Hadrian’s Wall
Interpretation Framework
Primary Theme:
The north-west frontier of the Roman Empire
Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site

Hadrian’s Wall Interpretation Framework

Primary Theme:
The north-west frontier of the Roman Empire

Genevieve Adkins and Nigel Mills

Cover image
Event at Sedgeford © Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums
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This document sets out an interpretation framework for “the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire” – the primary interpretive theme associated with the Hadrian’s Wall element of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site (WHS). A complementary document sets out a similar framework for the “natural and cultural landscape of Hadrian’s Wall” – the secondary theme for the Hadrian’s Wall WHS. These themes are summarised and brought together in a third linking Overview and Summary document that sets out a vision to co-ordinate interpretation and audience development across the 150 miles of urban and rural landscape that constitute the Hadrian’s Wall WHS.

The Interpretation Framework has been developed by Hadrian’s Wall Heritage Limited (HWHL) with the support of two steering groups1. It has involved extensive stakeholder consultation and audience research, testing current visitor perceptions of the WHS and exploring interpretive principles, themes and techniques that aim to broaden the potential of the WHS to engage with existing and new audiences.

As is explained in the document, the term “framework” is used very deliberately to describe a flexible approach that sets out guidelines to inform interpretation and audience development. The Interpretation Framework develops an overarching thematic plan supported by practical guidelines. These guidelines are not prescriptive; instead they are intended to help the many different organisations with an interest in Hadrian’s Wall, from local authorities and national agencies to community groups and private landowners, develop approaches to interpreting the WHS and its landscape in a coherent, complementary and differentiated way that will enhance and deepen the visitor experience of Hadrian’s Wall for a wide range of audiences.

The Interpretation Framework is an advocacy and guidance document which draws on extensive audience research, on best practice and on extensive consultation with stakeholders. The primary objective of the Interpretation Framework is to encourage adoption of the highest quality interpretation designed to meet audience needs across the WHS. High quality interpretation underpins the development of a world-class, differentiated, complementary and cohesive visitor offer along Hadrian’s Wall. This in turn will improve connectivity between sites, encourage multi-site visiting, increase dwell time and improve ticket sales and income generation for all.

As a guidance document, formal endorsement by the various partners and stakeholders across the WHS is not anticipated. HWHL understand that some of the research results and subsequent recommendations in the Interpretation Framework may generate discussion. The findings and recommendations are, however, research-led and provide an invaluable resource for use by all partners in working together to transform visitor understanding and appreciation of the WHS over the short, medium and long term.

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1 Steering Groups: Theme 1 – north-west frontier of the Roman Empire: Professor Peter Stone – University of Newcastle, Bill Griffiths – Manager, north-east museums hub, Nigel Mills – HWHL, Linda Tuttiett HWHL. Theme 2 – natural and cultural landscape of Hadrian’s Wall: Elaine Rigg – NNPA, Andrew Poad – National Trust, Brian Irving – Solway AONB, Bryan Scott – HWHL, Nigel Mills – HWHL.
Introduction - recognising the need for change
Interpretation Framework

1 Introduction - recognising the need for change

“...Hadrian’s Wall is England’s top ancient monument”.

Yet for the past three decades visitor numbers to three of the main sites in the central section of Hadrian’s Wall have fallen by an average of approximately 1.65 per cent each year2.

A full review of available audience research identified possible reasons for this decline:

- Potential visitors have limited knowledge of Hadrian’s Wall, its importance or potential appeal. A common perception is that it is simply “a wall” without any particular attractions. A visit to Hadrian’s Wall was expected to be “hard work” because the experience would depend on “what you make of it yourself”. As a result of these expectations and perceptions, a trip to Hadrian’s Wall was considered too risky a commitment of precious leisure time.

- For those living locally, knowledge of Hadrian’s Wall was largely based on school trips with the belief that little was likely to have changed since then.

- For previous visitors, Hadrian’s Wall was thought to consist of a collection of Roman sites with little to unify them into a cohesive visitor experience. The lack of differentiation between sites, and the limited awareness of attractions along its length, means there was a perception that visiting one part of Hadrian’s Wall was the same as visiting any other.

- Interpretation was generally regarded as not particularly good. This was the case for individual sites, the linking of sites along Hadrian’s Wall and for the Wall itself. Difficulty accessing information about Hadrian’s Wall was given as a key barrier to attracting new visitors, together with the perception that the large number of signs pointing in different directions to Hadrian’s Wall meant that no single location would be sufficient to make a visit worthwhile.

- Respondents generally felt that they should visit Hadrian’s Wall for educational or health and fitness reasons, making it a duty rather than a pleasure. Usually, a key motivator for leisure visits is a recommendation from a friend or relative. However, few respondents reported that a recommendation had influenced their trip to Hadrian’s Wall, indicating that it currently lacks a “wow” factor.

These findings highlight a series of important issues that need to be addressed if Hadrian’s Wall is to better realise its social, economic, cultural and educational potential.

This Interpretation Framework sets out to address these issues. It presents a unique vision for the interpretation of Hadrian’s Wall in which the visitor experience is put centre-stage. At the heart of this vision is the adoption of a Wall-wide approach to audience development through enhanced interpretation and collaborative partnership.

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2 Economics Research Associates 2004 The Hadrian’s Wall Major Study Report
An Interpretation Framework for Hadrian’s Wall – establishing a framework for change
2 An Interpretation Framework for Hadrian’s Wall – establishing a framework for change

2.1 Hadrian’s Wall – the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire

Hadrian’s Wall was originally inscribed as a World Heritage Site (WHS) by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1987, as the most complex and best preserved of the frontiers of the Roman Empire. Today, Hadrian’s Wall is arguably the most celebrated element of the transnational Frontiers of the Roman Empire WHS inscribed in 2005 and currently comprising Hadrian’s Wall, the German Limes and the Antonine Wall. The Hadrian’s Wall element extends over 118 km and includes the Wall itself with directly associated features, the frontier defences extending down the Cumbrian coast and several outpost forts to the north.

In the context of this change, the redefinition of Hadrian’s Wall for interpretive purposes as “the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire” offers unparalleled opportunities to:

- Broaden the themes and messages and appeal of the WHS so that its true composition, context, nature and significance can be better communicated and understood
- Explore the “bigger picture” by setting Hadrian’s Wall in the context of Rome’s occupation of Britain and the wider Roman Empire

• Use the many sites and the environment of Hadrian’s Wall to communicate the various aspects of this story in unique, individual and complementary ways

• Engage and interest visitors in the cultural values of the north-west frontier story in contemporary society – going beyond an appreciation of archaeology to fostering understanding of the frontier, of Britain as a Roman colony, of modern frontiers, walls and barriers and of issues of citizenship, identity and multiculturalism

This Interpretation Framework is directed at realising these opportunities, which will, in turn, deliver wider benefits:

- Enhance the visitor experience and visitor enjoyment for the widest possible audiences
- Increase visitor numbers and, more importantly, encourage visitors to stay longer and to visit more sites
- Improve awareness and understanding of the WHS, its significance and the need to conserve and protect it, thus supporting the objectives of the WHS Management Plan
- Promote UNESCO’s WHS values which seek to share the heritage and experience of people around the world to foster understanding, respect, tolerance, co-operation and peace. In the second decade of the 21st century with globalisation, migration, economic turbulence and war as ever-present concerns, these values offer an unparalleled opportunity for reflection and understanding

Outstanding Universal Value

A UNESCO World Heritage Site is a place that is inscribed by UNESCO as having ‘outstanding universal value’ (OUV) and each site has its own statement explaining this OUV. The OUV for the Frontiers of the Roman Empire and Hadrian’s Wall derives exclusively from the scope, scale, technological, and organisational achievement of the Romans represented by the Frontiers, reflecting the unifying impact of their Empire on the wider Mediterranean world.

Although the wider cultural and natural environment does not contribute to the World Heritage Site’s OUV, it is an important part of the interpretation offer for visitors. The cultural and natural environment therefore forms a part of an overarching Interpretation Framework for the Hadrian’s Wall WHS, and is recognised in the secondary natural and cultural landscape Interpretation Framework document.

* Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site - Hadrian’s Wall Management Plan 2008-14
2.2 Why an interpretation framework?

More than 50 organisations and 700 private owners operate within Hadrian’s Wall’s “sphere of influence”4. With so many interests at work, a tool is needed to co-ordinate interpretation and audience development among those with responsibility or involvement in the care, presentation and management of the WHS and associated sites. This Interpretation Framework directs all partners towards a common goal – the realization of Hadrian’s Wall’s full cultural, social and economic potential to benefit local, regional, national and international communities. Its purpose is to enthuse, empower and enable partners.

The Interpretation Framework provides a structure to inspire and guide interpretation and audience development. The framework approach recognises that Hadrian’s Wall is a very large and complex site with numerous locations and opportunities for interpretation, including at least 12 important site-based attractions and museums. Major projects may take many years to develop, the funding and organisational environment is constantly changing, and interpretive techniques and audience understanding is constantly evolving. A detailed prescriptive approach to interpretation development is unrealistic as it would be out of date almost as soon as it was produced, and yet would require huge expenditure of resources to secure Wall-wide consensus for all aspects of interpretation.

Instead, this Interpretation Framework aims to create a shared vision by setting out the principles and approaches for improved interpretation that will engage visitors in a wide range of people-focused and narrative-driven visitor experiences.

It establishes a clear narrative structure for Hadrian’s Wall, within which each site and location can be identified as having a unique role in conveying the complex and fascinating story. It therefore develops from previous planning documents5 which focused more on information provision for tourist visitors and will act as an important guide for future interpretive planning exercises.

It also provides critical support for management issues affecting the WHS, as set out in the WHS Management Plan. It does so by providing a clear framework for promoting public understanding and engagement with the WHS and for major site development within which all other site development and investment can be mapped.

2.3 What is interpretation and how can it help?

Interpretation is often associated with storytelling traditions. But it is more than storytelling. It is also more than displaying sites or objects and describing them based on current archaeological and historical evidence and knowledge. Interpretation is about fostering understanding – enabling people to move beyond the acquisition of information and knowledge to a position in which they wish to engage and to find out more.

Interpretation seeks to engage people in the meaning of things and in doing so relate that meaning to their own lives such that the place, object or people being interpreted are better understood and respected. It uses evidence, facts and our most up-to-date knowledge and understanding as the basis to explore the known and unknown, inspiring people’s imaginations, evoking emotions, sparking ideas and prompting reflection that helps inform people’s beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours.

