

Appendix 8/3: Candidate World Heritage Site Statement of Universal Value

Taken from Gwynedd Council 2019 (23-38)

Brief synthesis

The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales is located in the United Kingdom, in the mountains of Snowdonia. Seven areas together represent an exceptional example of an industrial landscape which was profoundly shaped by quarrying and mining slate, and transporting it for national and international markets. From 1780 to 1940 this industry dominated world production of roofing slates, transforming both the environment and the communities who lived and worked here.

The quarries and mines are monumental in scale, comprising stepped hillside workings, deep pits and cavernous underground chambers, massive cascading tips, ingenious water systems, and a range of industrial buildings. Outstanding technical equipment and major engineering features survive.

This mountainous landscape is close to the sea. Innovative transport systems linked quarries and processing sites with purpose-built coastal export harbours and with main-line railways.

Grand country houses and estates built by leading industrialists contrast with workers' vernacular settlements, with their characteristic chapels and churches, band-rooms, schools, libraries and meeting-places.

Slate from Northwest Wales is light, long-lasting and impermeable. By the late nineteenth century the region produced about a third of world output of roofing slates and architectural slabs. Their use in terraced houses, factories, warehouses and elite architecture contributed to rapid global urbanisation and influenced building style, encouraging the shallow-pitched roofs of the Georgian order.

Technologies that were innovated, adopted and adapted in *The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales* include the ingenious application of waterpower, the development of bulk handling systems and the first known application of the circular saw for cutting stone. These were diffused by specialists, and by emigration of skilled Welsh quarrymen to the developing slate industries of the USA, Germany and Ireland.

Snowdonia's narrow-gauge railway systems gained global influence as their suitability for challenging mountain environments, and for moving compact loads and minerals, meant that they were adopted from Asia and America to Africa and Australasia.

Justification for Criteria

Criterion (ii) – *The Slate Landscape of Northwest*

Wales exhibits an important interchange of human values, particularly in the period from 1780 to 1940, on developments in architecture and technology. Slate has been quarried in the mountains of Northwest Wales since Roman times, but sustained large-scale production from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries dominated the global market as a roofing element. This led to major transcontinental developments in building and architecture.

Technology transfer from *The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales* was fundamental to the development of the slate industry of continental Europe and the USA. Moreover, its narrow gauge railways – that remain in operation under steam today – served as the model for successive developments that contributed substantially to the social and economic development of regions in any other parts of the world.

Criterion (iv) – *The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales* is an outstanding example of a type of landscape that illustrates, in a dramatic way, the 'combined works of nature and of man' through the large-scale exploitation of natural resources.

Massive deposits of high-quality slate defined the principal geological resource of the challenging mountainous terrain of the Snowdonia massif. Their dispersed locations represent concentrated nodes of exploitation and settlement, of sustainable power generated by prolific volumes of water that was harnessed in ingenious ways, and brought into being several innovative and technically advanced railways that made their way to new coastal ports built to serve this transcontinental export trade.

The Property comprises the most exceptional discrete landscapes that, together, illustrate the diverse heritage of a much wider landscape that was created during the profound era of British industrialisation that changed the world.

Criterion (v) – *The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales* is an outstanding example of the industrial transformation of a traditional human settlement and marginal agrarian land-use pattern; it also exemplifies how a remarkably homogeneous minority culture adapted to modernity in the industrial era.

The monumentality of the quarry landscapes is compelling; huge stepped working benches carved from the mountainsides, deep pits and vast tips, and extensive cavernous underground workings. These also indicate the relentless persistence of generations of workers who used their hard-won skill and innovative technology to exploit slate for a global market. Their settlements, created by the industrialists, the workers and their families, retained multiple aspects of the traditional way of life and its strong minority language. They remain a palpable ‘living’ testimony, just like the diminished but proud slate-working tradition, and the railways that once hauled the slate.

Statement of integrity

The Property contains all of the essential elements that convey attributes of Outstanding Universal Value. Its boundaries capture the principal slate-producing areas in Northwest Wales, together with their associated industrial heritage that includes the most significant processing facilities, settlements, transport routes and harbours.

