

Elan Links

Interpretation Strategy and Activity Plan

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1. Elan Links: people, nature and water

The Elan Links: People, Nature & Water Partnership is made up of a group of organisations whose role will be to deliver the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership funded project. The project reach extends beyond the estate boundary and the structure of the partnership reflects this.

The Elan Links: People, Nature & Water Landscape Partnership project aims to:

- Create opportunities for community participation through a range of projects and activities;
- Conserve and enhance the natural and built heritage;
- Provide opportunities to learn heritage skills;
- Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special landscape qualities of the area by the public.

The Partnership also aims to:

- Strengthen the partnership between local residents, farmers, businesses and visitors by enabling them to work together to understand, share and appreciate the unique historic landscape of the area and through that safeguarding its future;
- Interpret the story of how Elan was flooded to provide the city of Birmingham with clean water;
- Provide an opportunity for local young people to develop skills and experience in the local area which will keep the young people in the area;
- Inspire people to enjoy, understand and care about the local heritage and history which will enable the project to have a successful legacy.

2. Purpose of this Interpretation Strategy

This strategy provides a joined up overview of the interpretation plan for the proposed Elan Links project. It takes into account, a range of interpretation from across the project and presents it as a coherent, strategic plan for the five years of activity.

This document is intended as a reference and guide for individuals, businesses, community groups, partner organisations and consultants engaged in the development and delivery of the Elan Links project.

This strategy focuses on the following:

1. Setting out strategic principles and interpretive aims and objectives
2. Defining the strategic themes and subthemes, and framework
3. An outlined programme
4. A provisional budget for a range of key interpretive tools and mechanisms

What is not referenced in this strategy, because these areas of work are covered in separately within the Elan Links project are:

- Community programme details
- Way-finding and signage
- Marketing, communications and brand management
- Evaluation

3. Development process for this strategy

The following research and consultation process was undertaken to develop this strategy and activity plan.

- Desktop review of research material, project proposals and existing strategic activity including the Audience Development Plan developed for this project.
- Scoping meeting followed by regular discussions and email correspondence with the Elan Links Project Officer
- Consultation meetings with partners including Apt Elan, CARAD and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
- Desk top research towards a creative plan of interpretive activities
- Interim consultation focus group with Elan Links partners
- Detailed progress and creative research and development discussions with key individuals including representatives of Elan Valley Trust, Apt Elan, CARAD, Dwr Cymru Welsh Water and Arts Council of Wales.
- Drafting of final document
- Submission of final document

Documents and programmes within the Elan Links partnership project, that are relevant to this strategy are:

- Elan Links: Audience Development Plan
- Elan Links: Landscape Character Plan
- Elan Valley: Access Plan
- Woodland conservation plan
- HLF Interpretation: Good Practice Guide
- HLF Access Policy
- HLF Guidance, Incorporating Welsh Language into your project

Documents that compliment this strategy, and are part of the Elan Links HLF programme of work are:

- Elan Links Way-finding and Signage Plan
- Elan Links Evaluation Strategy and Plan
- Elan Links Community Programme

4. Interpretation Commitments

In line with the HLF Access Policy and the HLF Interpretation Good Practice Guide, this strategy commits to:

- Promote Elan's heritage for everyone by making it's heritage activity accessible and enjoyable for people from all backgrounds
- Increasing opportunities for individual and community engagement with Elan's culture and heritage, especially in decision-making that affects the heritage
- Develop interpretation that celebrates the diversity of UK communities and reflects our shared multicultural heritage;
- Remove barriers that prevent engagement with Elan's heritage, whether that may be physical, sensory, intellectual, cultural, organisational or economic, especially for underrepresented, excluded, or disadvantaged groups;

5. Interpretation aims and approach

The Elan Links Interpretation Strategy takes a visitor centric approach, meaning it places the visitor at it's heart. Interpretation, in this context is about providing vehicles to explain or enable learning and meaning-making about the heritage and culture of the Elan Valley, surrounding area and water supply to Birmingham. It aims to enable a diverse range of views to be presented and represented, including those of the participating and visiting public. This interpretation strategy will enhance the visit or participation of the visitor to support the key Heritage Lottery Living Landscapes fund aim of *enabling people to learn about heritage; people to have an enjoyable experience; and, widen the range of people that engage with heritage.*

To meet the overall Elan Links project aims, the following aims for interpretation have been identified:

- Develop a scheme of best practice and creative interpretation tools that present the Elan Links Project key messages to Elan's public and target audiences
- Create a programme of stimulating and educational activities that actively engage audiences in Elan's rich heritage and biodiversity
- Provide opportunities for the public to engage in debate and discussion around Elan, it's heritage and it's future
- Create interpretation that is sensitive to Elan's landscape and provide guidance of how visitors can do this too.
- Use creative interpretation to remove access barriers, and welcome people from all backgrounds
- Use digital interpretation to connect with a local, national and international audience

6. Partners and stakeholders

Elan Links is a partnership and the following partners will actively contribute to or lead interpretation activities as part of this project. Representatives of these partners have been consulted as part of the research process for this strategy.

