

MAKING OUR HERITAGE MATTER



WIRRAL'S HERITAGE STRATEGY

2011-2014



November 2011

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Executive Summary

This is the first heritage strategy for Wirral Council and its partners. Its purpose is to set out a comprehensive and integrated heritage framework for Wirral borough, which will form the basis for heritage activities in the short and medium terms and establish principles to be followed in the longer term. It has been developed with the help of national and regional strategic organisations and many local groups and stakeholders and seeks to encompass their concerns, views and aspirations. Its success will depend on working in partnership, brokering new relationships and actively working across sectors to meet heritage objectives.

The strategy is in two parts. The main body of the document explores the strategic context for heritage in Wirral. Section 1 defines what we mean by 'heritage' and sets a series of objectives to support the overall vision

'To ensure that Wirral's heritage is protected, managed, enhanced and used to meet the educational, recreational and sustainable needs of local people, visitors and potential investors to the borough'.

Section 2 provides a historic overview of the borough and identifies the tremendous wealth of heritage assets and resources which have survived from that long history and which now contribute to the physical and social identity of Wirral. It looks at the wide range of heritage activities already taking place throughout the borough and identifies those organisations from all sectors who are currently delivering them. It assesses the value of heritage and how it contributes to economic regeneration and tourism.

Section 3 explores the wider context, and demonstrates how the strategy will respond to, interact with, and support those priorities and themes which currently drive heritage at national, regional at local levels.

Section 4 identifies key issues and proposed actions for five thematic areas:

- **Stewardship and Protection** – conserving Wirral's heritage for future generations;
- **Regeneration** – using heritage as a driver for economic development, inward investment and supporting sustainable communities;
- **Learning** – maximising the role of heritage in supporting education, training and life-long learning;
- **Participation** – ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to access, enjoy and participate in heritage;
- **Celebration** – recognising and utilising the part heritage can play in promoting local identity, social cohesion and civic and community pride.

The final section deals with how the strategy will be implemented through more 'joined-up' cross-departmental working within the Council, by building on existing external partnerships and forging new ones. It looks at criteria for determining priorities, which will assist the Council in prioritising its own projects and inform decisions on which external projects should be taken forward. Finally, it proposes a process of monitoring, evaluation and review which includes and engages local people.

The second part of the document is the **Action Plan** which expands on the actions identified in the main strategy, with short, medium and longer term targets. It is envisaged that the Action Plan will be an evolving and 'living' document, regularly updated as targets are achieved and new initiatives are fed into it.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why have a Heritage Strategy for Wirral?

Wirral's heritage is distinctive, diverse and in some cases, world class. Ranging from unique historic and natural landscapes, through outstanding model villages, to the vast complex of 19th century dockland structures, heritage provides the context for our everyday lives. It underpins the borough's national, regional and local identity and makes a significant contribution to our quality of life. It provides recreation and employment, contributes to the local and regional economy and can be a force in regeneration, tourism and sustainable development. Heritage is not just about the past. It impacts on all who live in, work in or visit Wirral today.

Most of all heritage is about people. It is about people learning from and enjoying this special place. It is about people caring for and looking after those things of value which we have inherited from previous generations and ensuring that they are safeguarded for the future.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out a comprehensive and integrated heritage framework for Wirral borough, which will form the basis for heritage activities in the short and medium terms and establish principles to be followed in the longer term.

The strategy reflects the great interest local people have in their heritage, as demonstrated by the large numbers of groups, societies and individuals who actively engage with Wirral's heritage. It has been developed in consultation with many of these organisations and seeks to reflect their views. The aim has been to produce a strategy which is agreed and accepted by the whole community and will be used by everyone as a 'living' document to guide heritage activity throughout the borough.

An important element of the strategy will be to provide an overview of Wirral's heritage by identifying those key heritage assets and resources which have value at local, national and even international levels. Within this context of understanding the significance of the borough's heritage, the strategy will be better placed to provide a clear direction for the management, promotion and celebration of that heritage.

However, a heritage strategy should not be and cannot be prescriptive. As public sector funding pressures bite further, the importance of widening participation in heritage will rise. Encouraging greater community participation and ownership of initiatives will be key and it may not be that all actions can be predetermined, but that innovation and community driven initiatives can be stimulated and allowed to flourish. The challenge will be to create the conditions that support such initiatives and enable them to happen.

The geographical area covered by this strategy is that of Wirral borough and does not include south Wirral which is administered by Cheshire West and Chester Council. However, it does recognise that heritage cannot be confined within local authority boundaries and that the historic and cultural identity of Wirral borough is inextricably linked to the history of the whole Wirral peninsula.

1.2 Who is the Strategy for?

Heritage in its widest sense touches all our lives, in ways which are both obvious and tangible, but also in ways which we often fail to recognise or appreciate. A person may never have any desire to visit a museum or engage in heritage activity, but will agree that a well maintained and attractive historic environment has a positive impact on their quality of life. Young people consulted on the development of this strategy initially expressed no interest in heritage, it was 'boring' and not for them. Yet their interest in and knowledge of the history of local football clubs was both passionate and impressive; they had just never thought of this as 'heritage'.

This strategy is not just a document for Wirral Council, but for the whole community. It has been developed with the help of very many local organisations and individuals and seeks to encompass their views, concerns and aspirations. Its success will depend on working in partnership, brokering new relationships and actively working across sectors to meet heritage objectives.

At times when financial resources are increasingly limited, it is more than ever important that the Council and its many partners have a clear vision and understanding of how heritage activity is to be delivered within the borough, establish priorities for action and define how these are to be achieved. This clarity should assist in targeting funding and funding applications towards those actions which have been identified as having greatest need.

1.3 How the Strategy has been developed

A priority in developing this strategy has been to engage local people throughout the process. In the spring of 2011 an initial consultation draft was sent to over 200 local organisations, including local history societies, community groups, healthcare providers, multi-cultural and disability groups, as well as national and regional strategic partners. Copies were available in museums, libraries and a whole range of community venues and the document was promoted through the Wirral History and Heritage Association. In July 2011 a community consultation day, held in Birkenhead Town Hall, attracted representatives from some 50 societies, who took part in a series of lively workshop sessions and discussions on every aspect of the strategy. They also helped to develop and test criteria for prioritising heritage projects

and initiatives. A second highly creative consultation exercise for young people took place in the same month and provided new and an imaginative perspectives on the meaning of heritage and how they would like to be engaged. Wherever possible, the strategy has tried to embrace the views of partners and local people and it is intended that this process of local engagement will continue through the monitoring, evaluation and implementation process.

1.4 Definition and scope

The definition of heritage is very broad and can mean different things to different people and organisations. Wirral's heritage assets include historic buildings, museum and archives collections and natural and man-made landscapes; but also less tangible aspects like our traditions, legends and memories. In fact it could be said that heritage consists of all those things we value that have been inherited from previous generations and which we wish to protect to hand over to our children or share with others.

This strategy will focus on heritage in its widest context, for it is the sum total of all these elements which has forged the special character of Wirral and all who live here.

While the value of some heritage is recognised and protected by government designation, much of our heritage does not enjoy statutory protection. Whilst the Council has a duty to safeguard heritage assets such as Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, museum collections and archives, there is increasing recognition of the importance of 'local' heritage to our communities, and an increasing pressure for local people to take a more pro-active role in the protection and enhancement of that heritage. This strategy will define statutory responsibilities, but will also explore the ways in which residents and communities can be empowered to enhance the understanding and management of heritage at a local level.

1.5 Vision, aims and objectives

Wirral's heritage is a tremendous asset, but the contribution heritage makes to our quality of life, the regeneration of our communities and the local economy can sometimes be overlooked. Too often, Wirral's heritage is overshadowed by the great maritime city of Liverpool to the east and the Roman city of Chester to the south. Yet Wirral has an outstandingly diverse heritage stretching back over 8,000 years of human occupation. The borough abounds with sites, buildings and landscapes reflecting almost every period of history, most of which are accessible to the public for leisure, learning and enjoyment.

However, the picture is not all rosy. Throughout the borough there are buildings and sites of historic interest which are at risk through neglect, changing patterns of use or threat of redevelopment. Similarly, the character of many areas of high heritage value is in danger of being eroded through unsympathetic and inappropriate development, proliferation of unsympathetic building materials and intrusive signs. The challenge over the next few years will be to understand the scale of the problem and to work with partner organisations to find new and innovative solutions to safeguard this important heritage.

The vision underpinning this strategy is to protect, enhance and use Wirral's heritage for the long term benefit of local people and the local economy. It aims to emphasise the value of heritage in both social and economic terms. Our heritage can be a tremendous source of community pride and life-long learning. Equally, heritage has a significant and growing role as an economic driver in regeneration projects and our tourism offer.

Central to the achievement of this vision will be the way we all work together to achieve our objectives. The Council, strategic partners, private sector and local people all need to work together, pooling experience, knowledge and skills. With a shared vision, increased understanding and appreciation of heritage issues and a clearly defined framework for action, Wirral will be well placed to maximise its heritage assets for the good of the social and economic life of the whole community.

The aim of the Wirral heritage strategy is:

'To ensure that Wirral's heritage is protected, managed, enhanced and used to meet the educational, recreational and sustainable needs of local people, visitors and potential investors to the borough.'

The strategy objectives are:

- To promote, celebrate and communicate the value of the heritage of Wirral as a source of national significance and local civic and community pride;
- To identify, recognise and give an understanding of Wirral's heritage, which will inform future management and development;
- To actively promote the role and opportunities presented by heritage in terms of the wider regeneration, economic and tourism development of the borough and to provide a framework for investment;

- To ensure the highest standards of stewardship, management and protection of heritage assets, including buildings, conservation areas, natural or man-made landscapes and art and historical collections;
- To promote community participation in heritage and to maximise the contribution heritage makes to education, lifelong learning and social development;
- To ensure that Wirral's heritage is widely accessible can be enjoyed and understood by the widest possible audience, including those who have traditionally been excluded from heritage activity.

2.0 HERITAGE IN WIRRAL

2.1 Historic overview : the story of Wirral

The Metropolitan Borough of Wirral occupies the northern half of the Wirral peninsula, bounded to the west by the Dee, to the east by the Mersey and to the north by the waters of Liverpool Bay. Throughout most of its history its character has been shaped by its coast and countryside, the inhabitants gaining their livelihood mainly from the land or the sea.

The earliest evidence of human activity comes from Greasby and Thurstaston, where archaeological finds include concentrations of small worked stones or microliths, evidence of hunter-gatherers of the mesolithic or Middle Stone Age period.

Settled farming began in the neolithic or New Stone Age period when the environmental record shows woodland was being cleared to make way for agriculture. This process of clearance and enclosure continued through the Bronze and Iron Ages; traces of agricultural settlements from these times have been excavated at Irby.

The one exception to this pattern is Meols, where over 4000 artefacts and nearly 1000 coins and tokens have been recovered from the eroding shore. The finds, mainly made in the 19th century, date from the prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post medieval periods and are an indication that in the past Meols was a major coastal trading site with links to places as far away as mainland Europe and the Mediterranean.

At the time of the Roman conquest, in AD 43, Wirral lay within the territory of the Cornovii, a British tribe, probably friendly towards the Romans. The harbour at Meols would appear to have been used for both military and trading purposes even before the establishment of the legionary fortress at

Chester in the later 70s. A road leading north from Chester, sections of which have been identified, runs in the direction of Meols.

As well as roads, there is evidence of settlement in the Roman period. At Irby a Romano British farmstead has been excavated while a skeleton found during 19th century work on the Leasowe embankment, has been shown to be Roman in date, the only one of its kind from Merseyside.

Little is known of Wirral in the early post Roman years. At Landican a possible early Christian site is suggested by the place name 'Llan-tegan', the church of St Decan, while the circular churchyard at Overchurch is probably the source of a decorated runic stone, dating from c 800. The presence of Saxons in Wirral, from the late 7th century onwards, is evidenced by place names. The elements '*ham*' meaning 'homestead' and '*tun*' a 'farmstead' are indications of their settlement.

In about 902, groups of Norsemen, expelled from Ireland, arrived in north Wirral. Again place names are evidence of where they lived. Villages like Irby, Frankby and West Kirby, have endings derived from the Old Norse word '*byr*', meaning 'farmstead' or 'settlement'. '*Thingwall*' comes from the Old Norse '*þing-vollr*' or 'meeting place' whilst the name Meols derives from '*melr*', the Norse word for sand-hills.

Many academics believe that the Battle of Brunanburh, fought in 937 between the Saxon king, Athelstan and the allied forces of the Scots and Norsemen, took place near Bromborough. Athelstan's victory consolidated the boundary between England and Scotland and confirmed England as a unified kingdom.

By the 10th and 11th centuries life seems to have become more settled. Several places, including Bromborough, West Kirby and Woodchurch have remnants of sculptured crosses dating from this period, while from West Kirby and Bidston come carved hogback grave markers.

Domesday Book records over twenty manors in north Wirral, with one large manor, Eastham, embracing most of the Mersey shore. In 1093 the moated manor house at Irby was granted to the monks of Chester abbey which also acquired the moated court house at Bromborough Pool.

In the mid-12th century, a Norman baron, Hamo de Massey, founded a small Benedictine priory dedicated to St Mary and St James on the isolated headland that now forms Birkenhead. In the 14th century the priory was granted the right to operate a ferry across the Mersey. The present day priory remains are the oldest standing structures on Merseyside. Other medieval buildings in Wirral include a number of parish churches, Storeton Hall and the tower house at Brimstage.

Farming continued as the principle occupation of the population though maritime activities, including fishing and seafaring were important along the coast. As early as the 14th century, silting in the Dee caused the increased use of small anchorages along the Wirral shore. That at the 'Redbank' or Dawpool was used to unload cargoes such as Spanish wine and iron. Of more significance was the Hoyle or Hyle Lake, a deep water channel, sheltered by sandbanks, off what is now Hoylake. In 1690 this 'lake' was the main point of embarkation for King William III's expedition to Ireland. It was also used by ships waiting to sail into Liverpool.

As the volume of shipping increased there was a need for lights and beacons. In 1763 pairs of lighthouses were built at Hoylake and Leasowe. In 1771 the lower light at Leasowe was threatened by the sea and replaced by a light on Bidston Hill. At Perch Rock, the lighthouse, begun in 1827, replaced a wooden pole or perch, used to warn shipping of rocks at the Mersey's mouth, while at West Kirby the Column, erected in 1840, acted as a landmark to shipping, replacing a windmill, blown down in the great storm of the previous year.

On Bidston Hill a series of flagpoles were used to inform Liverpool ship-owners of the imminent arrival of their ships while semaphore stations on Bidston Hill and Hilbre formed part of a communications system linking Liverpool with Holyhead. In 1866 the Liverpool Observatory moved to Bidston Hill and was later joined by the Tidal Institute which predicted the tides for the D-Day landings.

