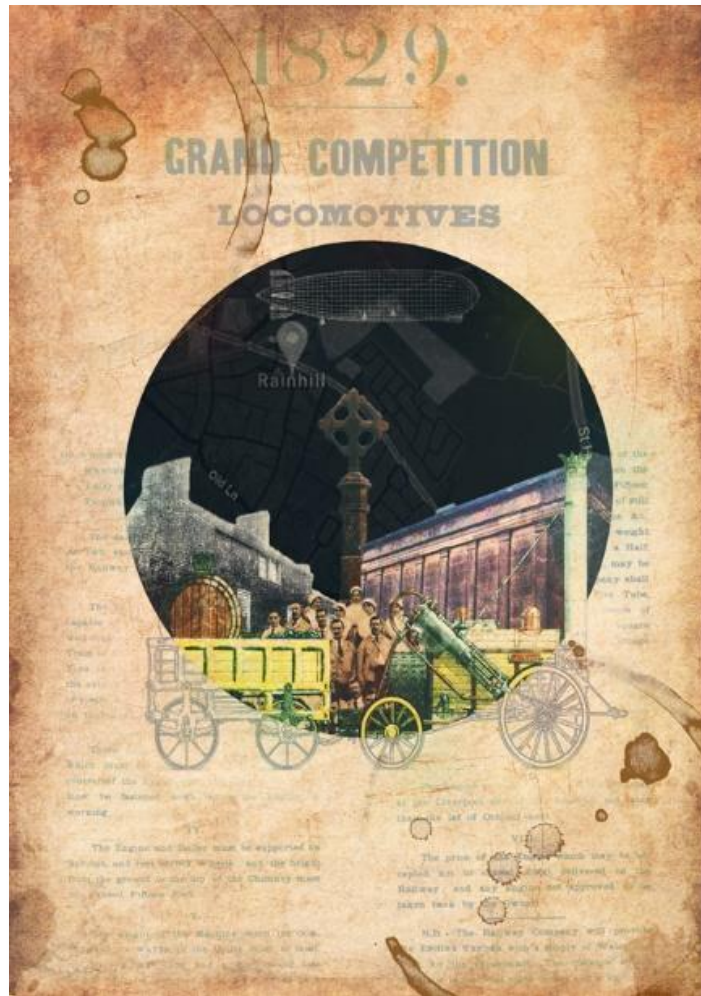
Our ancestors helped shape the modern world. On the way they served in the armed forces through two world wars, or worked to provide those who did with the tools they needed; many of them left the area, seeking their livelihood in other parts of these islands

or overseas; and in turn they welcomed many thousands of kinfolk or strangers from elsewhere, who themselves were migrating in search of better lives, and who played their own important part in shaping our places and communities. Together they sang, laughed, and some of them drank; they formed societies, groups and clubs, including one of the most successful professional rugby clubs in the world. They tried not to become ill, and to help those who did.

They bemoaned their misfortunes and mourned their dead, and many sought consolation in faith. They lived their lives as best they could, and together shaped the places that make up the modern Borough, the people who live in it, and those whose lives have taken them away from it; their legacy is our heritage.

People like to live in and to visit places with a strong identity. Heritage buildings, places and attractions shape identity. Investing in them helps keep them special, and to allow people to enjoy them in new ways. It also stimulates the economy: more than 48,000 jobs in the North West depend on heritage, directly or indirectly, and

it attracted more than 28 million visits to the region in 2018.¹ Interest in local and family history is at an all-time high and well-run visitor attractions across the country are making a major contribution to their local economy.



Drunk Wolf artwork on the theme of "Rainhill"

¹ For more information on the importance of heritage and its value to the economy see *Heritage and the Economy 2018*, Historic England, October 2018, available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-economy/>

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Local authorities have an important role to play in heritage. They have responsibility for managing aspects of the historic environment, and in shaping their places overall. They own and manage heritage sites, collections and attractions, and provide services that shape their communities' access to and appreciation of heritage. They also have an overview of all heritage attractions within their boundary, regardless of whether they own or operate them; this gives Councils a unique opportunity to coordinate the heritage offer. Their finances, however, are under more pressure than ever. To be successful they must use their limited resources wisely, based on a clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve.

St. Helens Council ("the Council") recognises this. In February 2019 it commissioned S.G. Lingard Consultancy ("the consultants") to develop a heritage strategy and delivery plan for St. Helens Borough, following a competitive procurement process. The overall purpose of the project was to assess the Borough's heritage assets and advise as to how they can be used more effectively to help communities celebrate their heritage and identity, and to boost the visitor economy.

The consultants gathered and examined a wide range of sources, including published and unpublished histories, archival material, Council documents and those from other partners, statutory heritage registers, government policies and guidance, and information about what can be learned from how other places do things. They visited the heritage attractions, places and collections, some of them several times. They discussed the project directly with more than 50 people representing at least 22 organisations, including local and sub-regional government, and heritage, arts and cultural groups. They ran a public survey that attracted 783 participants from across the Borough (and some beyond), promoting it with bespoke art celebrating local heritage, created by a local artist. The survey, and all of the sources, provided a great deal of useful data and information.

This document presents:

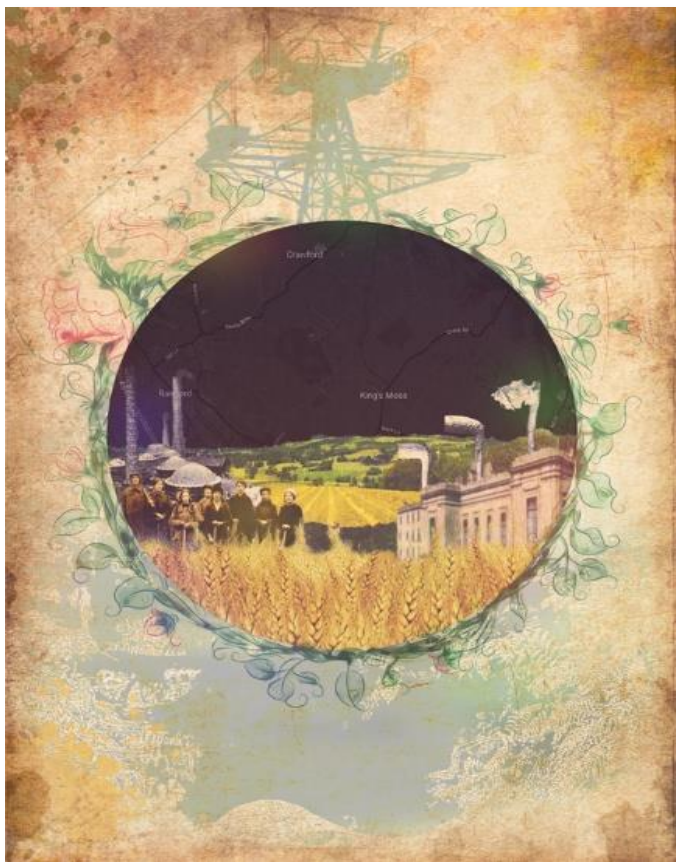
- an ambitious vision for heritage in the Borough, setting out the intended position in 2030; and

- a strategy to achieve the vision, with 10 aims, each with recommended projects and key actions.

VISION

A strategy is a means to deliver a defined objective: in this case that is an ambitious vision for the future of heritage in the Borough:

In 2030 St. Helens Borough will have achieved national and international recognition for the significance, quality and management of its heritage assets, attractions and infrastructure. Its heritage visitor economy will be thriving, based on industrial heritage and the outdoors, and its communities will feel that their heritage and



Drunk Wolf artwork on the theme of "the rural north"

identity is respected and celebrated.

STRATEGY

The strategy to achieve the vision is to address the 10 aims set out below, over the period to 2030.

- Aim 1: Provide capacity and sustain it
- Aim 2: Further protect and enhance the historic environment

- Aim 3: Develop first class heritage attractions, facilities and services
- Aim 4: Empower the Borough's heritage groups and interested individuals
- Aim 5: Respect and celebrate the Borough's different identities and places
- Aim 6: Achieve a reputation for celebrating heritage through the arts and culture
- Aim 7: Promote the heritage offer to best practice standards
- Aim 8: Develop and maintain strategic partnerships
- Aim 9: Build momentum through early success
- Aim 10: Achieve further recognition for the Borough's most significant heritage assets

The aims are explored over the following pages. Each section has: a short summary, explaining the aim it succinctly; a rationale, setting out why the aim was chosen, related to the findings set out in the background report; and a summary of the recommended projects and key actions.

The recommended projects and key actions represent a substantial programme for the long term. Many of them will be subject to project development works, including feasibility studies in some cases. Some of them will change, in concept and timing; others may not prove viable. In each case, relevant discussion and further ideas are provided in the Background Report.

Funding is a theme across the strategy and delivery plan, with specific recommended actions made where appropriate across the aims. Overall, the biggest things that can be done to attract the funding necessary to deliver the strategy are: having the strategy in the first place, as it demonstrates to potential funders that their investment will be made according to a plan, maximising the opportunities to bring funding sources together to achieve shared aims; and beginning to deliver the actions to enhance capacity and coordination in the short to medium term, as they will be crucial to the development work necessary to create viable, effective projects.

AIM 1: PROVIDE CAPACITY AND SUSTAIN IT

Summary

The Vision is to be achieved over more than 10 years, from 2020 to 2030. The Council will organise sufficient officer capacity in the short to medium term to coordinate delivery for the long term, across departments and working with partners. This role will involve securing external funding to provide further capacity and deliver the major projects.

Rationale

The background report found that though there had been successful heritage projects delivered in the Borough over many years, lack of coordination had become an issue in recent years. This was largely due to cuts to local government since 2010 causing a reduction in Council staff numbers in relevant positions, and resulting changes in structures and responsibilities affected continuity; the Design & Conservation Officer post for a long period the effectively became a part time position with no capacity to contribute to the strategic aspects of the role; the Cultural Funding Officer post became vacant and was not filled; and responsibility for heritage matters was shared between Cabinet members, and between senior officers. The Council stepped back from coordinating the St. Helens Heritage Network; a volunteer took on the task with some success, but had been forced to step back himself due to ill health; the Network effectively ceased operating some time ago. These factors have contributed to relatively few heritage funding bids being developed in the Borough in recent years, opportunities to improve the management of the historic environment being missed and heritage groups facing the same challenges independently of each other, effectively ceased operating.

Recommended projects and key actions

The Council should:

- establish and maintain clear lines of accountability for heritage, the arts and culture (which could include designating it as part of a single Cabinet portfolio);
- review the support provided for seeking grant funding, potentially with support from local partners;
- establish a virtual team to work on heritage matters, including staff across relevant Council functions

(including Design & Conservation, Library & Archives, the Arts Service, Economic Development and events); the team's role could include:

- working with heritage groups to re-establish a St. Helens Borough Heritage Network, to help the many groups work together;
- providing advice to heritage groups on project and bid development;
- leading or playing a strong supporting role in the development of heritage funding bids,
- liaising with key local partners in the arts and culture scene; and
- representing the Borough on the appropriate Liverpool City Region heritage, arts and culture bodies.

The capacity should be enhanced over time, through partnerships and securing external funding.

