

1.3 Project Outline

Trevor Basin hosts few commercial activities, which have evolved over time, often as an opportunistic response rather than within the context of a strategic plan. This has resulted in activities being ill placed, negatively impacting on the visitor welcome and its potential as a great place to visit and spend time.

Anglo Welsh (a tenant of the Trust) operates from Trevor Basin and has a range of boats available to hire including popular day trip boats. During the 2019 visitor season an estimated 20,000 holiday days were taken, making Trevor Basin a premier site across the canal network. At present, the operation is constrained to the Basin with limited visitor welcome.

With the retirement in 2019 of trip boat operator 'Jones the Boat', a unique opportunity was presented to begin implementing the Masterplan and re-locate the existing hire boat base and associated customer parking into the canal arms and pier at the north end of the site, allowing the transfer of short-stay visitor moorings into the Basin.

As part of the relocation, it was originally intended that the arms and pier would be developed ready for the start of the new visitor season in spring 2021; and that a new trip boat would begin operating from spring 2020 made up of scheduled trips, private bookings and education excursions. Although these plans subsequently had to be delayed due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the intention to implement these plans as soon as circumstances allow remains.

Works are likely to include:

- ◆ Construction of a new building housing Shop, Offices and Facilities building within a similar footprint of the now demolished *Jones the Boat* hire centre.
- ◆ Covered pump store out building and external (screened) fuel store to the northern end of the central pier
- ◆ A new Gas Bottle Store and Bin Store to the west of the site operator's facilities.
- ◆ New parking bays for 21 cars within the area of extant hardstanding adjacent to the proposed site operator's facilities.
- ◆ New pedestrian routes providing access to new Fuel, Foul, Electricity and Water Service Points.
- ◆ New Fuel and Foul Service runs the new Fuel, Foul, Electricity and Water Service Points.
- ◆ New pedestrian routes providing access to the new moorings and Service Points.

The following description of the proposals is provided in the C&RT's Planning Statement:

'The previous use of the site by the trip boat operator provided skippered passenger boat trips over the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. This former use consisted of boat moorings in the water space (including services for re-fuelling, a water point and refuse collection) and two prefabricated buildings on land accommodating an office, a cafe, and toilets. The prefabricated buildings have now been removed. The site also included designated car parking.'

It is now intended to re-introduce boating activity to this part of Trevor Basin. It is proposed to use the site as the base location for a hire boat operator. The hire boat business is an established operator, which currently occupies a central location within Trevor Basin close to the junction of the Llangollen Canal and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. This proposal utilises a more suitable location for the hire boat business, as it is located at the rear of Trevor Basin, which will ultimately reduce boat, pedestrian and vehicular congestion within the main basin area having a positive impact on manoeuvrability across the site.

As part of the proposed use, the site will similarly be the start and finish point from where the boats will leave and return to, which will also include services such as re-fuelling, water points, refuse and sewage disposal. Designated car parking will be retained on site for use by staff and customers.

It is proposed that a new main permanent building will be introduced on site to replace the previous prefabricated structures, which will accommodate an office, storage/laundry, toilets, and a cafe. A much smaller secondary building is also proposed to provide boat services for re-fuelling and sewage disposal, which is more suitably located away from the main building.

The sites former operation of prefabricated buildings and access arrangements were of poor quality, with high stepped access up to floor levels, steep steps and ramps to lower mooring berths, poor surfacing for pedestrian routes from the site entrance and no marked provision for disabled parking.

The proposed replacement main building will be a single storey detached structure situated over the footprint of the former office/cafe prefabricated unit on site. A primary facing material of timber larch cladding is proposed accompanied with dark metallic standing seam roof covering material and dark metallic windows.

The proposed development will significantly improve this accessibility of the former site.

From arrival to the site boundary from public realms there will be gradual and steady levelling with suitable external surfaces for ease of accessibility and travel to the primary entrance of the main building.

The central island is retained as an opportunity to present a naturalistic landscape and will only be developed to provide access to moorings.

External surfaces surrounding the proposed building and connecting routes will consist of tar and chip surfacing and thin underlying grass reinforcing mesh strip. The larger areas are left as made ground.

External walling material around the water space consists of stone masonry to match existing examples. Railway sleepers will be introduced into the wooded areas.

Railing and balustrade specifications are estate material to remain consistent with the wider area'.

1.4 Site description

The 'red line boundary' of the proposed development area had yet to be finalised at the time of the production of the initial Heritage Statement, but it was understood that the project area would be contained wholly within the C&RT Land Ownership to the north of Scotch Hall Bridge, which is the area edged in blue on Figure 1 (hereafter 'the Assessment Area'). This covers an area of c.1.2ha, centred upon the two terminal arms of the Llangollen Canal separated by a central pier. There is a dock on the western terminal, and at the eastern terminal there is a blocked junction bridge to the now infilled branch canal originally built to serve the Plas Kynaston Colliery and a former loading dock wide enough for a single boat where goods were transferred to and from the Ruabon Brook Railway.

It is now understood that the planning application boundary will not include that part of the C&RT Land Ownership to the east of the eastern canal arm, but extends for some distance (c.220m) to the north of the Land Ownership boundary to include the c.6.2m wide access route into the PDA along the extant asphalt-surfaced road known as the Old Wharf Station Road. However, as impacts to the access route are to be minimal (a proposed slight widening of the asphalt to provide pedestrian access) and as a matter of expediency, the original 'Assessment Area' has been retained in this report.

