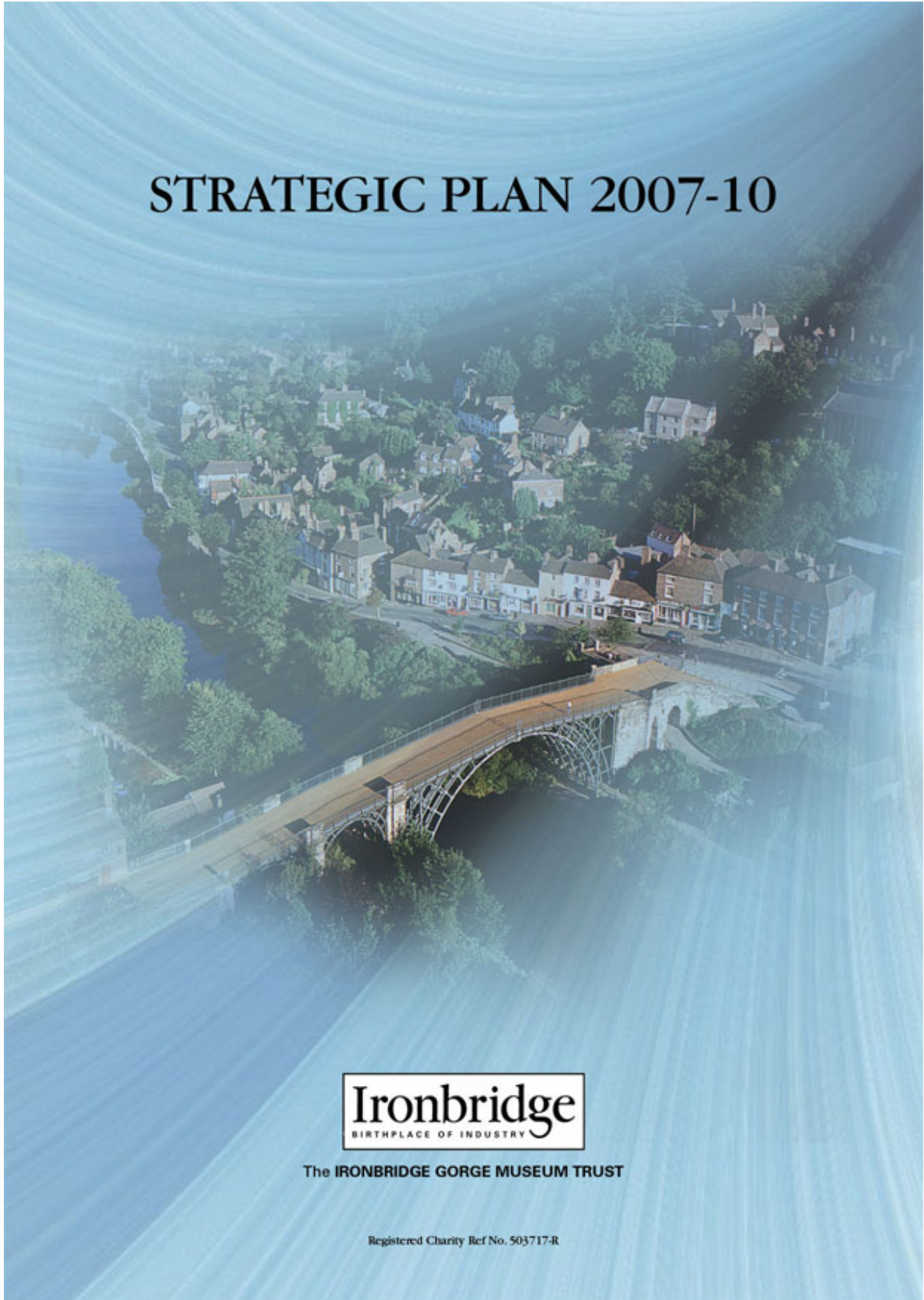


STRATEGIC PLAN 2007-10



Ironbridge
BIRTHPLACE OF INDUSTRY

The IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM TRUST

Registered Charity Ref No. 503717-R

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the largest independent museum in the country, the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust was established in 1967 to preserve and interpret the monuments and remains of relating to the birth of the Industrial Revolution, centred around the six square miles of the Ironbridge Gorge. It is an independent educational charity (Registered Number 503717-R), which by its entrepreneurial flair encourages visitors to be involved in and support its conservation work through admission charges, trading and associated commercial activities. Development costs are sought through grants and donations.

Responsible to a Board of Trustees, the Museum manages 35 historic sites within the World Heritage Site of the Ironbridge Gorge, ten of which are museums. The Trust's innovative methods and pioneering approach to managing museums have been widely copied and are now common practice in museums, whether public or privately funded. As well as ten museums, the sites also include a research library, a tourist information centre, two youth hostels, archaeological sites, historic woodlands, housing, two chapels, and two Quaker burial grounds.

2. MISSION & VISION

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Mission is stated as follows:

“To excel in researching, preserving and interpreting, for the widest audience, the Monuments, Collections and Social History of the early industry in the Ironbridge Gorge; to enrich the visitors' experience with live demonstrations, hands-on activities and innovative educational programmes.”