AIM 2: FURTHER PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Summary

Managing designated heritage assets and the broader historic environment effectively is central to achieving successful places and community pride. The Borough will resource its Conservation & Design function to play an active and strategic role in the heritage agenda, including shaping the development of masterplans and major heritage projects. It will engage its local stakeholders through a new Conservation Area Advisory Committee and through publication of a list of Locally Significant Buildings. It will update its supporting policies and technical documents to a planned schedule.

Rationale

Managing designated heritage assets and the broader historic environment effectively is central to achieving successful places and community pride. The Borough has 148 Listed Buildings, 12 Scheduled Monuments, 2 registered Parks and Gardens, 1 registered Battlefield and 8 designated Conservation Areas. The Sankey Viaduct, as the sole grade I Listed structure, is the single most significant designated heritage asset in the Borough.²

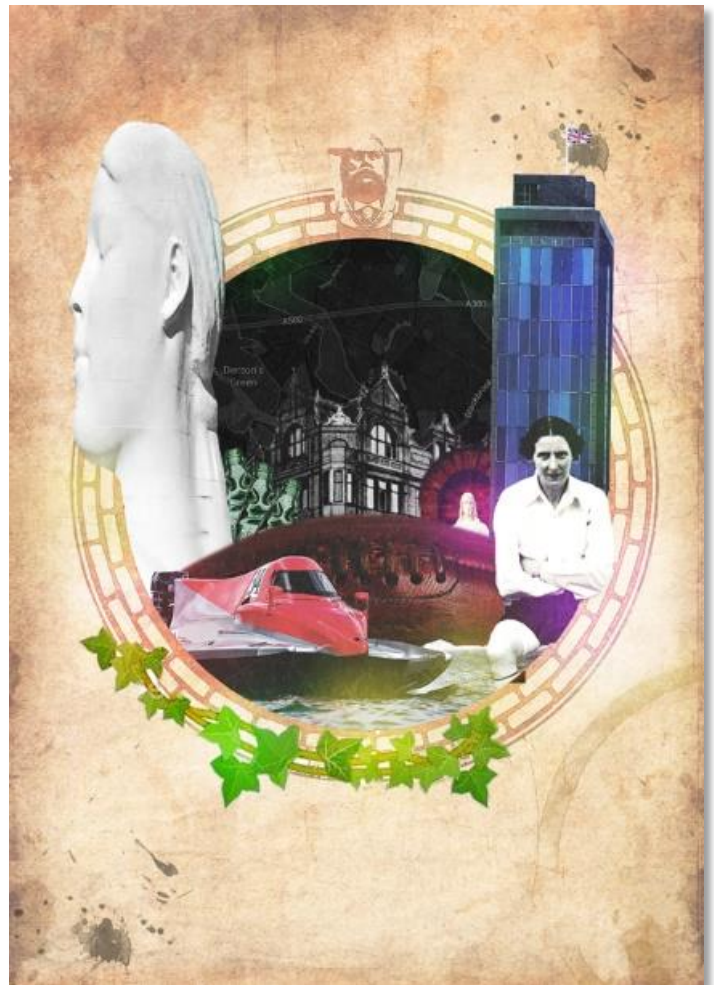
The background report found that aspects managing the historic could be improved, largely by having sufficient and ongoing capacity in the Design & Conservation role.

Recommended projects and key actions

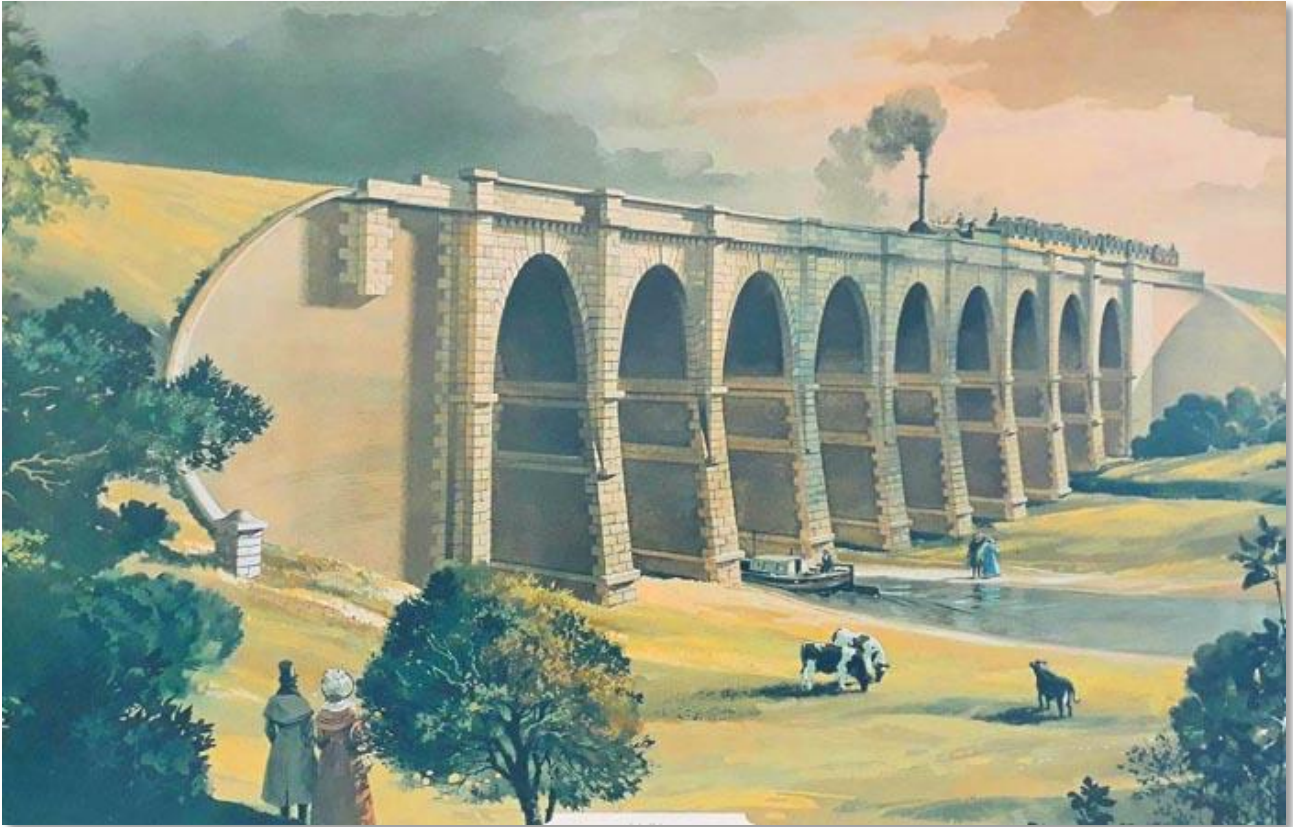
- Review emerging masterplans for St. Helens town centre, Earlestown, Rainhill and Haydock from a heritage perspective.
- Finalise and adopt the schedule of locally significant heritage assets.
- Ensure that all available relevant information about managing the historic environment is available publicly online and cross-referenced, including Conservation Area Assessments, Management Plans, Article 4 Directions, locally Listed Assets schedule, policies and appendices.

² The Viaduct would be the centrepiece of the proposed "Sankey Viaduct Heritage Park" proposed under Aim 3, and would be important for any future campaign to achieve UNESCO World Heritage List status for the Liverpool & Manchester Railway.

- Consider establishing a new Borough-wide Conservation Area Advisory Committee, to improve coordination in the management of Conservation Areas, demonstrate to potential funding partners the depth and permanence of Borough-wide community engagement and to harness the considerable latent expertise in heritage matters for the public good.
- refresh its Conservation Area Assessments and Management Plans.
- put in place Article 4 directions for those Conservation Areas that do not have one.
- explore Historic England's stated interest in developing a programme focused on 20th century buildings in St. Helens town centre.
- Develop an expression of interest for a High Streets Heritage Zone, for George Street or Earlestown.



Drunk Wolf artwork on the theme of "Sintellins"



The world's first intercity railway line crossing England's first industrial canal on the Sankey Viaduct – the Borough's only grade I Listed structure

AIM 3: DEVELOP FIRST CLASS HERITAGE ATTRACTIONS, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Summary

The most important heritage assets and stories must be served by first class attractions, facilities and services. The Borough's museum and archive collections will be presented in modern, professionally run facilities recognised as examples of good practice. The core collections will be free to view and managed jointly, supported by professional audience development and activity plans. New or enhanced visitor attractions will be developed to celebrate key themes and places, including railways heritage and the Sankey Canal.

Rationale

Organised heritage attractions, heritage collections, places and services are central to any area's celebration of its heritage and to its visitor offer. They are discussed below. (In each case, more detail is given in the Background Report.)

Organised heritage attractions

St. Helens Borough has six organised heritage attractions:³ The World of Glass, the North West Museum of Road Transport, the Rainhill Trials Exhibition, Rainford Heritage Centre, Sankey Valley Visitor Centre and the Smithy Heritage Centre. The background report examined each found that the Borough's heritage visitor attractions present a mixed picture. The premier site – The World of Glass – has experienced difficulties in recent years, and partners have explored options to develop it as a broader arts and culture centre. The Smithy Heritage Centre is an excellent example of a well-run local heritage attraction, benefitting from professional expertise. The Borough's canal, railway and mining story is not told effectively by the current attractions.

³ For this purpose, defined as places that present heritage collections and displays, and / or provide activities in a controlled environment, such as museums and visitor centres.



Smithy Heritage Centre, International Blacksmiths' Day 2016; (photo: Simon Critchley / Smithy Heritage Centre)

Heritage collections

The Borough is home to seven significant heritage collections,⁴ owned and managed as set out below.

- The Borough History & Local Heritage, Egyptology & Archaeology and Art collections are owned by the Council but stored and displayed in TWOG building, and managed by TWOG staff. Accessing them is subject to an £8 entry fee for adults.
- The Borough Archive is owned by the Council and stored in the basement of the Gamble Building. It is managed by the Library Service; it is also a recognised Place of Deposit and is seeking Accredited Archive status.
- The Community Archive of more than 2,300 digital images, partly digitised versions of items in the Borough Archive and partly uploaded by the public. The site was created as part of project supported by the HLF and is owned and managed by the Library Service.
- The Pilkington Glass collection, owned by The Pilkington Glass Collection Trustee Company Ltd., and

⁴ They are: the History & Local Heritage collection, of almost 5,000 objects, dating from approximately 1600 onwards; the Egyptology & Archaeology collection, of almost 750 objects, dating from 3000 BC; the Art collection, of more than 300 objects, including the Pilkington watercolour collection; the Borough Archive, of approximately two million objects; the St. Helens Community Archive, of more than 2,300 virtual objects; the Pilkington Glass Collection; and the Saints Heritage collection.

is stored and displayed in TWOG, alongside the Borough collections housed there.

- The Saints Heritage Collection is owned partly by the Saints Heritage Society, and partly by private individuals and the club. It is coordinated by the Society, and presented in various temporary displays and exhibitions.