Lifeboats also provided a service. A lifeboat station was established at Hoylake in 1803, with two further stations opened in subsequent years, one on Hilbre and one at New Brighton. The Hilbre station closed in 1939 but the other two are still active today.

Sea bathing had become popular in late Georgian times and in 1792 the Royal Hotel opened at Hoylake, while in 1830 James Atherton purchased a large area of sand hills, founding the seaside resort of New Brighton establishing a pattern of catering for visitors that still persists today.

The main catalysts for change were improvements in transport. A regular steam ferry service from Liverpool was instigated to Eastham in 1816 and to Tranmere in 1817. The road from Chester to Birkenhead was turnpiked in the 1830s and in 1840 a railway line opened between Birkenhead, Chester, Crewe and London.

With improved transport links, Wirral underwent major economic, social and demographic changes. Industry began to develop on the west bank of the Mersey while the area's fresh air, open countryside and wide sea views made

it an attractive place for Liverpool merchants and business men to make their homes.

In 1824 the Scotsman, William Laird, born in Greenock, established a boiler works on Wallasey Pool. In partnership with his son John, he soon diversified, founding what was to become one of the greatest shipbuilding enterprises in the world. In the 1850s the Laird shipyards transferred to the Mersey shore and in 1903 they amalgamated with Cammell, the Sheffield steel producer. Over the years the company would produce some of the navy's greatest ships, as well as the *Ma Robert*, the first steel hulled ship ever built, the Confederate raider '*Alabama*' and liners like the *Mauretania*.

The first few streets of Birkenhead were laid out by the lord of the manor, Francis Richard Price. Then in 1825, at the behest of William Laird, the great Scottish architect, James Gillespie Graham, produced a plan for a modern new town, with a gridiron pattern of streets, a range of fine late Georgian buildings and the imposing Hamilton Square. The town grew, with a market, theatres and music halls, the first tramway in Europe and the world's first publicly funded park – Birkenhead Park – which played a key role in the development of the parks movement and became a model for parks design including Central Park, New York.

The first of Birkenhead's docks, the Morpeth and Egerton Docks, opened in 1847. The Birkenhead Emigrant Depot, an important base for migrants bound for Australia, followed in 1852 as did Brassey & Co.'s Canada Works, which built much of the equipment, including locomotives and bridges, for the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada.

In 1857 an Act of Parliament brought the Birkenhead and Liverpool docks under the single ownership of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and it was under the company that the dock system developed. Until the 1960s the docks were in constant operation, with dozens of quays and warehouses, criss-crossed with freight lines. Many passenger and freight lines worked out of Birkenhead including Alfred Holt and the Ellerman, Clan and City Lines.

Although only a fraction of the dock system is now involved in traditional port activity, the legacy of buildings and dock structures is still impressive. Among these are the hydraulic tower, designed by Jesse Hartley and based on the Palazzo della Signoria in Florence and the Grain Warehouses, on the Dock Road, built in the 1860s to receive wheat, maize and barley from all over the world.

Though Wallasey Pool was the initial focus of development, industry soon spread along the Mersey shore. Price's Patent Candle Company, owned by the Wilson family, was already flourishing when in 1853 it purchased land for a new works on the tidal inlet of Bromborough Pool. The village the Wilsons

built for their workers, many of whom had moved up from London, is an early example of a model industrial village, predating Port Sunlight by over three decades.(The Candleworks went on to become Price's Chemicals, then Unichema.)

Port Sunlight Village, itself, was the vision of the Victorian entrepreneur and philanthropist, William Hesketh Lever. Laid out to provide accommodation for the workers in his soap factory, the model village, with its architect designed housing, gardens and green spaces was a pioneer in the Garden City Movement and is now of international standing. Within the village the renowned Lady Lever Art Gallery provides a permanent home of Lord Lever's outstanding art collection.

In contrast to the industrial settlements of the Mersey shore, New Brighton, served by both the ferry and the railway, developed as one of the most popular seaside resorts in the north. Its attractions included its Pier and Promenade, the New Brighton Tower (once the tallest in Britain), the Tower Ballroom and the now demolished open air bathing pool, one of the biggest in the world. Sadly, as with many former resort towns, competition from package holidays, lack of investment and social change, meant that by the 1980s New Brighton had lost much of what made it special and thus its attractions waned.

The recent history of Wirral has been one of mixed fortunes, which has exacerbated the social and economic contrasts between the two sides of the peninsula. 'Deeside Wirral' has retained its affluence, with well-to-do communities such as Heswall, West Kirby and Hoylake interspersed with open rural areas and pretty villages. To the east the dense urban and industrial belt fronting the Mersey has not fared so well. Decline began in the 1950s, resulting in physical deterioration, lack of investment, rising unemployment and a whole range of deprivation problems. It is against this background that Wirral Council is targeting its regeneration efforts, focussing inward investment on areas like Birkenhead Park, New Brighton and the Docks. The opening of Birkenhead Park Visitors Centre and New Brighton's rebuilt Floral Pavilion, with its theatre and conference centre, are examples of regeneration at work.

2.2 Heritage assets and resources

Heritage assets are all those things that survive from Wirral's history and which now contribute to the physical and social identity of the borough.

2.2.1 Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

Wirral contains over 1,900 Listed Buildings and 25 Conservation Areas, including Port Sunlight and Hamilton Square, both of which are of national importance. A number of old village centres like Bidston, Bromborough and

West Kirby are also designated as well as high quality suburbs, such as those within Oxton, Prenton and Hoylake. Within the borough, there are many other buildings and structures which although not designated, make a significant contribution to the character of the built environment. As well as individual buildings, the borough has two early model villages of outstanding quality and survival, important complexes of industrial buildings and one of the largest collection of 19th century dockland structures in the country.

2.2.2 Public realm

Street furniture, historic street surfaces, public art, statues and war memorials all have impact on the quality of the local environment. Even small architectural details like railings, shop canopies and historic boundary walls add interest and identity to our towns and villages. Small open spaces, both urban and rural, may not contain structures but they can be crucial to local distinctiveness and sense of place. Whilst many of these are not protected by statute, they are frequently 'local landmarks', held with great affection by the local community.

War memorials have a special significance to local people and the historic importance of Wirral's war memorials has been recognised by the granting of listed status to three sites. The monuments at Eastham and New Brighton are now listed Grade II, while Hoylake and West Kirby's memorial at Grange Hill is listed Grade II*.

2.2.3 Archaeological sites

Above and below ground archaeological remains are a significant part of Wirral's heritage. There are nine Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) of national importance within the borough. These are: Birkenhead Priory; Bromborough Court House moated site; Grange Beacon; Irby Hall moated site; New Hall; the former churchyard at Overchurch; St. Barnabas Cross, Bromborough; the standing cross at Holy Church, Woodchurch and Storeton Hall.

2.2.4 Historic parks and cemeteries

Wirral is fortunate that all our towns have public parks and green spaces, many of which are over a hundred years old. These areas are historic public assets that have developed into community spaces, greatly valued by local people and visitors alike. The borough is particularly noted for its Victorian parks and cemeteries, including the recently restored Birkenhead Park, the only public park to be listed Grade I on English Heritage's National Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Also included are Thornton Manor, Port Sunlight and also Flaybrick Memorial Gardens, a cemetery of European significance.

2.2.5 Natural landscapes, shorelines and wildlife, including special habitats and species

The Wirral peninsula is a place of exceptional natural beauty; residents and visitors alike benefit from our outstanding coast and countryside resource.

Wirral has a great variety of species, habitats, landscapes and geological features and this is reflected in the substantial numbers and types of sites that are designated for their wildlife value.

Wirral's coast has attracted a total of six international designations for nature conservation focussed on the Dee Estuary, the Mersey Estuary and the North Wirral Foreshore. These areas are internationally renowned for the large numbers of wildfowl and wading birds they support, and it is important to work within legislative requirements to avoid potential negative impacts of human activities.

There are 12 Sites of Special Scientific Interest including Dibbinsdale, Heswall Dales and Thurstaston Common. These national designations carry with them a statutory responsibility for management. There are a further 70 local wildlife sites (Sites of Biological Importance).

We have five Local Nature Reserves and three Country Parks: Arrowe Park, Eastham Country Park and Wirral Country Park (including the Wirral Way).

Alongside designations for nature conservation there are 3 geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Thurstaston Common, The Dungeon and the Dee Cliffs. There are also 15 local geology sites.

Hilbre Island is the subject of a current consultation and is soon to be designated as a Marine Conservation Zone - to protect blue mussel beds and marine peat and clay exposures which provide shelter for a diverse range of marine flora and fauna.

The Council's Parks and Countryside Service manages many of these special places. There is often a careful balance to be struck between the benefit of wildlife and social and economic uses. It is crucial that these resources are passed on to future generations with their interest and beauty intact.

Despite being densely populated Wirral is home to numerous rare and protected species. Some have the highest level of legal protection such as bats, water voles and great-crested newts. Others may not be nationally rare, but need protection because they are declining or uncommon in our area – for example common lizards and common toads.

2.2.6 Museums, galleries and heritage venues

Wirral Council is currently responsible for two accredited museum venues, Birkenhead Priory and the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum. These

contain a significant collection of objects dating from prehistoric times to the present day. Birkenhead Priory, founded in c.1150 is the oldest standing building on Merseyside. The entire site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument which includes structures listed as Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II. The chapter house is consecrated as an Anglican place of worship and above, the former scriptorium is now a chapel dedicated to the training ship HMS *Conway*. Adjacent to the Priory, St Mary's clock tower is all that remains of Birkenhead's first parish church. Within the tower a series of named plaques commemorate those who died in the loss of the ill-fated submarine, *Thetis*. A small museum tells the history of the site and its buildings.

The Grade II listed Williamson Art Gallery and Museum opened in 1928 and houses the vast majority of the borough's collection of art and history. Like the Priory it is accredited under the Museums, Libraries and Archive Council (MLA) Museum Accreditation Scheme and has a VAQAS (Visitor Attractions Quality Assurance Scheme) Award. The collections, some of which are of national importance, include a large collection of ship models, focusing on Cammell Laird built vessels and important collections of ceramics from Birkenhead's Della Robbia Pottery (1894 – 1906).

Both the Priory and the Williamson are currently benefitting from major capital investment. The Council is investing around £730,000 in improvements to the Priory, which is on English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Register. A further £1.3 million will go to the development and refurbishment of the Williamson, including enhancements to visitor facilities and the creation of more flexible spaces for performance, education and family learning.

In 2009, the Council made the decision to dispose of a number of buildings, which included museums sites. A tender process is being undertaken to find a new operator for Wirral Transport Museum and the Heritage Tramway. The lease on Shore Road Pumping Station, housing the 'Giant Grasshopper' pump, has been returned to Network Rail and the building is no longer open to the public. Wirral Museum in Birkenhead Town Hall has closed and the Council's Asset Management Team is developing alternative uses within Council ownership for this iconic building. The Town Hall is open for special functions.

Wirral is also home to the renowned Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight, run by National Museums Liverpool and the Port Sunlight Museum, managed through the Port Sunlight Heritage Trust. Fort Perch Rock in New Brighton is a privately owned early 19th century gun emplacement with fascinating and diverse museum displays.

The community sector has played a significant role in opening up heritage buildings to the public. The restored Hilbre Telegraph Station Lookout is run

by the Friends of Hilbre, as an interpretation centre for the islands. The Friends of Leaseowe Lighthouse have been instrumental in developing the oldest brick built lighthouse in the country as visitor and educational facility, with guided tours, special events and displays about the lighthouse and the Wirral coastline. The Charles Dawson Brown Museum, attached to St Bridget's Church in West Kirby, has displays of Anglo-Scandinavian and other carved stones and items connected with the history of West Kirby.

Three other independent heritage attractions have recently opened thanks to the drive and enthusiasm of local people. The Hoylake Lifeboat Museum, housed in the town's former Victorian lifeboat station, celebrates local maritime history and the activities of the lifeboat services in the North West. The centrepiece of the exhibition is the restored *Chapman*, the oldest Liverpool-style lifeboat in the country, which has been brought back to Hoylake after seventy-two years. There are plans to extend the collections and enhance the facilities, to create a viable and sustainable museum of regional significance.

The Wilfred Owen Story and Gallery in Birkenhead, is the first permanent centre in the North West to commemorate the life and works of the First World War poet Wilfred Owen, who lived on Wirral during his formative years. As well as the exhibitions, the gallery runs art shows, poetry and music performances and a range of community activities.

The New Brighton Heritage and Information Centre, has been created by the New Brighton Community Partnership, to provide the local community and visitors with information about the area's history and information about local events, attractions and activities. The Centre also hosts events, exhibitions and presentations, highlighting New Brighton's past, present and future, to encourage local people to learn about and participate in heritage.

The Mersey Ferries are the most popular paid-for visitor attraction in Merseyside and play a key role in the life of Liverpool, Wirral and the River Mersey. Mersey Ferries also operate two visitor attractions on Wirral; the U-Boat Story at Woodside Ferry Terminal and Spaceport at Seacombe Ferry Terminal. The U-Boat Story has U-534 which is the only WW2 German U-Boat in the UK and one of only four that survive in preservation anywhere else in the world. Merseytravel has a catalogued collection of historical artefacts relating to the U-Boat and also a collection relating to the Mersey Tunnels, Mersey Ferries and other public transport (buses, trams, trains etc.). A replica of the *Resurgam*, the world's first mechanically powered submarine, is also displayed outside Woodside Ferry Terminal.

2.2.7 Archives and local collections

Wirral's archives collection, housed in the Cheshire Lines Building in Birkenhead, covers almost five miles of shelving and contains thousands of historic records relating to the history of the borough. Some date back as far as the 15th century, but the majority are of the 18th and 19th centuries and include the extensive collections of Cammell Laird Shipbuilders. The borough's local history collections are held by Wirral Archives and three libraries; Birkenhead, Bebington and Wallasey.

Other historic collections within the borough, include the Port Sunlight archive collections relating to the development and history of Port Sunlight village, which are held in the Port Sunlight Museum Collections Study Centre. The Unilever Archives, also located in Port Sunlight, form one of the most important collections of business records in the world and are designated of national importance.

2.2.8 Sporting History

There is a long history of sport in the borough, which is particularly noted for sailing and golf. The internationally famous Royal Liverpool golf course in Hoylake has an extraordinary claim on golfing heritage. The Liverpool Golf Club was formed in 1869, granted the title 'Royal' in 1871 and was at the forefront of the development of amateur golf, hosting the first ever Amateur Championships in 1885 and the first English Amateur Championship in 1926. It has hosted the Open Championships on 11 occasions, most recently in 2006 and will do so again in 2014. Wallasey Golf Club has been an Open Championship qualifier golf course on a number of occasions and is world renowned as being the home of the Stableford scoring system.

