

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET – 8TH JUNE, 2010

IRONBRIDGE GORGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE STRATEGY GROUP

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING & TRANSPORT

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval to invite Professor Les Sparks OBE to become the Chairman of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Strategy Group.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning & Transport to invite Professor Les Sparks OBE to join the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Strategy Group as Chairman.**

3. PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 3.1 None.

4. INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Strategy Group was established by the Council to oversee and guide the conservation and management of the World Heritage Site. The Group includes representatives from organisations with an interest in the World Heritage Site, including Telford & Wrekin Council, Shropshire Council, the Parish Councils of the Gorge, Madeley and Broseley, the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust, English Heritage, Natural England, the Environment Agency, ICOMOS UK (on behalf of UNESCO), the Government Office for the West Midlands.
- 4.2 The role of the Strategy Group is to oversee the conservation, protection and management of the World Heritage Site (WHS) with the aim of ensuring that the WHS continues to achieve the Outstanding Universal Value required by UNESCO to maintain its World Heritage Status. The group also oversees the preparation, monitoring and review of the World Heritage Site Management Plan that is also required by UNESCO.

4.3 **Professor Les Sparks OBE DipArch DipTP MRTPI HonDDes FRSA (Chair)**

Professor Sparks is an architect/planner with substantial local government experience at senior level. He was Director of Planning and Architecture at Birmingham City Council from 1991 to 1999 and previously Director of Environmental Services at Bath City Council from 1980 to 1991. While at Bath he was instrumental in establishing the English Historic Towns Forum of which he is now an Honorary Life Member.

In 1999 he was appointed one of the founding Commissioners on CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment).

Professor Sparks was appointed a Commissioner of English Heritage in 2001, and is the Regional Commissioner for the East Midlands. He chaired the former Advisory Committee on the Historic Built Environment (HBEAC) 2002-03, and is Deputy Chairman of the English Heritage Advisory Committee (EHAC). He has been Chairman from 2003 of the CABE English Heritage Urban Panel, and a member since it was set up in January 2000 by English Heritage to advise on major development issues in historic towns and cities.

He chaired the Expert Panel on Historic Buildings and Land for the Heritage Lottery Fund from 1999 to 2001. He acts as a specialist adviser to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Crown Estates Commissioners, and Nottingham City Council.

Professor Sparks was appointed to the Ministry of Defence Historic Buildings Advisory Group in 1994. Since 1999 he has been a Visiting Professor at the University of West of England, Bristol, where he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Design.

He is a patron of the Urban Design Group and was formerly on the Steering Committee of the Urban Villages Forum. He is a Trustee of Birmingham Conservation Trust and has been a board member of Groundwork Birmingham. He worked part time as a planning inspector from 1999 to 2002, and is a consultant with planning consultants Terence O'Rourke plc.

Professor Sparks has served on various Government steering groups, on working groups of the Urban Task Force and the Urban Green Spaces Task Force, and on the Urban Capacity Group of the UK Round Table on Sustainability.

He was on the Demos/Comedia 'Richness of Cities' project team and was a member of the URBED/ DTLR team managing the Towns and Cities: Partners in Urban Renaissance Programme.

He was a specialist member of the Beacon Councils Advisory Committee Round 4, and was a member of the DCMS Steering Group

reviewing designation and management regimes for the historic environment.

In his professional career Professor Sparks has specialised in urban design and conservation and was awarded the OBE in 1997 for his services to Urban Regeneration.

With his skills and experience, Professor Sparks will be able to add considerable strength and influence to the work of the group. It is also considered that the nomination of an independent Chairman will enhance the value of the group in representing the interests of the WHS.

5.0 BACKGROUND

5.1 The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site is of value and benefit to all residents, as well as visitors to the Borough.

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

6.1 The protection and conservation of the WHS built and natural environment is consistent with the Council's environmental priorities.

7.0 LEGAL COMMENT

7.1 There are no legal implications.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The administration of the Strategy Group is funded from existing revenue budgets.

9.0 OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

9.1 The introduction of an independent and well qualified chairman to the WHS Strategy Group is likely to improve its ability to promote and attract support for the protection, conservation and management of the WHS.

10. WARD IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The WHS has an impact on all residents in all wards, especially the wards of the Gorge and Madeley.

11.0 LINKS WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

11.1 The protection and conservation of the WHS contributes towards the Council's corporate ambitions and supports the Council's environmental and economic priorities.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None.

Report prepared by Michael Barker, Head of Planning & Transport