The heritage collections represent the Borough's collective memory. Their management, to preserve the objects, allow and encourage public access, and to develop them overall to reflect a changing world, is central to making use of that memory, for the public good. The background report found that: the collections in or closely aligned to Borough ownership could be developed to better reflect the make-up and nature of the post 1974 Borough; that current management arrangements (and especially the separate management of the history & art collections and the Archive) are limiting opportunities to use the collections together; that the entry fee to view the history & art collections at TWOG is a barrier to accessing them; and that the ongoing closure of the Gamble Building and its limited facilities are restricting access to and use of the Archive.

Heritage places

The Borough includes several sites and spaces that aren't organised visitor attractions, but are important heritage assets. For the purposes of this report, they are referred to as "heritage places". They are discussed briefly, below.

The Liverpool and Manchester Railway, including the Sankey Viaduct and the site of the Rainhill Trials, is perhaps the most important heritage asset in St. Helens Borough. It is of international significance. The current commemoration and interpretation of the historic features, however, do not do it justice, and the visitor facilities are patchy. Addressing this must be a top priority if the Borough is to achieve its potential as a heritage visitor destination. The 200th anniversary of the Rainhill Trials will be in 2029, followed in 2030 by the 200th anniversary of the opening of the line. Both will attract national and even international attention. The dates provide deadlines for delivering improved interpretation, commemoration and visitor amenities. They allow sufficient time for an ambitious programme of projects to be developed and delivered.

The Sankey Canal and its corridor are significant heritage assets. The Canal was the first modern industrial canal in England. It was the catalyst for the development of St. Helens town and other parts of the Borough, and contributed to the creation of the railways. The point at which the Sankey Viaduct carries the L&MR across the canal is of international heritage significance. The canal's importance is not reflected by its current condition. Its heritage groups are knowledgeable and active, but would benefit from a clear common focus on an agreed programme of



Summer house on summit of Billinge Hill, during Beating the Bounds 2018

projects.

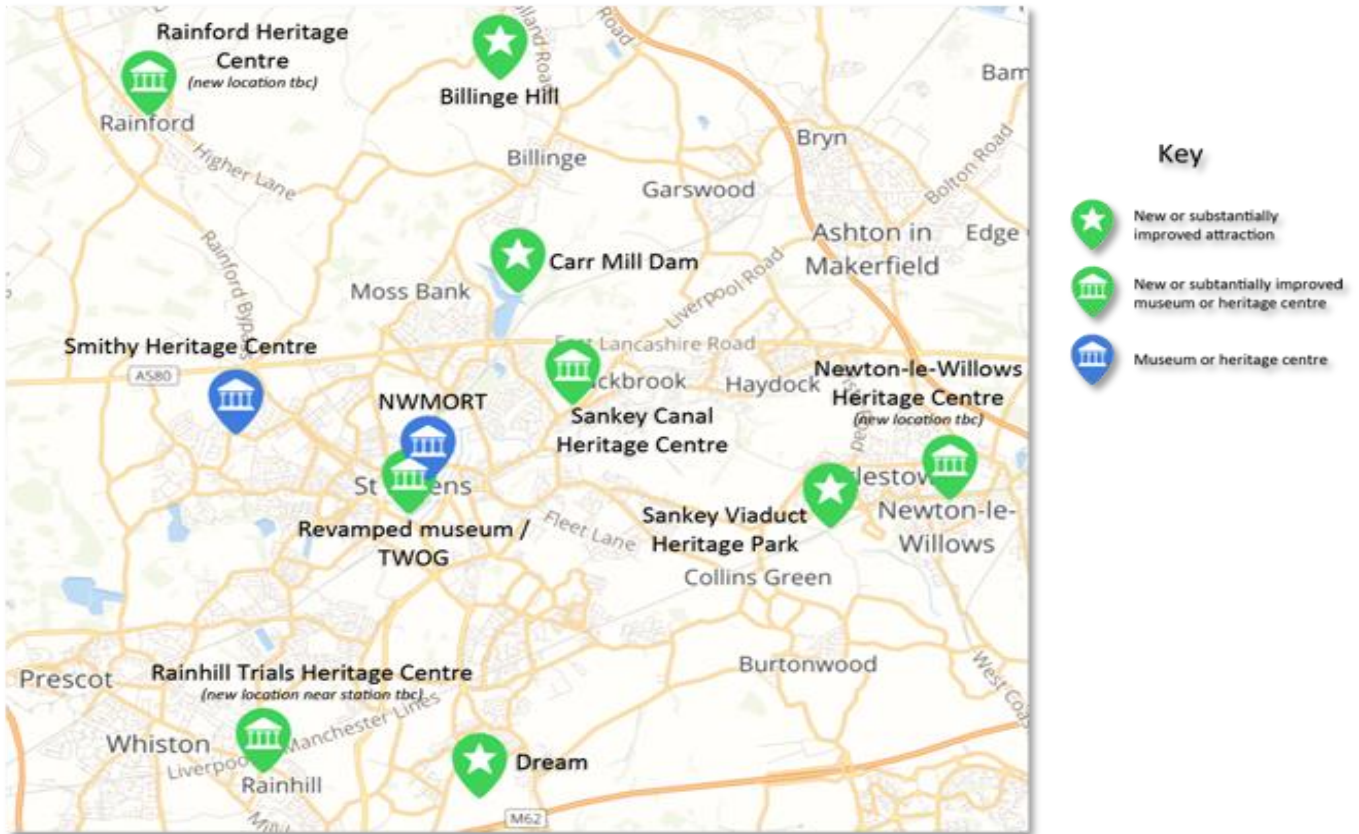
The summit of Billinge Hill, known locally as “the lump”, is the highest point in Merseyside, the LCR and the wider South West Lancashire area, at 179m above sea level. It commands extensive views, taking in the almost the whole Borough and far beyond. The summit is accessible by several footpaths. They are well used by local walkers, dog walkers, runners and off-road cyclists. The lack of parking and general difficulty of access has affected its visibility as an attraction, and its suitability as a focal point for community events.⁵ It could play a much larger role as an amenity for residents and attract many more visitors from outside the area if the access issue was addressed.

Carr Mill Dam, or “The Dam” as it is often referred to locally, is the largest inland body of water in Merseyside

and the Liverpool City Region. In the 1950s and 60s there was a small theme park alongside the Dam, at its southwestern end. A pub, hotel and car park now occupy the site. Footpaths go around the Dam, linking to the Sankey Valley to the east, and into the farmland towards Garswood and Billinge to the North. The Dam is a popular local amenity. Use is inhibited by the condition of the footpaths, however, as they can become very muddy after rain. There is only one picnic bench, and it is in poor condition. The Dam is a unique asset for the Borough and the sub-region, linked to nearby Billinge Hill. It could play a larger role for residents and visitors if the access and amenity issues were addressed.

Dream is a large statue of a young girl's head in a dream-like state, created in 2009 by Jaume Plensa, an internationally renowned artist and sculptor from Barcelona. Its base is a large replica miner's “tally”. It is positioned on the highest point of the former Sutton Manor Colliery, now Sutton Manor Woodland, which is managed by The Forestry Commission. Lighting was installed around the base, but was vandalised soon after it was completed. Visitor counters have established that the number of visits each year has increased from 25,000 when it was first opened to more than 85,000 in 2018. The view of and from the statue has become obscured by tree growth, as there is an ongoing tension between the statue's intended status as a highly visible landmark and its location in a forest. The interpretation on site is badly damaged. Parking is across a busy road and there are no visitor facilities. The statue was cleaned recently, and a special event held to mark its 10th anniversary. The site can't achieve its potential unless sustainable solutions are found for the issues discussed above.

⁵ The summit was the preferred location for the Jubilee Beacon and “Battle's Over” beacon lighting ceremonies. In both cases, access issues prevented the events taking places as intended: the Jubilee event was held in Bankes Park (though the Beacon fire itself was at the summit), and the “Battle's Over” event took place in Taylor Park instead.



The vision: St. Helens Borough Heritage attractions in 2030

Recommended projects and key actions

Organised heritage attractions and collections

It is not possible to develop specialist attractions for every topic, but by considering the heritage visitor attractions as a whole rather than just as individual sites, a new trajectory can be imagined, learning from good practice elsewhere. In recent years some industrial heritage attractions outside cities have experienced a boom, through development in pursuit of a vision over the long term. Examples include Cromford Mills, Ironbridge Gorge Museums, Black Country Living Museum, Beamish: the Living Museum of the North, and The National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port.⁶ They each have their own story and circumstances, but they demonstrate that there is demand for industrial heritage attractions and that success is due to having an ambitious vision and developing towards it over the long-term. Some of them are partially open air, and/or have multiple sites, and all have comprehensive activity plans with living history elements.

Something equally ambitious could be achieved in St. Helens Borough, by telling its story (and especially its

industrial heritage story) through a network of attractions and sites, together adding up to a first-class attraction. This could involve the steps set out below.

- **Revamping the current glass heritage offer at TWOG**, focused on the Tank House (with a modern CGI show and other activities), associated tunnels and hot glassblowing studio.



No. 9 Tank House, Pilkington Jubilee Works – now part of The World of Glass

- **Revamping the current Sankey Valley Visitor Centre as the Sankey Canal Heritage Centre.** (This is

⁶ Links to case studies are given in the Background Report.

covered in more detail in the section below focused on the Sankey Canal.)

- Developing a **“Sankey Viaduct Heritage Park”** at Earlestown, showcasing the spectacular grade I Listed Viaduct, as an accessible focal point for railway and canal heritage, with an improved environment, interpretation and facilities.
- Developing a **new or revamped facility to house the Rainhill Trials Exhibition** at or very close to Rainhill station, as part of delivering the new masterplan for the area.
- Determine the appetite among partners for pursuing UNESCO World Heritage Status for the L&MR.⁷
- Developing a **new heritage centre in an existing building at Newton-le-Willows**, focused on its role in railway history (but with scope for supporting exhibitions on broader local history matters), and providing basic visitor facilities within easy travelling distance from the new Sankey Valley Heritage Park.
- **Presenting the Borough heritage and art collections across the sites**, and / or partly in new space created as part of the redevelopment of the “growth quarter” in St. Helens town centre, and available to the public for free entry for the core museum collection, supported by active encouragement of donations and charges for events and special exhibitions.⁸
- **Managing the sites and collections jointly.**
- Recruiting individuals to governance positions in line with a skills audit.
- Animating the attractions and spaces with an overall **activity plan** developed with input from Heart of Glass and other arts and cultural partners, involving social engagement and living history.
- Establishing a short audience development plan for each site, complementing each other.
- Establishing a **re-vamped “Friends” / volunteering scheme** for the sites and services overall, linked to a new St. Helens Borough Heritage Network.
- Establishing stronger relationships between the heritage attractions in the Borough, publicly and privately owned, in the interests of joint promotion, events, ticketing and other projects.
- Establishing relationships with nearby industrial heritage attractions that specialise in telling the story of industries or topics relevant to St. Helens Borough, to help each other tell the area’s overall story and to deliver joint events and promotions. These include the Lancashire Mining Museum in Astley Green, Catalyst in Widnes (focused on the chemical industry), and the Lancashire Infantry Museum in Preston.⁹
- The **heritage collections owned by the Borough should be accessible by the public for free.**¹⁰
- The Borough should work with the Pilkington Glass Collection Trustee Company to arrange ongoing access to its collection, to be managed on the same basis as the Borough collections.
- In time all of the collections should be searchable online by the public, on the same basis that the Archive currently is.
- Exhibitions and displays should use objects from all of the collections on the same basis, as makes for the most compelling storytelling in each case.
- The **acquisitions and disposals policies** for the collections should be reviewed to ensure they are up to date and reflect the heritage of the whole Borough; the collections should be developed over time, accordingly.
- A new direction could be promoted to the public with a set piece exhibition along the lines of **“the history of St. Helens Borough in 100 objects”**, accessible for free; this could include a roving element in which a small number of key exhibits go on tour around the Borough.
- Support Rainford Heritage Society in finding a permanent and sustainable home for **Rainford Heritage Centre**, through advice and sharing good project development practice, directly and through membership of a new St. Helens Borough Heritage Network.
- Help the **Smithy Heritage Centre** continue its success, and help others learn from its approach,

⁷ This is discussed in the Background Report.