- Apt Elan
- Cannon Hill Visitor Centre
- CARAD
- Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (Elan Valley Visitor Centre)
- Elan Valley Trust
- Natural Resources Wales
- Tir Coed

Elan Links, project stakeholders:

- Local residents and communities (Elan, Rhayader, Llanwrthal, Nantmel)
- Rhayader 2000
- Royal Commission of Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales
- RSPB
- CADW
- Arts Council Wales
- Woodland Trust
- PONT
- Powys County Council
- Ceredigion County Council
- Powys Ramblers
- British Horse Society
- Rhayader Town Council
- The Arches (volunteering hub)
- Powys Association Of Voluntary Organisations

Organisations and partners identified for potential invited participation

- Dawns Powys Dance
- Ikon Gallery

- Mac Art Centre
- Play Radnor
- Local schools, colleges and education organisations (Mid Wales and Birmingham)
- Welsh and Birmingham Higher Education Sector

7. Strategic context

The Elan Links: People, Nature & Water Access Plan has identified how the project will help to meet the aims of:

- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 by promoting open access
- The Equality Act 2010 by meeting a range of requirements relating to physical, social, cultural and intellectual access
- Partnership for Growth 2103-2020
- Sustainable Tourism – a framework for Wales
- Museum Strategy for Wales (until new strategy launch)
- Rural Development Plan 2013 -2020

Local

- One Powys Plan
- Rhayader Town Council – Town Development Plan

8. Key sites for interpretation

Sites identified for interpretation are:

1. Elan Valley Visitor Centre and immediate surrounding area
2. Elan Valley Estate within easy walking distance from the Visitor Centre
3. The wider Elan Estate including:
 - Dolymynach , half built dam
 - Nant-y-Gro dam site
 - World War 2 pill-box site

- Esgair y Tŷ, medieval rabbit farming complex
 - Esgair Perfedd, Roman-camp site
 - Cwm Elan mine
 - Areas covered by walking and cycling trails
 - Claerwen dam
4. CARAD Museum and Gallery, Rhayader
 5. Rhayader town area including selected buildings, shops, businesses and public spaces.
 6. Cannon Hill Visitor Centre
 7. Elan Valley Model at Cannon Hill Park
 8. Schools and community spaces in the Elan and Rhayader area, the geographical area along the Elan – Frankly pipeline, and areas of Birmingham that receive Elan water.
 9. Online and digital space.

9. Audience Development

The Audience Development Plan researched and developed specifically for the Elan Links partnership, identifies target audiences as; current users, new audiences and under-represented groups. Interpretation will be designed to attract and engage target audiences. Interpretive experiences should be connected and this is addressed later in this document, where themes and sub themes along with some specific activities have been identified to focus interpretation and to ensure a range of interpretive tools are available to visitors, so as to increase access and provide visitor led routes into culture and heritage engagement. Within this approach these key models of strategic audience focus are suggested:

- Outreach may require taking active, hands- on interpretation programmes ‘out’ to the target audience, both locally in Mid Wales and in the Birmingham areas, particularly for new and under-represented audiences
- Local mid Wales audiences may have a special relationship with the Elan landscape and the interpretation should offer opportunities to represent this audience and their views, and to develop rich, long-lasting relationships.
- Accessibility should be championed through good, well planned and well designed interpretation to ensure that physical, social, economical and intellectual barriers are removed as much as possible.

The table below identifies visitors that are included within these wide definitions and interpretive strategies for attracting these groups.

9.1. Current users

Audience type	Description and interests	Suggested interpretation tools
Local residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of pride and ownership • Concern for heritage, culture and wildlife • Regular visits for enjoyment and leisure • Some non-users • Sustaining the peaceful location • Great wealth of local knowledge • Oral histories and storytelling • Local economy • Weekend family activities • Young people • Sense of ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participative arts and heritage workshops • Residency Programme public activities • Changing exhibitions and displays • Family focussed activities • Family festivals • Outreach activities • Opportunity to share ideas, knowledge and skills • Community focused events • Extended programming (more than one or two sessions) • Digital engagement • Deeper culture and heritage experience • Visual links to other local activities, clubs or economy. •
Short distance walkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor experiences • Easy walks with access to view and nature • Sometime unconfident and not highly equipped • Families • City day-trippers • Older people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible trails • Quick and easy access to views and nature • Family trails • Build confidence in the outdoors • Supported play activities • Social interpretation • Educational activities for children • Interpretative rest or picnic places
Active walkers/cyclists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident users • Lone or group visits • Local audiences • Often well equipped • Range of abilities • Families • Often repeat visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails with heritage focus • Digital interpretation • Rest places or picnic spots • Wild landscape • Planning facilities at Visitor Centre • Opportunities to engage digitally, prior or post visit. • Digital communities • Outreach to new audiences in Birmingham
Passive users of facilities in Elan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach trippers • Car riders • Local visitors • Less mobile visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibitions and displays at Visitor Centre • Digital interpretation • Quick stop interpretation at key sites • Interpretation that offers new experiences
Educational groups, school trips including	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and learning • Creative education • National curriculum syllabus • Visiting in large groups • Local schools have very limited access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pond dipping • Woodland activities • Engineering activities • Curriculum led activities • Group activities