Interpretation can engender meaningful relationships between the subject or place being interpreted and the visitor. Such relationships can be associated with loyalty and active support – characteristics that are valuable to both managers and marketers. Research reveals that the more authentic and real a site or experience, and the more engaging and stimulating the themes explored and approaches used, the greater the attachment that can be forged. And this loyalty and support can translate directly into visits, membership and advocacy - behaviours that enable managers to achieve their aims.

Because interpretation can be targeted at particular audiences, it plays an influential role in audience development strategies, by fostering new audiences or further developing existing ones. It is for such powerful purposes that interpretation is increasingly used to deliver benefits to society, particularly in the heritage, environmental and cultural sectors.

2.4 Creating visitor experiences

Interpretation helps to create visitor experiences. It helps organisations plan how a site is presented and communicated. It helps organisations manage visitors to sites. It helps organisations deliver visitor experiences through various interpretive approaches and media.

Interpretation plays a key role in the entire visitor experience and visitor communication cycle, alongside wider pre-visit information, site welcome and orientation, and end of visit information activity all of which take key messages from the interpretation.

Given the importance of these aspects to the whole visitor experience of Hadrian’s Wall, this Interpretation Framework will cover them where appropriate.

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4 http://www.hadrians-wall.org
5 Hadrian’s Wall Tourism Partnership 1996 Hadrian’s Wall Interpretation Strategy
2 An Interpretation Framework for Hadrian’s Wall

2.5 The benefits of good interpretation

Good interpretation is a powerful tool. It can make the visitor experience engaging, fun and memorable. It can help promote Hadrian’s Wall as a destination for tourists, bringing greater economic benefits to local businesses and communities. It can attract and engage more people in the historic environment. But it has the potential to do much more.

Good interpretation can forge links between individuals, communities and shared heritage, engendering pride in Hadrian’s Wall as a place of both local and international significance. It can break down barriers that often exclude particular social, cultural and ethnic groups. It can be used to develop existing and new audiences by providing experiences that meet their needs and make them feel welcome, secure and valued and which, in turn, fosters the development of these audiences.

Good interpretation can encourage a sense of stewardship of the sites themselves and contribute to the management of visitors to minimize their impact on the heritage. It can foster understanding and respect amongst visitors for a place, site and the people who work and live there. It can be a focus for education, from formal school trips to informal lifelong learning. It can enrich the cultural lives of visitors and local communities, revealing common qualities that connect human cultures. If the interpretation of a site or groups of sites works well, there are many potential benefits that can be realized.

Interpretation can be a force for change.

2.6 Audience development

Central to this Interpretation Framework and the identification of interpretive principles and themes is a commitment to audience development and to improving the visitor experience as a means to achieve this. This recognises the need to broaden the appeal of Hadrian’s Wall to the widest possible audiences for whom it may have meaning, resonance and value, including: local people, visitors (UK and overseas) and stakeholders. The Interpretation Framework puts audience needs and the visitor experience at the heart of decision-making and recognizes that a dynamic and responsive approach is required to engage all audiences and encourage repeat visitors.

To achieve these aims the Interpretation Framework is underpinned by the following audience development principles:

- A belief that our heritage should be accessible and inviting and that interpretation is key to achieving this
- An understanding of the barriers to participation for different audiences and an understanding of the factors that drive participation
- An understanding of the needs of different audiences and a commitment to meeting these needs
- An awareness that the story of Hadrian’s Wall and the stories of the people connected to it can be motivating to audiences and encourage participation if presented in appropriate ways
- The desire to make people feel welcome and build relationships with visitors
- Ongoing consultation and evaluation
The Interpretation Framework aims to:

• Create an overarching framework for the interpretation of Hadrian’s Wall and associated sites that pulls together existing plans and will inform future site presentation, events, public programmes, volunteering and so on.

• Provide the intellectual logic for thinking about Hadrian’s Wall as more than a monument but rather as “the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire”

• Support the development of an overall Hadrian’s Wall visitor offer that has resonance with local people, visitors and stakeholders

• Enable the creation and marketing of clearly differentiated visitor experiences that contribute to the overall Hadrian’s Wall visitor offer and appeals to a variety of audiences

• Broaden the appeal of Hadrian’s Wall to the widest possible audiences by diversifying the offer. For example, the schools offer should be developed to appeal to wider subject areas rather than simply “history” or “the Romans” (so “multiculturalism” and “identity” themes could be linked to Citizenship and Personal, Social and Health Education within the National Curriculum, while tourism and heritage management themes would interest geography, economics and travel and tourism students)

• Provide support to sites at a macro level to create distinctive visitor experiences, in terms of both themes and presentation, that complement rather than duplicate existing provision, thus encouraging multi-site, cross-visiting

• Help maximise the contribution of Hadrian’s Wall to the local economy

2.7 Purpose of the Interpretation Framework

An Interpretation Framework for Hadrian’s Wall
The audiences for Hadrian’s Wall
3 The audiences for Hadrian’s Wall

3.1 The existing audiences

The existing audiences for Hadrian’s Wall are declining. There are many reasons for this, including the affordability of overseas travel, increased competition within the UK and greater demands on leisure time. This situation means that Hadrian’s Wall must be more competitive, presenting a compelling leisure destination in the north of England.

A study by Economics Research Associates (ERA) estimated that in 2003, 776,000 people visited Hadrian’s Wall, of whom 458,000 visited the museums and main sites, 287,000 were general tourists who did not visit museums or sites and 31,000 were walkers who likewise did not visit the sites. The study found that:

- Forty nine per cent of visitors were from the North of England, 41 per cent from elsewhere in the UK and 10 per cent from overseas
- Visitors tended to be older than the population average, with 27 per cent aged 55+
- Just under a third of visitors were accompanied by children
- About two thirds of visitors were staying overnight away from home
- Just over 40 per cent of visitors were on their first visit to the area
- A quarter of visitors had made more than five previous visits to the area

3.2 The potential audiences

The pool of potential visitors for Hadrian’s Wall is large. The ERA study found that 2.4 million people live within 40 miles or an hour’s drive of Hadrian’s Wall, 85 per cent of whom are in the northeast. A further 1.9 million live within 80 miles, constituting a secondary residential market. Furthermore, some 5 million tourists – 4.4 million domestic – stay within 40 miles of Hadrian’s Wall each year. Yet despite being less than an hour’s drive away, the majority of these potential visitors choose to visit Cumbria or Newcastle instead.

It is this pool of missing visitors - locals and tourists - that needs to be persuaded to explore the outstanding heritage on their doorstep. Consultation with stakeholders identified seven priority market segments. These include:

- UK ABC1s, predominantly over 45 years old with no dependent children and living within three hours of Hadrian’s Wall
- North Americans and northern Europeans, with a similar demographic profile to the UK ABC1s
- Families with children
- Specialist audiences, with the same profile as UK ABC1s but with an active interest in heritage, walking or cycling
- New visitors who are in part attracted to Hadrian’s Wall by its WHS status
- Schools and other educational visitors
- People visiting friends and relatives in local communities

* Economics Research Associates 2004 The Hadrian’s Wall Major Study Report
3.3 Audience knowledge and perceptions of Hadrian’s Wall

In order to learn more about existing and potential visitors and what they thought about Hadrian’s Wall, a programme of public engagement and audience research was undertaken during 2009-10. This involved gathering both qualitative and quantitative data through focus groups, telephone interviews, site visit interviews and feedback and consultation activities targeted at local, regional and national audiences. The purpose of this exercise was to explore:

- Knowledge and perceptions of Hadrian’s Wall
- Awareness of key aspects, for example, the sites along Hadrian’s Wall’s length and its UNESCO WHS status
- General needs and wants when visiting a heritage site, including interpretation methods and media preferences
- Reactions to the idea of the Interpretation Framework
- Interest in the principles of the Interpretation Framework
- Interest in a variety of potential themes

Focus group research
Three focus groups of non-visitors (i.e. participants had not previously visited Hadrian’s Wall sites) were held in identified target catchment areas - Manchester, Edinburgh and Newcastle. A fourth focus group of visitors (i.e. participants had previously visited Hadrian’s Wall sites) was held in Newcastle. All participants were selected according to the priority audiences above, all visited heritage sites in the UK (and selected or jointly selected these) and all were parents or grandparents of children aged 9+. The key aim of the focus groups was to identify needs and to explore the proposed interpretive principles and themes in depth. “Mood boards” were used to visually communicate the various suggested themes, supported by written and spoken descriptions.

Telephone survey research
Telephone interviews with 307 people, each lasting around 20-25 minutes, were carried out. Participants lived across the UK and visited heritage sites in the UK at least twice a year. The key aim of the telephone research was to quantitatively measure findings from the qualitative stage, specifically:

- Awareness of various facts about Hadrian’s Wall
- Awareness of the different sites
- Interest in the principles of the framework
- Interest in the potential themes and stories
- Preferred interpretation methods and media

Site visit interviews and feedback at Housesteads
Two site visit interview and feedback activities took place at Housesteads. The first focused on gaining feedback from existing visitors to the site, including members of English Heritage (EH) and the National Trust (NT). The second focused on gaining feedback from a sample that had not previously visited the site and were not members of either organisation.

Telephone interviews
In addition to the above visitor and non-visitor research, it was identified that research should be undertaken with a key customer and target audience for Hadrian’s Wall – coach operators. Telephone interviews were identified as the most appropriate method to source qualitative feedback from coach operators.

Community consultation
Consultation events were held at Hexham and Brampton. Advertised through the local press, these provided local people with the opportunity to find out about the Interpretation Framework, current and potential projects along Hadrian’s Wall, view the “mood boards” that illustrated the interpretive themes, principles and approaches, hear the responses from the focus group and telephone research, and input their experience and ideas into the project.

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7 Site names used throughout the Interpretation Framework documents reflect those used in public communications and signage and not site descriptive terms e.g. Housesteads Roman Fort
3.4 Key findings from research

A number of key findings were identified in relation to people’s knowledge, perceptions and experience of Hadrian’s Wall.

Key finding 1. The most surprising finding is that, contrary to commonly held assumptions, people generally have a poor understanding of Hadrian’s Wall, what is there, how it can be reached, etc. This has important implications for the interpretation and marketing of Hadrian’s Wall.

Figure 1: Visitation and awareness of sites along Hadrian’s Wall (base 307)

Key finding 2. Generally, people do not know where to go to get information about Hadrian’s Wall, what is on offer or how to plan a visit. All focus group participants emphasised the need for a single point from which information could be accessed about all sites and facilities along Hadrian’s Wall, be this a physical or virtual facility, and for cross-site referral along Hadrian’s Wall to help visitors move from site to site and grasp the “bigger picture”.

Duplicate brown and white tourism signage on the A69 signing “Hadrian’s Wall” at various locations creates an impression that all sites are similar and confuses visitors who are not sure where to start a visit or how each site relates to the others and in what order, if any, to visit them.