⁸ Good practice on this is set out in DCR Research, *Taking Charge – Evaluating the Evidence: The Impact of Charging or not for Admissions on Museums, Final Report* (August 2016).

⁹ The museum the museum collection and archive of the South Lancashire Regiment – St. Helens Borough’s local regiment – and has a partnership arrangement in place with Warrington Museum.

¹⁰ Note: this does not preclude them being held in part on different sites, with different staff working with them on a day-to-day basis.

through encouraging visit and membership of the new St. Helens Borough Heritage Network.

- **A modern, accessible search room** should be created close to the Archive store, wherever that is located for the long-term; ideally the local history reference library should be located with it.
- A long-term plan should be put in place to ensure that the Archive responds to any recommendations made through the Accreditation process, and prepares effectively for subsequent re-accreditation processes.

The dispersed model is strategic and suits the Borough's nature as a place with distinct identities and multiple centres. It could be characterised as a "curating the Borough" approach. Delivering this ambition, or something like it, over the period to 2030 would transform the Borough's heritage offer. Doing so would require the Council and key partners to agree to it as a central part of their approach to delivering the heritage and arts & cultural strategies. Funding would be required from a range of sources, phased over time. The scale of the ambition could make ACE National Portfolio Organisation status for the delivery body achievable; this should be considered a key potential benefit and enabling step.

Depending on the details, the proposals could release space in the existing TWOG building for uses in support of broader St. Helens town centre regeneration, whilst retaining an industrial heritage core to its offer, suiting its historic location and fabric. This could be used to help animate that part of the town centre, and link to the "Trail of the Saints" concept expressed elsewhere in this document.

Should there not be appetite for such an ambitious direction, many of the individual points above could be delivered in their own right, achieving substantial benefits.

Heritage places

The **Liverpool & Manchester Railway** should be developed as a linear heritage and recreation attraction suitable for at least a half-day visit. Rainhill and Newton-le-Willows would be the focal points for this, as discussed below.

- The Rainhill Trials Exhibition should be relocated to a purpose built or adapted facility at or very close to

the railway station.¹¹ At its most ambitious such a facility should be capable of providing a permanent home for the original Rocket locomotive, the replica or another heritage locomotive from the early days of steam. That would provide a high-profile and striking visual centrepiece to a renewed heritage offer befitting Rainhill's importance in railway history. It would provide an important focal point for visitors to the full line, mid-way between Liverpool and Manchester.

- Visible markers could be installed at both ends of the Rainhill Trials course, at Rainhill and near Lea Green.
- The Sankey Viaduct and area immediately around it should be developed as an informal, outdoor visitor attraction: Sankey Valley Heritage Park. This would



Land adjacent to Rainhill Station, on the village side, viewed from the pedestrian bridge across the track; the Liverpool-bound platform is visible on the right.

involve the following steps:

- working with Network Rail to have the Viaduct cleaned;
- clearing the trees and bushes that obscure the classic view from Newtown Common Lock;
- formalising the car park next to Newton Common Lock, or creating one in another nearby location;
- seeking a Transport Heritage Trust "Red Wheel" for the viaduct;
- installing lighting to highlight the viaduct at night;

¹¹ Plans have been developed in the past, but not delivered. The consultants have seen a copy of an unsuccessful 2010 bid to the Heritage Tourism Improvement scheme, but has no information as to why it was unsuccessful and why other funding bids were not pursued subsequently. The forthcoming Rainhill masterplan provides the ideal opportunity to take this forward. It should place the railway line and Skew Bridge at the centre of its vision for the development of the area, with the provision of a new or adapted heritage facility as an important priority.

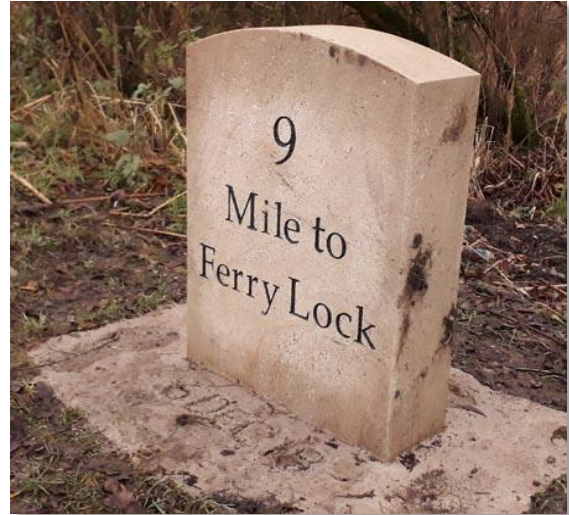
- reintroducing water to the alignment of the Sankey Canal beneath the third arch from the Earlestown end of the viaduct – this would not have to be a stretch of restored canal, as long as there was a sufficient depth of water to allow it to remain without evaporating;
- publicising heritage locomotive movements across the Viaduct, to encourage photography of the classic view; and
- maintaining the space to Green Flag standards.
- A sympathetic leisure use should be found for the old station building at Earlestown, potentially as a real-ale, gin and coffee bar, with micro-scale heritage exhibition capacity, enabled by the bid to the Liverpool City Region (LCR) for the station refurbishment.
- In the medium term, a heritage centre could be developed in an existing building in Newton-le-Willows, focused mainly on its railway heritage; this should be run on a similar basis to the Smithy Heritage Centre, and would only need to be open on weekends.
- The current station building at St. Helens Junction should be tidied up.

Restoration of **the Sankey Canal** should be retained as a long-term ambition, supported by ongoing commitments from the owners of the Canal to take no steps that would further hinder such works in the long-term. The focus of all parties, however, should be to develop meaningful projects that improve the heritage and community amenity value of the canal corridor in the short to medium term as worthwhile objectives in their own right and to improve the prospects for restoration in the very long term. Recommended actions are set out below.

- Seek further recognition of the status of the Sankey Canal as the first industrial canal in England.
- Improve physical interpretation along the corridor, where possible using replica industrial infrastructure to bring former uses to life (as at Stanley Bank), with traditional interpretation panels only at well-used locations.
- Introduce modern digital interpretation along a re-launched Sankey Canal Trail, linked to an improved

website with site by site information, maps and “then & now” photographs.

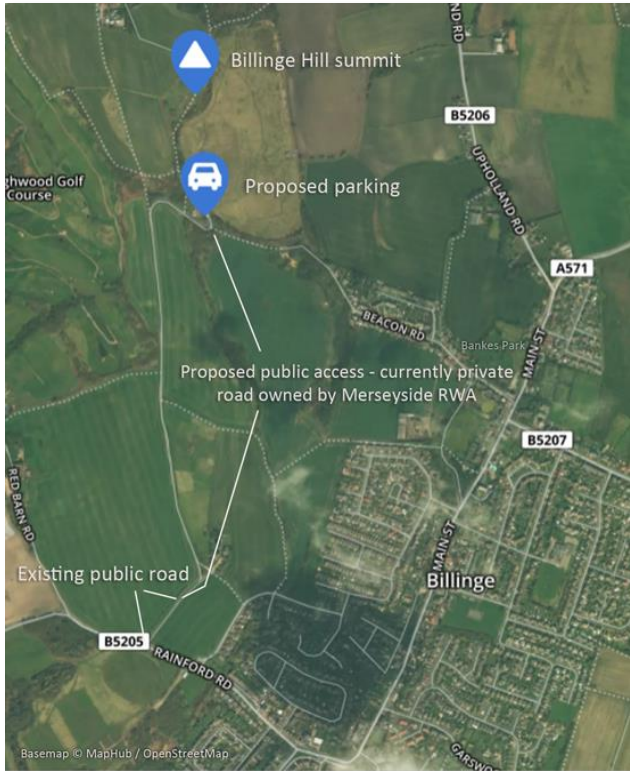
- Develop a smaller, more focused version of “The Nature of Industry” bid to support the above, working with the NLHF.



New replica milestone on the Sankey Canal

- Revamp the Sankey Valley Heritage Centre as the “Sankey Canal Heritage Centre”:
 - upgrade its exhibition to modern standards, focusing on the Canal and related local industry.
 - approach SCARS and the Sankey Link and Restoration CIC about providing volunteer staff for the Centre, to ensure consistent – and hopefully expanded - opening hours;
 - the gate on Blackbrook Road should be opened and a prominent sign placed on the fence whenever the Centre is open;
 - provide basic a basic café facility, open in mornings when the area is busy with walkers, cyclists and other users, but the adjacent Ship Inn is closed; this would provide an income stream for the Centre, and enhance its value as a meeting point and hub.
- Clear the Blackbrook branch of the Canal between the A58 and the Old Double Lock of vegetation to expose the historic features and make it clear to visitors that it is a canal, working with C&RT, SCARS and the Sankey Link & Restoration CIC. This would support a re-named Sankey Canal Heritage Centre.

The Sankey Valley Heritage Park recommendation (in the section of the report about the L&MR) is directly relevant to the Sankey Canal; its heritage groups would be important partners for the project.



Proposed new public vehicle access to the summit of Billinge Hill

Billinge Hill could play a larger role as an amenity for residents and attract many more visitors from outside the area and especially Merseyside and West Lancashire if the access issue was addressed. The consultants have identified a wide well-engineered road that goes to within 300 yards of summit from Rainford Road on the edge of Billinge, next to Crookhurst Farm. It is currently marked as a private road from the farm, though it is a public footpath.¹² Opening access to this road to public traffic and reintroducing a car park at or near its highest

point would allow a much wider range of people to get close to the summit and enjoy the views. Photographs of the road and potential parking area are at Appendix 1. The heritage link is that the hill, summit and quarry are of historic interest in themselves, and that the view shows almost the whole Borough landscape. This could be illustrated by providing a toposcope and interpretation close to the car park.

Carr Mill Dam could play a considerably larger role as an amenity for residents and an attraction for visitors from outside the area if the issues set out above were addressed. This would involve the steps set out below.

- Increasing the amount of formal car parking, possibly using land adjacent to existing parking along the A580 and A571.
- Removing the brick walls along the south-eastern edge of the Dam, or reducing their height to allow views across the water.
- Improving access to and the prospect over the water at the southern edge of the Dam (next to The Waterside) by clearing the undergrowth adjacent to the Waterside (leaving the mature trees standing) and providing picnic tables and litter bins. The space should be managed to Green Flag park standard.
- Improving the footpaths around the Dam to all-weather standard.
- Improve links to Billinge Hill by establishing a waymarked walking route to between the sites, as part of a broader network of heritage trails.
- Installing improved interpretation at the Dam, illustrating its role in the Gerard estate and links to the Sankey Canal.
- More effective promotion of powerboat races, as feature events for the Borough.

