

FRONTIERS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

# THE ANTONINE WALL

Management Plan 2014-19

REPORT ON THE CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS



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## MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014-19 FACILITATION AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION EXERCISE

### MAIN REPORT

#### Introduction

1. The Antonine Wall is a very special place in Scotland. It formed the North-West Frontier of the vast Roman Empire, a complex part of a frontier system extending for 5000km through Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. It stretches from the Forth to the Clyde, and was only occupied for a generation, but it remains Scotland's largest and most important Roman monument.
2. Its importance was recognised by UNESCO in 2008 as part of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site, joining Hadrian's Wall and the German Limes, and together forming a trans-national WHS. It is therefore a young WHS, even though nearly 2000 years old.
3. Responsibility for its management lies with a Partnership of the 5 Local Authorities on the line of the Wall (West Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire and Falkirk), together with Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. The requirements for a Management Plan are set out in UNESCO Guidelines. The first 5-year plan is now coming to an end, and so a new plan for 2014-19 is being prepared, to be completed in 2013.
4. This new plan has to be subject to public consultation. The consultation process was undertaken by an independent facilitator working alongside the Antonine Wall WHS Co-ordinator. This report summarises the process and its main outcomes; it also includes an assessment by the independent facilitator. Detailed records of each stage of the process supplement this report, and have been lodged with the Co-ordinator.

#### The Consultation Process

5. The consultation process was conducted in three carefully planned stages:
  - An initial Visioning Exercise with the Partnership Steering Group held in Edinburgh on 31 July 2012. The aim was to identify the key issues for the long-term future potential for the Wall.
  - Three Stakeholder Workshops with key stakeholders from government agencies, local authorities and other organisations, held in Glasgow and Edinburgh on 28-29 August and 10 October 2012. The aim of these sessions was to identify the issues which the new plan should address, and complement these by suggestions of practical actions.
  - Five Public Consultation events, each open to a wide range of participants, one held in each local authority area over the period 20-29 November 2012. A draft list of issues, objectives and actions for the new Plan, based on the previous two stages, was circulated to all participants. These workshops sought reactions to this draft, and to learn of local concerns and priorities for action.

These three stages are to be followed by a further opportunity for consultation on the draft Management Plan as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process.

6. In all, over 150 participants from a wide range of organisations and communities from across the Central Belt of Scotland took part in the 9 events. Each event included briefing presentations on the WHS and the stage reached in the consultation. Breakout groups then explored the more strategic issues and the practical actions which participants would like to see in the new Management Plan. At the conclusion of each event there was an opportunity for a brief summary of the progress made. To supplement group discussions, short

individual questionnaires were completed within the events, so that everyone had a further opportunity to contribute. A high response rate was achieved, with 37 completed questionnaires from the Stakeholder Workshops and a further 64 from the Public Consultation.

7. The consultation process did not start from a blank canvas. The briefing presentations made clear that the consultation did not cover the format for the new Plan, the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value or governance arrangements, all of which are already determined. The new Plan also takes into account the legacy of the 2007-12 plan and its achievements and experiences. What the consultation does cover is all other aspects of the new Management Plan.

## Outcomes

### The Visioning Session

8. This event with the Partnership Steering Group set the scene for the consultation by re-affirming the long-term aspiration for the Antonine Wall. They identified 5 key facets:
  - Protecting, maintaining and enhance the value of the heritage resource and its environmental context
  - Building strong partnerships and engagement with local communities
  - Raising awareness and understanding about the Antonine Wall
  - Enabling public access and enjoyment, including enhancing visualisation of the heritage resource
  - Realising the Wall's potential as an educational and research resource.
9. Two other aspects were also identified as essential:
  - The Wall needs to be appreciated both as a linear entity, linking across Scotland and to its wider Scottish and international context, and also as a set of individual places and artefacts that are valuable in themselves and should benefit local communities.
  - All the above facets are inter-dependent. The paramount aim of protection of the heritage resource will only be secured if the Wall is understood and valued. In turn, the enjoyment, research and educational roles can only take place if the Wall is there, protected and accessible. These factors need to be locked together in a learning process

so they become mutually supportive and provide multiple benefits.

10. In support of this vision, the Steering Group wanted to see:
  - A clear vision for the future of the Wall, to enable the effective targeting of resources
  - An effective Partnership, with annual Actions Plans, to deliver this vision, including reaching agreement on funding the Co-ordinator post
  - Raising awareness and visibility of the Wall (not least at its Western end), but also not raising its profile and expectations beyond its capacity to deliver
  - The development of tools and products, especially for education and enhancing the visitor experience.