Tranmere Rovers Football Club was founded in 1884 and its most famous player William Ralph 'Dixie' Dean scored 60 league goals in the 1927 – 1928 season. Birkenhead Park Cricket Club was formed in 1846 and its club house is reputed to be the oldest surviving cricket pavilion in the country.

In more recent times, Wirral played host to the British film industry. In 1981, scenes from the film *Chariots of Fire* were filmed in Wirral, with the Oval Sports Centre in Bebington representing the Stade Olympique de Colombes in Paris, whilst Woodside Ferry Terminal was used for embarkation scenes set in Dover.

2.2.9 People

Wirral's history is marked by a remarkable range of individuals, including William and John Laird; Thomas Brassey, the great railway engineer and William Hesketh Lever.

Sporting greats include the versatile sportswoman Lottie Dodd, five times Wimbledon tennis champion, a golfer and hockey player and silver medallist in archery at the Olympics. Others include the great footballer, Dixie Dean, who began his career with Tramere Rovers, the cricketer Sir Ian Botham and the Olympic cyclist, Chris Boardman. Birkenhead was the birthplace of the mountaineer George Leigh Mallory, who when asked why he wanted to climb Everest gave the immortal reply “because it is there”. He disappeared on Everest in June 1924 with his Birkenhead born colleague Andrew “Sandy” Irvine.

Wilfred Owen the First World War poet spent his formative years in Birkenhead and attended the Birkenhead Institute. Sir Patrick Abercrombie the pioneering town planner was a former resident of Oxton. The artist Philip Wilson Steer was born in Birkenhead as was the artist and cartoonist, Norman Thelwell.

Wirral is well represented in the world of stage film and television, with many well-known names coming from the area, Patricia Routledge, Glenda Jackson, the James Bond actor Daniel Craig, Paul O’Grady and John Peel.

2.2.10 International links

With its long maritime history and proximity to the Port of Liverpool, Wirral has strong connections with countries throughout the world. The Peninsula’s Viking heritage has resulted in particularly close links being developed with Scandinavia. Indeed, recent research has suggested a strong Scandinavian influence in the DNA of some old Wirral families, demonstrating that the Vikings left a genetic legacy which survives and continues today.

During the American Civil War, Wirral had significant links with both the northern and southern states. In consequence it is only the second place outside the USA to have been accorded the status of an American Civil War Heritage Site by the Civil War Preservation Trust. The Argyle Rooms in Birkenhead were an important meeting place for the anti-slavery lobby. The notorious Confederate ship, the CSS *Alabama* and the blockade runner, *Denbigh* were built at the Laird’s yard in the 1860s. The American Civil War Society (UK), in conjunction with the Trust, has produced the Wirral Civil War Heritage Trail, celebrating all the known Civil War sites on Wirral.

2.2.11 Innovation

Given its size and location, Wirral can boast a remarkable number of historical ‘firsts’, many of which put the peninsula and its people at the cutting edge of technological, industrial, sporting and cultural innovation. These include:

- 1847 – Birkenhead Park opened as the first publicly funded park in the world.
- 1856 – Birkenhead became the first unincorporated borough to adopt the Public Libraries Act and open a public lending library.
- 1859 – The *Ma Robert*, the world's first ever steel hulled steam paddle ship, built by Lairds for Dr Livingstone's expedition up the Zambesi.
- 1860 – An American, George Francis Train, inaugurated the first street railway, with horse drawn trams running between Woodside and Birkenhead Park.
- 1862 – The first British tramcar factory opened in Cleveland Street, Birkenhead.
- 1879 – The *Resurgam*, built in Birkenhead was the world's first steam powered working submarine.
- 1885 – The 1st Amateur Golf Championship was held at the Royal Golf Club in Hoylake.
- 1886 – The Mersey Railway Tunnel opened. It was the first underwater rail tunnel in the world.
- 1894 - The Della Robbia Pottery was founded in Birkenhead and became an important part of the Art Nouveau movement in Britain..
- 1900 – New Brighton Tower was completed. Standing at 621 feet it was the country's highest tower, beating Blackpool Tower by over 100 feet.
- 1908 – The Boy Scout movement was inaugurated by Sir Robert Baden-Powell in the YMCA building in Grange Road, Birkenhead.
- 1920 – The first all-welded ship in the world, the *Fulgar*, was built at Cammell Laird.
- 1929 – The Boy Scouts held their 'Coming of Age' Jamboree at Arrowe Park to celebrate 21 years since the movement's foundation.
- 1934 – The Queensway Tunnel was opened and held the record as the world's underwater tunnel for 24 years.
- 1931 – The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association was founded in Wallasey.
- 1962 – The world's first scheduled passenger hovercraft service was inaugurated between Wallasey and Rhyl in North Wales.

2.3 Heritage involves us all

The conservation, protection, interpretation and promotion of heritage is not just the responsibility of national and local government; throughout Wirral a whole range of different organisations and individuals are actively engaged in heritage and in delivering heritage activity at many levels.

2.3.1 The Council

Wirral Council currently has the responsibility of delivering a range of statutory and non-statutory heritage and heritage related services. Increasingly this is achieved through partnership with national, regional and local bodies. The Council provides strategic lead for initiatives which impact on heritage and have appointed a Heritage Champion as an advocate for heritage issues. Elected members have and will increasingly have an important part to play in local heritage. They 'know their patch' and are ideally placed to identify and promote issues which their local communities regard as important.

The Council services whose work currently has a heritage focus include:

- The Museums Service two museum venues: Birkenhead Priory and the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum. It delivers a wide range of learning, outreach and cultural activities to many different audiences.
- Wirral Archive Service acquires and maintains records with any material link to Wirral and its collections can be used to research all aspects of local history, including social, economic, industrial, administrative and family history. The two main aims of the service are access – making the records accessible to all – and outreach – informing everyone about the collections.
- Birkenhead, Bebington and Wallasey libraries have local history collections and give access to a wealth of on-line resources for family and local history. Libraries are well used as bases for talks, workshops and short courses on topics of local heritage interest. The Service has worked with a range of partners to deliver creative research, reminiscence and community projects.
- The Children Young People's Department, through its Youth Education and Humanities Team has delivered a wide range of heritage activities in partnership with a many of external partners and other Council Departments.
- The Conservation and Design Team is responsible for Listed Buildings within Wirral as well as the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and other historic spaces. Urban Design is an integral

part of the planning process and the team works with developers, architects and stakeholders to ensure that new developments enrich the existing environment and create buildings and spaces that are attractive, stimulating and sustainable.

- Wirral has no dedicated Archaeological Service. Until April 2011, advice was provided through the Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service which was jointly funded by all five Merseyside authorities. Following withdrawal of this funding, archaeological advice in the planning process is now being provided through the relevant planning departments. The authorities continue to have access to the Merseyside Environment Record (HER), the central body of information on the historic urban and rural environment of Merseyside.
- Wirral Parks and Countryside Service manages a wide range of land including coast, local parks, country parks, cemeteries, playing fields, golf courses and green spaces throughout the borough including outstanding landscapes and natural habitats. The Service delivers a wide range of educational and interpretative activities including walks, trails and other activities relating to heritage and the natural environment.
- Wirral's Forward Planning team is responsible for developing planning policy for Wirral, which has a significant impact on heritage. The emerging Local Development Framework includes a Biodiversity Audit, a Landscape Assessment and a Green Infrastructure Strategy as part of its evidence base.
- The Highways Service is responsible for maintenance of the public realm - excluding parks and open spaces - and has an important role in managing street scenes within conservation areas.
- Although not having direct responsibility for heritage conservation, maintenance or presentation, the Regeneration and Destination Marketing Services have a key role to play in attracting inward investment for projects which enhance and interpret the historic environment, promote the borough's heritage and attract visitors. By providing advice and support on external funding applications, particularly the National Lottery, the Council has assisted many local organisations in developing and delivering a wide range of heritage-based projects.

2.3.2 National and regional heritage organisations

The National Trust does not have any historic properties on Wirral, but does own Heswall Fields, part of Caldy Hill and part of Thurstaston Common and small areas of woodland at Harrock Hill, Irby and Irby Common. There are no English Heritage sites within the borough, but as the government's statutory

advisor on the historic environment, English Heritage provides advice on the most significant listed buildings and on monuments and gives general advice on maintaining the historic built environment. English Heritage's current strategic priority is to tackle Heritage at Risk (HAR) and provides funding for buildings, sites and monuments on the Heritage at Risk register.

Until 2011 English Heritage also co-ordinated and promoted national Heritage Open Days (HODs), but from 2012 this role will be undertaken by the National Trust, Civic Voice and the Heritage Alliance. The active organisation of the Wirral open days programme will continue to be delivered by local volunteers through Wirral History and Heritage Association, with support from the Council.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) uses money from the National Lottery to grant- assist a wide range of projects involving local, regional and national heritage. With the notable exception of the £7.4 million grant towards the £11.4 million refurbishment of Birkenhead Park, the Heritage Lottery Fund recognises that Wirral, despite some successes, has fared less well than other authorities in attracting HLF funding, particularly under the Your Heritage and Young Roots (aimed at young people ages 13 to 25) programmes. Council officers and the Wirral History and Heritage Association are now actively promoting these HLF strands and encouraging local organisations to apply for appropriate funding.

2.3.3 Community groups, organisations and societies

The great interest local people have in their heritage is reflected in the number and variety of organisations engaging in heritage and delivering heritage activities. These include civic and local history societies, family history groups, friends groups, conservation area partnerships and special interest groups – from transport history to the American Civil War. Their work is diverse and wide-ranging and includes commenting on planning applications and the development process; organising events, and activities; research and publications; campaigning and undertaking voluntary work.

The Wirral History and Heritage Association (WHHA) has been supported by the Council to represent over 70 local societies and act as an umbrella group for networking, dissemination of information and engaging local groups in common issues. Its mission is “to work with Wirral Council to establish and implement a heritage, history and cultural strategy for Wirral, to make the past part of our future – and to create a cycle of understanding, valuing, caring and enjoyment for all residents of Wirral”.

The WHHA hosts a web-site promoting local heritage activities and disseminating information. It also organises special events, including Wirral's Heritage Open Days and the popular annual Local History Fair. Additionally,

the association is working with the Council to support a range of heritage initiatives, including Buildings at Risk and the development of a Local List.

2.3.4 Friends groups

Many of Wirral's parks, cemeteries and countryside areas have Friends Groups, comprised mainly of local residents who are keen to get involved or simply have their say in the management of their local park of green space. The Parks and Countryside Service is currently supported by 44 voluntary Friends Groups, who are closely involved in the protection of parks and green spaces, as well as organising events, activities and practical voluntary work.

Both the Williamson Art Gallery & Museum and Wirral Archives Service also have active friends groups to support their work.

2.3.5 Individuals

There are a number of local people with a strong interest in and knowledge of the borough. These people contribute to the widening appreciation of local heritage through research, giving lectures and talks, collecting evidence and producing publications.

2.3.6 Partnership working

Partnership working is fundamental to the heritage sector and important partnerships have been forged to co-ordinate and deliver a range of initiatives, including partnerships with neighbouring local authorities.

The Museums Service has strong links with National Museums Liverpool (NML) and there have been successful collaborations with both the Lady Lever and the Walker Art Galleries. The Service also works closely with the Cheshire Museums Forum, the strategic body for the provision of museums services in the region and has used Renaissance funding to support the delivery of literacy projects for secondary schools.

The Conservation and Design Team is supported by the Conservation Area Forum and emerging Conservation Area Partnerships in its efforts to protect and enhance the character of Conservation Areas. The Parks and Countryside Service has especially strong links with the Friends Groups. It also works closely with partners and other land-owners through the Biodiversity and Local Sites Partnership such as the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the National Trust, to ensure that our land is managed in the most appropriate way for the purpose of conserving habitats and species.

The Wirral Attractions Partnership represents and promotes tourism and heritage attractions throughout Wirral. The Wirral Coastal Partnership brings

together all sectors to champion and support a range of initiatives to the benefit of Wirral's coastline.

2.4 Heritage activity in Wirral

Throughout Wirral there are many opportunities for people to engage with and participate in heritage activities. Whilst some services are provided by the Council, much of the heritage activity in the borough is organised and delivered by local voluntary groups and organisations.

2.4.1 Formal and informal learning

Through its Arts and Museums Services, the Council has established strong links with many local schools and colleges. The Williamson Art Gallery and Birkenhead Priory provide opportunities for curriculum based learning for school groups, including sessions based on literacy and numeracy as well as historical events. Both museums offer informal learning activities, including family learning, special activities, talks and workshops. However, given the current physical restriction of each venue and staffing limitations, it has not yet been possible to fully exploit the educational or learning potential of either site.

The Youth Education and Cultural Services Humanities Team have a long track record of working with Humanities Subject Leaders in schools, to ensure that local heritage makes a significant contribution to the school curriculum. A range of learning packs has been produced for every area of the borough, to support the local dimension of the school curriculum. This has also involved work with the Birkenhead Park Education Officers and support for the development of learning materials on the Park and engagement with local schools. From September 2011, Wirral no longer maintains a specialist Humanities Team and new approaches will need to be adopted to ensure that heritage education continues to be delivered in local schools.

The Parks and Countryside service, often in partnership with Friends Groups, is another major provider of learning services, including school visits and voluntary activity projects.

Local library staff and staff from the Wirral Archives service provide taster sessions on researching local and family history using original books, maps and documents as well as ICT resources. The Archives Service holds Saturday morning workshops on family and local history topics, aims to work with two schools each month and hosts group visits or workshops for local history societies, adult education groups and other informal groups interested in historical topics.

2.4.2 Community outreach

The appointment of a Heritage Outreach Officer in March 2010 has provided new opportunities to extend heritage activities into local communities and engage new audiences in local history and heritage. Working with local organisations, mainly through the Wirral History and Heritage Association, the post is intended to grow capacity, offer advice on funding and project development and devise new and creative means for people to engage in Wirral's heritage. However, the post is part-time and time limited until February 2011.

2.4.3 Heritage Open Days

Since first participating in Heritage Open Days (HODs) in 2007, Wirral's programme has grown from strength to strength. Now organised locally by Wirral History and Heritage Association, there were ten events in 2009, growing to forty three in 2010 and to sixty in 2011. Feedback has shown that Heritage Open Days provide an excellent opportunity to build on the enthusiasm and knowledge of local groups and bring heritage to the attention of a wider audience.