To the west of the western terminal is the former location of the 'Jones the Boat' hire centre, which has recently been demolished, although some foundations and low walling associated with this survive. Immediately to the north of the footprint of the former building is an area of hardstanding previously used as a car park, which is accessed via a trackway with an entrance at the north end of the site (the Old Wharf Station Road discussed above). Either side of this access route in the northern part of the Assessment Area are overgrown areas of scrub, whilst further to the south the areas alongside the towpaths are grassed and benches have been placed adjacent to the bridge over the now infilled private branch canal and former loading dock. The central pier is also overgrown with scrub and trees, although scrub removal was underway at the time of the site walkover (March 2020).

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principal aims of this assessment are to produce a report detailing any archaeological potential of the PDA, and to assess the potential impacts of the proposed development upon any buried and upstanding archaeological remains, historic buildings, the historic landscape and the settings of nationally designated assets. The following objectives will contribute towards accomplishing this aim:

- ♦ To collate and assess existing information about the historic environment within the study area and to determine as fully as possible from the available evidence the nature, survival, quality, extent and importance of any archaeological remains and any upstanding buildings/structures within the PDA.
- ♦ To provide an assessment of areas of archaeological potential and survival based on the above research and assess the potential for the use of particular investigative techniques in order to aid the formulation of any necessary mitigation strategy,

including further evaluation, excavation, and/or preservation of archaeological remains.

- ♦ To assess, where possible from the available sources, the extent of any ground disturbance associated with any previous intrusive development.
- ♦ To provide an initial assessment of potential impacts of the proposed development to the settings of cultural heritage assets and make recommendations for further detailed assessment should this be considered necessary.

3 METHOD STATEMENT

This Heritage Statement was undertaken in accordance with the guidelines set out in The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment* (CIfA 2020), and Cadw's guidance documents *Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales* (Cadw 2017a); *Manging Change in World Heritage Sites in Wales* (Cadw 2017b); and *Setting of Heritage Assets in Wales* (Cadw 2017c), and with cognisance of the relevant sections of *Planning Policy Wales 11* and *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment*.

The approach to the assessment of significance is that set out in *Conservation Principles* (Cadw 2011), which states that the significance of heritage assets derives from the 'heritage values' that they possess, which may be *evidential*, *historical* (either *illustrative* or *associative*), *aesthetic* or *communal*.

3.1 Study Area

The study area adopted for this assessment comprises the Canal & River Trust Land Ownership to the north of Scotch Hall Bridge, although impacts to the settings of heritage assets within the wider visual envelope of the World Heritage Site will also be considered, and reference will also be made to heritage assets in the wider landscape where relevant to the assessment. Searches of relevant datasets listed in the information sources listed below were undertaken for a 1km study area surrounding the C&RT Land Ownership boundary to the north of the Scotch Hall Bridge.

3.2 Information Sources

The following sources of information were consulted to inform this assessment:

- ♦ The Historic Environment Record (HER), maintained by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT).
- ♦ The National Monuments Record (NMR) for Wales maintained by the Royal Commission on the Ancient Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW).
- ♦ Cadw's downloadable GIS datasets for designated heritage assets available on *Lle*, the Welsh Government's GeoPortal for Wales.
- ♦ The Denbighshire Record Office for historic maps, plans and other documents relevant to the study area.

- ♦ The Flintshire Record Office for historic maps, plans and other documents relevant to the study area.
- ♦ Google Earth and Bing online historical satellite imagery.
- ♦ Groundsure Historic Mapping Report for historic Ordnance Survey maps.
- ♦ Environment Agency Lidar data.
- ♦ Various other relevant books, journals, websites and publications identified during the course of the assessment, details of which can be found in the references section of the report.
- ♦ A site walkover was undertaken during sunshine and showers on 11th and 12th March 2020.
- ♦ The results of the archaeological evaluation undertaken in March 2021 (Tong 2021).

4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The Ellesmere Canal

The concept of what was to become known as the Ellesmere Canal (later the Shropshire Union Canal and the Llangollen Canal) was mooted by a group of Shropshire landowners at a public meeting in 1791, with a view to linking the major ports at Liverpool and Bristol via inland waterways from the River Severn at Shrewsbury, to the River Dee at Chester, and thence across the Wirral from the River Dee to the Mersey estuary at what became Ellesmere Port. Along its course, the canal or branches from it were to serve limestone quarries in the Llanymynech and Froncysyllte areas, coal mines and other industry around Ruabon and Wrexham, and the agricultural areas of Shropshire and Cheshire (Brown 2007, 611). Initially, two different courses for the canal were under consideration, known as the 'Eastern' and 'Western' canals, the former following a course between Shrewsbury and Chester to the east of Ellesmere and the River Dee, and the latter veering to the west of Ellesmere and the River Dee. Numerous deviations and extensions were proposed during the formative years of the scheme as the project continuously evolved (Dean 2007).

At the advice of William Jessop, the premier canal engineer of the time who was taken on as Principal Engineer for the scheme, it was the Western Canal that was eventually carried forward, not least because of the increased access to the Welsh coalfields that this route afforded, and an Act of Parliament authorising the construction of this canal was passed in 1793. Nevertheless, there was still some tension between the proponents of the Eastern and Western routes, and the course of the canal remained fluid as competing factions argued their cases, and several Acts of Parliament were eventually required to accommodate the repeated changes in the plans and to permit more money to be raised (Brown 2007, 613).

William Jessop was already considered by the newly formed (though fractious) Ellesmere Canal Company (ECC) to be the principal engineer overseeing the project, and in September 1793, noted road and bridge builder Thomas Telford was also appointed as 'general agent', although he was also variously referred to as 'general surveyor and agent', 'general agent