Key finding 3. There is compelling evidence of a general lack of awareness of the different sites along Hadrian’s Wall and what they have to offer. Forty-three per cent of participants in the telephone survey had not heard of any of the major sites along Hadrian’s Wall.

“Just thought it was a wall and a bit boring, I didn’t realise there were different places to go, I thought it was all just the same”
Key finding 4. The impression that there is little to attract or do is reinforced by the name of the monument and its dominant use in marketing and communications materials. Many focus group participants questioned why they would want to visit “a wall”. There was a perception that they would have to do a lot of work to make the visit worthwhile and enjoyable and that other sites are “easier” to visit.

Key finding 5. Evidence strongly suggests that Hadrian’s Wall is not perceived as an attractive or easy place to visit. Telephone survey respondents frequently used the following terms to describe Hadrian’s Wall:

- “Open spaces”
- “Bleak landscape”
- “Stone and ruins”
- “Remote”
- “Desolate”
- “Wild, open spaces”
- “Green fields”
- “Rolling hills”
- “Windy”
- “Long”
- “Cold and bleak”
- “Moorland”
- “Old”

Marketing materials produced by organisations involved in promoting Hadrian’s Wall, the north-east and north-west as leisure and tourism destinations, frequently use images of Hadrian’s Wall in open, unpopulated landscapes in inclement weather. It is hardly surprising that potential visitors have such a low awareness of the wider sites along Hadrian’s Wall, feel that there is insufficient reason to visit and that a visit would be “hard work”.

Key finding 6. Participants had a limited knowledge of Roman history - it is understood as being about “facts” rather than different viewpoints, ideas or people.

“Maybe it’s the age you get taught the Romans – in primary school. When you are older and you learn about the Second or First World War you have discussions and you get to know the different reasons why people did things and all the different viewpoints. In Roman history, it is ‘this happened’ and ‘so-and-so did that’.”

It appears that having studied Roman history early within their education, participants (now parents and grandparents) remembered little, viewing Roman history as a “very long time ago”, and encountered years earlier at school. As such, the majority found it difficult to relate to Hadrian’s Wall. So distant is their learning that combined with limited awareness, it appears not to enter their minds to visit as its unfamiliarity would make it “hard work”.

Key finding 7. World Heritage Site status is not fully understood and is generally associated with sites outside the UK, such as the pyramids of Giza, Egypt.

“If you are on holiday and you see that there is a World Heritage Site, you would want to go and see it and you do think it will be something special. But I don’t think of sites like that as being in the UK.”

Key finding 8. The apparent focus on the archaeology of Hadrian’s Wall means that there is a general perception that all sites along Hadrian’s Wall are very similar, with little reason to visit more than one or two sites.

Milecastle 37 and Crag Lough, Milecastle 39, Hadrian’s Wall, Northumberland © Roger Clegg
Key finding 9. Existing visitors to Housesteads (mainly NT and EH members or similar) generally enjoy the existing visitor experience, and principally appreciate the surrounding landscape and views, but would like better facilities and toilets. This is in line with the results of previous research with existing visitors carried out by EH. However, when asked about the existing interpretation, most interviewees responded positively to or freely suggested improvements proposed by the Interpretation Framework.

In contrast, new visitors i.e. those who had not previously visited, and who were not NT or EH members, felt the existing visitor experience was limited and that a thematic and family oriented approach would add considerably to the visitor offer. These results are in line with the focus group and telephone survey research.

The difference in findings between the two visitor groups to Housesteads is significant. Although based on small samples, it suggests that in order to develop new audiences, the two management organisations need to adopt the principles of the Interpretation Framework if existing and new audiences are to be motivated to visit.

“I found the site itself a little bit disappointing. It was hard to get a sense of what used to be there, and it was difficult to see more than a series of small walls. While it was interesting to see the wall and the fort, it was not very exciting”

“The children were underwhelmed. At other sites, it is easy to keep their attention by explaining what they are looking at, and describing events that have happened. I found it hard to do that here, as there was a lack of information on the site. The information boards that we found were not very inspiring”

“More information definitely, but not the way it is written now! It needs to make you want to read it. All of the panels looked the same to me, and were all a bit boring”

“If this is all you see of Hadrian’s Wall, I think you will be disappointed. I have been to Vindolanda which is very different. But there is no reference to Vindolanda or any of the other places along the Wall so I would be worried that visitors would come here and think that all of Hadrian’s Wall is like this, whereas in reality, you can do different things along the Wall”

Key finding 10. Local people perceived little, if any, change at sites along Hadrian’s Wall. As a result, many recalled school trips undertaken many years ago and did not return until they had children or grandchildren. Such trips were seen as “duty” visits and seldom repeated. Asked to describe their experiences, sites along Hadrian’s Wall were perceived as “not very good” and interpretation at non-staffed sites generally in “poor condition” and “dirty”.

Key finding 11. Focus group participants who had visited Hadrian’s Wall sites raised the expense of visiting sites, including petrol, car parking, admission prices, lunches, drinks, etc. Hadrian’s Wall was identified as an expensive place to visit with other sites being better value for money. All participants highlighted the need for a discount card to incentivise multi-site visiting along Hadrian’s Wall.
3.5 What visitors want and need

In addition to the key findings, the public engagement exercise sought to establish what aspects make a good visitor experience to the identified target audiences. Over half of respondents in the telephone research (56 per cent) identified the following as characteristics of a "favourite" site that they visited regularly:

- Lots to see and do that has special appeal to the visitor group, such as activities for children
- Some familiar elements that can be can be relied upon
- Some changing elements, such as temporary displays or events
- Located within easy travel distance
- Sites that visitors can feel connected to, usually as a result of good interpretation
- Sites that provide clear information about what is available, and that enable people to plan and manage their visit and travel
- Good facilities and amenities
- Availability of saver ticket or season ticket that provides value for money

3.6 The implications for Hadrian’s Wall

Visitor numbers to Hadrian’s Wall are declining in a context of increased competition. Research has identified that a number of factors are contributing to this: low awareness of Hadrian’s Wall, and its various sites; lack of awareness of its historical and cultural importance and a perception of narrow focus; duplication and questionable quality of existing interpretation; and, difficulties in accessing sites and information.

If this trend is to be stopped and reversed, audiences for Hadrian’s Wall need to be developed, new approaches to interpretation need to be adopted based on sound audience development and interpretation principles, facilities improved and appropriate and accessible information provided on a co-ordinated Wall-wide basis.

By adopting a thematic approach that sees the Hadrian’s Wall WHS for interpretive purposes as “the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire”, the many sites along Hadrian’s Wall can explore a much wider range of themes, with each site focussing on a particular theme or themes to a greater or lesser extent. The result will be a series of sites that not only present well-defined and clearly differentiated visitor offers, but also:

- Fully communicate the historic significance of the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire of which Hadrian’s Wall is but a part, thereby increasing understanding amongst local people and visitors of Hadrian’s Wall itself
- Fully communicate the WHS values that underpin its designation
- Address issues associated with perceived focus, duplication and quality that lie at the heart of declining visitor numbers and thus promote visits and increase income that, in turn, will support conservation and education objectives of the WHS Management Plan
- In the longer term, address issues of awareness, perception, presentation and understanding, which the research has highlighted as critical to the current situation

No other museum or site in the UK explores the “bigger picture” of the Roman Empire. The many sites along Hadrian’s Wall offer a unique opportunity to do this in a way that will accrue wider social, economic and conservation benefits to a large and important geographical area.
Interpretation principles - making change happen
To achieve the aims of this Interpretation Framework and address the issues identified through the audience research, changes are needed. To help make these changes a series of principles have been developed to help inform future interpretation projects along Hadrian’s Wall. These principles have been informed by the consultation process, the audience research findings, good practice guidelines and academic interpretation and tourism research.

This section explains these principles and how they were received during the audience research. It lays out the final set of principles adopted by the Interpretation Framework.

Tourism research tells us that people are interested in people. This has been confirmed by the research undertaken as part of this project. Future interpretation of Hadrian’s Wall should maximise opportunities to link the stories of the past to people (both past and present) so that audiences can relate to, understand and empathise with them.

For example, at Roman Vindolanda the story of “Britain’s Top Treasure”, the Vindolanda Tablets, is to be told by focusing on the people whose lives are revealed in them, rather than solely on their archaeological discovery. This presents an unparalleled opportunity to relate the wider archaeological collection to these individuals and their lives on the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire.

By focusing interpretation on the stories of people and life on the frontier, and by communicating these stories in ways that are diverse, personally engaging, and which challenge assumptions, a more varied, inspiring, affective and effective visitor experience can be created. This has the ability to generate stronger feelings and attitudes, enhance understanding, and, ultimately, realise the aims of this Interpretation Framework.

Central to the creation of these experiences is a commitment to interpretation that is dynamic. And this means interpretation that:

- Offers opportunities for interactivity and participation – both intellectual and physical
- Provides a variety of experiences for a range of audiences throughout the year
4.2 Making Hadrian’s Wall relevant

Interpretation is most effective when visitors are able to relate to its messages. Therefore it is important to deliver interpretation that encourages such relationships.

One important way in which this can be done has been described above. Another is to give it contemporary resonance. By making connections between modern life and the past, audiences are able to relate it to their existing knowledge and experiences, providing an environment in which they can be stimulated to compare, question, reflect and construct new understandings and knowledge about the past and the present.

Hadrian’s Wall, part of the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire, offers an unparalleled opportunity to explore many issues that effect contemporary society. In this way it can offer new insights into the modern and Roman world, including colonialism, multiculturalism, identity, conflict, war, walls and barriers. As such, it provides an unrivalled learning resource for all ages and interests to engage with issues that reflect UNESCO’s WHS values, providing a profound and affecting experience.

Case study:
Wall-to-Wall project, Segedunum - exploring contemporary issues of local identity through the Roman heritage

An ambitious outreach project has helped schoolchildren in Wallsend engage with their heritage to explore identity and cultural diversity. The project used the contemporary resonance of Hadrian’s Wall, a focus on common human experience and locally-discovered small finds to inspire learning among children living in a town blighted by high unemployment.

Wall-to-Wall was led by Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums staff based at Segedunum, supported by a British Museum initiative and involved pupils and staff at Burnside Business and Enterprise College. It produced activities that drew on the children’s understanding, imagination, artistic vision and media skills. They were prompted to relate their own personal identities with those of the Romans who once lived in Wallsend and also to consider the value of objects in the museum collection.

Sixth formers curated a public exhibition based on the project, pupils participated in national and international conferences and links were forged with their counterparts from a school at the end of the Great Wall of China. The project has been part of ongoing creative work at the school that has seen improved exam results and reduced truancy.