2.4.4 Festivals, fairs and re-enactments

Wirral has a number of large-scale festivals including the Food and Drink Festival, Wirral Festival of Transport in Birkenhead Park, the Bus and Tram Festival based around Pacific Road and Heritage Open Days. Individual communities also organise a range of celebratory events, such as the Scarecrow Festival now held at Eastham and the popular Secret Gardens of Oxtun. The Wirral History and Heritage Association hold a very successful annual Local History Fair, which brings together local history groups and enthusiasts from throughout the borough. Viking and Norse re-enactments are popular and the living history group Wirhalh Skip Felag (Wirral Vikings) are particularly active around the borough. A recent innovation is the annual St Olave Wirral Viking Walk, from Neston to Chester, commemorating St Olave the 'Viking Saint' and celebrating Wirral's links with the Vikings.

2.4.5 Community drama and performance

There are numerous examples of Council services, community organisations and professional artists using drama to interpret Wirral's history, although this is usually dependant upon obtaining external funding. For instance, the Youth Education Team, the Museum Service and other partners have successfully delivered a range of Heritage Lottery funded drama projects such as Flaybrick – their Past Our Future' and 'Tranmere Rovers Remembered', both of which were showcased regionally. The Parks and Countryside Service have used community performance to tell the stories of various sites, including Flaybrick

Memorial Gardens and Bidston Hill. As part of the Bidston Windmill Project, young people created a historically based musical trail around Bidston Hill and also puppet safaris exploring the site. 'Their Past Our Future' was a young people's project exploring the lives of local World War II veterans and creating a musical drama, which was performed in Birkenhead Library in 2011. The Wirral Youth Theatre has a strong track record of developing creative heritage-based performance and Active Drama is an educational resource team, delivering community drama projects across the borough. One recent initiative is the History Busters, a group of young people who explore sites around Wirral, creating pieces of theatre to celebrate their history and heritage.

2.4.6 Walks, talks and tours

Most Wirral parks and countryside spaces offer a regular programme of walks and related activities, and these are supplemented by walks led by volunteers from Friends Groups and local societies. For example Wirral's Parks and Countryside Service offer a joint annual events programme with the Dee Estuary Voluntary Wardens and RSPB to deliver a regular and long-standing programme of bird watching events.

Nearly all history and heritage groups have a talk or lecture programme during the winter months, and organise site visits and special interest tours for their members. Individually these activities are relatively small scale, but together they give many thousands of local people the opportunity to participate in heritage and are probably the most popular form of heritage engagement for local people.

2.4.7 Community archaeology

Community archaeology enables local people to work alongside professional archaeologists and discover more about archaeological sites through investigation, fieldwork and recording. A number of successful projects have been conducted within the borough, for instance the 2007 community excavation at Leasowe Lighthouse and Meols, led by the Field Archaeology Unit of National Museums Liverpool. Local community groups, like Wirral Archaeology, offer a wealth of practical and local knowledge, and support professional units around the country on research, geophysical surveys and public engagement projects.

2.4.8 Interpretative trails (on-site and self guiding)

In recent years a number of interpretative trails have been created, exploring different aspects of Wirral's history and heritage. The Wirral Maritime Trail from Eastham to New Brighton has helped to highlight Wirral's coastal history in this area through a series of plaques telling the stories of places of interest

and the people who lived there. A proposal to develop Hoylake Promenade with a series of interpretative artworks is being developed, although this will now be subject to the need to stabilize the sea defence wall and roadway, hopefully in time for the 2014 Open Golf Championships to be held at the Royal Liverpool.

There are also aspirations to link the existing Wirral Maritime Trail with the proposed Hoylake Promenade improvements, through the creation of a series of interpretative artworks along the four mile length of the North Wirral Coastal Park. This would bring together community groups from Meols, Leasowe and Wallasey in celebration of the rich and diverse maritime heritage of North Wirral.

The Wirral Circular Trail is a 35 mile sign-posted route taking in the coastline, the history, the heritage and the countryside of the Wirral peninsula. Funding from the European Regional Development Fund and the Local Cycle Plan was secured through the Rights of Way Development Plan, to create a walking and cycle trail, linking the public rights of way network with other routes around Wirral. The trail is supported by a free high-quality interpretative guide, which is also available on-line. The Council has also produced The Wirral Nature Guide to the coastline.

Many local societies and friends groups have produced trails, leaflets and publications, many of which are also available on-line.

2.5 The value of Wirral's heritage

Heritage can provide a key driving force in both economic regeneration and tourism. Historic buildings, places, events and activities and a high quality environment are all prerequisite to maximising economic development potential, projecting a positive image and attracting jobs, investment and tourism. Heritage makes a vital contribution to tourism, the environment, jobs, skills and the economy. It motivates people to travel in order to quench their thirst for knowledge, to reinforce their place in history and contextualise a place geographically and socially. In doing so, they spend considerable amounts of money to the benefit of the place and, hopefully, heritage. Heritage is not a luxury or a pleasant recreational pastime, but an integral part of our future.

Heritage and particularly heritage tourism have never been more important to the national and local economy. According to the Heritage Lottery Fund's 2010 document *Investing in Success: Heritage and the Tourism Economy*, the size of the heritage-tourism sector is in excess of £12.4 billion a year and supports an estimated 195,000 full-time jobs – this makes the sector bigger than the advertising, car or film industries. As people increasingly choose to stay in the UK rather than holiday abroad, heritage attractions have helped to

increase visitor numbers as a crucial part of the national tourism offer. The latest statistics reveal that Wirral's visitor economy is worth over £250 million, an increase of 11% over the last five years and employs the equivalent of approximately 4,000 jobs. The borough benefits mainly from repeat visits and heritage adds value to the wider tourist offer.

On Wirral, new visitor attractions like Spaceport at Seacombe and the U-Boat Story at Woodside are attracting many thousands of new visitors each year. Merseytravel currently contributes more than £34 million each year to the region's tourism economy through Mersey Ferries and its associated attractions, supporting the equivalent of 742 full time jobs. It is forecast that the Mersey Ferries attractions in Wirral and Liverpool have the potential to grow by more than 25% over the next decade bringing in an additional 300,000 visitors to the region.

Just as heritage-based tourism is vital to the national economy, heritage has even wider benefits. Each year English Heritage's *Heritage Counts* report assesses the state of the country's historic environment and provides evidence of the social and economic impact. The 2010 report found that every £1 of investment in the historic environment generates £1.6 of additional economic activity over a 10 year period. One in four businesses agrees that the historic environment is an important factor in deciding where to locate – the same as for good road access.

The importance of conserving our natural heritage and biological diversity is becoming increasingly recognised. The natural world is an integral part of our cultural heritage and identity. It is important in defining local character and distinctiveness. It affects the quality of life of the people of Wirral, contributing to our health and wellbeing. A good quality natural environment has a positive impact on house prices and makes high density housing more liveable. Our green infrastructure as a whole also provides 'ecosystem services' such as carbon sequestration, flood prevention, maintenance of water quality, micro-climate control and even pollination for our crops.

In Wirral, the importance of heritage as a driver for regeneration was demonstrated in the Single Regeneration Budget initiatives of the 1990s. Citylands, Lairdside, New Wallasey, Wirral Waterfront and, particularly, the Hamilton Quarter – all had significant heritage, conservation, cultural and tourism elements within their schemes. Current regeneration programmes – Wirral Waters, Woodside and the regeneration of Hoylake, West Kirby and Deeside Wirral - have the potential to bring significant investment into the borough and have a strong heritage focus. The key challenge will be to maintain the local distinctiveness of these areas through a co-ordinated approach to heritage management and regeneration.

3.0 HERITAGE AND THE WIDER CONTEXT

The heritage strategy for Wirral must respond to, interact with and support the priorities and themes which currently drive heritage at national, regional and local levels. However, at a time when government and regional policies and agendas are in transition, the strategy will need to adopt a flexible approach, which can adapt and evolve to accommodate new approaches to heritage delivery.

3.1 The national and regional context

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has overall responsibility for heritage policy in England. While priorities and policies for culture and heritage are currently being reviewed, the government recognises that culture and heritage support a range of policy priorities including, but not limited to, economic growth, health and well-being and building stronger and safer communities. The government is pressing local authorities to develop different approaches to providing local cultural and heritage services by linking more efficiently with other key service priorities such as adult social care, health, children and young people and economic development.

However, there have been substantial cuts in DCMS budgets and, as a consequence, cuts in funding to local authorities and cuts in the amount of grant-aid available from organisations like Natural England and English Heritage. Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), which were significant investors in heritage, have been abolished. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) are no longer stand-alone bodies.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is the main governmental department with responsibility for the natural environment. Under their umbrella lie several agencies including the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Forestry Commission. To achieve DEFRA's vision for a more integrated large scale 'landscape' approach to nature conservation, Wirral will need to work with these agencies through Regional and Local Biodiversity Partnerships for Cheshire and North Merseyside, and through emerging Local Nature Partnerships.

The government's Big Society initiative, which aims to increase peoples' active engagement in society, will encourage greater local participation in heritage issues. Its objectives include:

- Social action – encouraging and enabling people to play a more active part in society;

- Community empowerment – giving local councils and neighbourhoods more power to take decisions and shape their local area;
- Opening up public services – opening up opportunities for the voluntary sectors and local groups to deliver public services and manage community and public assets.

A number of very significant changes are proposed to the planning system. Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5 – *Planning and the Historic Environment* was issued in early 2010, but is intended to be replaced by a National Policy Framework (NPPF) during by April 2012. This, together with the Localism Bill (expected to receive Royal Assent in November 2011) and other policy innovations, are intended to devolve planning decisions to a more local level, giving local communities greater ability to shape development in their areas. This new decentralised approach to planning and other decision making will inevitably have significant implications for Wirral's historic built environment.

3.1.1 English Heritage

The English Heritage Corporate Plan and strategic priorities are under review. However, the interim National Protection Plan 2010, sets out a framework for more effective protection of the historic environment. It is underpinned by four main themes: understanding heritage; valuing heritage; caring for heritage and enjoying heritage. A key element of the Plan is local empowerment; enabling owners, local groups, communities and individuals to take a more active role in protecting their heritage, by providing them with access to expert advice, technical support and, in some circumstances, financial assistance.

3.1.2 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)

The Heritage Lottery Fund has clear priorities for those applying to its grants programmes. HLF's Strategy for 2013 – 2019 is currently under review and consultation, but currently applicants must demonstrate that:

- Projects help people to learn about their own and other peoples' heritage.
- Additionally projects must meet one or both of the following criteria:
- Conserve the UK's diverse heritage for future generations to experience and enjoy.
- Help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in making decisions about heritage.

Heritage Lottery funded projects need to demonstrate clear social and educational benefits. Capital projects have to include a clearly defined time limited programme of public engagement activities which go beyond core and on-going activities for the project.

3.1.3 Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)

Some of MLA's functions have been transferred to Arts Council England and the strategic direction for the sector is uncertain. However, MLA will continue working to ensure that museums, libraries and archives are widely used as a key resource for creativity, life-long learning and skills development and that they make an increasing contribution to local economies and communities.

3.1.4 The Heritage Alliance (THA)

The Heritage Alliance represents the independent heritage sector. Its membership includes national and regional organisations like the National Trust, Council for British Archaeology, Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, as well as many smaller and more specialised heritage groups.

3.1.5 Civic Voice

Civic Voice is the national charity for the civic movement in England, which aims to make places more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive and to promote civic pride. Civic Voice, together with the National Trust and the Heritage Alliance will be the national co-ordinators for Heritage Open Days from 2012.

3.2 The Local Context

3.2.1 Wirral Corporate Plan 2011 – 2014.

Heritage in its widest context, can support and contribute to Wirral Council's Corporate Plan objectives in many ways. Engagement with heritage can contribute to the quality of life and health and well-being agendas; promote educational attainment and raise the aspirations of young people; and support the development of those living in areas of multiple-deprivation. It makes a significant contribution to the cultural and leisure offer of the borough, for both residents and visitors. It also contributes to the Destination Marketing of Wirral as a business and visitor location. Finally, Wirral's heritage can be used to raise the profile of the borough in a positive way, promoting a sense of identity, a sense of community and a sense of civic pride.

3.2.2 Local strategies.

The heritage strategy will relate to the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) in respect of the borough's natural environment and heritage assets, local distinctiveness and design within the historic environment. It will also support the strategic priorities of tourism and destination marketing in respect of promoting the heritage aspects of Wirral's tourism and visitor offer. The strategy actively supports the aims and objectives of the Strategic Framework for Wirral's Museums Service 2011 –

16, the Wirral Archives Service Plan and the emerging Parks and Countryside Service Plan.

4.0 MAKING OUR HERITAGE MATTER: KEY ISSUES AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

4.1 Stewardship and protection – conserving Wirral’s heritage for future generations

The fragile nature of our heritage should not be underplayed. Once a historic building is demolished or buildings in a Conservation Area are unsympathetically altered they are unlikely to be restored or replaced. Similarly, historic artefacts and collections need to be carefully managed if they are to be preserved for the future. The effective preservation of historic structures, conservation areas, landscapes, archives and collections and their stewardship is therefore fundamental to this strategy. However, this does not prohibit change. It does not mean that a Listed Building cannot be altered or added to – rather that its significance is fully understood with the most important elements given the most protection. Above all is the need to find a sustainable future for our heritage, maintaining the key parts of the past for future generations.

4.1.1 Built environment

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure the proper protection of all Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas in the borough. However, with over 1,900 listed structures and 25 Conservation Areas, maintaining these buildings and places is increasingly difficult, particularly in the current economic climate. Many buildings which are deemed important today, such as our stock of Victorian industrial buildings, were not necessarily built to last and their progressive deterioration, coupled with the difficulty in finding appropriate new uses, poses a significant challenge.

Most Conservation Areas now have an adopted Management Plan and Conservation Area Partnerships made up of local residents are being formed. The success of Conservation Areas depends on the joint commitment of the Council and local people, working together to preserve and enhance the character of each area. Conservation Areas are periodically reviewed to ensure that these places of special interest are being protected, and the Council consults with local people about the revision of existing Conservation Area boundaries and the designation of new areas. Conservation Area designation is currently being proposed for Lower Bebington, Storeton, Noctorum, Raby, Landican and Brimstage.

ACTION: Ensure that all the Conservation Areas within the borough have a formally adopted Management Plan and a cycle of appraisals as part of the process.

ACTION: Continue to review all existing Conservation Areas and to designate new Conservation Areas as appropriate.

A particular issue of concern is the incremental erosion of the character of Conservation Areas, through the small scale alterations to dwelling houses which are normally possible through the exercise of 'permitted development rights', granted to householders by the Government, under the General Development Planning Order. Article 4 Directions are a potentially useful means of protecting the original character of groups of unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas, as they trigger the necessity for planning permission for relatively minor alterations to the external appearance of buildings. However, they tend to work best where property owners 'buy into' the concept, where character properties prove to be a sound financial investment and where local groups can assist in making a case for application. Article 4 Directions are resource intensive, take a long time to establish and their success is heavily dependent upon policing and enforcement. However, the Council will work with local residents to monitor changes in residential areas within Conservation Areas and would consider the application of Article 4 Directions, if the character of those streets appears threatened by uncontrolled change.