Whilst some elements are at risk from decay and minor neglect, in each case the situation is under control from the point of view of effective legislation and management, with action planned to improve the state of conservation and security. There is no existing or anticipated pressure within the Property from any large-scale developments which will impact on Outstanding Universal Value. There is some local aspiration for renewable energy installations, which can be adequately managed through the planning process.

Statement of Authenticity

The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales is an exceptionally well-preserved cultural landscape that retains an unusually high level of authenticity. Attributes of Outstanding Universal Value are conveyed by physical property that is clearly identified and understood in terms of date, spatial distribution, use and function (including living communities and operational railways), form and design, materials and substance, and their interrelationships including connectivity and overall functional and compositional integrity of the series. The Property further embodies a vibrant cultural tradition, including slate-working skills and the continued widespread use of the Welsh language.

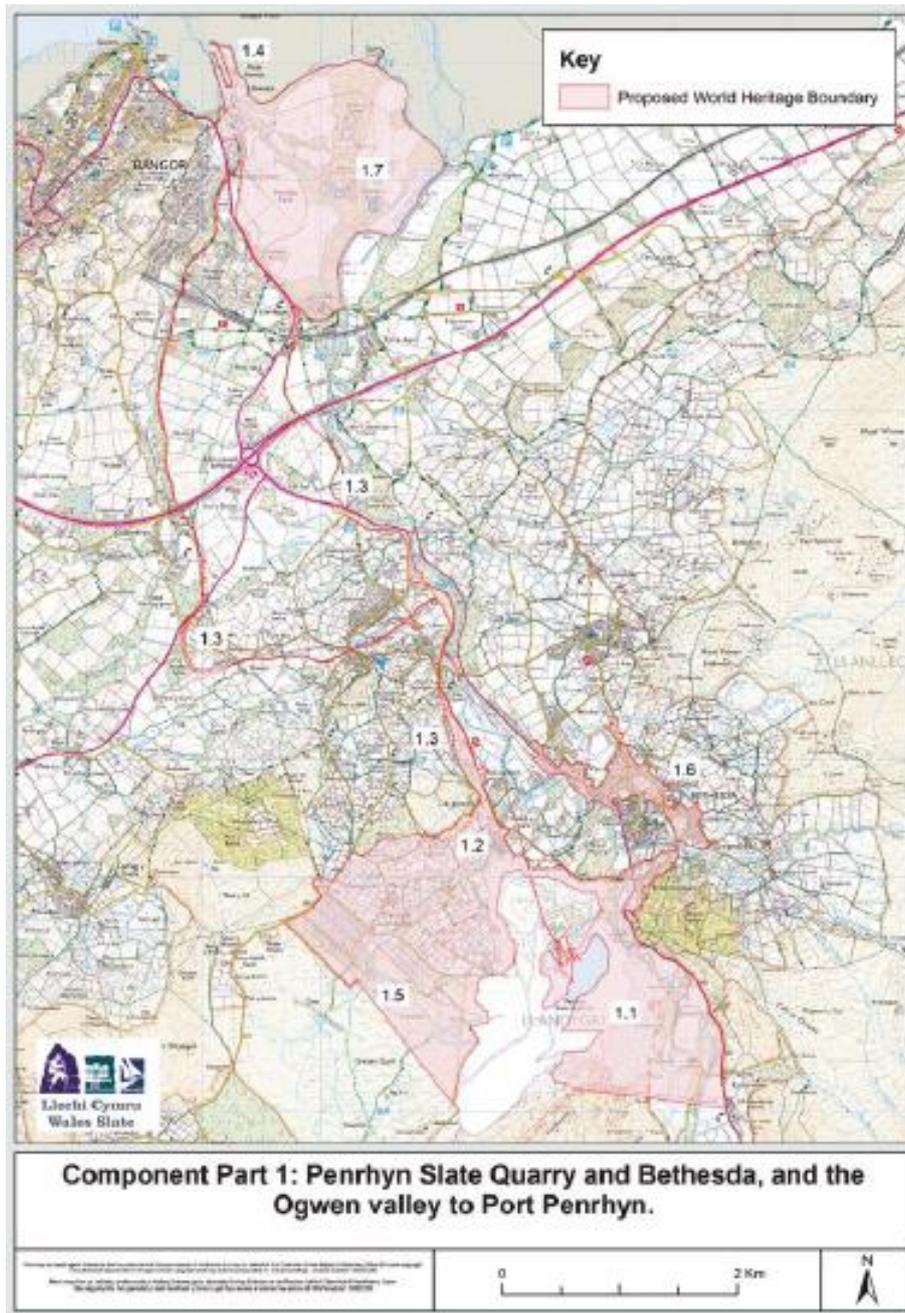
Requirements for protection and management