foreign students visiting to UK	<p>to other cultural venues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under and post graduate learning opportunities • Want to participate, not only a passive learning experience • Overnight group visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails and picnic spots • Visits to key sites • Digital interpretation • Planning and post visit activities • Displays with academic level content • Costumed interpreters • Story telling • Opportunities to display project work • Overnight stays • Dark skies activities • Survival activities • Orienteering and wilderness walks
Coach trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May include international visitors • Visitors on day trips from urban areas • Large school groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibitions and displays at Visitor Centre • Digital interpretation • Quick stop interpretation at key sites • Interpretation that offers new experiences • Art, craft and design • Short walks near to visitor centre • Planned talks or guided tours
Local interest groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing clubs and groups • E.g., nature, wildlife, arts, heritage, motoring, engineering, cycling, walking, young people, digital. • Regular visitors, sometimes even weekly or daily • Some groups rarely or never visit • Sense of pride and ownership • Excellent knowledge of the landscape • Specialist knowledge • Deep personal experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to exhibit work in exhibitions • Residency programme – socially engaged practice and public programme • Invitations to contribute to programmes • Digital interpretation • Invitation to contribute to interpretation • Changing displays about their interests • Deeper engagement in heritage and culture • Best practice community building activities
UK interest groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E.g., nature, wildlife, arts, heritage, motoring, engineering, cycling, walking, young people, digital. • Occasional planned visits • Specialist knowledge • Annual or bi-annual visits • Deep personal experiences • Travel substantial distances • Social groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special display content • Changing displays • Contributing to programmes • Special themed activities • Specialist workshops • Guided walks and tours • Residency contribution opportunities • Digital
Artists and photographers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special relationship with the landscape, nature and built environment • Local, national and international • Possibly very regular visitors • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residency Programme and associated activities • Art, craft, design workshops • Displays and exhibitions • Installations • Live debate, discussion, seminars • Dark Skies • Continuous professional development

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital engagement
Event attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist knowledge • Interest in heritage, culture, science and / or arts. • Interest in sport or leisure activities • Open to deeper learning experiences • Enthusiastic and already committed to engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festivals • Events such as Dark Skies • Guided talks, walks, cycles or rides. • Competitions • Digital and social media • Indoor and outdoor activities • Programmes for accompanying family members • Exhibitions and displays • Sensory activities such as local food experiences

9.2 New audiences

Audience type	Interests	Suggested interpretation tools
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social activities for all of the family including extended members and intergenerational. • Children of varying ages • May need guidance and encouragement to explore • Learning through play • Teenagers can be hard to engaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible trails and paths of variable lengths and safe from major risks (not too close to cliff or reservoir edges for example) • Educational (explorer) activities • Forest education • Natural play and creative learning (constructive learning activities) • Pond dipping and insect identifying • Soft play • Interpretive toys • Wet weather options • Curriculum relevant outdoor activities • Digital and social media • Good planning resources on the website • Quick access to the landscape • Activities that encourage constructive play between generations • Activities aimed at teenagers (digital for example) • Family festivals • Planned rest areas or picnic spots • Natural fun trails • Making and doing activities • Participative activities • Story-telling
Older people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyment the landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral history activities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in heritage and culture • Can be knowledgeable • Keepers of intangible heritage • May be less mobile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displays and exhibitions • Arts, crafts, food and sensory activities • Social programmes • Opportunities to tell their stories, and share their experiences through films and displays • Residency programme activities and socially engaged practice • Social media and digital
Visitors to Rhayader and visitors from Birmingham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyment of the landscape • May be in groups or families • Special interest groups • Holiday makers, day-trippers and weekend trippers • Multi-ethnic • Possibly less confident and ill equipped 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varying trails and routes • Presenting links between Elan and the urban environment • Good picnic and rest areas • Clear route markers • Exhibitions and displays • Family activities • Wet weather activities • Support in learning about the landscape
Hard to reach groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teenagers • Socially and economically excluded groups • Need fun, relevant and often free activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach programmes • Supported transport • Digital innovation activities • Creative and forest learning activities • Youth led programmes • Organised activities with existing community organisations • Urban culture activities • Residency programme and socially engaged practice activities
Disabled people and those with access needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality accessible interpretation • Easy access to nature and landscape • Ease of trying new things • Welcoming atmosphere • Independent mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large print text in displays • Accessible display interactive • Rest places and easy-rise seating • Digital and social media • Sensory activities and trails • Films and audio guides • Physically accessible trails and routes • Physically accessible guided tours
National cycle network users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed and experienced cyclists • Specialist interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good trails and paths with heritage interpretation on route • Digital and social media • Exhibitions and displays • Specialist events and festivals
Equestrians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed and experienced riders • Specialist interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good trails and paths with heritage interpretation on route • Digital and social media • Exhibitions and displays • Specialist events and festivals