ACTION: Recognise the importance of retaining the character of Conservation Areas and take appropriate measures, including the application of Article 4 Directions to limit the impact of small-scale changes.

As well as those buildings protected by statute, Wirral has very many other buildings which are of historic significance and are very important to local people. Wirral's buildings were last surveyed for listing in 1992 and there are notable omissions, particularly dockland structures which have been poorly recorded. A number of good unlisted buildings outside Conservation Areas have been demolished. Whilst the whole issue of listing is currently under review nationally, there is still scope to increase the number of submissions for 'spot-listing', either by the Council or by local people, to ensure that the quality of vulnerable buildings and structures is recognised and they are preserved.

ACTION: Ensure that as many as possible of the borough's historic buildings, sites and structures are statutorily protected through the listing process.

Both central government and English Heritage are advocating that local authorities compile and maintain a non-statutory 'Local List' of buildings of merit, with buildings submitted according to agreed criteria, in full consultation with the public and formally adopted. English Heritage has now issued guidance on non-statutory lists and Wirral History and Heritage Association is compiling its own list of 'Buildings of Merit at Risk'. Whether a formal list adopted by the Council, or a list compiled by local people, the issue is certain to raise interest in those sites and buildings of local value and increase pressures to ensure that they are not put at risk through demolition, massive alterations or redevelopment.

ACTION: Explore the practicalities of compiling a non-statutory 'Local List' and support the work of local organisations and individuals in identifying buildings of local interest or merit.

Statues, monuments, art-works and memorials all make a significant contribution to the character of the local environment and need to be maintained in good condition. The War Memorial in Port Sunlight, the second largest in the country in terms of bronze statuary, has recently been conserved to a very high standard by the Port Sunlight Heritage Trust. The Council has successfully applied for 'spot-listing' for a number of war memorials and has an ongoing programme of cleaning, repair and re-inscription in preparation for the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II and the centenary of the outbreak of World War I in 2014.

ACTION: Continue to take a pro-active approach to the conservation and maintenance to the borough's war memorials.

It should not be forgotten that most of the historic building stock in the borough is owned by private individuals or private companies, using their own resources to keep a building in good shape and in use. It is incumbent on building owners to be aware of the threat of incipient decay and act promptly to head off problems. The value of maintenance cannot be overstated; once decay becomes obvious, major repairs will be required and these equate to major costs, disruption and the avoidable loss of historic fabric. The Council pro-actively encourages owners of buildings and historic sites to undertake repairs and works with local communities to raise awareness of building maintenance issues. Whilst education undoubtedly has a part to play, eventually in the small minority of cases where private owners are unable or unwilling to act, the Planning Authority may have no alternative but to use its statutory powers.

ACTION: Work pro-actively with private owners to encourage regular repairs and maintenance and, where appropriate take enforcement action to safeguard neglected buildings.

4.1.2 Heritage at Risk

English Heritage's *Heritage at Risk Register* lists the most vulnerable historic sites in the country. As well as buildings, it now includes Conservation Areas, archaeological sites and historic parks, gardens and cemeteries, churches and places of worship. There are currently nine such sites in Wirral, mostly in private ownership.

- Storeton Hall, Bebington: Grade II Listed: condition - very bad (private ownership);
- Fort Perch Rock, New Brighton: Grade II* Listed: condition - poor (private ownership (private ownership);
- Birkenhead Priory: Scheduled Ancient Monument: condition - deteriorating, but currently subject to a major scheme of repair;
- Bromborough Court House Moated Site and Fishponds: Scheduled Ancient Monument; condition – significant localised problems (private ownership);
- Site of Church and Churchyard, Overchurch: Scheduled Ancient Monument; condition – major localised problems;
- Thornton Manor, Bebington: Registered Park and Garden Grade II; condition – major localised problems (private ownership);
- Flaybrick Memorial Gardens (Flaybrick Cemetery), Bidston: Registered Park and Garden Grade II – very bad;
- Hamilton Square, Birkenhead: Conservation Area; condition – very bad (private ownership with the exception of Birkenhead Town Hall and central gardens);
- Rock Park, Rock Ferry: Conservation Area; condition – poor (private ownership).

The government's Planning Policy Statement 5 '*Planning for the Historic Environment*', for the first time requires local authorities to seriously consider how the condition of sites at risk within their areas will be addressed. This is seen as a priority by Wirral Council, which has recently invested heavily in the restoration and improvement of Birkenhead Priory. Clifton Park in Tranmere has removed from the HAR thanks to concerted enforcement action, while

discussions with English Heritage over the future for Flaybrick Cemetery are ongoing.

ACTION: Continue to work with English Heritage and property/site owners to seek creative solutions and funding packages for buildings and sites on the 'Heritage at Risk Register' to ensure their long-term sustainability.

4.1.3 Churches and Places of Worship

Wirral has a wealth of churches and other places of worship, many of which are listed or in Conservation Areas. They make a tremendous contribution to the historic environment and many are local landmarks. While some remain solely active in religious life, others have also acquired new social uses that benefit the widest cross section of society. Responsibility for their care falls almost entirely on the shoulders of volunteers and for many congregations the burden of maintenance can be heavy. When religious buildings are no longer used, the problems of finding new uses can be difficult, leaving empty buildings vulnerable to deterioration and vandalism. The challenge is to work with congregations, church and other religious authorities, to help them to adapt to the evolving needs of worshippers and the wider community, to ensure that their historic fabric and features are preserved.

A good example of such a project is Oxton Congregational Church. This imposing Victorian Gothic Grade II Listed church is an important landmark at the 'gateway' to Oxton village. Having been derelict for many years, it has now been restored by the Wirral Christian Centre, which has plans for significant community engagement and involvement.

ACTION: Support churches, congregations and other religious authorities to help them adapt religious buildings to meet the needs of both worshippers and the wider community, whilst ensuring that their historic features and fabric are preserved.

4.1.4 Archaeology

Archaeological remains are finite by their very nature and any intervention or excavation is not repeatable or reversible. Therefore it is important that all archaeological projects of whatever size or complexity, are supervised by professional archaeologists who are active and current members of the Institute for Archaeologists. The Council is not able to support projects where the observance of professional standards is not demonstrably adhered to.

This is not to say that amateur archaeologists should be constrained or excluded. On the contrary, the Council encourages community archaeology

and aims to work in partnership with local groups in order to secure appropriate levels of observance of professional standards. There is plenty of scope for amateurs and volunteers to work alongside professional archaeologists and this remains the basis for undertaking community projects that involve archaeological excavation.

The withdrawal of funding from the Merseyside Archaeological Service, means that Wirral Council, like the other four Merseyside authorities, will have to find new ways of acquiring specialist archaeological advice; including advice on a range of development and planning issues. English Heritage requires that any advice obtained must be of a suitable professional level. Options could include entering into arrangements with another local authority which has a professional archaeological service e.g. West Cheshire & Chester, or buying in professional advice on a case by case basis.

ACTION: Ensure that Wirral Council promotes the highest standards in archaeology and is able to secure the best possible specialist archaeological advice on development and planning issues.

ACTION: Actively encourage professionally led community archaeology projects as a means of furthering our knowledge of the history of the borough.

4.1.5 Recording

The recording and proper identification of our heritage is essential in ensuring that it is properly protected and is vital to help develop knowledge and understanding of the historic environment. Sadly, Wirral's built heritage is not well recorded and there are significant gaps in our understanding of many buildings, and in some cases their true historic significance may not be appreciated. In particular, there has never been a comprehensive survey of the docklands buildings and structures, which make such an important contribution to the historic character of north Wirral.

Wirral's archaeological and historical development is documented in three records of regional strategic significance. The Cheshire Historic Characterisation Study, undertaken by the former Cheshire County Council in 2007, produced a comprehensive view of the sequence of changes that have contributed to the character of the landscape from earliest times to the present day. The study recommends actions to ensure the sustainable management of the historic landscape. The Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project, hosted by National Museums Liverpool, uses digital mapping technology and other methodologies to define and describe how the past landscape has influenced the landscape of today. The Merseyside

Historic Environment Record, also held by NML, contains comprehensive information on historic and archaeological sites, including individual sites and remains above and below ground, under-water sites, artefacts and landscapes. It is primarily used to assist in the conservation and management of the historic environment, as part of the development management process.

ACTION: Take appropriate measures to ensure that Wirral's historic buildings and archaeological sites are adequately recorded and that where appropriate, these records be made publicly accessible.

Good quality information is needed to inform the effective management of wildlife habitats and species. Historically, wildlife recording has depended to a large extent on amateur naturalists, but increasingly information is becoming available from consultants working on development projects. Biological data collection is co-ordinated in our region by Cheshire Wildlife Trust and the Biological Records Centres for Cheshire and Merseyside.

ACTION: Work with Biological Records Centres and Local Biodiversity Partnerships to enable data collection and the voluntary recording of wildlife on Wirral, and ensure the best information is used to inform the management of our natural heritage.

4.1.6 Historic parks, cemeteries and natural heritage

Wirral possesses a range of historic parks, cemeteries and open spaces of national regional and local significance. Some parks and open spaces are strongly historic in character through their buildings and structures and because of their uniqueness: Birkenhead Park because of its role in the parks movement and Flaybrick Cemetery because of its fabric and historical connections with Birkenhead and its people. Others reveal heritage through lay-out, planting schemes and surviving buildings, fixtures and structures. In addition to their intrinsic heritage value, they form high quality open spaces for public enjoyment. All these parks and open spaces also have nature conservation value, whether designated or undesignated, which needs protecting and managing to different degrees.

However, maintenance of these key heritage assets is a major issue, particularly in the cases of historic structures such as chapels, lodges and other buildings which have long fallen out of use and into disrepair. In some cases, such as Royden Park and Rake Lane Cemetery, historic buildings have been successfully put to new uses but the chapels in Flaybrick Memorial Gardens are, for example, completely derelict and the whole cemetery, which is on the Heritage at Risk Register, is in need of major refurbishment.

ACTION: Identify funding for the restoration of Flaybrick Memorial Gardens and new end use for the chapels.

ACTION: Ensure the significance of historic parks and cemeteries and the historic buildings, features and structures within them are recognised and understood and that their importance is reflected in plans and management strategies.

ACTION: Produce a partnership plan with Friends Groups, environmental groups and other stakeholders to ensure that the views of heritage groups are properly represented in the emerging Parks and Countryside Service Plan.

4.1.7 Natural heritage

There are still a number of designated and non-designated sites where Wirral's habitats and species are at risk from factors such as recreation use, invasive species, lack of management or inappropriate management. All of Wirral's parks and open spaces, designated or not hold nature value, whether a grass verge, town park or countryside site.

ACTION: Ensure the importance of natural heritage and Biodiversity is recognised and understood and that this is reflected in all Parks Management Plans.

ACTION: Work with Natural England, the Wirral Biodiversity and Local Sites Partnership and other partners in the public, private the voluntary sectors to manage all Wirral's designated nature sites towards favourable condition.

4.1.8 Community involvement in the historic environment

Local people currently take an active role in shaping, protecting and understanding their local natural, built and historic environments through civic and amenity societies, friends groups and community organisations. The importance of their roles will increase as the aspirations for the Big Society and the implications of Localism come to have a major impact on how the historic environment is managed. The new emphasis on decentralisation and local empowerment will bring opportunities for the voluntary heritage sector but also new challenges. Many community groups simply do not have the organisational capacity or skills to fully engage in the process. The Council will need to offer leadership and vision to support neighbourhood groups, assist with capacity building and funding applications and, most importantly,

manage expectations, so that local communities have a clear understanding about what can and cannot be achieved through Localism.

ACTION: Work in partnership with local communities and neighbourhoods so that that they have the knowledge, skills and capacity to engage effectively in the planning process.

4.1.9 Archives and collections

Within Wirral there are significant museum and archive collections, ranging from major collections of international and national importance, to those which tell the stories of our local heritage. The challenge is to ensure that all collections, including documents, artefacts, art, memorabilia and memories are preserved, conserved and made accessible. Whilst the major collections are those held by Wirral Council, National Galleries Liverpool, Port Sunlight Heritage Trust and the Unilever Archives, there are many smaller collections in private ownership or owned by local societies or trusts.

o Archives

Wirral Archives Service moved to its present office in Cheshire Lines in 2008. The Service aims to attract a wide and diverse group of users, from family historians and school parties to academics and enthusiastic members of the public, who have an interest in archives. The Service and its research facility are used by Wirral residents and enquirers from all over the world.

The Archives Service has a pro-active collections policy, actively seeking out collections to ensure their survival and that the archives reflect the social history of Wirral in the widest possible way. It is also actively addressing the need to respond to the growing challenge of managing digital information so that it is accessible now and remains discoverable in the future. It is also working towards comprehensive on-line access to archives through improved cataloguing and digitisation. A service priority is to identify funding to catalogue the nationally important Cammell Laird collection and make it available on-line.

The immediate challenges confronting the service are to tackle the backlog of uncatalogued collections and increase the amount of resources available on-line, using existing resources. There is also a need to identify adequate funding in order to identify adequate funding in order to digitize collections that have been identified as a priority.

ACTION: Increase access to the borough's important archive collections by a continued programme of

adding catalogues and digital images to the Wirral Archives web-site.

○ **Museum collections**

The Wirral Museums collection is largely housed in The Williamson Art Gallery and Museum. The Fine Art collection is of particular note, with 18th and 19th century watercolour paintings and drawings by regionally and locally important artists and the work of the 19th century Birkenhead artist Philip Wilson Steer. There is an impressive collection of maritime models and pictures, particularly vessels built by Cammell Laird and its predecessor shipyards, and the Mersey Ferries. The ceramics collection includes the nationally important Della Robbia pottery made in Birkenhead, Liverpool porcelain and Seacombe pottery. There are smaller social history and archaeological collections and the Civic Silver.

In addition to its prime responsibility to preserve and exhibit the collections within its care, the Museums Service produces a regular and varied exhibition programme which both uses and complements its own collections. Particular successes in recent years include 'A Textile Dynasty: Arthur H Lee I Sons, Birkenhead', which won the national Museums & Heritage Award in 2010 as the 'Industry's Favourite'; a smaller exhibition, 'Above the Clouds: Mallory and Irvine and the Quest for Everest' was highly commended in the same awards.