4.3 More than a Wall

Hadrian’s Wall is but a single element of the defences and structures that make up the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire. It is therefore vital that future interpretation places Hadrian’s Wall in a much broader context and better references the wider frontier and surviving evidence. This will ensure that the frontier and its significance are better understood and valued.

By broadening the interpretive focus of Hadrian’s Wall to encompass the north-west frontier and the wider sites, resources and stories, Hadrian’s Wall has the potential to become more than just a Wall, taking on a richer and more significant place in the UK’s historic environment that better reflects and communicates its WHS designation.
4.4 Making sense of Hadrian’s Wall

Hadrian’s Wall includes 12 major managed sites and museums dispersed over 118 km, from Arbeia in the east to Maryport in the west. There are several hundred unstaffed sites varying from forts to fragments of Wall and ditches. Making sense of the size, scale and extent of Hadrian’s Wall can be a challenge. Equally challenging is to understand how the sites relate to each other.

Providing audiences with information that enables them to understand the full extent of Hadrian’s Wall, its sites, where and how to access them, and how they relate to each other, both physically and intellectually, is key to developing audiences for Hadrian’s Wall. Without this assistance audiences are unclear about where to start, continue and end a visit.

Four types of provision are needed to help audiences plan and physically navigate a visit to Hadrian’s Wall:

- **Orientation** – maps, plans and so on (print and online)
- **Information** – details on what there is to see and do at each site, supporting facilities and amenities
- **Signage** – brown and white tourism signage; site signage (welcome, directional)
- **Referral** – site-to-site orientation and information, often including site to site directions by road or foot

In parallel with this physical navigation, visitors need help to understand Hadrian’s Wall and its various sites and how they relate to each other intellectually. The research has highlighted that audiences are generally unfamiliar with Hadrian’s Wall and Roman history. It has also highlighted that the scale of the monument and its multiple entry points and sites can be confusing.

By adopting an approach that presents Hadrian’s Wall for interpretive purposes as the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire, a bigger picture can be painted in which each site can be located and will have meaning – both to the frontier and individually. This will enable audiences to make sense of the northwest frontier and its story. At the same time, the individual sites will be better presented and understood as representing different aspects of the frontier story.

This strategy will equip audiences with a level of comprehension that they currently lack, giving them the knowledge and assurance they need to feel that a visit to Hadrian’s Wall will be worthwhile and can be planned in such a way as to meet all the needs of their group.
4 Interpretation principles

4.5 Unique but complementary visitor experiences

Each site along Hadrian’s Wall once played a unique role within the north-west frontier. However, research suggests that audiences do not currently perceive there to be many differences between the sites; even different types of site are viewed simply as “Roman”. This seems to be the result of three main factors. First, a lack of background knowledge that would help audiences make distinctions between, say, a fort and a temple. Second, the perception that existing interpretation focuses primarily on describing archaeology and objects. Third, the perception that sites are presented in a very similar way and offer little variation in visitor experience.

If audiences, particularly local people, believe there to be little change in the sites along Hadrian’s Wall, that the visitor focus group participants associate it with being “old fashioned” and “not worth...[a visit]”, the perceived lack of variety and dynamism are core issues that must be addressed if audiences to Hadrian’s Wall are to be developed.

A review of existing interpretation at sites along Hadrian’s Wall reveals that audience perception largely reflects the evidence on the ground. Many staffed sites feature displays that, while clean and well maintained, appear out of date when compared to more recent exhibitions that audiences have visited. Many sites feature object-rich displays supported by descriptive graphic labels that provide few opportunities for interaction and engagement. Moreover, most sites lack accessible interpretation.

In addition, unstaffed sites are generally interpreted with graphic panels, many in poor condition and showing a lack of maintenance. And although some site interpretation has been updated, evidence suggests the general lack and quality of interpretive provision contribute directly to audience perceptions and motivation to visit. A better way to differentiate sites, particularly the main sites, is needed.

Although it is true to say that all sites once played a unique role along Hadrian’s Wall, similar types of sites served similar functions. Therefore it is not sufficient to present the sites according to their relative similarities and differences; this is the realm of typology and in some ways describes the current situation in which many archaeological sites have been consolidated and presented following archaeological excavation.

Interpretation provides a means of looking at the sites afresh and moving beyond their tangible remains to explore the intangible past they represent, which can have great meaning to audiences. Put simply, sites themselves are not the entire story. More overt differentiation is needed and interpretation can provide this. At the heart of the Interpretation Framework is recognition of the opportunity to communicate the story of the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire and through this realise the opportunities and potential of the WHS. This is a narrative that comprises a number of themes and stories. By focusing the interpretation at individual sites on particular themes and stories, more clearly differentiated yet complementary visitor experiences can be created.

In other words, by adopting a narrative and thematic-led approach, this Interpretation Framework will enable the different organisations that have an interest in interpreting Hadrian’s Wall to work in partnership with one another to coherently fit individual or groups of sites into broader regional, national or international themes and perspectives. This approach will help enrich the visitor offer and experience by enabling visitors to better understand how sites relate to one another, and to more holistic Wall-wide, province-wide and even Empire-wide stories, making the “bigger picture” of the frontier of the Roman Empire more accessible.

By working in collaboration to link sites together in this way, the full potential of the assets along Hadrian’s Wall can be used to encourage and facilitate multi-site and repeat visiting. It will also enable the relative significance of individual sites to be better assessed and gaps identified, allowing a more strategic allocation of investment and resources.
4 Interpretation principles

4.6 Research underpins all good interpretation

Sound academic research underpins all good interpretation. However, this does not mean that interpretation should slavishly present research findings. Neither should it focus solely on presenting the subject or object of the research. Instead, good interpretation embeds the insights that come from such research in the creation of visitor experiences that aim to engender understanding in visitors. It forms the springboard to excite people’s imaginations such that they engage with the subject and prompt wider discussion through which the subject might be better understood.

This balance creates visitor experiences that are authentic, exciting and better able to meet the expectations and needs of visitors. A narrative approach in which research informs themes rather than the simple presentation of information is more likely to engage visitors, and hence is more likely to be remembered and recommended.

4.7 Testing the interpretation principles

Given the importance of the above principles in guiding future interpretation along Hadrian’s Wall, they were tested in the focus groups, telephone survey and consultation events. The graph shows the percentage of telephone survey participants (base: 307) who considered each principle a good idea that would encourage them to visit or come back. All principles tested very positively with the target audiences, with “different experiences and different stories” and “people, lives and the evidence left behind” most positive, reflecting the emphasis audiences place on such matters.

The principles were also tested in two workshops attended by staff from various organisations and interests along Hadrian’s Wall. All attendees (See Public Engagement Appendix) endorsed the principles as a means by which their organisations could address the issues identified in the audience research.

Following this process of research, consultation and endorsement, the six principles of the Interpretation Framework were summarised as follows:

1. Commit to interpretation that is dynamic and people oriented, relevant (though potentially challenging) to their views, understanding and interest in the world around them – providing interpretation that is exciting, challenging, engaging, fascinating, participative, enjoyable and fun.

2. Recognise opportunities to identify contemporary resonances as a key means to engage visitor interest, foster understanding and promote UNESCO’s broader values in relation to the WHS. For example, modern frontiers can illustrate some of the tensions and realities of life along Hadrian’s Wall – it can act as a metaphor through which to explore contemporary issues, contributing relevance, meaning and value to the visitor experience.

3. Appreciate that Hadrian’s Wall is itself an object that illustrates the overarching theme of the Roman Empire’s north-west frontier, but is not, on its own, the whole story.

4. Enable visitors to grasp the “bigger picture” and to understand that each site tells a different part of the story, or presents the story in a different way appropriate to different audiences.

5. Differentiate each site along Hadrian’s Wall so that each one is an attraction in its own right and makes a unique contribution to the overall visitor offer and experience.

6. Understand that in order to engage more effectively with existing and new audiences, interpretation needs to be underpinned by sound academic research and that objects and sites should focus on communicating themes within an overall narrative structure for the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire.
4 Interpretation principles

Case study: The Eden Project, Cornwall – winning hearts and minds through interpretation principles and themes

Interpretation at the Eden Project aims to help visitors to forge connections with the natural world and with each other. It is based on clear interpretive principles whose development explicitly drew on academic research, messages about sustainability, and a focus on audiences who have not previously engaged with environmental issues.

Botanical and environmental research gives the interpretation authenticity, while visitor research ensures the Eden Project’s 1.1 million annual visitors get the experience they desire. This means answering the questions that visitors ask rather than delivering the facts that horticulturalists think most important.

The interpretation has a deliberate emotional appeal and seeks to dynamically engage in contemporary issues. For instance, growing awareness of the role oil palm plantations play in deforestation prompted new interpretation of the plant. This included the construction of a traditional palm hut by two men from Borneo who told visitors how deforestation was affecting their lives, creating a relevant and people-orientated experience.

Evaluation among school groups and families suggests that the interpretation is effective in stimulating interest and prompting learning, which in turn influences attitudes and behaviour.
Interpretation themes - the story of the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire
5 Interpretation themes - the story of the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire

5.1 What are themes?

Central to this Interpretation Framework is the dynamic story of the Roman frontier in northern Britain as it evolved over more than three centuries. This is a fascinating story with many topics to be explored and countless remarkable details to capture audiences’ imagination.

But interpretation is not about simply conveying information. It is about provoking visitors through storytelling to make their own meanings. Therefore not every fact about a site can or should be communicated. So themes are devised to maximise the narrative potential around take-home messages.

Themes are not synonymous with topics or general subject areas. Themes carry whole ideas that are relevant to the site and audience, and which enable people to make connections and gain a deeper understanding of the subject or object being interpreted.

The role of topics in the Interpretation Framework

Topics offer a way of organising information to ensure important subject areas are not excluded. Topics can help inform the development of themes and narratives.

The Interpretive Framework has drawn up a comprehensive list of topics as a resource but has also considered audiences, conservation and site issues and organisational objectives to devise the thematic structure.

Individual sites should take a corresponding approach from their own perspectives if the content of their interpretation is to engage visitors with authentic, emotional and memorable experiences, while working within the Interpretive Framework thematic structure to connect to the “bigger picture” and to other sites.

The result should be an overall experience of Hadrian’s Wall that is greater than the sum of the parts.