¹² It ascends the southern slope of Billinge Hill at a steady angle giving uninterrupted views from East around to the west, with no wooded areas obstructing the view. The consultants understand that the road was constructed for access to the quarry and landfill site beneath the summit to the east, which explains its substantial engineering. The consultants also understand that it is owned by the Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority, what is ultimately the local authorities. A section of the area beneath the summit and adjacent to the access to the landfill site is marked on some old maps as quarry car park.

6

Dream: In the long term, delivery of the Bold Forest Park Action Plan should ensure that the site is improved and developed as part of that wider offer, including interactive visitor interpretation. This includes improved parking (on site, via a new vehicle entrance opposite Chandlers Way) and an events area.¹³ The woodland management and illumination issues are not mentioned in the Action Plan, however. This should be addressed.



Dream, lit up at its 10th anniversary celebrations, with artist Jaume Plensa on the left; (photo: St. Helens Star)

¹³ *Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan*, p.32.

AIM 4: EMPOWER THE BOROUGH'S HERITAGE GROUPS AND INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS

Summary

The Borough's residents and interested others have a vital role to play in researching and presenting its heritage, and taking part in creative projects, as individuals and as part of groups. They will be helped to do this by friendly, helpful and accessible attractions and services, and through a Council-coordinated Borough Heritage Network that provides advice and information, linked to a wider volunteer and third sector network. The needs and interests of a wide range of demographics, including young people, will be considered as part of this. The Borough will become known as an example of best practice for heritage volunteering. This will enhance the capacity of all the attractions and services, and enrich the lives of those who take part – they will become "Heritage Champions".

Rationale

The background report found that heritage groups and interested individuals in the Borough play a vital role on researching and celebrating their heritage, and in supporting attractions and events. They are not coordinated, however, except in so far that some of them share members or work in the same places or on the same topics, and are therefore able to exercise some degree of informal personal coordination. The "St. Helens Heritage Network" has not existed for some years, following the Library Service stepping back from coordinating it and later a key member suffering from ill health. Many of the heritage groups said they very much valued having someone to go to for information about who was doing what, and advice on developing funding applications. The current lack of coordination means that knowledge is not widely shared, effort is duplicated, projects compete with each other and mistakes are repeated. This applies particularly to knowledge about project management, publicity, securing and managing volunteers, securing funding and understanding heritage policy and good practice.

Recommended projects and key actions

A St. Helens Borough Heritage Network, coordinated by the Council, should be re-established. It would strengthen individual projects and make it much easier for the groups and the Borough as a whole to secure investment from the NLHF and other heritage bodies. It

would also allow for the development of a volunteer strategy, also coordinated by the Council.¹⁴ This would make links between volunteers at different venues, developing a flexible volunteer workforce with the skills and experience to support individual venues and special events anywhere in the Borough. The current St. Helens Community Archive website already hosts information such as a history timeline and links to heritage groups and sources of useful information. This could be expanded to form an online home for a re-formed St. Helens Borough Heritage Network, with up-to-date contact details (including for relevant contacts in the Council), more comprehensive information sources, more guidance about potential funding and volunteering.

¹⁴ The Council is currently working to bring together the voluntary and faith sectors in the Borough into a network, or annual summit; a re-formed Borough Heritage Network could be part of this, and benefit from sharing experience and best practice. Halton & St. Helens Community and Voluntary Action would have a role to play in this.

AIM 5: RESPECT AND CELEBRATE THE BOROUGH'S DIFFERENT IDENTITIES AND PLACES

Summary

The Borough is composed of places with their own history and identity. This will be celebrated by factually correct use of language, acknowledging the distinction between St. Helens the town and Borough, and by helping communities celebrate their distinct and shared identities through bespoke heritage trails, interpretation, public art and events.

Rationale

The background report found that there are several identities in the Borough: many participants outside St. Helens town feel only a slight connection to it, or the Borough; this applies especially to those in Newton-le-Willows. Though coal, glass, the railways and rugby league are important to very many people, they are not important to everyone across the Borough. Other topics – such as farming, other industries, the theatre and sports other than rugby league – play a significant role. Only 10 per cent of survey participants said they feel that their identity is celebrated “very well” by the current heritage attractions and events, whilst almost one third said they don’t think it is celebrated “at all”. Councillors in different wards have different levels of interest in heritage matters, reflected in widely differing levels of support for heritage projects from the Councillors Improvement Fund.

Heritage trails are a relatively inexpensive way of providing a focal point for local pride and helping attract visitors, and can also contribute to health and wellbeing. Well-designed examples are increasingly well used.¹⁵ St. Helens Borough has several heritage trails, or trails with a strong heritage element, with at least one other in development. They present a mixed picture: the Newton-le-Willows and Rainhill trails are examples of good practice, and a lot of thought is going into the Haydock trails. Others are neglected: the Sankey Canal Trail and Dream Audio Trails seem almost forgotten as concepts and their waymarking and interpretation are poor, though parts of their routes are well used and relate directly to major heritage assets. Other trails do not seem to have developed far beyond a concept. There is no heritage trail in St. Helens town centre.

¹⁵ Guidelines for trail design are attached at Appendix 2.

Recommended projects and key actions

The strategy as a whole has been developed with the issue of there being different identities and senses of heritage in mind. This is reflected in many of the aims and individual recommendations. This can be enhanced through the steps below

The Council should:

- use factually correct language in its policies, documents and marketing collateral, acknowledging the distinction between St. Helens the town and Borough; it could encourage this through introducing a short style guide for Council staff and Councillors;
- provide local heritage training for new Council staff and Councillors as part of their induction, involving a visit to the museum galleries and the Archive, and being given a short briefing note, perhaps developed from the “historical background” section of the background report;
- ensure that the Borough’s heritage collections come to reflect the diversity of the Borough by reviewing the acquisition and disposals policies and developing the collections over time and working with museums and archives in neighbouring Boroughs that might hold items relevant to parts of the St. Helens Borough;
- reflect the different identities on the roadside signage for the component parts of the Borough, through appropriate words and images (as



St. Helens Community Archive logo, from <https://www.sthelenscommunityarchive.org.uk/archive>

r rebranding the St. Helens Community Archive as “St. Helens Borough Community Archive” and its strapline amended to “Our People. Our Places. Our Heritage,” to ensure it is seen as being for all the communities in the Borough, not just those in St. Helens;

- instituting a heritage plaque scheme, focusing on commemorating people. This potential project is set out at Appendix 4;
- ensure Councillors are aware of the potential to support local community heritage initiatives with contributions from the Councillors Improvement Fund;
- consider helping the new Heritage Network develop a series of local history publications;¹⁶
- encourage heritage groups across the Borough to take part in a new, revamped St. Helens Heritage Network, to ensure that local identities and interests are represented, and that knowledge is shared widely; and
- work with heritage and community groups to review the current heritage trails that aren’t performing well, complete the intended Haydock Industrial Heritage Trail, and to introduce four new trails focused on priority places and themes. These are:
 - St. Helens Town Centre Heritage Centre;
 - Ravenhead Industrial Heritage Trail;
 - “The Trail of the Saints”, between St. Helens town centre and the Totally Wicked Stadium; and
 - The Carr Mill & Billinge Heritage trail.

Further information about the four potential trails (including suggested routes for three of them) at Appendix 3.

¹⁶ St. Helens Historical Society has experience in writing and publishing pamphlets and books.

AIM 6: ACHIEVE A REPUTATION FOR CELEBRATING HERITAGE THROUGH THE ARTS, CULTURE AND EVENTS

Summary

Heritage is closely related to the arts and culture: they are part of the Borough's heritage and can help celebrate and promote it; heritage themes can in turn enhance artistic expression, and celebrating and exploring local identities and lives. The Borough will bring its heritage to life through a heritage event programme planned and delivered over the long-term and focused on its most significant heritage stories. Its communities will be engaged to help designing and deliver them. This will include events to celebrate the Rugby League World Cup 2021 and build to internationally significant events to mark the 200th anniversaries of the Rainhill Trials and the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway line in 2029 and 2030, respectively. Public art will be used to explore heritage themes, in line with a new public art strategy.

Rationale

The Borough aims to become a centre of excellence for socially engaged art, led by its two ACE National Portfolio Organisations (Heart of Glass, and St. Helens Library Service), The Citadel and other arts organisations. Heritage can support it by providing locally relevant themes that engage people's sense of identity; the heritage agenda can benefit from using creative approaches to involving communities in its



"St. Helens Through the Lens" artwork, created by artist Debbie Adele Cooper (pictured) using the Geoff Williams photography collection; (photo: St. Helens Arts Service).



A Guinea a Box cast at the Beecham's Clocktower building (photo: Heart of Glass)

projects, from concept to delivery. Events will be a major part of the approach, because they are an excellent way of engaging people in heritage: they can be performances, exhibitions, heritage themed art competitions, festivals incorporating a range of elements, and delivered indoors, outdoors – or both. Public art and related heritage installations also have an important part to play in bringing sites and stories to life.

The research for the background report found some very positive examples of the arts and events being used to engage people in heritage, including the "St. Helens Through the Lens" project and the "Rainhill Rocket 190" event. It also found mixed levels of understanding of the concept of socially engaged art, and some practical lessons from the experience of heritage related events.

Recommended projects and key actions

- Hold an event or events with senior stakeholders in the Council and the arts, culture and heritage sectors, seeking to develop a greater shared understanding of socially engaged arts and culture, and what becoming a centre of excellence will mean.
- Complete the development of the arts and cultural strategy for the Borough, to stand alongside the heritage strategy, informed by the stakeholder engagement discussed in the point above.
- Discuss significant heritage issues – such as decisions about potential changes to the current museum and archives arrangements, potential funding bids, new heritage trails and interpretation – with the Arts Service and key arts and culture stakeholders at

concept stage when there is the maximum opportunity to influence them, and design social engagement into the process.

- Use bespoke art as a creative tool in community engagement and consultation on heritage matters, as standard.
- Heritage Open Days should be coordinated through a re-formed St. Helens Borough Heritage Network, discussed elsewhere in this report.
- Include heritage considerations in the public art element of the arts & cultural strategy, focusing heritage related public art mainly on industrial heritage and sport, and prioritising the most significant heritage sites and stories, as set out in this strategy.¹⁷
- Review the experience of Rainhill 190 and establish further lessons for future events
- Develop a long-term event plan stick to it, subject to planned reviews and evaluation. Planning events well in advance allows them to be delivered efficiently, and maximised potential partnership links and promotional impact. Potential heritage elements of this are set out below.
 - **September 2020:** a small event to mark the 190th anniversary of the opening of the L&MR, to maintain momentum developed by Rainhill Rocket 190, and to continue to position the Borough as an important part of that story.
 - **Autumn 2020:** seek the inclusion of appropriate heritage elements in the “**FIERCE AND URGENT CONVERSATIONS**” socially engaged art triennial.
 - **October-November 2021:** an exhibition celebrating the Borough’s Rugby League heritage, timed to support Rugby League World Cup 2021 (as discussed above).
 - **Timing tbd:** an exhibition to showcase the museum and archives collections, along the lines of “a history of St. Helens Borough in 100 objects” (as discussed in the “Heritage Visitor Attractions” and “Heritage Collections” sections), with timing to be determined – though see the point below.
 - **Timing tbd:** restage Julia Jones’ short story *Faith and Henry*, produced and screened by Granada in 1969, with performances in the original locations,

showcasing important parts of the Sankey Canal and mining landscape, whilst exploring contemporary social issues.¹⁸

- **2022:** an event or programme of events to celebrate 130 years of St. Helens Museum.
- **2023:** an event to celebrate the 190th anniversary of the opening of the St. Helens – Runcorn Gap railway, continuing the narrative of the Borough’s place in railway history in the approach to 2030.
- **2023:** an event or programme of events to celebrate 75 years of the St. Helens – Stuttgart



Still from Granada’s “Faith and Henry” (1969), next to the Sankey Canal at Earlestown

twinning arrangement.