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning online
Visitors who pass through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach trippers • Car riders • Local visitors • Less mobile visitors • Local, national and international • Could be repeat visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibitions and displays at Visitor Centre • Digital interpretation • Quick stop interpretation at key sites • Interpretation that offers new experiences • Encouragement to stay for longer
Wales and UK urban dwellers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyment of the landscape • May be in groups or families • Special interest groups • Day-trippers and weekend trippers • Multi-ethnic • Possibly less confident and ill equipped 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varying trails and routes • Presenting links between Elan and the urban environment • Good picnic and rest areas • Clear route markers • Exhibitions and displays • Family activities

9.3 Under-represented groups:

Audience type	Interests	Suggested interpretation tools
Disabled groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality accessible interpretation • Easy access to nature and landscape • Ease of trying new things • Welcoming atmosphere <p>Independent mobility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large print text in displays • Accessible display interactive • Rest places and easy-rise seating • Digital and social media • Sensory activities and trails • Films and audio guides • Physically accessible trails and routes <p>Physically accessible guided tours</p>
Welsh and other language speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly believe in being able to experience services in Welsh when in Wales. • Other language speakers feel welcomed by seeing their own language • These audiences include tourists, particularly Asian language speakers • International tourists have made a clear decision to visit Wales and the Elan Valley • Diverse under-represented audiences from urban areas may also be second-language English • Refugee communities feel especially welcome when seeing their native language in the UK, some refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All text interpretation is presented in both Welsh and English language • Presenting key words or phrases in a variety of languages and graphics • Online films and transcripts are made available online so they can be translated through Google Translate. • Programmes such as tours and tours for specific groups with language translation. • Trails to be in key languages to attract target audiences • Trail instructions to be available in target audience languages

	<p>don't speak English or Welsh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh language speakers may feel passionately about access to Welsh cultural and may have specialist knowledge. 	
Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often have specialist interest • May belong to other community groups (sport for example) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing relevant activities • Targeted activities to engage men (cycling, motoring, engineering, farming, servicemen for example) • Outreach with specific community groups (through the Army or Air-force for example) • Residency Programme, particularly through socially engaged practice arts. • Activities for children and fathers
Unemployed people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to participate due to travel and economic factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach through existing local community groups • Through volunteering programmes • Active outreach festival programmes in areas of high unemployment or low socio-economic circumstances. • Digital can be inaccessible
Children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teenagers can be hard to reach • Visit with youth groups and clubs • Visit with families and intergenerational groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family activities • Engage local youth groups • Digital and social media • Residency Programme activities • Outreach programmes • Youth festivals • Youth forums • Forest and creative education
NEETS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking for opportunities to improve employability • May need confidence, skills and communications development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer programmes • Skills development activities such as forest education and creative learning • Digital interpretation • Longer term programmes to develop young people over time
Ethnic minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate a range of religious and cultural festivals that may not fall within the usual UK holiday programme, Diwali, Eid, Chinese New Year for example. • Often visit in family groups • Need to feel a sense of ownership • More likely to be urban dwellers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic diversity to be well represented in digital interpretation, especially images of visitors • Digital and social media • Programmes that could be presented as wider cultural holiday activities (Diwali for example) • Intergenerational and accessible family activities • Festivals • Outreach programmes targeting

		Birmingham's multi-ethnic areas
People without private transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be self sufficient once arrived • Need to be able to plan their arrivals, departures and activities in advance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach activities • Festivals • Online planning information • Digital and social media • Digital links to public transport and local facilities

9.4 Prioritising the Target Audiences

The proposed priority target audiences to be connected with the Elan Links project are listed here. These priority audiences have been identified in the Audience Development Plan which sites that this is where the audience development effort should be focussed. These priorities will be reviewed during the progress of the Scheme.

The target audiences that have been identified are categorised as follows:

1. Visitors
 - Birmingham, because of the connection with their water
 - General visitors
 - Visitors already in the area within 1 hour's drive (Aberystwyth data)
 - Visitors coming for a specific activity (1 of the targeted activity groups)
2. Harder to reach groups
 - Groups in the local area
 - Groups in Birmingham
3. People living and working in the area
4. Volunteers
5. Training participants

10. Learning

Learning is a key output of successful interpretation. Creative and forest learning is core to the Elan Links project, and the interpretation scheme supports this. The following learning models underpin interpretation schemes in an informal heritage or museum environment where visitors engage often in social groups or through other activities (walking trails for example). Elan Links interpretation will use the McCarhty and

Leflar model of different learning styles and constructive learning theory for museums (Hooper-Greenhill 1994).