### The Stakeholder Workshops

11. The three stakeholder workshops endorsed the outcomes from the Steering Group. In terms of the emerging draft Management Plan, these were set out as 6 aims which are, in summary:
  1. Safeguard and enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS
  2. Promote awareness and understanding
  3. Realise the WHS's full potential as an education and learning resource
  4. Build strong partnerships and strengthen community engagement
  5. Balance wider environmental concerns in sustainable management of the WHS
  6. Increase research opportunities & use to protect and promote the WHS.
12. In discussion, and particularly in the questionnaire responses, stakeholders tended to focus most on aims 1, 2 and 4. The other aims were not seen as unimportant, but more the province of those particularly involved in them. Many aspects of promoting awareness and understanding were explored, including improved interpretation, signage and access, digital and traditional media, and communications. Holding an annual research or networking seminar was suggested. Stakeholders recognised that the Wall is of international as well as local importance, a point stressed in the questionnaires received from the FRE Partners at Hadrian's Wall and the Limes.

13. It was also acknowledged that the Wall can be difficult to appreciate, especially when in places it is either not visible, or the most evident remains are not a wall but a ditch. The need for clarity in marketing, and not raising unrealistic expectations, was stressed. Because of this lack of visibility, there is a role for both quality reconstruction (with a potential role for experimental archaeology) to convey the scale of the Wall, and for one or more Visitor Centres – themes discussed further in the public sessions. Those who raised these matters thought that public funding would be unlikely to be available during the management plan period, but argued that preparatory work should be undertaken. It was also noted that if a single centre could be seen as drawing people away from other parts of the Wall, it would be unlikely to command Partnership support.

14. Prominent amongst the practical actions advocated by stakeholders were:
- **Having a well-linked up to date website.** It was thought this should link to local authority web pages; to specialist sites; and to guidance for visitors.
  - **Development of a path or trail network along the length of the Wall,** enabling a variety of visitor experiences, from circular walks to being able to traverse the length of the monument. Developing a **forestry, habitat & landscape strategy** was also advocated.
  - **Foster links with private landowners,** establishing who owns what and access arrangements. This could extend to supporting landowners to access funds which could lead to enhancing the Wall and its environment, and business opportunities related to visitors (and **exploring the business development potential of the Wall** more generally).

### The Public Consultations

15. Each of the five public consultation events had its own character and emphasis, and added new ideas. A strong case was made for wanting more, i.e. more visible, Wall in West Dunbartonshire; they also supported having a long-distance route which would make Kilpatrick a destination. It was argued here (and elsewhere) that we should tell the story of the Wall, but also link to local history and peoples, and to

the nearby canal. In Glasgow an emphasis was ‘do more with the resources we have’, such as better links between the sites and the artefacts held in collections. They also pressed the need for facilities for visitors – transport, car parks, toilets – and better signage and interpretation. At Kirkintilloch in East Dunbartonshire, communication was a theme, including the potential for knowledge exchange about who is doing what along the Wall, the need to train planners and monitor decisions, and to establish dialogue with farmers and landowners. In both North Lanarkshire and Falkirk, there was evident enthusiasm of groups from Twechar, Croy, Kinneil House, and the Antonine Guard. Again the case for an Antonine Wall long-distance route and for one or more visitor centres was made.

16. These emphases were in the context of comprehensive discussions at each event. Overall, participants supported the draft list of issues, objectives and actions which had been informed by the previous workshops. There were some valuable additions: for example, at Kirkintilloch a strong case was made for inclusion of geodiversity alongside biodiversity. There were numerous suggestions for practical actions, both in the discussion groups and on questionnaire responses. For example, a strong case was made for better access to Bar Hill. Amongst the many evocative suggestions were the need to bring the Wall to life, with re-enactments, stories and hands-on experiences (such as sampling Roman cooking), and marking the line of the Wall with beacons or more replicas of the Wall’s unique distance slabs.

17. The responses to the individual questionnaires showed that the greatest benefit of the Wall is seen as being an educational resource for all age groups. This is followed by its historic and heritage value; the opportunities it provides for recreation and walking; its scenic and landscape value; and its potential for tourism. By far the greatest use made of the Wall is for walking and recreation, followed by education including school visits. Its uses for tourism, community activities, history and heritage, and open space and natural heritage were also frequently cited.

18. In terms of the actions participants would like to see in the new Plan, 6 groups stood out above the others:

- Signage and improved interpretation
- The need for one or more Visitor Centres and reconstructions, with more use of existing centres as a starting point
- A range of paths, including a long-distance route, with improved access, transport and facilities
- Better digital and information resources
- Networking and co-ordination of public bodies and interest groups, including drawing on voluntary resources
- Archaeology, preservation and research: monitoring and securing the heritage, but also making more it visible, e.g. at Kinneil Fortlet, Rough Castle, Castlecary or Kilpatrick.