- **2023:** support St. Helens R.F.C. in celebrating its 150th anniversary.
- **2023:** an event to mark the 250th anniversary of the formation of the British (Cast) Plate Glass Company, which built and operated a nationally significant plant at Ravenhead.
- **2024 (tbc):** deliver an innovate programme of socially engaged arts and cultural events as LCR Borough of Culture (tbc).
- **2024:** an event to mark the 125th anniversary of the Kurz Chemical Works disaster.

¹⁷ Public art can be defined as art in any media that is designed to be displayed or performed in the public domain. Public art can be temporary or permanent.

¹⁸ The film is available to view at: <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-faith-and-henry-1969-online>.

- **2025:** event to celebrate 250 years since the Sankey Canal reached its fullest extent in the Borough, with all extensions into St. Helens complete. This could take the form of public theatre with volunteers designing and building a spectacular, large portable model or effigy of a Mersey flat boat, and carrying it along the route – including along the filled-in sections in St. Helens town centre, involving stopping traffic and sending a strong visual message that the town was once an inland port.
- **2026:** an event or programme of events to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Pilkingtons being founded.
- **2028:** an event or programme of events to celebrate 80 years of the St. Helens – Stuttgart twinning arrangement.
- **2028:** an event or events to mark the 175th anniversary of the founding of the L&NWR Viaduct Foundry (Earlestown Wagon Works), linked to Earlestown being named.
- **Spring 2029:** events to mark Dream’s 20th anniversary, in a transformed Sutton Manor Woodland.
- **October 2029:** events to mark the 200th anniversary of the Rainhill Trials, based around a new heritage visitor attraction focused on the Trials in the village. Social engagement could be delivered in many ways, including using the model for the proposed Sankey Canal event, with volunteers constructing and operating large portable models of the locomotives that took part in the Trials, in a street theatre spectacular. Community partners from elsewhere could be sought to help develop the models of locomotives associated with their places, working with local groups.
- **2030:** events to mark the 200th anniversary of the opening of the L&MR, coordinated with partners along the route, and in partnership with the National Railway Museum.
- **2030:** an event to mark the 100th anniversary of the Lyme Pit disaster.



The replica “Rocket” displayed at Rainhill for “Rainhill Rocket 190”

AIM 7: PROMOTE THE HERITAGE OFFER TO BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS

Summary

The Council, its partners and its growing team of volunteers will tell residents and potential visitors about the heritage offer, and help them to tell others. It will adopt a new visitor economy strategy based on a core proposition of industrial heritage and the outdoors, and use storytelling to engage people. It will explore ways to do this effectively and distinctly within the LCR destination marketing framework.

Rationale

No matter how good the heritage offer is, it won't fulfil its potential unless people are told about it. Doing that effectively involves understanding what the key messages and target audiences are. Though the research for the background report found many good individual examples of promoting heritage events or individual services, it also found several issues in need of attention. The broader picture, such as the hotel offer and transport links, are beyond this scope of this strategy, but it can contribute on some specific heritage matters.

Recommended projects and key actions

- Adopt a new visitor economy strategy (developed from the 2017 draft), with industrial heritage, rugby league and sub-regionally significant outdoor spaces (especially Carr Mill Dam, Billinge Hill and Dream / Sutton Manor Woodland) as key elements.
- Ensure any commissioned visitor economy marketing arrangements (such as with the LCR Local Enterprise Partnership) consider how best to reflect the Borough's distinct heritage and identities,¹⁹ and that copy and collateral provided on the heritage offer is up to date.
- Help local partners support heritage events by discussing the long-term event plan with them regularly via the revamped St. Helens Borough Heritage Network.
- Provide basic guidance for event promotion on the St. Helens Community Archive website, alongside the other helpful information for heritage groups.

- Consult relevant stakeholders, including local heritage groups, carefully about the names and



Drunk Wolf artwork on the theme of "Haydock"

brands for any new or revamped heritage attractions or services.

¹⁹ For example, having www.visitsthelens.com redirect to www.visitliverpool.com may be correct, but it dilutes the distinctiveness that potential visitors interested in heritage are attracted to.

AIM 8: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Summary

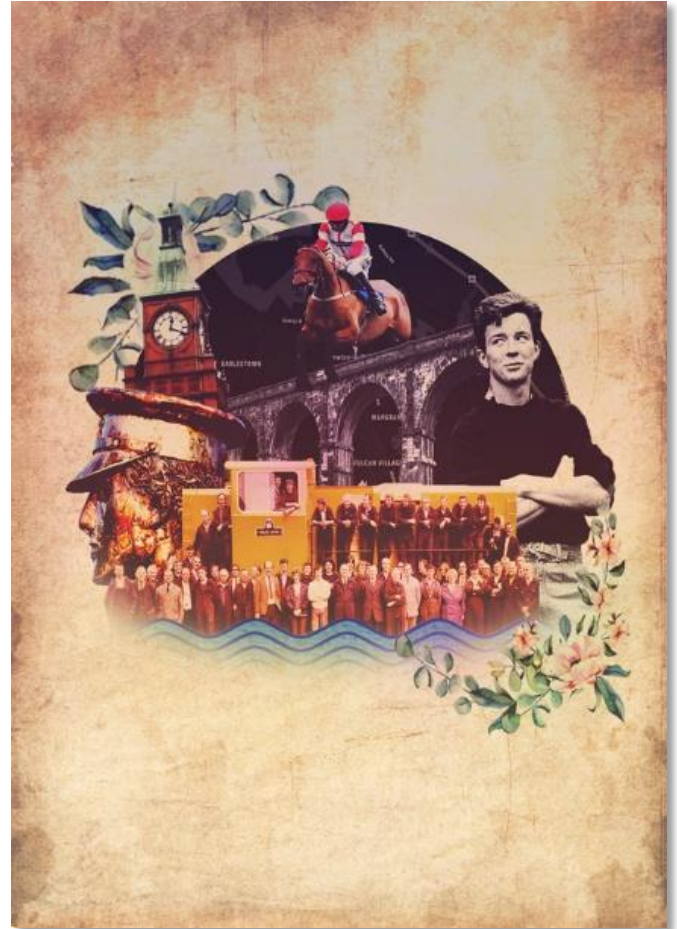
Success depends on working closely with organisations that can help deliver, inform and fund projects. This, in turn, depends on building effective relationships with them and maintaining them over the long term. Communication is key. The Council will ensure the Borough develops and maintains relationships with local arts and culture organisations, Liverpool City Region partners, Historic England, heritage funding bodies. It will also help local heritage partners develop helpful relationships, including with attractions and expert groups outside the area.

Rationale

Achieving the heritage vision will depend upon working closely with strategic partners over a period of many years. These include heritage funding and regulatory bodies, LCR partners, overseas twinning partners, sector networks, heritage attractions elsewhere with complementary interests, local businesses and networks, and key local delivery partners. Whilst many of the relationships are in place, deepening them and maintaining them requires sustained focus, spanning individuals moving on.

Recommended projects and key actions

- Establish a list of strategic partners for the Heritage Strategy, based on the above and the “potential partners” content in the delivery plan
- Identify a named relationship manager for each strategic partner.
- Communicate the key points in the heritage strategy, and especially the ambitious vision for 2030, to the partners, through the relationship managers.
- Remain in ongoing, if sometimes occasional, contact, even when there is no joint project underway.
- Ensure that responsibility for relationship management is handed on when individuals move on.



Drunk Wolf artwork on the theme of “Newton & Earlestown”

AIM 9: BUILD MOMENTUM THROUGH EARLY SUCCESS

Summary

Early progress builds confidence. The Borough will seek to achieve this by publishing an agreed version of the heritage strategy, arranging initial capacity to coordinate delivery and developing some of the shorter-term projects for delivery in 2020-21.

Rationale

Having developed a heritage strategy reflects the Council's interest in and ambition for the heritage agenda. The process of developing the strategy has engaged more than 800 individuals and 45 organisations, all of whom share a strong interest in heritage. Demonstrating that their engagement has served a purpose, and that the strategy is leading to a new approach to heritage will build confidence and generate further engagement.

Recommended projects and key actions

- Announce intentions for the heritage agenda, though publishing the Heritage Strategy, or a document derived from it.
- Arrange initial capacity to coordinate delivery of the strategy.
- Announce intentions or decisions about some of the key projects, such as the Billinge Hill access project.
- Begin delivery of some of the shorter-term projects, such as updating Conservation Area Assessments and Management Plans, and creating the new St. Helens Borough Heritage Network.
- Begin project development work for some of the medium-term and long-term projects, to be determined.

AIM 10: ACHIEVE FURTHER RECOGNITION FOR THE BOROUGH'S MOST SIGNIFICANT HERITAGE ASSETS

Summary

The Liverpool and Manchester Railway is of international significance; the Sankey Canal Corridor, industrial Ravenhead, Dream and parts of the Borough museum and archive collections are of regional and national significance; and Billinge Hill, Carr Mill Dam are of sub-regional significance. This must be recognised locally and communicated clearly to sub-regional, regional, national and international target audiences, using factually

correct and consistent messages. This will improve the Borough's capacity to attract funding, enhance residents' pride in their heritage and attract more visitors.

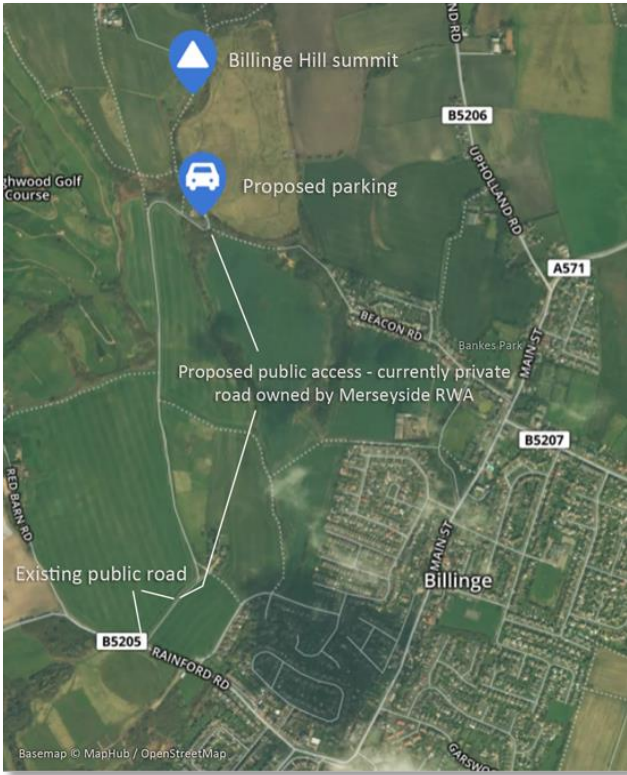
Rationale

As per the summary.