All stakeholders and managers will sustain the Outstanding Universal Value of the Property through the clear understanding and valuing of its attributes (including the intangible heritage of the Welsh language), in the context of the existing legal protection framework of Wales and the United Kingdom, and through effective, coordinated management. An overall Property Management Plan is complemented by local Conservation Management Plans that relate to specific ownership and management, covering all key areas. Protection is vested in local planning authorities (Gwynedd

Council and the Snowdonia National Park Authority), of which each already has local development plans which set out appropriate policies to manage change.

Buffer zones will be managed under existing systems of landscape protection and will protect important settings and water catchments. Their boundaries have been refined by characterisation studies and by identification of significant views. There are no long-term threats currently known. There is no active quarrying or mining within the Property (no active mineral permissions are included); slate exploitation continues in the Buffer Zone, where it does not negatively impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the Property.

Extract in relation to Component Part 1: Penrhyn Slate quarry and Bethesda, and the Ogwen Valley to Port Penrhyn



An area that has been quarried for slate since the Medieval period but which was developed on an extensive scale from the late eighteenth century onwards by Richard Pennant, Lord Penrhyn, and his heirs. The boundary includes the relict areas of Penrhyn Quarry, and the slab mills at Felin Fawr, the roads, railways and harbour that enabled the export of slate, the settlements established for the quarrymen and the owning family's huge neo-Norman castle.

Elements

- 1.1 Penrhyn Slate Quarry – relict stepped benches with extensive areas of slate tipping to either side
- 1.2 Felin Fawr Slate-slab Mills – an historic processing and engineering complex
- 1.3 The Penrhyn Slate Quarry Railroad and Penrhyn Slate Quarry Railway – two historic systems which exported slate from 1801 to 1962
- 1.4 Port Penrhyn – the harbour for Penrhyn slates
- 1.5 Mynydd Llandygai – Settlement; planned housing for quarrymen and their families
- 1.6 Bethesda – Village; created by quarrymen who preferred not to live on the Penrhyn estate
- 1.7 Penrhyn Castle and Park – the extravagant neo-Norman dwelling of the Penrhyn family

Essential Setting

The essential setting of this Component Part is made up of the Ogwen and Cegin valleys, incorporating the entire landscape of slate production and distribution from the quarry northwards to the port for onward shipment, and from the quarrymen's town of Bethesda to the parkland and neo-Norman castle of the owning family, from the steep sided slopes of the Carneddau mountains which define the southern limit to the Arfon coastal plain and to the Menai Straits adjacent to the castle.

Significant Views

Views within the Quarry convey the immense size of the relict workings. Views from the southern part of the relict Quarry take in the settlements associated with it, including Penrhyn Castle, as well as the Menai Straits and Liverpool Bay. The 'moving view' for travellers making their way north on the historic Telford post road (the A5) shows how the giant tips of slate rubble have encroached on the pre-existing farmland of Nant Ffrancon, and for those on the Chester–Holyhead railway and the A55, the Neo-Norman keep of Penrhyn castle dominates the landscape around the northern, coastal end. Views towards the quarry from the Castle are for the most part restricted by the trees in the parkland; however, notably the quarry is visible from the 'Slate bedroom', a room with public access, in the castle.

Sense of arrival

Key arrival points include turning off the B4409 road into the main quarry landform where the vista of a vast industrial landscape opens up. Arriving at Penrhyn Castle through the park. Travelling through Bethesda along the A5 road – a linear industrial settlement built along a carefully-graded road; the spire of Glanogwen church aligns with the road.

From Gwynedd Council 2019, 12-13, 47 & 61.