Collaborations with National Museums Liverpool (NML), the Cheshire West & Cheshire Museums Service and other regional museums and galleries are regular and frequent. The 'Albert Lipczinski' exhibition, displayed from July to October 2011, was an international collaboration with the Polish National Museum in Gdansk. It was specifically planned to complement the 'Art in Revolution' exhibition held at the Walker Art Gallery, which featured works by Lipczinski alongside those of international artists like van Gough, Matisse and Gauguin, who were all displayed in a groundbreaking exhibition held in Liverpool in 1911. There are plans to work with NML and other partners on a major exhibition on the 19th century Liverpool School of Artists, largely based on the collections in Williamson and the Walker galleries.

ACTION: Continue to develop exhibitions with National Museums Liverpool and other partners, complimenting the Museum Service's own collections with other public and private collections, to create exhibitions of regional and national significance.

The priorities for the Museums Service are set down in the Business Plan for 2011 – 2016. Key objectives are to continue to meet the needs of Accreditation and also to broaden the visitor and user base. The Business Plan proposes a new structure to address these issues, with a stronger

emphasis on formal, informal and family learning. By making better use of the skills and talents within the Service, it is hoped to free up time for the professional museums staff to concentrate on developing the collections and their use in learning and exhibitions programmes. One issue is to tackle the backlog in documentation which has accrued over many years. The Business Plan has a clear timetable to complete documentation by April 2012 with the final stages, including retrospective documentation to be completed by April 2016. There is a longer term aspiration to identify funding to give access to date bases of collections on-line.

ACTION: Implement the Museums Service restructure, to facilitate more effective care and display of collections, documentation and exhibitions.

ACTION: Purchase new documentation software and complete documentation so that the complete collection is recorded.

4.2 REGENERATION – using heritage as a driver for economic development, inward investment and supporting sustainable communities

The historic environment can play a significant role in helping regenerate communities. Investing in heritage can make a real difference to the appearance of local areas, provide opportunities for businesses and give local people new confidence and pride in their surroundings. However, they are complex projects, resource intensive and the benefits may not be apparent for many years. The challenge is to ensure that heritage is firmly embedded into regeneration proposals

Wirral's experience over the past twenty years has demonstrated the importance of heritage as driver for economic and social regeneration. Since 1988, several hundred millions of pounds of inward investment have been attracted to Wirral and heritage has made a notable contribution to this success. Current regeneration proposals have important implications for the conservation, enhancement and interpretation of historic buildings and sites. Wirral Waters, a thirty year, £4.5 billion mixed use development by Peel Holdings at Birkenhead and Wallasey docks, identifies heritage as part of its cultural offer. Beginning with the restoration of the Grade II Listed Hydraulic Tower and its conversion to commercial use, Listed Buildings will be refurbished and brought back to use; and there are exciting opportunities for imaginative interpretation and public art.

ACTION: Ensure that developers and investors are made fully aware of the importance of Wirral's heritage and the social and economic benefits of retaining and enhancing heritage assets within regeneration projects.

The new Mersey Ferries landing stage at Liverpool's Pier Head has the potential to bring significant tourism opportunities across the water. Merseytravel will be actively encouraged to explore the potential for new ferry terminals and ferry services to Wirral.

The Mersey Coastal Park Strategy is promoting a regeneration vision for East Wirral, built upon the principle of opening up access to the coast and harnessing the economic potential of the waterfront. It covers some 6.5km of coastline between Rock Ferry and Eastham Country Park and will include the following 'signature' projects which, once linked, will create a unique visitor and tourist attraction:

- Rock Ferry Waterfront Regeneration Scheme
- Rock Park Esplanade and Conservation Area
- Shorefields Community Park
- Bromborough Dock Landfill Site
- Wirral International Business Park
- Eastham Country Park

Heritage ideals have been firmly embedded into the Mersey Coastal Park Strategy from the outset. The Rock Park Conservation Area is regarded by the Secretary of State as a one of the three most important conservation areas on the Wirral and is also on the English Heritage 'Heritage at Risk' Register.

Other heritage assets along this stretch of coastline which are recognised in the Coastal Park Strategy are Bromborough Dock and its place in the physical, economic and social development of Port Sunlight; Shorefields Community Nature Park which has links to the SS Great Eastern; archaeology at Shodwell (a possible origin of the Bromborough Ferry) and key historical features in Eastham Country Park.

ACTION: Ensure that major long-term developments such as Wirral Waters and the Mersey Coastal Park maximise the opportunities to conserve, enhance and promote key heritage assets and also consider the local character of the area.

Heritage is also central to regeneration proposals for Hoylake, West Kirby and Deeside Wirral. Improvements to the Hoylake and Meols promenade and seafront could include high quality interpretation. This would focus on the history of the lost port of Meols, a site of national archaeological importance, and tell the story of 'Hoyle Lake' which gave the town its name. This large sea water lake offered safe anchorage for many vessels for hundreds of years and was an embarkation point for armies crossing to Ireland.

ACTION: Work with communities to ensure that regeneration proposals at Hoylake, West Kirby and Deeside, reflect and interpret local heritage and the natural environment.

Within Wirral Country Park, the aim is to deliver a new £3 million visitor centre at Thurstaston. As well as reflecting the importance of bird life across the Dee coast, this would give the opportunity to interpret the history of the area. Included would be the story of Dawpool – one of Wirral's old ports – and Dawpool Hall, home of the Ismay family, founders of the White Star Line and owners of the Titanic.

ACTION: Identify a funding package which will deliver the visitor and interpretation centre at Thurstaston.

Maintaining a high quality historic environment where people want to live is vital to the economy of Wirral. Attractive historic suburbs both in the west and east of the borough can contribute to the regeneration process by attracting and retaining families with high spending power whom might otherwise be tempted to live and perhaps, work elsewhere. The need to protect, manage and enhance residential areas of historic value will become increasingly important if major regeneration proposals like Wirral Waters successfully generate large numbers of well paid jobs for people with families.

ACTION: Work with local residents and Conservation Area Partnerships to retain the special character of historic suburbs.

Over the next few years, the borough is uniquely placed to maximise its heritage tourism potential. Wirral, like elsewhere will have opportunities to take advantage of the influx of visitors to Britain arising from forthcoming events like the London Olympics, Queen's Diamond Jubilee, centenary of the sinking of the Titanic in 2012; the centenary commemorations for the outbreak of World War I and the Open Golf Championship in 2014. Within this context there are significant opportunities to capitalise on a wealth of heritage assets which have national and international appeal such stunning landscapes, coast, parks and wildlife sites; our Viking and American Civil War heritage; Cammell Laird and maritime connections; Wilfred Owen links, and a

long and distinguished sporting history. Heritage is vital to the visitor experience and it is important to bring it to life with good interpretation to tell its stories and make it relevant and accessible to everyone. It is crucial that the visitor experience and the opportunities for all kinds of public involvement at heritage sites continue to improve and increase.

ACTION: Maximise opportunities to promote heritage as part of Wirral's wider tourism offer and ensure that that the importance of the borough's historic and natural environments are reflected in destination marketing strategies.

4.3 LEARNING – maximising the role of heritage in supporting education, training and life-long learning

Heritage makes a vital contribution to learning for all ages; our historic buildings, museums, archaeological sites, artefacts and archives can all be used to provide stimulating and imaginative learning opportunities. Maximising educational and training opportunities across the borough is a key Council objective and heritage has the potential to make a significant contribution to corporate goals. The Council's Museums and Archives Services already have programmes of formal and informal education in place and there are opportunities for student placements, volunteering and training. There is recognition that learning about heritage not only offers personal fulfilment and pleasure, but can contribute to a whole range of social agendas such as literacy and numeracy, health and well being, citizenship and skills development.

ACTION: Work across Council departments, particularly those promoting community development and the interests of young and elderly people, to utilise heritage learning programmes to deliver strategic and corporate objectives.

However, there is still much more that can be done. The Museums Service, through its Business Plan, is currently refocusing its work to place greater emphasis on formal, informal and family learning. As the result of a management review, the existing education officer role will be redefined and split into two part-time posts, specialising in primary and secondary education. Their roles will be to develop and deliver cross-curricular and key skills programmes and to respond pro-actively to topic work undertaken in local schools. The existing Engagement Programme will be progressively broadened, with strands encompassing family learning, vulnerable children and young people, elders' engagement and volunteer development.

ACTION: Refocus the museum staffing structure to achieve a stronger emphasis on formal and informal learning and community engagement.

ACTION: Develop and implement an Informal Learning Strategy, identifying potential partners and with an underpinning funding strategy.

Heritage education has been successfully delivered over many years by the Council's Youth Education and Cultural Service Humanities Team, working with Humanities Subject Leaders in local schools. However, from September 2011, Wirral no longer maintains a specialist Humanities Team, although most secondary and primary schools will continue to have access to support networks. Changes in staffing structures will require new and creative approaches to delivering heritage education in schools. There will be a need for more joined up working with other Council departments and external partners, but also opportunities to build on successes of the past.

Strategies need to be devised to tackle some of the key barriers to schools who are unable to access heritage sites and activities. The lack of access to free or cheap transport is of particular concern. There is a need to improve communications so that information about heritage sites and activities is specifically targeted at the right person in each school. More needs to be done to get teachers out of the classroom and to pro-actively demonstrate that cross-curricular heritage-base projects not just deliver key educational targets, but give an added value which far exceeds the extra effort involved.

Recent changes to the National Curriculum have brought new opportunities for schools to utilise heritage in the classroom. The English Baccalaureate, introduced in 2011, recognises qualifications in geography or history within its humanities element. This provides a tremendous opportunity to strengthen heritage work in schools, as the history GCSE now contains a significant British/local history element. The Primary Curriculum is currently under review, but it is likely that there will be a far more flexible curriculum; pupils will still study history but topics may not be so prescriptive giving opportunities to explore heritage themes in more exciting and creative ways.

ACTION: Work across Council departments and with schools and external partners to ensure that heritage, natural history and local history continue to be taught in local schools and are embedded into cross-curricular work.

ACTION: Work towards achieving the ‘Learning Outside the Classroom’ accredited standard for all education offered by the Parks and Countryside Service.

One way to support learning in schools could be make greater use of the community and voluntary sector. Members of local history, archaeology and civic societies have a wealth of local knowledge which could be shared with children and young people. A number are already working with local schools and there is real enthusiasm to do more. However, such activity is usually done on an ad hoc basis. It is not always easy for the community sector to forge links with the education sector, while issues of child protection and insurance can be barriers to voluntary work in schools. In their turn, most teachers are probably unaware of the pool of expertise on their doorsteps and how this could be utilised to help deliver National Curriculum themes. One solution might be for the Council to hold a data-base of those wishing to work in schools, assist with legal issues and act as broker between schools and community volunteers.

ACTION: Work with the community sector to establish links with schools and provide the necessary support for them to work with pupils and students.

The Council provides opportunities for vocational training and placements within the museums and archives sectors. The Museums Service has been developing links with Initial Teacher Training providers, to create learning outside the classroom placements and promote the museum sites as learning destinations for trainee teachers to inform their future practice. However, as yet little has been done to address the national shortage of specialist craft skills across the heritage sector. Traditional building and craft skills, which were historically handed on through the apprenticeship system, will wither and die unless they are pro-actively supported. Other authorities nationally have successfully developed links with colleges and higher education institutions to provide much needed vocational training and there are also national programmes which could be promoted.

ACTION: Recognise the heritage skills deficit and explore the possibilities of bringing together education, training and learning organisations, to consider skills development in the heritage sector, particularly traditional craft and construction skills.

4.4 PARTICIPATION – ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to access, enjoy and participate in heritage

Getting people involved in heritage is central to this strategy. Whilst a great many people already enjoy heritage through visits to museums or historic sites, or by attending a lecture or talk organised by a local group, there is a need to create opportunities to engage with a wider and more diverse audience. Access to heritage should be more inclusive, with more community engagement and programmes of activity specifically targeted at people who, for social, cultural or physical reasons, are currently unable or unwilling to participate. Across the borough, the Council and its partners deliver or support a wide range of community outreach activities and are seeking ways to widen opportunities for all. However, more needs to be done to promote understanding of the social benefits of heritage; that heritage is not elitist but can be enjoyed by all ages and sections of society.

The importance of heritage in linking a range of social agendas needs to be recognised and exploited. The Museums Service has developed a Community Engagement Plan, to support the development of projects that target specific groups with different social needs, including Looked After Children, isolated elders and young carers. A wider 'Health and Heritage' programme of activity is being developed with a range of partners and will include reminiscence and inter-generational work in the community.

ACTION: The Museums Service to identify external funding to implement a Community Engagement Plan that will increase the number of community engagement projects by 50% year on year for the next three years.

ACTION: Work with partners to develop a 'Heritage and Health' programme and identify funding options by March 2012.

If widening participation and access is to be meaningful, there needs to be a far more pro-active approach to engaging excluded groups, including black and ethnic minorities, isolated elders and people with disabilities. In doing this, there may be a need to challenge traditional definitions of heritage and recognise that there will be diverse and conflicting and sometimes controversial meanings. Stronger links need to be forged with community groups and the voluntary sector, exploring new and imaginative ways to support activities which are directly relevant to the needs of each group. The work of existing groups such as the Black Environment Network and the Merseyside Access to Heritage Group could be channelled into Wirral.

ACTION: Prioritise targeting heritage and outreach activity towards excluded groups and work with them to devise projects which directly meet their physical, intellectual and cultural needs.

The majority of people who are currently actively involved in heritage are members of local societies. Their contribution to delivering heritage activity throughout the borough is invaluable and fully recognised by the Council. However, there is scope for giving them more support to develop their work and explore new ways of delivering their heritage interests. Membership of most local groups and societies tends to be older people and they should be encouraged to look at ways of attracting younger people, to ensure that activities are sustained. The Council supports the Wirral History and Heritage Association as the 'umbrella' organisation which represents and gives voice to local history and amenity societies. The profile of WHHA needs to be raised, so that there is greater understanding of its aims and objectives and there needs to be greater engagement with local groups so that all feel included in its work.

ACTION: Continue to support the work of the voluntary and community heritage sector by helping with skills development and funding advice, so that they can maximise their work within local communities.

ACTION: Help to develop the profile of Wirral History and Heritage Association as an independent networking organisation, which is recognised and supported by local societies throughout the borough.

Heritage Open Days provide the ideal opportunity for local groups to come together in celebration of Wirral's heritage and attract new audiences. Over the past few years WHHA has massively expanded the HODs programme, which is now a major event in Wirral's cultural calendar. WHHA intends to further develop HODs by extending the length of the programme and adding a range of cultural activities to create a 'festival' of heritage. If successful, this will attract a wider and more diverse cross-section of the community and raise the profile of Wirral as a 'heritage' borough.

ACTION: Support Wirral History and Heritage Association in organising Wirral's Heritage Open Days and encourage the development of a longer and more varied cultural programme.