## Assessment

### The Consultation Process

19. This was an unusually extensive and interactive consultation process. It was extensive because the Antonine Wall spans across Scotland. It affects many places and communities of interest, running through 5 local authorities with both rural and urban areas, which present different challenges. As the report shows, there many aspects to consider, including the protection and enhancement of the heritage, and its education, research, recreation, tourism and environmental dimensions. This required a substantial consultation process if these different interests were to be taken into account.
20. It was also an interactive process, not seeking responses to an already prepared draft plan. Instead it sought to develop ideas in consultation with the many affected and relevant interests. The aim was not only to enable people to contribute, but also hope that they will feel it is, in part at least, 'their' plan. This kind of process takes time, and while direct costs may be modest, there is a considerable staff time involved, particularly for the Co-ordinator and the local authority officers who hosted events in their area. However, this is likely to be worthwhile if the result does secure a wide sense of ownership of the emerging Management Plan.
21. It also took time to arrange the meetings and ensure that a wide range of people and organisations were informed. While the attendance and venues varied from Council

Chambers to village halls, the numbers attending each event (10-25) were sufficient to generate good discussion, yet small enough for everyone to have a chance to contribute. There was no sign that holding 9 events led to diminishing returns: each event produced additional ideas, and hopefully enabled people to feel part of the process.

### The Responses

22. The consistent character of all the sessions was that participants were positive, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, yet at the same time realistic about what might be achievable in the current economic situation. Collectively, they represented a significant potential resource in support of the WHS.
23. Overall, there was also a clear consensus of support for the framework set out by the Steering Group, which advocates a comprehensive approach to the management of the Wall. The only exception was that a few people thought that most importance should be attached to community engagement. The public sessions suggested that this aspect should take as its starting point the local history and amenity societies, and other voluntary resources, who contributed to the consultation.
24. There will be some significant choices to be made, particularly relating to the prospects for one or more visitor centres. Here again, participants were realistic that it was unlikely that major funding would be available in the short term. They therefore advocated both that more use should be made of existing facilities, and that preparatory work should be undertaken to assess the best longer-term options. Every session championed its own area, though for very different reasons: West Dumbarton arguing because they have little of the Wall currently visible; North Lanarkshire and Falkirk arguing that they have some of the best visible remains.
25. This pragmatic, phased and realistic approach characterised the discussions, which often suggested modest first steps to start to move to more strategic objectives. For example, the objective of a path network, including an Antonine Way route across Scotland, should start with improved signage and markers for the route of the Wall, and build on existing

initiatives such as the John Muir Way and link to walks along the canal. Identifying, in consultation with landowners, potential routes and access agreements might come next.

### Managing the Complexity

26. One of the key challenges in managing the Antonine Wall is handling the many different aspects, and trying to co-ordinate the myriad of agencies and groups with relevant interests. At present there are many separate strategies relating to aspects of the management of the WHS, already prepared or underway. As well as securing a common framework so that these component parts support one another, it will be essential to delegate responsibilities – in the way that the Supplementary Planning Guidance has become part of the Development Plan of each local authority.
27. For the Management Plan itself, the risk with a logical hierarchical approach to planning is that with 6 main Aims, each of which is then fleshed out with successive layers of Issues, Objectives, and Actions, the result is a vast number of things to try to do simultaneously. When the core resource for the Antonine Wall is just one Co-ordinator, there is a need to try to find more of a focus.
28. Following the themes of the Steering Group and Stakeholder sessions to be realistic about likely resource levels, and where possible to secure multiple benefits from the actions taken, the following suggestions distilled from the workshops illustrate a range of potential early action priorities:
  - **A Long-Distance Walking route:** start with signs marking the full route of the Wall, and existing and proposed path networks; then explore the further potential in consultation with landowners, with a view to access agreements, and improving access and facilities along the Wall.
  - **Visitor centres:** start with existing facilities, and the scope for more replicas following the success of the Bridgeness Slab. Relate to the history of the locality, and explain the timelines, and include the potential for reconstructions.
  - **Improved communications:** start by updating the current website, then examine a range of digital and traditional media to

enhance how to share and disseminate information.

- **Networking:** start with an annual event – a seminar for both researchers and interest groups to exchange ideas and information; explore options such as setting up a Friends of the Antonine Wall, and a Facebook page.
- **Education:** produce a pack for teachers; and develop the potential for school visits, especially drawing on volunteer resources to enable lively and memorable hands-on experiences, and telling a Scottish as well as a Roman story.

### Criteria for Project Selection

29. In the last consultation sessions, participants noted that projects might come forward which had not been envisaged as part of the Management Plan. While it was not formally discussed, the tenor of the consultation responses make it feasible to suggest the kind of criteria which would be appropriate to guide project design and selection. The questions to ask are whether a proposed project would contribute to the WHS by:
  - Securing its protection and enhancement
  - Improving its visibility and interpretation
  - Aiding communication and its educational and research roles
  - Enhancing facilities for recreation, enjoyment and tourism
  - Being economically sustainable (in terms of benefits and maintenance costs)
  - Strengthening connections, both locally and further afield.

### Acknowledgements

30. Thanks are due to everyone who took part in this consultation process. This includes everyone from public bodies who came to contribute and to listen, including those who hosted the various events; and the members of the public and a wide range of community organisations who gave up an evening or an afternoon to contribute to the discussions. Inevitably this report has had to be selective, but it is hoped that it reflects the main points and the supportive mood which pervaded this whole process.

**Tim Birley**  
**12 December 2012**