10.1 Learning Styles

The interpretation scheme will be designed to appeal to four identified learning styles, that link learning to *prior knowledge* (McCarthy and Leflar, 1983), see appendix B:

Experiential:	learn by imaginative trial and error
Imaginative:	learn by listening and sharing ideas, and prefer interpretation that encourages social interaction
Analytical:	prefer interpretation that provides facts and sequential ideas
Common sense:	like to try out theories and discover things for themselves

10.2 Prior knowledge and hermeneutics

All visitors who visit or engage with Elan, have varying levels of prior knowledge and interpretation, both on-site and digital needs to acknowledge this. Some visitors have little knowledge of the ideas and messages being presented to them, while others are experts, and may have well-developed views or first hand experience.

Content will be presented or represented in an inclusive manor, suitable for a wide range of people, with different levels of prior knowledge. This is particularly important where text is used, and that the style of text used is informative and sensitive to the *existing knowledge* of different and often diverse audiences.

Language style should be clear, informative and warm, while being accessible and impartial. Language should not avoid the use of more intellectual terminology, but explain the meaning of terms or concepts. Elan Links interpretation aims to develop the knowledge of individuals, and enable personal learning and new meaning-making to take place. The intention is that new knowledge may then be put into practice in the landscape to reaffirm the learning through *doing* and embed that knowledge. This model of learning is known as hermeneutics or *constructive learning*.

Content will consider different views of diverse audiences and will sometimes present contested histories or challenging debates. Such debate will not be avoided but embraced and opportunities for such different views to be openly discussed will be encouraged. It is best practice to present different views from a neutral ground. The Interpretation Activity Plan identifies which interpretive tools support the different learning

styles and can be used as an aid when planning to use a number of different tools together so as to develop interpretation that works for a range of learners, for example in an exhibition or festival.

11. Removing barriers to heritage and culture

It is imperative that the interpretation tools developed to present the Elan Link's heritage represents diverse audiences and is actively inclusive, removing barriers to make this heritage more accessible to a greater number and more diverse range of people. This is a key aim of the Elan Links project. The interpretive tools proposed engage a range of interpretation styles to help remove barriers. HLF says that barriers might be:

- Physical
- Emotional and sensory
- Cultural
- Financial
- Organisational
- Intellectual
- Socio-economic

Some interpretation tools will be designed to actively target particular communities or audience groups.

These groups include families, audiences from diverse backgrounds (including BAME), lower socio-economic audiences, school groups, visitors from Birmingham and the community who live locally to Elan, Rhayader, Llanwrthal and surrounding areas.

All text material used in Wales will be produced in both English and Welsh Language in line with HLF Welsh Language policy. Some specifically identified text may also be produced in a variety of languages to help attract specific communities or remove cultural barriers to access. This will be particularly important to the interpretation presented in Birmingham that has one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse populations in the World

12. Messages, themes and narratives

The Elan Links partnership has identified four key messages, along with a number of themes and a wide selection of narratives that will be the overall focus the Elan Links Interpretation Scheme. Adopting these messages will ensure that the scheme is joined up and is delivered seamlessly.

12.1 The four key messages are:

- Elan is about people: built heritage, people's history and future, learning, community, phenomenology, the human condition
- Nature delivers: fitness, wellbeing, health, inspiration, education, science, arts, economy, society
- Water is a valuable and powerful natural resource: health, sanitation, industry, economy, wealth, global warming, ecosystems
- Elan is a special place for everyone: enjoyment, landscape, community, ecosystems, geology and geomorphology, leisure

12.2 Five Themes for Five Years

A five-year programme of annual themes is proposed to deliver the key messages through innovative interpretation. These five over-arching themes are suggested to ensure that the interpretation is developed within a coherent and manageable format, while offering greater impact to the public and value for money.

The structure of the themed programme will enable good joined up working and support partners in delivering the key messages listed above. Partner organisations will develop activities within the five themes and using this interpretation strategy and framework as a guide and using the sub-themes and narratives to develop high quality activity for a range of audiences. An initial *Activity Plan* has been put together in consultation with Elan Links partners, and will be further developed as part of each organisation's core programmes. This programme (Appendix A) will be revisited throughout the scheme and changes or amendments are likely as the project partners reflect on the on-going success of the scheme

The five themes interpret the key areas of activity within the Elan Links project and are strategically programmed to:

1. **Introduce** the project to the public
2. **Generate** interest and attract audiences
3. **Facilitate** active visitor participation in heritage and culture
4. **Stimulate** learning in heritage and culture
5. **Sustain** audiences
6. **Attract** repeat visits

Some interpretation will be fixed so support a long-term physical legacy, while other aspects will concentrate on developing best practice participative and dynamic interpretation that will provide an audience and

volunteer legacy, along with strengthening partnerships and building a vibrant and active community for the future.

The suggested themes are:

Year 1: Setting The Scene

Presenting the importance of the Elan site and relationship to it's associated communities. This narrative will explore the history of the Elan area, it's role in providing water to Birmingham and what this means, and it's importance as a habitat to a special ecosystem and how these depend on one another. It will also present the Elan Links project and the complex work that will take part over the next five years and beyond.