Understanding is crucial to the enjoyment of heritage and local people are engaged in a wide range of initiatives to interpret their history. A number of Friends Groups manage heritage buildings for interpretative and educational

use, while others provide interpretative programmes through walks, trails and participatory activities. The Charles Dawson Brown Groups have well advanced plans to upgrade and redisplay their museum attached to St Bridget's Church in West Kirby. Other community-led projects include the new Hoylake Lifeboat Museum, the Wilfred Own Story in Birkenhead and the New Brighton Heritage and Information Centre.

ACTION: Actively encourage wider participation in heritage and the interpretation of Wirral's history, through supporting the work of community led initiatives.

ACTION: Continue to work with community groups and partners to provide a varied, high quality events programme through the Parks and Countryside Service.

Wirral has some excellent interpretative trails, which are highly regarded by local people and visitors. There are imaginative proposals for further large-scale interpretative projects with community input, in the redevelopment of Hoylake Parade and in the North Wirral Coastal Park. There is strong community support for the interpretation of Wirral's Viking heritage, World War II history and historic docklands, amongst other themes. The borough's historic parks and cemeteries would greatly benefit from enhanced on-site interpretation. Given the number of famous people with Wirral connections, there is real scope to upgrade and extend the 'Blue Plaque' programme. However, within the borough, there are interpretive panels, commemorative plaques and other signage which are in poor condition due to vandalism or old age. Implementing new interpretative projects will be dependent on funding and there is a need to review existing interpretation, identify new opportunities and establish a framework for future development and investment.

ACTION: Compile an audit of current interpretative provision and develop a heritage interpretation strategy for the borough.

The rapid developments in new technologies, particularly Smartphones and other mobile internet-accessible devices, have created new opportunities for interpretation and engagement, which are already being used in heritage attractions and sites around the country. Their use will be particularly important if new and younger audiences are to be attracted to heritage. Virtual tours and interpretation would be particularly useful at sites like Birkenhead Priory, where the location of traditional interpretation panels is

problematic because the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and all the buildings are listed.

ACTION: Develop a programme to implement the use of new technologies to interpret museums sites and explore the potential for wider applications across the borough.

With so much activity taking place on Wirral, it is vital that there is an integrated and joined up approach to promoting heritage (whether as information, volunteering opportunities, planning, events, tourism etc.). Co-ordination could be improved by an enhanced heritage section on the Council's web-site, with clear links to the Wirral History and Heritage Association's web-site, plus links to other local and regional organisations, including English Heritage, National Museums Liverpool, Merseytravel and other heritage providers. Consideration should also be given to promoting heritage through social networking sites (this was seen as a priority by the young people consulted in the development of this strategy) and will inevitably be an important route for the future.

ACTION: Explore the potential to further promote heritage and heritage activity through the Council's web-site, by and enhance heritage section for heritage, bringing together information about all the authority's heritage based services and providing links to other heritage organisations.

4.5 CELEBRATION – recognising and utilising the part heritage can play in promoting local identity, social cohesion and civic and community pride

The heritage of Wirral gives us much to be proud of and celebrate. Generally local people value their inheritance from the past. They believe that Wirral has a distinctive character and identity which makes it very different from other places. By celebrating our heritage, raising its profile locally and nationally and giving people a more active role, we can strengthen this sense of pride and ownership throughout our communities.

A positive image of Wirral's heritage can be promoted by developing initiatives more widely across the borough. The Heritage Open Days programme has achieved much in showing that Wirral is a place to enjoy and explore heritage, but more can be done to promote our heritage assets to a wider local, regional and national audience. An excellent short-term opportunity will be the designation of 2012 as 'Year of Coast and Countryside', celebrating Wirral's natural environment, engaging local

people in community activities and bringing the borough's attractions to the attention of a wider audience. There will be different themes in future years.

Tidy Britain's prestigious Green Flag award celebrates and promotes heritage in our parks and open spaces. Green Flags have been awarded to 12 of Wirral's parks to date. In addition, Birkenhead Park has gained a Green Flag Heritage Award and Tam O'Shanter Farm has attained a Green Flag Community Award.

The aspiration to achieve UNESCO World Heritage Site status for Port Sunlight should be supported and pursued.

ACTION: Work with partners to promote initiatives which celebrate and raise the profile of Wirral's heritage and promote a positive image of the borough.

ACTION: Increase the number of Wirral's Parks achieving the Green Flag standard.

Pride comes from a sense of ownership. If people feel involved with their local heritage there is more chance that they will respect and care for it. This can be achieved by greater levels of engagement and participation by and with local people. We need to recognise and build on the work already being undertaken within communities and celebrate achievements, both large and small.

For many people, heritage is not just about museums, great historic buildings or heritage sites, but about those things which they value within their local area. This could be a statue or local landmark, a sandstone wall, an ancient tree or hedgerow, an old cinema or pub – or past events which have had helped to shape the identity of their community. By challenging 'traditional' perceptions of heritage and encouraging people to celebrate their own local heritage and cultural identity there are real opportunities to increase community involvement and local pride.

ACTION: Support local communities in celebrating those aspects of their local heritage which are important to them and create opportunities for them to get involved activities which help shape the future of their area.

Much of the past is not documented; the stories and memories of people living in Wirral are a vital part of our heritage, to be valued and celebrated. By capturing these individual and collective memories through reminiscence and recording projects, social and community history can be brought to life, giving new meaning to dry and inanimate structural remains. As well being a vital tool in understanding our recent past, oral history projects can explore

sensitive topics such as prejudice, fear and division, often as a way of challenging stereotypes. Reminiscence work with older people encourages a sense of self-worth and confidence whilst inter-generational work brings younger and older people together, breaking down barriers and encouraging understanding.

ACTION: Ensure that individual and collective memories are captured and celebrated through supporting reminiscence and recording projects.

Many local people are already active in promoting Wirral's heritage and more could be done to capture this enthusiasm and expertise. Other authorities have successfully appointed 'Heritage Ambassadors', volunteers who have been trained to present and interpret local heritage to a wide range of audiences and promote community pride in the history of the borough.

ACTION: Explore the potential for training volunteer 'Heritage Ambassadors' to promote heritage throughout the borough.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is essential to strengthen cross-cultural links between heritage and other sectors – the arts, sports, libraries, theatre, music etc. – as heritage is stronger when seen as part of a wider cultural offer and can make a greater contribution to sense of place, identity and quality of life.

ACTION: Work more closely with other sectors to ensure that heritage is an integral part of Wirral's wider cultural offer.

5.0 IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

5.1 Working in partnership

The heritage resource is by its nature very fragmented and involves a wide ranging and diverse group of organisations, agencies, individuals and volunteer groups. A partnership approach to delivering this strategy will be vital to its success. Through collaborative working, there will be a greater potential for community impact, local empowerment and raising profile. As well as building on existing partnerships, it is important that we identify new public and private sector partnerships, particularly funding partners. In order to benefit from external funding, it is essential to develop a good understanding of existing and future funding opportunities and the criteria and priorities of different funders.

As well as working with external agencies, it is important that heritage is recognised by the Council as a shared, cross-cutting issue that affects the Council as a whole and spans most, if not all, service areas. Heritage needs to be regarded as an issue which affects everyone's life and can be used to help deliver a wide range of council policies.

5.2 Community engagement

The hard work of numerous volunteer groups has played a significant role in Wirral's heritage. The voluntary sector has significant public value by harnessing community energy, giving local people a feeling of ownership and saving money. However, to successfully deliver this strategy, there will need to be even wider community engagement, which may require developing skills, knowledge and a greater understanding of heritage issues. This will be increasingly important if local people are to be empowered to manage, deliver and protect heritage projects. The arts sector already has a strong track record in skills development and capacity building at community level and this model could be used to train local volunteers and heritage groups, so that they can build on and extend the work they already do within the community.

5.3 Establishing priorities

Most heritage projects will require some element of external funding and it is essential to understand the priorities and criteria which heritage funding bids would be expected to meet in order to be successful. Inevitably there will be variations according to the size and nature of the project, but consideration of these criteria should assist those developing heritage projects to understand the basis upon which applications for funding will be assessed. It will also assist the Council in prioritising its own projects and inform decisions on which external projects to support. At a time when resources are increasingly limited, the aim is to assist projects to become more focussed, reduce competition for the same funds and generate more benefit to the people and the economy of Wirral. These criteria will include:

- **Strategic fit** – defined by how well the project links to other relevant national, regional and local strategies and meets the Council's own corporate objectives.
- **Community need** – defined by demonstrating that there is a genuine local demand or need for the project.
- **Heritage objectives** – defined by demonstrating that the project meets one or more of the objectives of this strategy.
- **Funding** – availability of appropriate funding sources and /or match.

- **Skills** – are there skills within the organisation or its partners to manage the project?
- **Timescale** – will the project be delivered within the short, medium or longer term?
- **Sustainability** – is there environmental, economic, organisational capacity?
- **Current Council Priority** – if all relevant criteria are fulfilled is this a project the Council would wish to consider as a priority?

By assessing potential projects against these criteria, using a simple assessment matrix (see below), it is possible to identify those proposals that have most chance of success and to prioritise accordingly.

Project	Description	Lead/ Partners	Strategic Fit	Community Need	Meets Heritage Objectives	Funding	Skills	Timescale	Sustainability	Current Council Priority

5.4 Monitoring, evaluation and review

The heritage strategy and its action plan will be regularly monitored and updated to ensure that targets are achieved and that new initiatives are fed into an evolving and ‘living’ document. It is important that local people are kept informed of progress and feel included in this process.

Within the Council there are many services and people involved in heritage issues. Each has their own perspective where heritage cuts across their core responsibilities. Implementation of this strategy will need a co-ordinated approach to all aspects of heritage, working across different departments and services.

The most effective achieving this is to convene a Heritage Steering Group, composed of officers and key external partners, to drive the strategy forward. This should meet quarterly to monitor and review progress and compile and disseminate an annual evaluation report. Council officers should be from those services with direct or indirect responsibility for heritage issues (e.g. Museums, Archives, Heritage, Parks and Countryside, Conservation, Education, Libraries, Regeneration and Destination Marketing). External members would represent different areas of expertise and influence, such as the independent museum/attractions sector, civic movement, friends groups, community education, ethnic minority representation and special needs.

As well as championing the heritage strategy and ensuring a co-ordinated approach to delivery, this group could do much to promote heritage in its widest sense and ensure that the Council, partners and community work together towards common objectives.

5.5 Celebrating and promoting achievement

This strategy is not just a document for Wirral Council but for the whole community. Just as its success will depend on working in partnership, it will be equally important for everyone involved in Wirral's heritage to celebrate achievements in delivering projects or meeting key milestones. By promoting best practice, disseminating achievement and keeping local people informed of progress, the strategy will clearly demonstrate the commitment the people of Wirral have towards their heritage and their determination to safeguard it for future generations.

Appendix 1: Action Plan

Page no: refers to page number in the strategy document.

Timescale: S = short (within 1 year); M = medium (2 -3 years); L = long (3 years and over); OG = Ongoing

Strategy Themes:

- A. Stewardship and Protection – conserving Wirral’s heritage for future generations.
- B. Regeneration – using heritage as a driver for economic development, inward investment and supporting sustainable communities.
- C. Learning – maximising the role of heritage in supporting education, training and life-long learning.
- D. Participation – ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to access, enjoy and participate in heritage.
- E. Celebration – recognising and utilising the part heritage can play in promoting local identity, social cohesion and civic and community pride.

Priority: L = low; M = medium; H = high

Page No.	Actions	Time-scale	Lead	Support/Partners	Indicative Funding	Key Tasks and Milestones	Priority
	STEWARDSHIP AND PROTECTION						
35	Ensure that all the Conservation Areas within the borough have a formally adopted Management Plan and a cycle of appraisals as part of the process.	M/OG	Conservation & Design Team	Conservation Area Forum/Conservation Partnerships	Within existing resources	All Conservation Areas having an adopted Management Plan by 2013. English Heritage recommend appraisal every 5 years.	H
35	Continue to review all existing Conservation Areas and to designate new Conservation Areas as appropriate.	M	Conservation & Design Team	English Heritage, local residents	Within existing resources	Achieve Conservation Area status for Lower Bebington, Storeton, Noctorum, Raby, Landican and Brimstage.	M
35	Recognise the importance of retaining the character of	OG	Conservation & Design Team/	Conservation Area Forum	Within existing resources, but	Areas at risk to be identified through Conservation Area	H

	Conservation Areas and take appropriate measures, including the application of Article 4 Directions, to limit the impact of small-scale changes.		Planning Enforcement Team		recognising that enforcement will be an additional burden of officer time.	appraisals and only applied after consultation with local residents and landowners.	
35	Ensure that as many as possible of the borough's historic buildings, sites and structures are statutorily protected through the listing process.	OG	Conservation & Design Team Parks and Countryside Service and Asset Management (historic structures within parks and cemeteries) Senior Architectural Assistant (War Memorials)	Conservation Area Forum, WHHA, local amenity societies, Friends Groups, English Heritage, War Memorials Trust.	Within existing resources.	Work with voluntary sector to identify buildings worthy of spot-listing. Continue the on-going programme of spot-listing war memorials.	M
36	Explore the practicalities of compiling a non-statutory 'Local List' for Wirral and support the work of local organisations and individuals in identifying buildings of local interest and merit.	S	Conservation and Design Team/Heritage Outreach Officer	WHHA, local amenity societies	Feasibility within existing resources; implementation will have resource implications.	Explore feasibility and cost implications and if achievable, prepare a programme of work to undertaken in partnership with the voluntary sector.	H
36	Continue to take a pro-active approach to the conservation and maintenance to the borough's war memorials.	2014	Asset Management	Civic societies, English Heritage, War Memorials Trust	Within existing resources	Complete cleaning, repair and re-inscription in time for 2014 WW I and WW II commemorations.	H
37	Work pro-actively with private owners to encourage regular repairs and maintenance and, where appropriate, take	OG	Conservation & Design Team, Enforcement Team		Within existing resources	Ensure that owners of historic assets are aware of their value and their responsibilities in relation to looking after and maintaining	M