Recommended projects and key actions

- Explore feasibility and interest in developing a campaign to achieve UNESCO World Heritage List status for the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, leading to a decision as to whether to proceed.
- Seek a Transport Heritage Trust "Red Wheel" for the Sankey Viaduct.
- Help ensure consistent communication about heritage significance by producing a short heritage guide, with key messages about the most important assets, informed by the Heritage Strategy, with key communications messages.
- Seek further recognition of the status of the Sankey Canal as the first industrial canal in England, through measures to be determined by working with the local canal groups and the C&RT.

APPENDIX 1: PHOTOS OF PROPOSED BILLINGE HILL SUMMIT ACCESS ROAD



Proposed new public vehicle access to the summit of Billinge Hill



Looking up towards Crookhurst Farm from the public part of the road



The gates at the side of Crookhurst Farm. Further up access up the hill is to the left of the gates

Further up the private part of the road towards the farm



Looking down the private road with Carr Mill Dam and St. Helens in the distance



Looking up towards the summit from the private road



Bench part way up the road towards the summit



View of the potential parking area, looking towards the south east



View of the potential parking area, looking back towards the road

APPENDIX 2: GUIDELINES FOR HERITAGE TRAILS

Good heritage trails involve:

- a clear concept (such as being about a particular place, theme or person), expressed through a clear name;
- a sound historical basis for the choice, related to significant features such as designated heritage assets or locally significant heritage assets;
- sufficient flexibility to take in other points of interest, even if they don't strictly meet the historical criteria;²⁰
- using only public rights of way, and keeping time on roads and lanes with no footpaths to a bare minimum;
- good footpaths passible in poor weather, no overgrown sections or unexpected obstacles;
- using a loop, only including branches with a good reason;
- multiple convenient start and end points, with parking and access from public transport;
- several places where refreshments can be bought on the way;
- avoiding dark, narrow or enclosed sections, where possible, to help ensure users feel safe;
- preferring paths away from motor vehicles, where possible;
- avoiding turns that are difficult to spot;
- taking in points offering a wide view, or sections alongside water, where possible;
- never going beyond approximately 2km from public facilities, in case of difficulties;
- clear information about the route, such as how to get to it, exactly where it goes, how far it is, any significant elevation changes, the nature of the surface, whether it is suitable for young children or those of limited mobility, and how long it will take to walk (assume about 2.5 miles an hour for a group of mixed abilities on reasonably flat going); this should be available on a downloadable leaflet (printed versions are nice, but cost money and have greater environmental impact) and a GPX file.

Following the above guidelines will give a heritage trail a good chance of success. They can be enhanced further with heritage interpretation. This can take several forms: panels giving the route and / or historical interpretation at key sites; directional waymarkers pointing out the route, often with a branded logo illustrating the heritage theme; plaques or markers giving information about key sites, often with a link to further information, such as a reference

number, web address or QR code; 3D physical interpretation such as replica industrial infrastructure; or public art. Further digital elements, such as geocaching (using GPS to find hidden containers with items to find and share inside – a form of treasure hunting), bespoke apps with functions such as augmented or virtual reality, including features such as dynamic “then and now” images of points on the route. In urban or semi-urban areas, panels should only be sited in prominent, well, used locations, as any tucked out of the way are likely to be vandalised.²¹



Information and interpretation panel, Rainhill Village Centre – a good example of a well-designed panel, in a suitable location

²⁰ The summit of Billinge Hill is approximately a third of a mile from the Borough boundary, but the “Beating the Bounds” route includes it as it adds value to the route, and allows visitors to see much of the overall 43-mile route from one place.

²¹ The original Newton-le-Willows Heritage Trail suffered from this.

Replica industrial infrastructure or public art can be hard-wearing, and less likely to suffer from vandalism.²² It can also be thought provoking and tell a site's story. The coal wagon and crane at Stanley Bank is a good example of this:



Replica industrial infrastructure at Stanley Bank, St. Helens

visitors can tell what they are and what the site is used for without having to read anything, and the installations haven't suffered from any significant vandalism in the decade they have been in place.

Bespoke digital interpretation can be costly and take time to develop; many bespoke apps fail to achieve the usage their commissioners hoped. A route that follows the basic guidelines and is served by well researched and presented historical and route information, available on a website (and a leaflet if possible) can work very effectively.

Local heritage trails are discussed in more detail in the Background Report.

²² The design of public art should take account of any public art strategy in place.

APPENDIX 3: PROPOSED HERITAGE TRAILS

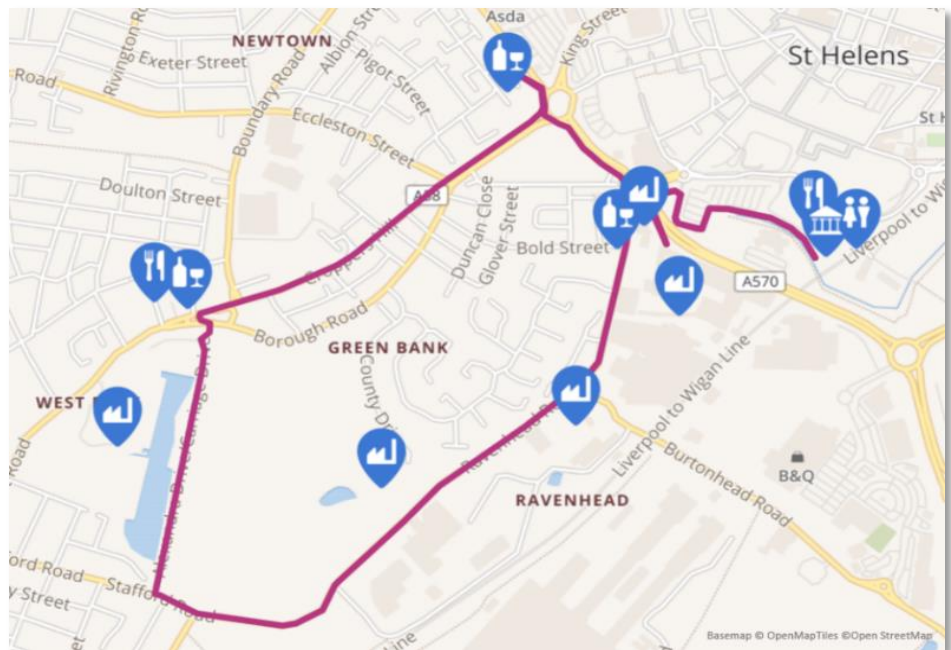
St. Helens Town Centre Heritage Trail

St. Helens town centre is the major urban centre in the Borough, and the focus for a large proportion of its population and many visitors. It includes a concentration of heritage assets, including two museums, several Listed Buildings and two Conservation Areas (George St. and Victoria Square). There is some evidence that a member or members of the St. Helens Heritage Network began to plan a heritage trail for the town centre, but it was not completed or implemented.²³ This should be addressed. There are many potential routes for such a trail, given the concentration of points of interest and facilities in the town centre, and devising one would need further attention.

Ravenhead Industrial Heritage Trail

Length: 3 miles. Walking time: approximately 1.25 hours.

Ravenhead is perhaps the most significant industrial heritage area in the Borough, with identified industrial activity dating from the 16th century, and probably earlier. In the late 18th century, following the extension of the Sankey Canal, the development of coalmining and the opening of the copper works and the British (Cast) Plate Glass works it was one of the most significant sites in the country. The creation and successive extension and redevelopment of the various Pilkington works in the 19th and 20th centuries enhanced this significance. Much of the area was regenerated in the late 20th century by Ravenhead Renaissance, creating a retail park, hotel, TWOG and a housing estate; much of it remains in industrial use. A lot of interesting features and assets remain, however, enhanced by having TWOG in the area and the town centre's facilities nearby. It would suit an industrial heritage trail, complementing an adjacent trail for St. Helens town centre.²⁴



Suggested Ravenhead Industrial Heritage Trial

A suggested route is given in the map above. It would take in the following features:

- The World of Glass – the Borough's main museum;
- a remaining section of the Sankey Canal;
- the site of Pilkington's original Grove St. headquarters;
- Reflections Court, a Grade II Listed former Pilkington's headquarters;
- Canal St., formerly the Ravenhead Branch of the Sankey Canal, filled-in in the late 19th century;
- the site of the Parys Co. copper works, founded in the early 1770s;
- a Grade II Listed former windmill tower;

²³ A paper exists in the Local History reference library with a short collection of photographs "gathered to accompany the St. Helens Town Centre Heritage Trail" by the St. Helens Heritage Network.

²⁴ The 2001 Heritage Open Days leaflet refers to industrial walking tours being led by Tony Sweeney, but do not give a route.

- Factory Row, an interesting example of mid-19th century workers' housing, historically associated with the neighbouring Ravenhead glass works;
- the site of the British (Cast) Plate Glass works, including the Grade II Listed former Ravenhead House, circa 1773 (bays of the former great casting hall survive as part of the current Knauf works);
- Alexandra Park, the Grade II Listed former Pilkington's headquarters complex; and
- a range of operational industrial sites.

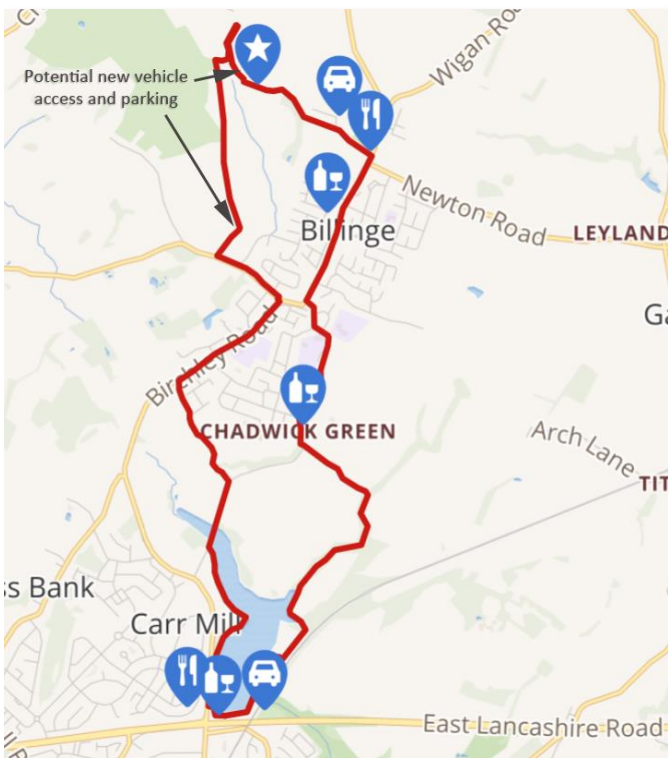
The suggested route has been designed to pass close to several potential refreshment stops, including TWOG, The Phoenix, The Eccleston Arms and The Cricketers. A branch could be extended to take in the Anderton Shearer Mining monument (relevant to Ravenhead Colliery), Steve Prescott Bridge and Cannington Shaw Bottle Shop.