Indicative list of topics:

The Roman Empire
- Language
- Imperial politics
- Trade and commerce

Technology
- Daily life
- Local people
- Religion

Roman military
- Transport
- Roman people
- Economy
- Death

Government and administration
- Arts and crafts
- Key personalities
- Fashion and jewellery

Education
- Administration
- Class and wealth
- Health and sanitation

Archaeology
- Food and drink
- Gender
- Recreation
5.2 The power of narrative and themes

Research has revealed that audiences generally struggle to make sense of Hadrian’s Wall and its many sites. Their limited knowledge of Roman history means that they are not able to fully understand the interpretation at sites or to contextualise this to a wider understanding of Hadrian’s Wall and the Roman Empire.

The use of a narrative approach and themes give interpretation enormous potential as a tool through which to address these issues and to enhance the visitor experience.

The story of the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire is a complex one that needs to be conveyed through not one, but a number of themes. A coherent thematic structure for Hadrian’s Wall will make it easier for audiences to grasp the “bigger picture” of the north-west frontier and to understand that each site tells a different part of this story or presents the story in a different way appropriate to the site and its target audiences.

Moreover, a thematic structure will help sites find their own place within the Interpretation Framework, enabling them to co-ordinate their interpretation without being forced to adopt ill-suited narratives that a more rigid strategy or plan might prescribe. On the ground, the clear differentiation of sites will present audiences with different visitor offers and visits to multiple sites within the WHS.

Evidence tells us that visitors who have been provoked by thematic interpretation to think deeply and relate to a site, are more likely to have had a satisfying experience that prompts them to buy souvenirs, particularly if the merchandise is closely linked to the themes.

And when themes directly address the values of the site, they can also influence the behaviour of visitors. For example, interpretation that engages visitors with the need to protect fragile archaeological remains can convince them of the importance of conserving heritage and persuade them to act accordingly.

In other words the adoption of a narrative and thematic approach will bring a number of benefits to Hadrian’s Wall.

5.3 Developing the themes for the Interpretation Framework

Given the importance of themes to the Interpretation Framework, the project process was designed to achieve maximum input in their creation and testing from experts, partners and audiences.

Stage 1. An initial list of themes was developed by working with site and consultant teams at several of the major sites and museums, matching up the particular interpretive opportunities presented by the history, archaeology, location and setting of each site with the broader thematic possibilities within the overarching theme of “the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire”.

This initial list of themes was then refined through consultation with staff from partner organisations such as English Heritage, the National Trust and Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, as well as Roman historians and academics.

Initial Interpretation Framework themes:

- **Citizens of Empire**
  Citizenship, identity, multicultural, modern and historical parallels.

- **Frontier Lives**
  Personal stories revealed by writing tablets, inscriptions, graffiti and so on.

- **Edge of Empire**
  The frontiers of the Empire; changing frontiers over time, Roman and barbarian, symbols of Imperial power and control.

- **The Imperial Province of Britain**
  Britain as a military province of Rome, exploitation of mineral resources, commerce, Roman and native.

- **The Roman Army**
  Organisation, training, tactics, multi-cultural, non-military functions - administrators, engineers, a police force.

- **Conquest and Legacy**
  Empires, conflict, commerce, exploitation, peace, frontiers and barriers, UNESCO aspirations and values.

- **Contemporary Resonances in a Globalised World**
  Modern frontiers, identity, migration, multiculturalism, commerce, government and administration, trade.

- **Exploration, Discovery and Values**
  Archaeological and historical evidence, excavation and research.
Stage 2: The initial themes were tested in the focus groups and re-tested with a larger regional and national audience sample through the telephone survey. The aim was to establish understanding and interest in the themes.

The focus groups inevitably provided a better opportunity to engage respondents through illustrative mood boards that brought the themes to life and resulted in the re-titling of some initial themes so that participants could more easily understand them.

Interpretive themes developed through focus groups:
- Citizens of Empire
- Frontier Lives
- Edge of Empire
- The Imperial Province of Britain
- The Roman Army
- Before and After replaced Conquest and Legacy
- Walls and Barriers replaced Contemporary Resonances in a Globalised World
- Exploration, Discovery and Values

All the developed themes tested well with focus groups and telephone survey participants for both understanding and interest.

Focus group participants highlighted that all themes are interrelated and that it was not the theme alone that determined its appeal. Participants felt that all themes could be highly appealing if presented well and interactively. Using “people” and examples of “before and after” helped respondents to connect with all themes. This illustrates that approaches to presenting the themes that enable people to forge connections with their own life experiences are most effective and accessible - confirming the importance of adopting principles of good interpretation within the Interpretation Framework.

In the telephone survey all themes scored highly in terms of respondents saying they were good ideas and would encourage them to visit or come back to Hadrian’s Wall - higher than is generally found in such research. However, themes of “Frontier Lives” and “Before and After” had the most universal appeal across the sample. This reflects the fact that interpretive approaches that engage people with real lives and provide content that visitors can place in a modern context are more engaging than simple presentation of information. Use of these approaches to bring themes to life is a key interpretive principle of this Interpretation Framework.

Overall, themes of “Walls and Barriers” and “Edge of Empire” appealed most to older respondents who were more likely to have previously visited Hadrian’s Wall, echoing participants of the focus groups who said the the themes would appeal most to adults and older children and grandchildren. This finding suggests the suitability of these themes for Housesteads whose visitors are older and may be English Heritage or National Trust members. However, use of people-based approaches and contemporary resonances to presenting these themes would help broaden their interest for younger and family audiences.

The “Edge of Empire” theme, in particular, attracted strong responses in the focus groups:

“I think this is a really good idea to make you think of the wall as part of a bigger picture”

“That is really fascinating!”

“It’s a brilliant concept”

“I like things to be quite thought provoking, to make me think”

“I like this idea: the Romans around the world”

Given that participants were also interested in themes of “Before and After” and “Walls and Barriers”, it appears that the idea of a frontier, of dividing people and of conquest is interesting to people, but not the bare facts about frontiers of the Roman Empire. There is evidence that people do engage emotionally with the idea of a lonely, cold Roman looking out across the empty landscape, as is evidenced by W H Auden’s 1937 poem Roman Wall Blues. The issue is, however, one of how the idea of a frontier can be interpreted in an engaging way. This is especially important given the positive responses to this theme gathered at Housesteads where this theme might be concentrated.
5 Interpretation Themes

Stage 3: The developed themes were subsequently explored in two workshops with staff from various partner organisations along Hadrian’s Wall. These discussions led to a re-titling and refinement of the definitions of each theme and the addition of a theme that covered the landscape aspects of the north-west frontier.

Interpretive themes refined through workshops:
- People of the Empire replaced Citizens of Empire
- Frontier Lives
- Edge of Empire
- Britain – a Roman Province replaced The Imperial Province of Britain
- The Roman Army
- Before and After
- Power and Control replaced Walls and Barriers and Contemporary Resonances in a Globalised World
- Exploration, Discovery and Values
- The Frontier and its Environment

All workshop participants endorsed the themes as a way for sites along Hadrian’s Wall to develop distinctive, complementary and differentiated visitor offers. Participants also supported the principle that interpretive development at other sites could be guided in a similar way with reference to:
- The particular history, archaeology, location and setting of the site/location
- The possibilities and opportunities identified in the thematic structure
- Existing and proposed offers at other key sites across the WHS
- Opportunities to appeal to different audiences and to use interpretive techniques appropriate to the site/location

As well as endorsing the themes for the Interpretation Framework, workshop participants were also asked to review a central theme statement. The role of this statement is to bring together seemingly disparate messages into a single unifying statement, or message. It is a reference point to guide all interpretation. As such it may not be specifically presented as part of the visitor experience; instead it will guide thinking and decision-making as interpretive proposals are developed.

Stage 4: The refined themes and central theme statement were subsequently explored in a series of community consultation events.

All attendees were familiar with current interpretive provision along Hadrian’s Wall and felt that significant improvement was needed. All expressed strong support for the proposed Interpretation Framework project and to new approaches to presenting and marketing Hadrian’s Wall. On the feedback form, one attendee wrote: “There appears to be a lot of common sense in this approach – the importance of focusing on what people want to know rather than what we want them to know. People want to know about people”. This was echoed in the feedback of another attendee who wrote: “People relate to people, not to objects”. Attendees overwhelmingly identified personal interpretation as best to communicate and engage people in the stories of the north-west frontier.

Attendees similarly expressed universal support for the proposed themes and central theme statement of the Interpretation Framework. On a feedback form, one attendee wrote: “I liked the concept of putting forward the wider aspects of the Roman frontier and its modern counterparts”.

5 Interpretation Themes

5.4 Central theme statement

Through the process of public engagement, the following central theme statement was created:

Hadrian’s Wall is at the centre of the dynamic story of the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire. This frontier evolved from the first to the fifth centuries AD in response to changing political, social, economic and demographic forces within the Roman Empire and the changing status and role of Britain as an Imperial Province. The heavily militarised frontier zone has left a rich physical and cultural legacy through which we can explore its story and understand its resonance with the modern world.

5.5 Key themes of the Interpretation Framework

The same process created the following themes for the Interpretation Framework. These suggested themes illustrate how the central theme statement can be delivered. It is important to highlight that these are not “set in stone”. It is hoped that site and project teams will further develop and refine this thematic structure as they explore how to improve the visitor experience of Hadrian’s Wall.

1. People of the Empire – the Roman Empire was multicultural and as concerned with issues of citizenship, identity and belonging as we are today. Modern parallels can be drawn with the archaeological and historical record to inspire reflection and new understanding of this aspect of Rome’s legacy.

2. Frontier Lives – we can become personally involved in the daily lives, emotions and cares of individual Roman citizens through the compelling personal stories revealed in the writing tablets from Vindolanda and Carlisle and through the wealth of inscriptions found across Hadrian’s Wall.

3. Edge of Empire – Hadrian’s Wall became the centre of the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire, a key element in the frontier ring created by Emperor Hadrian. As such, it symbolises the military power of the Empire and the imposition of military occupation on Rome’s territories.

4. Britain – a Roman Province – Britain was part of a vast empire with long-range social and commercial links. The area around Hadrian’s Wall reflects this story and reveals many aspects of life in the provinces, including exploitation of mineral resources, commerce, citizenship, politics and relations between Romans and local people.

5. The Roman Army – the Roman Army was the key instrument in establishing and maintaining the Roman Empire. It operated as an effective and mighty military machine and its multicultural soldiers were also administrators, engineers, a police force and loyal citizens in retirement.

6. Before and After – before, during and after the Roman occupation of the northwest frontier, local people occupied the area. Through archaeological excavation we are learning more about these people, about Rome’s legacy on people, culture and environment, and ties to our European neighbours. The frontiers of the Roman Empire form both tangible and intangible links between the many countries once within the Empire and those outside the Empire.