Year 2: Conserving Elan's Natural Landscape:

With a strong focus on the project work that is taking place towards conserving Elan's woodland and grassland, and the discourse that sits within this (science, biodiversity, farming, water, awe and wonder, nature-tourism). It is important to communicate why the conservation work is important towards sustaining this delicate eco-system.

Year 3: Elan's Human Heritage:

Presenting a narrative around the work happening to restore Elan's built environment and explore how Human's have lived and worked in Elan for thousands of years, and how the landscape has, and continues to be shaped by our activity.

Year 4: Capture Elan:

This theme invites the visitor to be the main author and invites a democratic approach to telling the story of how people interact with Elan now. Visitors are invited to contribute their own interpretations both historic and contemporary, including science, art, design, media, digital, film, food, memories and ideas. It is intended to facilitate connections and debate between Elan's broad and diverse audiences

Year 5: Elan's Future

Facilitating discourse around the future of Elan, the future of water, the future of people, but particularly around sustainability, and responsible use of the world's resources.

12.3 Sub-themes

Within the five key themes will sit further sub- themes that will consistently run throughout the programme. Present under each of the five key themes, and integral to the overarching heritage of the Elan Links partnership, these sub-themes for interpretation are:

A. People: Elan has a rich history of human activity. This theme explores of a sense of place, from diverse perspectives, exploring different histories and futures.

1. **Pre-historic and ancient heritage:** Woodland clearing, a network of hilltop pathways and numerous stone- works and earthworks on the Elan estate and surrounding areas are the legacy of this historic age.
2. **Classical and Middle Ages:** Evidence of Roman History can be found at Elan (Roman camp at Esgair Perfedd) and around Rhayader (jewellery at British Museum). There are good records of industrious medieval activity including farming and cottage industries and land management by monks at Strata Florida. Markings on the landscape from this period include a rabbit-farming complex.
3. **The age of discovery at Elan:** an exploration of science, arts and industry in the modern period has had a lasting impact on Elan’s landscape, including mining, farming methods, education, economy, religion, folk-law, medicine, artistry, and the building of the dams. The enlightenment and industrial ages had huge effect on people in the Elan, Rhayader and Birmingham areas, providing clean water to Birmingham, connecting Elan and Rhayader to the World by rail, making many people homeless and unemployed, and others rich.
4. **A built environment:** From standing stones, roman forts, stone-age pathways, Victorian engineering and 20th century to World War pill box shelters, there is a surprising array of historical buildings and monuments created by humans on the Elan Estate, Rhayader and area.
5. **Elan and health.** There is a huge range of fun and enjoyable outdoor activities to do in Elan, from walking, cycling, bird-watching, photography, horse riding, playing, foraging, orienteering and cycling and much more, all which can help us enjoy a healthy lifestyle, both physically, emotionally and mentally. Elan has impacted on the health of our nation since 1901.
6. **Farming Elan:** exploring farming business and practices on the estate, past, present and future
7. **Love Elan:** Visitors enjoy Elan in personal and individual ways.
8. **Elan welcomes everyone:** get outside and explore Elan and the surrounding area. There is something here for everyone.
9. **Elan inspires:** artists, designers, makers and wordsmiths are inspired by Elan. Elan is explored through creative practice now and through history.

10. **Elan, memory and exchange** – Exploring Elan through its rich intangible history. Presenting an emotional, sensory and intellectual exploration of Elan
11. **Sustainability:** environmental, organisational, economically, preparing for the future.
12. **Elan and space:** art and science exploration of space from Elan.

B. Water

1. **Water is incredibly valuable.** Elan's water that has directly enabled our society to develop in the C20th by improving health and sanitation in Birmingham, and supplying industry, (value, materiality, health, sanitation, economic development).
2. **Building the Elan reservoir and Birmingham water supply network was a huge, and very modern engineering project.** One of the World's biggest at the time of construction and includes the railways, dams, two treatment works (Elan and Frankly), roads, village, workers accommodation, power supplies, pipeline, distribution networks, waste and sewers and water cleaning works. A huge amount of money, resources, creativity and people to realise this enormous project.
3. **Clean water enables social and economic development.** Only a very small percentage of the World's population has running water and sanitation in their homes. At Elan, water's abundance has prevented industrialised farming techniques and currently supports diversified farming methods and businesses.
4. **Water is powerful.** As well as supporting a rich biodiversity and the health of a population, water holds power during times of conflict. Damage to a water supply can be devastating for those dependent on it, or living nearby.
5. **Water supports Elan's delicate and rare ecosystem.** A rather special, species rich biodiversity exists in Elan that depends on the very wet environment. It is this ecosystem that makes the landscape so special, but it needs to be cared for to enable it to thrive and survive.
6. **What is water?:** Exploring the meaning of water to people and nature, in the past, present and future.

C. Nature

7. **Elan's rich biodiversity:** exploring the special natural environment of Elan
8. **Extra special species:** presenting the rare and unusual species that are specific to Elan (for example. lichen, fungi, birds, insects) and why they exist here.