Carr Mill – Billinge Heritage Trail

Length: 6 miles. Walking time: approximately 2.5 hours.

The main documents explore the potential of Carr Mill and Billinge Hill as visitor attractions in their own right. Their features and the attractive countryside between them would suit a new heritage trail connecting the two, celebrating the heritage of the two places and encouraging people to explore them both. The route would include: Carr Mill Dam; other parts of the former Gerard estate; former industrial workings in the fields between Billinge and Garswood; the proposed new access route to Billinge Hill, up the road next to Crookhurst Farm; Billinge Hill summit; the historic core of Billinge Chapel End village; Chadwick Green; and Old Carr Mill Road.

The route would pass by the Waterside and Premier Inn, the amenities in Billinge Chapel End village, the Mason's Arms at Chadwick Green and Lancashire Powerboat Club. It would give an added reason to visit the improved amenities at Carr Mill Dam and Billinge Hill.



Suggested route of a Carr Mill & Billinge Heritage Trail

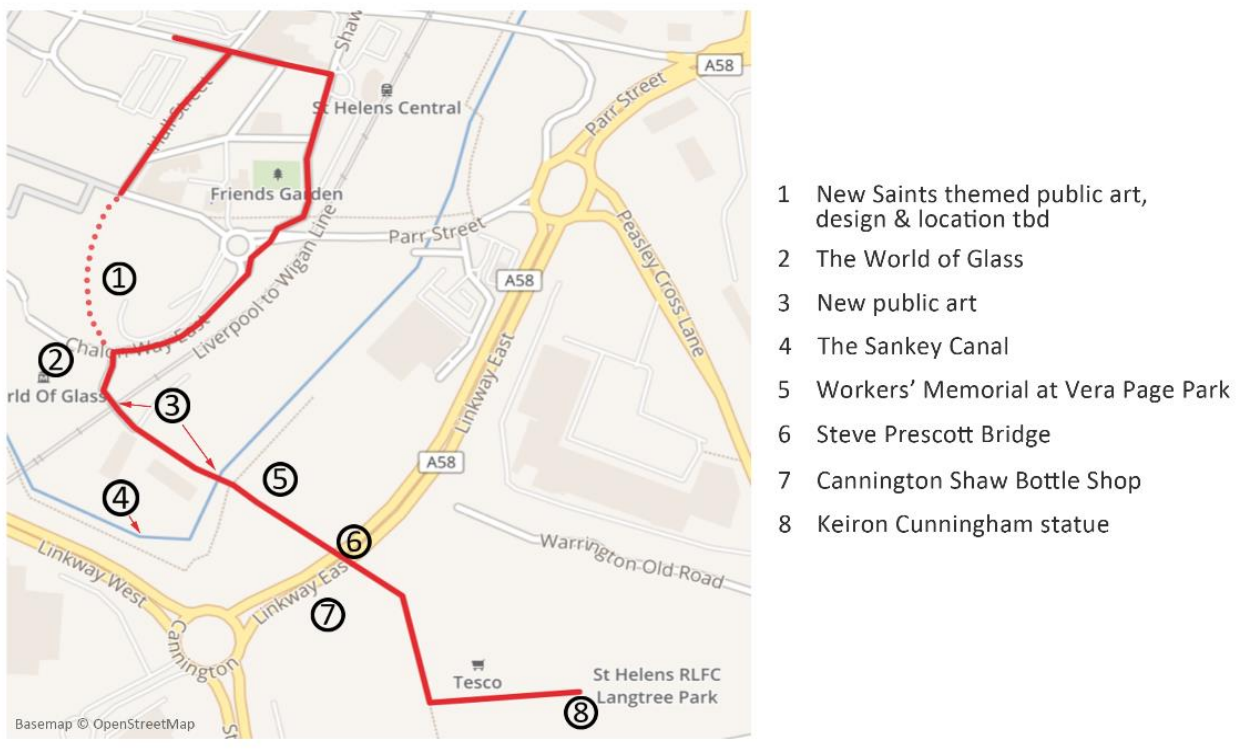
“The Trail of the Saints”

Length: 0.75 miles. Walking time: 10-15 minutes.

The most common walking route between St. Helens town centre and the Totally Wicked Stadium goes down Chalon Way East, past TWOG, beneath a railway bridge, through an industrial estate, across the Sankey Canal, through Vera Page Park, across the Steve Prescott Bridge, past the Cannington Shaw Bottle Shop and through Tesco car park. The route is not obvious, parts of it are unattractive and it is not branded as an “official trail”. It takes about 10 minutes to walk. Recent improvements to Vera Page Park, and the installation of The Workers Memorial statue have made that section more interesting, but the route remains a poor showcase for the Borough, compared to the stadium and match experience. Following the route involves little engagement with the town centre.

The route needs coordinated attention to make the journey more memorable for spectators, to encourage them to visit the town centre and to spend time and money there. Examples of what has been done on stadium routes elsewhere are attached as an Appendix to the Background Report.

The route could be developed as a new heritage trail, “The Trail of the Saints”, to improve the match day experience and foster a positive impression of the town. Relevant steps are summarised below.



Suggested “Trail of the Saints” with new public art, and highlighting existing heritage features

- Create public art installations celebrating Saints’ heritage along the route, especially on the canvas provided by path beneath the rail bridge and adjacent fencing.²⁵
- Marking the route to the stadium as an official “Trail of the Saints” and ensuring it receives regular maintenance and preservation. Branded directional signage would also help.
- Using the open green spaces along the route by offering them to street performers or carefully selected vendors on match days.
- Placing stewards on the walking route, especially for matches that are anticipated to be busier than usual.

²⁵ Examples of public art on Network Rail Infrastructure are available at: <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/art-and-the-railway/>. Any public art introduced should be in line with the forthcoming public art strategy.

- Extending a branch of the “Trail of the Saints” into the town centre, by creating a decorated walkway through an appropriate space – even a public building – connecting the spaces.²⁶ This could be enhanced with secure display cabinets featuring memorabilia from Saints Heritage Society.
- Creating a piece of Saints related public art in the town centre, connected to the main “Trail of the Saints” by its town centre branch. This would act as a focal point in the town centre, to act as an opposite end focal point of the trail to the statue of Kieron Cunningham at the Totally Wicked Stadium.

All public art elements of the project should fit the approach set by the forthcoming public art strategy, and engage the community from concept stage through to design and delivery.

²⁶ Wigan’s “Walk of Fame” connecting the Grand Arcade with its car park is a nearby example.

APPENDIX 4: PROPOSED HERITAGE PLAQUES SCHEME

A heritage plaque is a permanent sign installed in a public place to commemorate a link between that location and a famous person, event, or building that once stood on the site. They are often referred to informally as “Blue Plaques” in reference to the plaques used in Greater London since 1866, run by English Heritage since 1986.²⁷ This scheme was the first of its type in the world and has provided a model for many other UK regions and countries to adopt. It has put up more than 900 official plaques.

There is no national UK heritage plaque scheme: many different schemes are run by local councils, civic societies and heritage groups; some are locally focused, and some relate to particular topics.²⁸ There is no official statistic, but it has been estimated that there are more than 46,000 plaques in the UK,²⁹ run by more than 300 schemes (many of them closed).³⁰ Many broadly follow the English Heritage model, using circular blue plaques; many others, however, use different shapes and colours. Criteria for selection vary greatly.

Plaque schemes are increasingly popular as they have demonstrated an enduring ability to foster community interest in local history and the historic built environment. They have also, however, been criticised for not recognising the achievements or importance of women and ethnic minority groups. English Heritage has published guidance for anyone operating a plaque scheme, or considering starting one.³¹

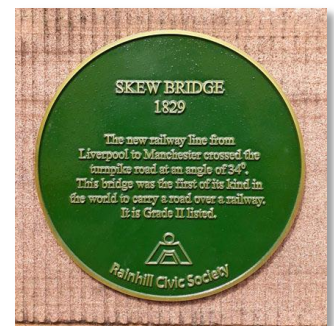
The current position

There is no coordinated heritage plaque scheme in the Borough, though a small number of plaques erected at different times in the past are still in place, and Rainhill Civic Society has recently installed a set of six on historic structures in Rainhill. They cost £1,700 plus £150 each to erect, funded from the Councillor Improvement Fund. The Parish Council has paid for the planning applications. The idea of introducing a scheme across the Borough was broadly supported in the public survey. The Background Report discusses the current position in more detail.

Potential project

The consultants have considered the position, examples elsewhere and the English Heritage guidance. They propose that Council could establish a Boroughwide heritage plaque scheme, with the following features:

- a focus on commemorating people from or with strong links to the Borough who have made a significant or notable contribution to society; this would celebrate the human and community role in heritage, and avoid competing with the existing plaques scheme in Rainhill and the Heritage Trail interpretation panels in Newton-le-Willows, both of which are focused on places and buildings (the former entirely, the latter largely); it would also help make the scheme easy to understand, as it would broadly correspond to the



New heritage plaque at Skew Bridge, Rainhill

²⁷ For more information, see: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/blue-plaques/>

²⁸ English Heritage ran a trial expansion to its Greater London scheme from 1998 to 2005, installing 34 plaques across the UK – 14 of them in Liverpool. The trial was discontinued as it was thought to be competing with existing local schemes. There are several nationwide schemes operated by special-interest bodies. For example: The Transport Heritage Trust’s “Red Wheel” scheme celebrates sites that played an important role in transport history; and The Royal Society of Chemistry’s “Chemical Landmark” scheme erects hexagonal blue plaques to mark sites where the chemical sciences are considered to have made a significant contribution to health, wealth, or quality of life.

²⁹ <http://openplaques.org/>

³⁰ About 25 of these schemes are in the North West: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/visit/blue-plaques/propose-plaque/other-plaque-schemes.pdf>

³¹ <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/visit/blue-plaques/propose-plaque/commemorative-plaques-guidance-pt1.pdf>

widely known English Heritage “Blue Plaque” scheme; eligibility criteria would need to be established;

- developing an initial list of potential candidates, perhaps including some who have not been commemorated in the Borough to date, such as Sarah Clayton, John Mackay, Henry Berry, Bert Trautmann and Lily Parr; local heritage groups (such as St. Helens Historical Society) could draw up the draft list;
- the plaques to be based on the recent Rainhill model, with colours and other design details to be determined; costs would be circa £450 per plaque, including erection; and
- the scheme to led initially by the Council, then taken on by a revamped St. Helens Borough Heritage Network, supported by the Council (as discussed elsewhere in this report).

The public could then be consulted about additions to the list, and a rolling programme of awards made, with a small number each year. The Council could pledge a contribution to each plaque, and to assist with arranging planning permission, with the remainder to come from seeking grant funding or crowd funding.

On this basis, an initial round of 10 plaques would cost less than £5,000 (plus officer time), with the costs for additional rounds being proportionate, depending on the number of plaques, plus inflation.

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