	enforcement action to safeguard neglected buildings.					their buildings.	
38	Continue to work with English Heritage and property/site owners to seek creative solutions and funding packages for buildings and sites on the 'Heritage at Risk' Register to ensure their long-term sustainability.	OG	Conservation & Design Team, Regeneration Teams	English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, Architectural Heritage Fund.	Within existing resources; English Heritage funding is available for buildings and sites on the HAR register.	Removal of buildings/sites from Heritage at Risk Register. Explore opportunities for managing buildings/sites through Building Preservation Trusts.	H
38	Support churches, congregations and other religious authorities to help them adapt religious buildings to meet the needs of both worshippers and the wider community, whilst ensuring that their historic features and fabric are preserved.	OG	Conservation & Design Team, Regeneration Teams	Individual churches and places of worship; Wirral Churches Together; English Heritage; Churches Tourism Association	Within existing resources	Ensure churches and other religious congregations are aware of support mechanisms e.g. the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings 'Faith in Maintenance' training programme and English Heritage partnership funding available for 3 year Support Officer posts for churches.	M
39	Ensure Wirral Council promotes the highest standards in archaeology and is able to secure the best possible archaeological advice on development and planning issues.	S	Wirral Council		If external archaeological expertise is to be commissioned there will be financial implications.	Explore options for obtaining specialist archaeological advice, including service level agreements with archaeological units or individual project commissions.	H
39	Actively encourage professionally led community archaeology projects as a means of furthering our knowledge of the history of the borough.	OG	Conservation & Design Team/Heritage Outreach Officer	Universities, NML, archaeological societies, community groups.	Within existing resources; dependent upon attracting external funding.	Identify sites of priority interest and work with partners to facilitate archaeological investigations.	M
40	Take appropriate measures	OG	Conservation &	Wirral Archives,	Within existing	Important recording work has	M

	to ensure that Wirral's historic buildings and archaeological sites are adequately recorded and that, where appropriate, these records are made publicly accessible.		Design Team	NML, archaeological societies, universities, civic and amenity societies.	resources.	already been done by local societies; build on this work and develop an action plan to identify buildings and sites in greatest need of recording.	
40	Work with Biological Records Centres and Local Biodiversity Partnerships to enable data collection and the voluntary recording of wildlife on Wirral, and ensure the best information is used to inform the management of our natural heritage.	OG	Parks and Countryside Service	Biological Records Centres, Wildlife Trusts, Liverpool Museums Service, Local Biodiversity Partnerships	Within existing resources.	Be part of the establishment nature partnerships.	M
41	Identify funding for the restoration of Flaybrick Memorial Gardens and new end use for the chapels.	S/M	Parks and Countryside Service	English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, Friends of Flaybrick	Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage	Continue to work with English Heritage to agree priority actions and submit proposal to HLF for funding package.	H
41	Ensure that the significance of historic parks, gardens, landscapes and cemeteries are recognised and understood and that their importance is reflected in management strategies and action plans.	S/M	Parks and Countryside Service	HLF EH Friends of Parks	Within existing resources	Agreed management strategies/action plans in place.	H
41	Produce a partnership plan with Friends Groups, environmental groups and other stakeholders to ensure that the views of heritage groups are properly represented in the emerging Parks and Countryside Service Plan.	S/M	Parks and Countryside Service	All partners and stakeholders	Within existing resources	Partnership plan created in the Parks and Countryside Service Plan.	H

41	Ensure the importance of natural heritage and biodiversity is recognised and understood and that this is reflected in all Parks Management Plans.	S/M	Parks and Countryside Service	All partners and stakeholders	Within existing resources	Ongoing	H
41	Work with Natural England, the Wirral Biodiversity and Local Sites Partnership and other partners in the public, private the voluntary sectors to manage all Wirral's designated nature sites towards favourable condition.	M/L	Parks and Countryside Service	Natural England, Wildlife Trust, Biodiversity and Local Sites Partnership	Some additional funding will need to be identified	Create a target in the Parks and Countryside Service Plan	H
42	Work in partnership with local communities and neighbourhoods so that they have the knowledge skills and capacity to engage effectively in the planning process.	S/M	Conservation & Design Team; Planning Teams; Engagement Teams	Community groups, amenity societies	Cost implications will need to be assessed within the context of new planning legislation.	Research best practice nationally and utilise support and training offered by Places Matter! and other organisations.	H
42	Increase access to Wirral's archive collections through programmes of digitisation and greater on-line access.		Wirral Archives	North West Digital Preservation Trust.	Within existing resources but external funding sources will be explored.	Improved catalogues and digital images to be added to Wirral Archives website.	H
43	Continue to develop exhibitions with NML and other partners, complementing the Museum Service's own collections with other public and private collections, to create exhibitions of regional and national significance	M	Wirral Museums Service	National Museums Liverpool, Cheshire West and Cheshire Museums Service, regional and national museums services	Within existing resources but external funding sources will be explored.	Work in collaboration with NML and other partners to produce a major exhibition on the 19 th century Liverpool School of Artists.	M

	Implement the Museums Service restructure, to facilitate more effective care and display of collections.	S/M	Museums Service	HR, Senior Management Team	Within existing resources although external funding will be sought to fund additional project staff.	First stage of restructure to be in place by April 2012.	H
44	Purchase new documentation software and complete documentation of the Museum's collections.	S/M	Museums Service	Insurance Team	Within existing resources with a contribution from the Risk Management Fund.	Documentation completed by April 2012; retrospective documentation completed by April 2016.	H
3	REGENERATION						
45	Ensure that developers and investors are made fully aware of the importance of Wirral's heritage and the social and economic benefits of retaining and enhancing heritage within regeneration projects.	OG	Planning Division, Inward Investment team	Civic and amenity societies.	Within existing resources	Heritage embedded into regeneration projects. Priority is Bromborough Pool village and Bromborough landfill site.	H
45	Ensure that major long-term developments such as Wirral Waters and the Mersey Coastal Park Strategy maximise the opportunities to conserve, enhance and promote key heritage assets and also consider the local character of the area.	OG	Strategic Investment	Conservation/ Planning/ Regeneration teams.	Within existing resources.	Heritage embedded into regeneration projects.	H
46	Work with communities to ensure that the Hoylake, West Kirby, Deeside and the Mersey Coast regeneration proposals reflect and	M	Regeneration Teams	Planning and Conservation teams; local community groups including local civic societies	Funding packages to be identified.	Funding packages in place with view to complete projects by 2014.	M

	interpret local heritage.						
46	Identify a funding package which will deliver the visitor interpretation centre at Thurstaston.	M	Regeneration Teams	Parks and Countryside Service Parks Development Friends of Thurstaston	Partial funding in place	Match funding identified	H
46	Work with local residents and Conservation Area Partnerships to retain the special character of historic suburbs.	OG	Conservation and Design Team	Conservation Area Partnerships	Within existing resources	Plans agreed for retention	
	Maximise opportunities to promote heritage as part of Wirral's wider tourism offer and ensure that the importance of the borough's historic and natural environments are reflected in destination marketing strategies.	OG	Tourism/Destination Marketing	Wirral Attractions Partnership, Wirral Coastal Partnership, The Mersey Partnership, Museums Service, Mersey Ferries.	Within existing resources	The role heritage plays in enhancing the visitor experience to be reflected in marketing strategies and publications. Continue to support the work of local and regional partnerships and their contribution to the promotion of heritage issues.	H
5	LEARNING						
47	Work across Council departments, particularly those promoting community development and the interests of young and elderly people, to utilise heritage learning programmes to deliver strategic and corporate objectives.	OG	Museums Service (Engagement Manager); CYPD, Older Peoples' Services	Learning Officers, Schools, Colleges Universities, Housing Associations, Child minders	Within existing resources	Establish inter-departmental meetings, to identify areas where heritage can be used to address social agendas	H
48	Refocus the Museum Service structure to achieve a stronger emphasis on formal and informal learning and community	S	Museums Service	HR, Senior Management Team	Short-term restructure within existing resources; additional	Redefine the Education Officer role with two part-time Learning Officer posts, to develop and deliver cross-curricular activities across the	H

	engagement.				posts dependent upon external funding.	primary and secondary sectors.	
48	Develop and implement an Informal Learning Strategy with an underpinning funding strategy.	S	Museums Service	Wirral Lifelong Learning Team	Initially within existing resources	Strategy completed by December 2012 Funding plan in place by December 2012	H
48	Work across Council Departments and with schools and external partners to ensure that heritage, natural history and local history continue to be taught in local schools and are embedded into cross-curricular work.	M	Museums Service, CYPD	Schools	Within existing resources	Maximise opportunities created by changes to the curriculum at secondary and primary levels to strengthen heritage work in schools.	M
49	Work towards achieving the 'Learning Outside the Classroom' accredited standard for all education offered by the Parks and Countryside Service.	M	Parks and Countryside Service	Schools	Within existing resources	Learning Outside the Classroom accreditation achieved.	L
49	Work with the community sector to establish links with schools and provide the necessary support for them to work with pupils and students.	S	Heritage Outreach Officer, Museums Service	Local societies and voluntary heritage sector	Within existing resources	Compile a database of volunteers from local societies wishing to work in schools, assist with legal issues and act as a broker between schools and community volunteers.	H
50	Recognise the deficit heritage skills and explore the possibilities of bringing together education, training and learning organisations to consider skills development in the heritage sector, particularly	M	Museums Service/Heritage Outreach Officer/ Archivist/Conservation Officer	Colleges and Higher Education establishments	Initially within existing resources – potential for HLF funding	Agreed plan for skills development by 2014.	M

	traditional craft and construction skills.						
5	PARTICIPATION						
51	Implement the Museums Service Community Engagement Programme.	M	Museums Service	Wirral Methodist Housing Association, Barnardos, Cultural Inclusion Officer	Funding Plan in preparation.	Increase the number of community engagement projects by 50% year on year for the next 3 years.	H
51	Work with partners to develop a 'Heritage and Health' programme and identify funding options.	S	Heritage Outreach Officer	PCTs, Age Concern, health practitioners, MENCAP	Resources to be identified as part of the programme development.	Programme developed and funding sources identified by March 2012.	H
51	Prioritise targeting heritage and outreach activity towards excluded groups and work with them to devise projects which directly meet their physical, intellectual and cultural needs.	OG	Museums Service, Heritage Outreach Officer, Archives Service	Local historic societies	Within existing resources, with potential project support from Heritage Lottery Fund.	Work pro-actively with excluded groups to identify barriers to engagement. Explore best practice nationally (e.g. Black Heritage Network, MENCAP Access to Heritage initiative) and build on their experiences in project development.	H
51	Continue to support the work of local history, heritage and amenity groups, through helping with skills development and funding advice, so that they can maximise their work within local communities.	OG	Heritage Outreach Officer, Museums Service (Engagement Manager), Parks and Countryside Service.	WHHA, Friends Groups, civic and amenity societies.	Existing resources/HLF	Organise skills development and funding workshops for the voluntary heritage sector. Work with outside agencies e.g. English Heritage, Civic Voice and Places Matter!) to disseminate best practice.	M
51	Help to develop the profile of the Wirral History and Heritage Association as an independent networking organisation which is recognised and supported by local societies	OG	Wirral History and Heritage Association	Heritage Outreach Officer, Museums Service (Principal Museums Officer), WHHA member organisations.	Within existing resources/ possible HLF bid	WHHA web-site fully operational and maintained by March 2012. Explore opportunities for skills development to ensure sustainability of the	H

	throughout the borough.					organisation.	
51	Support Wirral History and Heritage Association in organising Wirral's Heritage Open Days and encourage the development of a longer and more varied cultural programme.	OG	Wirral History & Heritage Association	Heritage Outreach Officer; building owners, local volunteers	Currently within existing resources, although if HODs continue to grow, additional funding sources may have to be identified.	Increase the number of HODs events by 10% in 2012 and extend the range of activities.	H
52	Actively encourage wider participation in heritage and the interpretation of Wirral's history, through supporting the work of community led initiatives.	M	Heritage Outreach Officer/Engagement Manager	Community Groups, Friends Groups, Hoylake Lifeboat Museum, Wilfred Owen Story, New Brighton Heritage Centre, Charles Dawson Brown Museum.	Within existing resources/HLF	Recognise the importance of the voluntary heritage sector in developing and managing key heritage sites and venues; foster partnership working and maximise the use of these venues as 'hubs' for heritage activity.	H
52	Continue to work with community groups and partners to provide a varied, high quality events programme through the Parks and Countryside Service.	OG	Parks and Countryside Service	Community Groups, Friends Groups, Heritage Groups, Environmental Groups, Wildlife Trust, RSPB, other Partners and Stakeholders	Within existing resources	Update programme on Council internet site to keep list of events up to date	H
52	Compile an audit of current interpretative provision and develop a heritage interpretation strategy for the borough.	M	Heritage Outreach Officer, Museums Service, Parks and Countryside Service, Destination Marketing Team.	Community Groups, Friends Groups	Within existing resources	A comprehensive review of existing interpretation will provide the framework for identifying new opportunities and provide a framework for future development and investment.	M
53	Develop a programme to implement the use of new	L	Museums Service		Within existing resources/HLF	Research the application of new technologies for	M

	technologies to interpret museum sites and explore the potential for wider application across the borough.					interpretation. Secure external funding to implement, with Birkenhead Priory as priority.	
53	Explore the potential to further promote heritage and heritage activity through an enhanced website.	S	Museums Service/Finance Department/Corporate Marketing	All Council services with a responsibility for heritage	Within existing resources	Research best practice by other authorities in order to put forward an informed business case.	H
1	CELEBRATION						
54	Work with partners to promote initiatives which celebrate and raise the profile of Wirral's heritage and promote a positive image of the borough.	OG	Principal Museums Officer/Tourism and Destination Marketing	Engagement Manager/ Audience Development Manager	Within existing resources	Support borough-wide initiatives like Heritage Open Days and 2012 'Year of Coast and Countryside'.	M
54	Increase the number of Wirral's Parks achieving the Green Flag standard.	OG	Parks and Countryside Service	Friends Groups, other partners and stakeholders	Within existing resources	Create a target for increase in the Parks and Countryside Service Plan	H
54	Support local communities in celebrating those aspects of their local heritage which are important to them and create opportunities for them to get involved in activities which help shape the future of their area.		Heritage Outreach Officer/Conservation & Design Team/Museum Service	Local communities	Within existing resources.	Encourage greater community ownership of projects and work to create the conditions which support such initiatives and allow them to happen.	H
55	Ensure that individual and collective memories are captured and celebrated through supporting reminiscence and recording projects.	S/OG	Heritage Outreach Officer/Wirral Archives/Library Service	Community groups, local/family history societies, schools and youth groups.	Within existing resources/HLF	Actively promote reminiscence projects by developing pilot project/s which demonstrate their social benefits as well as heritage value. Aim for initial pilot to be delivered during 2012.	M
55	Explore the potential for training volunteer 'Heritage Ambassadors' to promote	S	Heritage Outreach Officer/Tourism	Museums Service, Archives, community groups.	Within existing resources/HLF	Draft training programme has been drawn up; further development required.	M

	heritage throughout the borough.						
55	Work more closely with other sectors to ensure that heritage is an integral part of Wirral's wider cultural offer.	OG	Wirral Attractions Partnership	Museums Service, Arts Service, Archives, Tourism/Libraries	Within existing resources	Wirral already does much to present an integrated cultural offer; build on existing and create new opportunities to strengthen cultural links.	H