7. Power and Control – empires are often synonymous with conflict, struggle and barriers, but also with stability, economic prosperity, trade and commerce. Once a great divide, the frontiers of the Roman Empire provide a unifying element in the modern world and offer opportunities to explore and understand contemporary struggles and barriers and share universal values that resonate with the purposes of WHS status.

8. The Frontier and its Environment – the landscape, its geology and its flora and fauna helped shape the frontier and the nature of Hadrian’s Wall. The Romans exploited, adapted to and left their mark on the environment of Hadrian’s Wall.

9. Exploration, Discovery and Values – the archaeological and historical evidence that enables us to explore the story of the north-west frontier is revealed through antiquarians, researchers, archaeologists, workmen and volunteers. This is a dynamic process with which we can actively engage and contribute our own interpretations. It is also a process through which we come to understand and value the legacy of the past.

These themes complement those identified for the natural and cultural heritage in the companion Interpretation Framework for the natural and cultural landscape of Hadrian’s Wall.
5.6 Making connections

The project consultation process has identified two subsidiary themes which link the two Interpretation Framework documents and provide further scope to broaden the interpretive offer for visitors:

- UNESCO and World Heritage Sites
- Natural and cultural frontier

UNESCO and World Heritage Sites

World Heritage Sites are places inscribed by UNESCO as having cultural and/or natural heritage which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. This is usually referred to as a place having outstanding universal value to all humankind. UNESCO does not define precisely what it means by outstanding universal value but each World Heritage Site has its own statement of significance that places its value within the context of the Convention and a series of qualifying criteria. For the Frontiers of the Roman Empire and Hadrian’s Wall the outstanding universal value is seen within the scope, scale and technological and organisational achievement represented by the frontiers, reflecting the unifying impact of the Roman Empire on the wider Mediterranean world.

In promoting the concept of World Heritage, UNESCO has a wider agenda and objective, which is to promote peaceful co-existence and partnership between the nations of the world through respect, understanding, tolerance and co-operation. These broader values are most effectively expressed through the UNESCO World Heritage in Young Hands learning programme.

It is important that the interpretation of World Heritage Sites and their use and presentation to the public as a resource for learning encompasses this wider UNESCO agenda. One way of doing this is to ensure that the World Heritage in Young Hands programme is adopted as an integral part of the learning strategy for any World Heritage Site.

A natural and cultural frontier

Many physical and human aspects of the landscape between what are now Scotland and England reflect a "frontier" theme, from geological times to the present day. Included within this ancient frontier zone are not only the remains of the Roman frontier but also remnants of major ecological upheavals as land masses collided millions of years ago; the traces and scars of climate change and the related ebb and flow of human settlement in marginal areas; the castles and fortified farmhouses that reflect the political process and history of the area from Roman times to the recent past; and the buildings and monuments that reflect the early Christian story when the area was an important religious frontier.

This "frontier" theme provides further links between the Roman frontier and the modern world, and between the Roman frontier and the landscape in which it is set. This linking theme is reflected in the natural and cultural landscape document.
Mapping the themes to Hadrian’s Wall – telling the story of the northwest frontier of the Roman Empire
6.1 Using the thematic structure

In parallel with the iterative development of the central theme statement and themes, the themes were mapped onto the sites along Hadrian’s Wall. Working with site staff, managers and consultant teams, the assets, unique characteristics, interpretive potential and target audiences for each site were identified. This enabled potential site themes, sub-themes and stories to be scoped, based on topics or subject areas. These were then mapped to the key themes of the Interpretation Framework in order to create a holistic and co-ordinated thematic structure through which to achieve its aims. Central to this process was the creation of an overarching concept or theme statement encapsulating the focus of interpretation for the site.

At major sites where projects are completed or in progress, this mapping exercise was undertaken in detail with project teams. At all other sites, the site themes, sub-themes and stories are indicative at this stage, and simply suggest how each site’s interpretive potential can be mapped into communicating the story of the north-west frontier. When projects are brought forward at these sites, a more detailed assessment and identification of themes will take place. For these other sites, therefore, the following tables are a guide for interpretation, not a definitive list of themes and sub-themes that should be adhered to.

To manage the thematic mapping exercise, sites were sorted into the following four groups:

- Major sites with development projects completed or in progress
- Major sites where projects may be developed in the future
- Minor site clusters
- Linked sites

The tables that follow illustrate how the sites within each group might be mapped to the thematic structure.
6.2 Major sites with development projects completed or in progress

As described above, the Interpretation Framework has both informed and been informed by the major developments currently being brought forward at sites along Hadrian’s Wall. The six sites are: the Great North Museum; Tullie House Museum; Housesteads; Roman Vindolanda; the Roman Army Museum and Roman Maryport. These are the focal points of the Interpretation Framework for the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire which focus on creating a network of differentiated but complementary offers essential to a cohesive Wall-wide visitor experience, and to realising the social, cultural and economic vision for Hadrian’s Wall.

The Great North Museum and Tullie House Museum, with their large artefact collections representing many different parts of the frontier zone, act as eastern and western “gateways” and orientation points to Hadrian’s Wall and to Hadrian’s Wall Country. Their purpose is to provide both a physical and conceptual overview of Hadrian’s Wall and the story of the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire, in contrast to the site-based interpretation that focuses on more specific themes and stories.

The Great North Museum, whose Roman Gallery is completed, focuses on Hadrian’s Wall itself and features a scale model of its full-length. This centre-piece is supported by collections-rich displays that are brought to life through the voices of individuals identified from the world-class collection of inscriptions.

The new Roman Gallery at Tullie House Museum currently under construction, focuses on communicating the wider story of the north-west Frontier of the Roman Empire, and on Britain as a military province of the Empire. The main theme of the gallery is the people of Rome, a theme that enables exploration of ideas of colonialism, citizenship and identity as well as highlighting contemporary resonances in modern experiences of frontiers, citizenship and identity.

At Housesteads, English Heritage and the National Trust are planning a project that will enable visitors to explore and understand life within one of the best preserved and most easily visible fort complexes in the Roman Empire that includes the entire complex of fort, Wall, vallum, garrison settlement, temples, parade ground, cultivated land and roads. Visitors will be able to explore the fort, Hadrian’s Wall and its dramatic landscape setting, and through comparisons and connections with other Roman frontiers and their forts, will develop an appreciation of what it must have been like to live at the edge of the Roman Empire.

At Roman Vindolanda, just completed, visitors are able to engage with the daily military and domestic life on the frontier 2,000 years ago, as revealed through the Vindolanda collections and the ongoing process of archaeological investigation and research at the site.

At the Roman Army Museum, just completed, the interpretation brings the Roman army to life by exploring themes of the army and the Empire, military tactics and training, and the diverse roles and functions of the army as an occupying force, as engineers, as architects, as administrators and as multicultural Roman citizens. It also, where possible, draws contemporary parallels with the modern military, warfare and peacekeeping. Given the broad and popular appeal of the subject, the visitor experience is more family focused, and maximises the opportunity for this facility to be a much needed wet weather attraction along Hadrian’s Wall.

At Roman Maryport, a project is being planned that will focus on communicating the relationship between a fort, its garrison and the wider Roman Empire by exploring the journeys and career paths of its people and soldiers, as revealed by the altars in the Senhouse Museum collection. At the height of its power and influence, Rome’s Empire stretched across 32 countries, a feat that meant its citizens and soldiers had to make both physical and personal journeys by land and sea to remote outposts such as the north-west frontier. The new museum displays will be enlivened by an on-going programme of excavation that will enable visitors to engage with the process of excavation and archaeological research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site and Management Organisation</th>
<th>The Great North Museum (Tyne &amp; Wear Archives &amp; Museums)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation Framework</td>
<td>Main: Edge of Empire, Frontier Lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Supporting: The Roman Army; Exploration, Discovery and Values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Concept</td>
<td>Hadrian’s Wall – its construction, function and the people who lived along it as soldiers and civilians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>Wall-wide world-class collection of large, high quality objects, especially sculpture and inscriptions. Urban location in large modern museum at the eastern end of the WHS. Partnership with the British Museum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>The displays focus on the construction and functioning of Hadrian’s Wall itself, featuring a scale reconstruction of the full length of Hadrian’s Wall, brought to life through individual stories of people identified through the inscriptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiences</td>
<td>Primary: Local people from Newcastle, Gateshead and Tyneside; people from the northeast; UK tourists; overseas tourists; lower socio-economic groups; schools; families; over 50s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site and Management Organisation</th>
<th>Tullie House Museum – Roman Frontier Gallery (Carlisle City Council)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation Framework</td>
<td>Main: People of the Empire; Edge of Empire; Britain – a Roman Province; Before and After; Power and Control. Supporting: Frontier Lives; The Roman Army; Exploration, Discovery and Values; UNESCO and WHS values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Exploring the ebb and flow of the Roman Empire’s north-west frontier across northern England and Scotland over 300 years, the story of Britain as a military province of the Empire, and the resonance with contemporary frontiers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Concept</td>
<td>Large, high quality collections from across the western end of the WHS and Cumbria including organic remains, evidence for the Roman occupation of northern England under Vespasian and later evidence of political unrest and instability in the Empire. Large modern gallery space in an urban location that is also a major transport and accommodation hub. Partnership with the BM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>The displays will explore the relationship between Britain and the Empire, symbolised by the ebb and flow of the frontier across northern Britain over 300 years. Rome was the largest and most influential empire ever to have existed in Europe. Britain was its most northerly territory or “province”. Occupation by the Empire heralded new ways of living, trading, communicating and worshipping. The Roman Empire was multicultural and as concerned with citizenship and identity as we are today. Through the “Living Wall” visitors will be encouraged to reflect on resonances with the modern world, especially the role of modern frontiers in dividing people and creating identities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiences</td>
<td>Primary: Learning families; kids-first families; sightseers; local people; schools; lifelong learners; experts; young people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Audience segmentation categories reflect those used by site management organisations and therefore vary from site to site*
### Site and Management Organisation

#### Interpretation Framework

#### Themes

**Housesteads (English Heritage, National Trust)**

- **Main:** Edge of Empire; The Roman Army; Power and Control; Frontier and its Environment.
- **Supporting:** Frontier Lives; UNESCO and WHS values.

#### Site Concept

Lives were played out in the dramatic landscape setting of this iconic garrison fort and settlement that symbolises the Frontiers of the Roman Empire WHS.

#### Assets

- Dramatic landscape setting; complete fort plan; examples of all the main building types; toilet block; largely complete and accessible garrison complex including Wall, fort, Vallum settlement, temples, burial ground, parade ground, roads; site collections, purpose built museum.