9. **Elan’s geomorphology has been shaped by water in various states.** The plateau holds vast amounts of water in it’s bogs and ground water reserves, keeping water flowing all year round. The wide glacial valleys carved into in-perm able Cambrian rock, with occasional narrow gorges that are dammed, enable water to be contained in the series of reservoirs.
10. **Nature for learning:** use nature to learn, from kids to post doctoral research.
11. **Elan is a living site for research site:** Science and art research happens here and who knows what might be discovered at Elan or what the landscape and it’s people might inspire.
12. **Looking up:** Beyond our world is for us to explore....

Within these agreed themes partner organisations will lead the creative development of activities to suit their organisational remit and also their joint target audiences.

13. Interpretation principles

Interpretation for the Elan Links project will communicate, engage and provide learning and meaning-making opportunities for audiences identified in the Elan Links Audience Development Plan. This interpretation scheme will enable audiences to better understand, learn or think about their experiences and the Elan landscape in a considered and well-informed manor, while having fun, enjoying the estate or engaging in the community programme, both on site, within the activities of the partner organisations, or digitally.

13.1 Good interpretation should:

- Provoke imagination, interests and / or concerns of the visitor / participant
- Be relevant, or relate to people’s own life experiences
- Reveal complex and often abstract ideas and concepts through accessible means
- Present a ‘whole story’ through the use of unifying themes
- Provide opportunities for the public to democratically contribute
- Be accessible and fun

13.2 Interpretation can support a variety of activity and roles including:

A. Learning and education

- Presenting specific themes / messages to visitors
- Actively engage an audience in the discourse around a place

- Stimulating interest and learning in a subject or place
- Explaining the role and associated activities of a site to visitors
- Create opportunities for learning and skills development

B. Visitor engagement and participation

- Support enjoyment of a site
- Provide opportunities for people to actively engage in and contribute to interpretive themes and discussion
- Provide a recreational product or experience
- Encourage constructive behavior to protect site resources

C. Economic and audience development

- Attract new and repeat visitors to a site or area
- Encourage spending and generate employment
- Support a brand image for a site or area
- Develop skills and employment pathways

D. Community involvement

- Recruit volunteers
- Develop a conscious community and sense of ownership
- Enable diverse communities to have a voice
- Involve people in the management of the site

13.3 Interpretation tools

Interpretation tools activities or resources that enables a visitor to engage with a narrative or theme that is being presented. .

13.4 Best Practice Interpretation

For the purpose of this project the following best practice principles are advised for the interpretive scheme:

A. Learning and participation

This scheme has a strong focus on learning and participation through its interpretation programme, largely due to the desired outcome for key target audiences being around increasing awareness, developing knowledge and generating skills. The majority of the interpretive scheme has learning at its heart, and actively promotes participatory interpretation, whether that be physically participative fixed interpretation, printed trails that take visitors on guided walks or programmed activities.

Learning activities should be fun and sociable, whether for formal learners or leisure-time visitors. Visitors tend to explore interpretive devices in pairs or groups so should be designed to facilitate this. Family activities should encourage group participation, interactive play, develop imagination and creative or forest learning.

B. Layered interpretation

It is good practice for interpretation to take a layered approach and support a range of learning and participatory styles. Some visitors will not engage at all with formal interpretive tools, others will enjoy a deep engagement and interaction with the interpretation and learning tools provided. The interpretation tools identified for this project are largely targeted at specific audiences in response to the Elan Links Access Plan and Audience Development Plan rather than taking a blanket approach to audience development.

C. Visitor-centric approach

Placing the visitor at the centre of the interpretation development, responding to research and refining activities to the need of the visitor. Actively engaging a wide and diverse range of audiences through creative and relevant programming, and representing diverse views and opinions. Interpretative tools will be accessible and aim to remove the barriers to heritage engagement outlined in section 11 of this strategy, *Removing barriers to heritage and culture*.

D. Language, text and graphics

For this project, all interpretation will be produced in both English and Welsh language within Wales. Online media will provide transcripts in English and Welsh, plus subtitles in either language. There are opportunities for some interpretation to be produced in further languages to help remove cultural barriers and build a diverse and multicultural audience. The interpretation at the various sites will consist of a text hierarchy, which will need to have consistency throughout the various displays and be able to deal with different ways

of exploring and interpreting material culture and supporting well designed and contemporary style graphics. A wider range of informative content and complex debate within the themes addressed.

E. Planning

The quality and presentation of interpretation materials will be complex to manage over a number of sites and through partnership working, but must be consistent in style and language, incorporate the agreed branded Elan Links project graphics. There will be a range of interpretive devices, tools and participatory programmes developed which will interpret activity over the whole Elan Links project through a coherent and planned programme of five themed years. This programme will include walking trails, fixed text and graphic interpretation, digital devices, creative learning activities, interactive tools and participatory programmes. Some methods will be repeated throughout the five-year programme, and some activities will be developed with a legacy beyond this project in mind.

F. Location and sensitivity to landscape

Interpretation tools and devices should be placed close to the subject matter they are interpreting, potentially as an integrated part of the display, building or landscape.