In the work that we do, we will strive to:

Innovate

Engage

Excel

Our Vision is:

- To make the Industrial Age and Ironbridge's role in it, as well understood in terms of world significance as the Egyptian and Roman epochs.
- To share and disseminate the timeless significance of Ironbridge and Coalbrookdale.
- To make Ironbridge and Coalbrookdale a universal place of pilgrimage. Ironbridge should become as well known as the Eiffel Tower or the Pyramids.
- To ensure that every visitor to Ironbridge takes away something of value – material, intellectual or spiritual.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- a. To work with partners and stakeholders to raise the profile of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust as one of the world's foremost independent museums in one of the country's premier World Heritage Sites.
- b. To improve access to the museums, monuments and collections in the Trust's care through physical, intellectual and social improvements, investments and innovations.
- c. To increase the resources available to support the work of the Trust through our trading operations, including retail, corporate and property management.
- d. To become an exemplar in the sector for the quality of our customer service and our visitor experience.
- e. To develop our staff and our volunteers as Ironbridge's most precious resource, through an ongoing programme of training and personal development.
- f. To put learning at the centre of everything we do, leading the museum field in the quality of our schools' provision, innovative outreach work and community engagement.

4. RESOURCES

- a. Building on the significant capital investments of the past 15 years and the key structural investment at Blists Hill Victorian Town, we will use our new resources to maximum effect, creating sustainable income sources to meet the strategic objectives outlined.
- b. Creating effective use of new technologies, particularly our award-winning website.
- c. Ensuring partnership working which offers mutual benefits, building on our existing local, regional and national partnerships and through new ways of working with key stakeholders.
- d. Finding exemplary ways of managing projects, with clearly defined teams and with transparent working methods.
- e. Being imaginative in the connections we make within the organisation, looking for new ways to add value to our work and for efficient and innovative working practices.
- f. Becoming a leader in the field of sustainable, green tourism.
- g. Developing new and exciting ways of involving volunteers in the work of the Trust, creating mutually beneficial opportunities for both volunteers and the organisation.

5. CONTEXT

Over the next 4 years, there are a number of key, external factors, which will have an impact on the work of the Trust:

- All museums have a major role to play in many of the most vital issues of our age. Ironbridge does and will continue to play a significant role in these issues – in the creation of a sense of identity and the building of successful communities, in helping people to learn and to understand the world around us and in nurturing a creative and vibrant society.

- Development of the Renaissance in the Regions project, currently providing significant resources to the Trust and helping to shape the Trust's key goals. How Renaissance in the Regions will develop beyond the existing Business Plan (up to April 2008) will be crucial, offering new opportunities and new targets.
- Development of the local economic and tourism infrastructure, particularly the emergence of a new DMP (Destination Management Partnership) for Telford and the wider Shropshire Region. This will offer new marketing and partnership opportunities for Ironbridge.
- Structural improvements within the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site will hopefully stabilise the areas of the Gorge which are currently under threat. Questions still remain on the long-term stability of the Gorge which ultimately will have a key impact on the development of the Trust's work.
- 2009, the 300th anniversary of the first time that iron was smelted using coke and therefore, arguably the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, is a major milestone in the history of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust and also represents a unique opportunity to work with partners across the West Midlands region with 2009 also being the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth and the 250th anniversary of the foundation of the Wedgwood Company by Josiah Wedgwood.
- The opportunities of the Olympic Games in 2012 and the cultural offer in the run up to the Games offers massive opportunities for Ironbridge, particularly given the close proximity to Much Wenlock, the spiritual home of the modern Olympic movement.

6. KEY THEMES

- Building on the successes of the past decades in the **securing of the historic buildings in the Trust's care**, developing long-term maintenance programmes which are proactive rather than reactive.
- To continue to develop innovative and **sustainable sources of revenue** to support the educational aims of the Trust.
- **Linking our learning offer more fully**, ensuring that our collections, monuments and museums are utilised for the maximum benefit of learners of all ages and backgrounds.
- Returning to the essential reasons of **why Ironbridge is a World Heritage Site**, telling this world-changing story in new and engaging ways, enabling new generations to understand the importance and relevance of the story to their own lives.
- Continuing the innovative and creative developments which over the past 40 years have made Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust **one of the world's pre-eminent museums of industrial history**, building Ironbridge's international reputation and academic standing.

7. CONCLUSION

The past fifteen years have seen a considerable investment in the properties and monuments in the care of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust. This structural investment continues with the Blists Hill Development Project, a £10.2m package which will ensure the Trust's largest site regains its place in the highest level of heritage tourist attractions. 2009 offers a landmark date to celebrate again the event which led to the Industrial Revolution and the inscription of Ironbridge Gorge as one of Britain's first World Heritage Sites.

As well as telling a story of truly world-changing significance, Ironbridge needs to develop its services for its local communities, the people for whom the Ironbridge story has the greatest emotional and spiritual resonance. Working with key partners, the Trust will lead in the creation of a sustainable tourism offer, making Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site a model for integrated and high-quality visitor destinations.

Our offer must be attractive to the widest possible audience, based on respected academic research, yet engaging and family-friendly. By the Olympic Games of 2012, Ironbridge will be widely acknowledged as an exemplar in the fields of access and public engagement, with an increased national profile and strong community support.