#### Description

The whole archaeological landscape of the garrison complex will be interpreted, highlighting the dramatic sense of being on the Edge of the Empire, the similarities and connections with other frontiers of the Empire, and the way these frontiers symbolise not only the power of Rome but of all Empires and the way that frontiers still divide people today. The landscape setting also provides an opportunity to present key themes from the Natural and Cultural Landscape Framework.

#### Audiences

Primary: UK overnight break visitors; English Heritage and National Trust members; overseas visitors; schools; lifelong learners; higher and further education groups; volunteers; families; people with disabilities.

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### Site and Management Organisation

#### Interpretation Framework

#### Themes

**Roman Vindolanda (The Vindolanda Trust)**

- **Main:** Frontier Lives; Exploration, Discovery and Values.
- **Supporting:** The Roman Army; Before and After; Frontier and its Environment.

#### Site Concept

Military and domestic lives are explored through the Vindolanda collections and the real people revealed by the Vindolanda writing tablets. The ongoing programme of excavation, research and conservation reveals the science, the excitement and the value of archaeological research.

#### Assets

- Vindolanda writing tablets; large and high quality collection of well preserved objects including abundant organic remains; fort and civilian settlement; on-going programme of excavation and research; landscape setting. Partnership with the British Museum.

#### Description

The new displays will explore the daily military and domestic lives of people living at Vindolanda, as revealed through the Vindolanda collections, the writing tablets and the ongoing process of archaeological investigation and research at the site. The visit to the site and to the museum will be closely linked in a journey that enables visitors to connect site and museum, themes, objects, and ongoing research.

#### Audiences

Primary: UK overnight break visitors; international visitors; visiting friends and relatives; leisure day visitors; school groups; families; coach tours; Friends of Vindolanda; volunteers; students; walkers; cyclists.
### Roman Army Museum (The Vindolanda Trust)

**Main:** The Roman Army; People of the Empire; Britain – a Roman Province.

**Supporting:** Frontier Lives; Edge of Empire.

**Site Concept**
The Roman army – creating the Empire. The organisation, functioning, training, tactics, recruitment, roles and multicultural make-up of the Roman army.

**Assets**
Large, accessible display areas in the central section of the WHS; artefacts illustrating the Roman army from Vindolanda; location adjacent to Carvoran fort and to Roman road to Whitley Castle.

**Description**
The Roman army was the key instrument in establishing and maintaining the Empire through a range of duties and functions. The displays will explore all aspects of the Roman military life and the wide range of functions the army performed in addition to its strictly military role. The multicultural nature of the army will be highlighted. The role of the army in the construction of Hadrian’s Wall will be explored in depth and the story of the Frontier revealed through 3D imagery.

**Audiences**
Primary: UK overnight break visitors; international visitors; visiting friends and relatives; leisure day visitors; school groups; families; coach tours; Friends of Vindolanda; volunteers; students; walkers; cyclists; Roman military enthusiasts.

### Roman Maryport (Allerdale Borough Council)

**Main:** People of the Empire; Frontier Lives; Edge of Empire; Exploration, Discovery and Values.

**Supporting:** Britain – a Roman Province; The Roman Army.

**Site Concept**
Maryport was one of the most remote outposts of the Roman Empire and yet was connected to the heart of the Empire through the garrison commanders, through communications and through trade.

**Assets**
Collection of altars dedicated by fort commanders; information enabling us to trace the careers of several of these commanders across the Empire; extensive garrison settlement and fort in single ownership; dramatic location on the Cumbrian coast; proposed rolling programme of archaeological investigation focusing on the garrison settlement.

**Description**
The displays will bring to life the relationship between a fort, its garrison and the wider Empire by exploring the journeys and career paths of its soldiers and citizens as revealed through the physical and personal journeys of the commanders of the garrison who came from Africa, the Balkans and Italy. This relationship will also be explored by understanding the communications, supply and trading networks of the Empire, highlighting the importance of transport by sea. The proposed ongoing programme of excavations will enable visitors to engage with the interest and excitement of archaeological research.

**Audiences**
Primary: cultural, Roman, heritage interest visitors; families; general tourists; volunteers; students; various learners.
## 6.3 Major sites where projects may be developed in the future

There are currently a further five major sites and museums across the WHS that are in need of updating and development – Arbeia, Segedunum, Corbridge, Chesters and Birdoswald. All of these sites have something important and different to offer. Their refreshment and refurbishment is essential to achieve the complete, complementary, Wall-wide and fully differentiated offer essential to maximizing the audience and visitor potential of the Hadrian’s Wall WHS. The following table suggests potential site themes and sub-themes for these sites. As outlined above, these are purely indicative and require further development by partners. However, for the purposes of the Interpretation Framework, suggested site concepts are mapped to the key themes of the Interpretation Framework as a guide to future discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Indicative Interpretation Framework Themes</th>
<th>Indicative Site Concept</th>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Indicative Description</th>
<th>Audiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arbeia Roman Fort and Museum</td>
<td>Main: Britain – a Roman Province; People of the Empire; The Roman Army. Supporting: Frontier Lives; Exploration, Discovery and Values.</td>
<td>A maritime supply depot and base for the frontier zone, Arbeia was a cultural melting pot illustrating the ethnic diversity of the Empire. The reconstructions enable us to explore Roman architecture and building and to experience the scale and atmosphere of Roman buildings.</td>
<td>Reconstructions; ongoing programme of excavation and research; collections including iconic pieces relating to ethnic diversity; supply depot with extensive granaries; east coast location.</td>
<td>Displays could explore the concept of the Roman Empire as a seafaring empire, supported by maritime military, supply and trading activities that enabled large and multi-ethnic communities to flourish. This is a legacy that survives today. The fort was also the springboard for Severus’s renewed effort to subjugate the whole of the British Isles. The reconstructions provide a particular opportunity to experience the true scale and impression of Roman buildings and to explore Roman architecture and construction.</td>
<td>Primary: East coast residents particularly lower socio-economic groups; tourists and visitors to the east coast; schools, volunteers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths and Museum

**Site**
Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths and Museum

**Indicative Interpretation Framework Themes**
Main: Britain – a Roman Province; The Roman Army; Power and Control.
Supporting: Frontier Lives; Edge of Empire; Discovery and Values; UNESCO and WHS values.

**Indicative Site Concept**
Exploring Roman military tactics through an understanding of Segedunum’s role as a cavalry fort, including the building history of Hadrian’s Wall and its changing function over time; using the site’s symbolic location at the end of Hadrian’s Wall to explore WHS values and modern resonance.

**Assets**
- Cavalry fort plan; reconstructions (baths and Wall);
- large modern display areas; most extensively excavated fort along Hadrian’s Wall; excellent education facilities and links (Burnside Cottage); location at the eastern end of Hadrian’s Wall.

**Indicative Description**
Displays could focus on the evolution of warfare and tactics on the north-west frontier at the most extensively excavated fort in the WHS. The reconstructed Wall and Buddle Street remains provide an opportunity to present Hadrian’s Wall as a frontier work and its building history. The excellent educational facilities create the opportunity to maximise the educational potential of the site, especially with regard to cross-curricular use of the WHS in schools and UNESCO values. There is also an opportunity to introduce the landscapes of Hadrian’s Wall as suggested in the Natural and Cultural Landscapes Interpretation Framework.

**Audiences**
Primary: East coast residents (Newcastle and Gateshead), particularly lower socio-economic groups; tourists and visitors to the east coast; schools, further and higher education, volunteers.

### Corbridge

**Site**
Corbridge

**Indicative Interpretation Framework Themes**
Main: Britain – a Roman Province; Edge of Empire; Before and After.
Supporting: The Roman Army; Exploration, Discovery and Values.

**Indicative Site Concept**
The Roman occupation of the north of Britain and its legacy. Also potentially an important event venue, orientation point and wet weather location.

**Assets**
- Impressive and distinctive remains of an urban settlement/supply depot; high quality collections including many religious elements; extensive event space; location just off the A69 near a key junction; museum space.

**Indicative Description**
As a long-standing fort, town and military supply depot at a central point on Hadrian’s Wall, Corbridge can provide an essential overview of more than 300 years of Roman occupation including the political, legislative and administrative systems and their legacies. It provides insights into the post-Roman world through its Anglo-Saxon connections. Corbridge also has potential as an important event space and as an information and orientation point for visitors arriving from the south and east.

**Audiences**
Primary: UK overnight break visitors; overseas visitors; schools; lifelong learners; higher and further education groups; volunteers; families.
### Chesters

**Indicative Interpretation**
- **Framework Themes**: Main: Britain – a Roman Province; Exploration, Discovery and Values. Supporting: The Roman Army.

**Indicative Site Concept**
- Antiquarian interest sowed the seeds for our understanding of Roman Britain. Also potential to highlight access for people with disabilities.

**Assets**
- Antiquarian history and collections; bath-house; bridge; accessible paths with gentle gradients, purpose built museum and visitor centre.

**Indicative Description**
- Hadrian’s Wall has been studied throughout the centuries, but particularly in the 19th century, changing our perspective on the Romans. This is celebrated in the Chesters’ Museum displays. The bridge at Chesters offers insights into Roman roads, land transport and communications. The site provides particular opportunities for access by people with disabilities as the paths are generally fairly flat. Chesters was also a cavalry fort in a key location and this could feature as an important secondary theme.

**Audiences**
- Primary: UK overnight break visitors; overseas visitors; schools; lifelong learners; higher and further education groups; volunteers; families; people with disabilities.

### Birdoswald Roman Fort

**Indicative Interpretation**
- **Framework Themes**: Main: Edge of Empire; Before and After. Supporting: Frontier Lives; The Roman Army.

**Indicative Site Concept**
- The construction and functioning of Hadrian’s Wall, the native population before, during and after the Roman occupation, the legacy of the Roman occupation.

**Assets**
- Well-preserved stretch of Hadrian’s Wall with fort, turrets, milecastles, river crossing and good stretch of earlier turf Wall; post-Roman aisled building; later construction of a bastle; recent excavations and collections including legionary stones that tell us who built Hadrian’s Wall; the identification of the builder of the granary and the link to his child in the cemetery; westerly location proves potential key WHS experience (with the Roman Army Museum) for visitors arriving from the west and linking to the Frontier Gallery at Tullie House Museum.

**Indicative Description**
- Displays could focus on the detailed story of the construction of Hadrian’s Wall, illustrated by the well-preserved elements located nearby including the earlier turf Wall. This would also provide an opportunity to explore the Roman architectural legacy. The presence of the aisled hall is a key asset enabling exploration of the post-Roman world including its military, political, religious and commercial aspects.