Outdoor fixed interpretation should aim to be sensitive to the landscape and designed and made using sustainable materials that complement their site surroundings. While outdoor fixed interpretation should be easy to locate for visitors, it should be positioned discreetly. Some sites are not suitable for fixed interpretation. In these locations, digital interpretation may be more suitable.

G. Digital

Digital interpretation, for some outdoor sites will be used rather than fixed interpretation to reduce impact on the landscape being interpreted. Digital interpretation via the web has an international reach so has the ability to engage audiences across the World especially using social media. Digital interpretation will also support audiences in planning visits to Elan, CARAD, Rhyader and Cannon Hill, but will also provide interpretation to be accessed and contributed to away from the physical sites. Some interpretation may be experienced both on site and digitally.

H. Display interpretation

Some devices are a means to provide visitors with further information; even if they are delivered via high-tech media they are not necessarily interactive. However, some low- and high-tech devices are interactive, for example, encouraging learning by asking visitors to apply what they have learnt, such as solving a scientific problem, or identifying a species. Others encourage dialogue between visitors by inviting response or contribution, for example digital photography and film displays through Instagram.

I. Networked spaces

Networked spaces are neutral places where different types of audience can meet to discuss and engage. It may be that staff, professionals, volunteers, visitors and researchers spend time in these places and discuss complex issues, for example in the context of Elan, the debate around re-forestation, re-wilding and farming. These places need to be neutral and debate invited or presented in an accessible format to create agency and helps to develop communities who feel ownership over a place.

14. Interpretation Framework for Elan Links

Interpretation for Elan Links could consist of seven main layers. Each layer provides a different style and *level* of interpretation:

1. **Foundation layer interpretation** – led by the Interpretation Officer and in partnership with key staff at CARAD, Dwr Cymru, Elan Valley Trust and independent visitors to provide key thematic content and research for exhibitions or programme, directing the content and experience for all visitors.
2. **Text and graphic interpretation layer** – fixed permanent text interpretation developed by the Ranger team, experts and relevant editors. The text interpretation is key to providing consistent thematic information to visitors, while also introducing wider interpretation such as graphics and interactive devices. This interpretation includes the graphic text in the exhibitions as well as the text interpretation around the whole estate.
3. **Fixed high-tech and low-tech interpretative devices and tools** – these will be made up of simple mechanical tools such as games and touch objects, films, audio and graphics. These are usually developed with a range of audiences and learning styles in mind.
4. **Live interpretation** – The ranger and volunteer teams are key to the interpretation of the Elan Valley, along with guides, farmers, residents and specialists giving talks and leading events.
5. **Participatory interpretation** – artists, communities and visitors will be invited to contribute to the participatory interpretation through interpretation programmes, digital and onsite activities.
6. **Dynamic interpretation** – a changing programme of interpretation that includes temporary displays and changing educational programmes, artist residencies or activities.
7. **Digital interpretation** – available on digital devices including phones, tablets, home computers and onsite facilities. This content is available internationally.

Elan's community has a rich intangible history, through storytelling, passing down of skills and knowledge through generations and community activity so community and audience participation is appropriate and therefore integral to the framework of the Elan Links interpretation. The learning and community programmes with partners will be crucial to the success of the programme and to engage a wide and diverse audience.

Some aspects of the programme are specifically aimed at developing key audiences or communities. For example, a number of family focused interpretation activities will engage families, encourage social interaction within the groups, and develop a legacy audience for the future, both for Elan Links partners, and for the wider sector. The Residency programme will develop a far-reaching community attracting local and national communities of artists, scientists and engineers, while also specifically targeting local communities to actively participate in Resident led projects.

15. Planning and Management of Interpretation

The Elan Links Project Manager will over see the whole programme that includes the senior level management of Interpretation which will be managed directly by an Interpretation Officer. Interpretation within individual partner organisations will be managed by staff within these organisations, and with support from the Elan Links Interpretation Officer. It is advised that an Interpretation Programme Steering Group will be set up to support this area of work through partnership working. This group will ensure that the interpretation activity across all sites is of the highest possible quality, theoretically robust and that it is being developed on time and to budget and with ample resource. The group, which will meet four times a year will also take a view on the overall content of interpretation and the process by which it may be produced, to ensure that this is achieved using best practice methods and adopting models of working that are visitor focussed and deliver in line with best practice interpretation principles. Interpretive content generated within partner organisation's activities is the responsibility of that individual partner.

16. Activity Plan

A plan of activities with a budget that draws together the interpretation scheme across all of the Elan Links project is presented in Appendix A and has been developed in close consultation with the lead partners for public engagement. The plan outlines proposed activities and a schedule for delivery.

17. Evaluation

In depth evaluation of the Elan Links interpretation scheme will be overseen by the partnership and the Interpretation Steering Group. Effectiveness of the interpretation scheme will be monitored on an on-going basis to measure qualitative and quantitative outputs.

It is advised that the Interpretation Strategy, Action Plan and Budget is revisited by the Partnership on a regular basis and refined to reflect findings from evaluation and research.