**Audiences**
- Primary: UK overnight break visitors; overseas visitors; volunteers; families; people with disabilities; local communities; schools; lifelong learners, further and higher education; young people and community groups; coach parties.
6 Mapping the themes to Hadrian’s Wall

6.4 Minor site clusters

The vast bulk of the Hadrian’s Wall WHS lies outwith the 12 major staffed sites and comprises a complex network of sites and features including the Wall itself, the Vallum, milecastles, turrets, forts, roads, quarries, camps etc. Interpretation of the great range of these sites can be fitted within the Interpretation Framework’s thematic structure.

The minor sites can be clustered into distinct geographical groups, influencing the nature of visits and hence the interpretation required. Suggested clusters include:

- Cumbrian coastal route, where most visitors will travel between sites by car or bicycle, probably in a single journey
- Urban clusters, where most visitors will travel between sites by car or public transport, potentially in a series of local visits
- Linear stretches of Hadrian’s Wall and circuits through the landscape, where most visitors will walk between sites, though they are likely to have reached the WHS by car or public transport

Each cluster potentially constitutes a distinct visitor offer that could have an overarching theme and sub-theme structure within which individual site themes can be developed. Suggestions as to how this could be done for several of the main site clusters are included in the tables below. The suggestions are purely indicative and need to be worked up in consultation with partners. These clusters would also provide opportunities to link with themes and topics from the Natural and Cultural Landscape Interpretation Framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Interpretation Framework</th>
<th>Minor Site Cluster Concept</th>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Audiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle – Benwell Vallum and temple; Newcastle Castle; Denton turrets; consolidated sections of the Wall</td>
<td>Main: Edge of Empire; The Roman Army; Frontier Lives; Before and After. Supporting: Power and Control.</td>
<td>The Wall beneath the city.</td>
<td>This scatter of Wall-related sites across eight miles of Newcastle is an opportunity to look at each site in the context of Hadrian’s Wall, with a focus on the lives of Roman soldiers and civilians and defending the Empire – all encouraging exploration of other sites.</td>
<td>Lives of Roman soldiers; defending the Roman Empire; Roman army and the scope and organisation of Hadrian’s Wall; fate of Hadrian’s Wall under Newcastle; the WHS.</td>
<td>Primary: The communities around each site and the broader Newcastle population; people from the northeast region; UK overnight break visitors; visiting family; people with disabilities; cultural, Roman and heritage interest visitors; school groups; lower socio-economic groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## 6 Mapping the themes to Hadrian’s Wall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Wall: mile 22 – mile 24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretation Framework Themes</strong></td>
<td>Main: The Roman Army; Edge of Empire. Supporting: Before and After; The Frontier and its Environment; People of the Empire; Frontier Lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minor Site Cluster Concept</strong></td>
<td>The Vallum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assets</strong></td>
<td>This stretch of Hadrian’s Wall constitutes an excellent opportunity to understand the Vallum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Function and construction of the Vallum and its later use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audiences</strong></td>
<td>Primary: Leisure day visitors; families; communities and schools from Humshaugh, Chollerton and Hexham; people from the northeast region; UK overnight break visitors; international visitors; general tourists; walkers; cultural, Roman and heritage interest visitors; experts; lifelong learners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Wall: mile 26 – mile 27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretation Framework Themes</strong></td>
<td>Main: The Roman Army; Edge of Empire. Supporting: Before and After; The Frontier and its Environment; People of the Empire; Frontier Lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minor Site Cluster Concept</strong></td>
<td>Organisation and the Wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assets</strong></td>
<td>This stretch of Hadrian’s Wall, close to Chesters fort, shows how it was organised. It includes an opportunity to look at the lives of the smallest garrisons who manned the turrets and the engineering achievements of the bridge builders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Organising Hadrian’s Wall defences; building a Roman bridge; beliefs of Roman soldiers; functions of turrets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audiences</strong></td>
<td>Primary: Leisure day visitors; families; communities and schools Humshaugh, Chollerton and Hexham; people from the northeast region; UK overnight break visitors; international visitors; general tourists; walkers; cultural, Roman and heritage interest visitors; experts; lifelong learners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6 Mapping the themes to Hadrian's Wall

#### Carrawburgh Fort

**Group of Sites:** Carrawburgh Fort

**Interpretation Framework Themes:**
- Main: People of the Empire; Frontier Lives; Power and Control.
- Supporting: Exploration, Discovery and Values; The Roman Army.

**Minor Site Cluster Concept:**
The religious beliefs of the Roman army can be explored at Carrawburgh Fort.

**Assets:**
The two shrines at Carrawburgh reveal two different sets of religious beliefs – votive offerings to a water nymph and ordeals of the Mithraic cult, with links to sites along Hadrian's Wall.

**Description:**
Roman and native religious beliefs; survival of indigenous culture; cult of Mithras; multicultural aspect of the Empire; trials of life in Roman Britain; impact of treasure hunting; undisturbed and well preserved fort platform.

**Audiences:**
- Primary: Leisure day visitors; UK overnight break visitors; local communities and schools from Humshaugh, Chollerton and Hexham; people from the northeast region; people with disabilities; walkers; cultural, Roman and heritage interest visitors; experts; lifelong learners.

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#### MC.33 – T.35A

**Group of Sites:** MC.33 – T.35A

**Interpretation Framework Themes:**
- Main: The Roman Army; Edge of Empire.
- Supporting: Before and After; Britain – a Roman Province.

**Minor Site Cluster Concept:**
The military and the Wall – adapting to changing needs and the destructive impact of the Military Road.

**Assets:**
A two-mile section of Hadrian's Wall that shows how the different elements of the frontier structure were used, as well as the impact of the 18th-century Military Road.

**Description:**
The defensive elements of Hadrian’s Wall; how the Roman army defended and controlled the frontier; changing needs and capabilities of Hadrian's Wall; impact of the Military Road.

**Audiences:**
- Primary: UK overnight break visitors; local community and school groups from Bardon Mill and Haydon Bridge; people from the northeast region; walkers; cultural, Roman and heritage interest visitors.
### Group of Sites
- **6 Mapping the themes to Hadrian’s Wall**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Interpretation Framework</th>
<th>Minor Site Cluster Concept</th>
<th>Assets</th>
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<th>Audiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>6 Mapping the themes to Hadrian’s Wall</strong></td>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
<td>The iconic status of Hadrian’s Wall and its landscape.</td>
<td>Circuit includes an impressive stretch of Hadrian’s Wall and landscape close to Vindolanda and the Once Brewed Visitors Centre.</td>
<td>Opportunity to interpret Hadrian’s Wall in the environment it was imposed upon, with a chance to see native settlement remains and explore the countryside as well as consider its iconic and WHS status. Engineering achievement of Hadrian’s Wall; adapting to changing needs of the province; landscape of Hadrian’s Wall Country; native forts and settlements; changing climate of Britain; the Stanegate frontier before Hadrian’s Wall; impact of treasure hunting; Hadrian’s Wall in the movies; WHS.</td>
<td>Primary: Leisure day visitors; local community and school groups from Haltwhistle; UK overnight break visitors; general tourists; walkers; cultural, Roman and heritage interest visitors; lifelong learners; experts; higher and further education groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Interpretation Framework</th>
<th>Minor Site Cluster Concept</th>
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<th>Description</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>6 Mapping the themes to Hadrian’s Wall</strong></td>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
<td>Hadrian’s Wall Country in flux – before, during and after the Roman period.</td>
<td>Impressive section of Hadrian’s Wall west of Steel Rigg with good view of the Vallum, the military way and the Stanegate.</td>
<td>The landscape’s use changed over millennia, from Bronze age ritual, Roman defences with the military way, medieval farming and modern quarrying, all evident on this stretch of Hadrian’s Wall over the Whin Sill, including the Vallum. Protection and conservation of Hadrian’s Wall; geology of Whin Sill; Roman and later quarrying; indigenous cultures; importance of the military way; reuse of Hadrian’s Wall.</td>
<td>Primary: UK overnight break visitors; general tourists; walkers; cultural, Roman and heritage interest visitors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6 Mapping the themes to Hadrian’s Wall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>T.44B – Wall mile 45</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation Framework Themes</td>
<td>Main: The Roman Army; The Frontier and its Environment; Edge of Empire. Supporting: Exploration, Discovery and Values; Frontier Lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Site Cluster Concept</td>
<td>How the Romans exploited the landscape to defend their frontier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>An impressive section of Hadrian’s Wall over the Walltown Crags, with dramatic landscape over the quarry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Opportunity to explore the geology of Whin Sill and how the Romans used it to their advantage. Adapting the landscape to the frontier; the geology of Whin Sill; the frontier before Hadrian’s Wall; the origins of the garrison; the changing climate of Britain; how Hadrian’s Wall defences worked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiences</td>
<td>Primary: Leisure day visitors; UK overnight break visitors; international visitors; local community from Walltown and Haltwhistle; Haltwhistle schools; visitors without transport; walkers; families; people with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>MC.48 – MC.49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor Site Cluster Concept</td>
<td>The scope and engineering achievement of Hadrian’s Wall and the operation of the system of milecastles and turrets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>An impressive section of Hadrian’s Wall near Birdoswald with turrets and a bridge abutment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Opportunity to explore the ambition, organisation and engineering that went into building Hadrian’s Wall, and how the Romans interacted with the landscape. The scope of Hadrian’s Wall; how Hadrian’s Wall worked; building a Roman bridge; using and adapting to the landscape; the domestic lives of Roman soldiers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiences</td>
<td>Primary: Leisure day visitors; UK overnight break visitors; local community and schools from Gilsland and Greenhead; people from the northwest region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Group of Sites
- **T.51A – T.52A**

### Interpretation Framework

#### Themes
- Main: The Roman Army; Britain – a Roman Province; Frontier Lives.

#### Minor Site Cluster Concept
- Roman soldiers on a dynamic frontier.

#### Assets
- Impressive section of Hadrian’s Wall with four towers and turrets, and archaeology showing the dynamic nature of the frontier.

#### Description
- Opportunity to explore the detailed operation of the turret system, with comparisons to other frontiers. How Hadrian’s Wall worked; evolving and adapting Hadrian’s Wall; domestic lives of soldiers in the military machine; pre-Wall frontier.

#### Audiences
- Primary: UK overnight break visitors; people from the northwest region; people with disabilities; walkers; cultural, Roman and heritage interest visitors; community and secondary school from Brampton.

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### Group of Sites
- **Carlisle – Carlisle Castle, Stanwix Fort and the line of Hadrian’s Wall between MC.65 and MC.64**

### Interpretation Framework

#### Themes
- Main: Edge of Empire; Before and After; Power and Control.
- Supporting: The Roman Army; Frontier Lives.

#### Minor Site Cluster Concept
- Defending frontiers through the centuries.

#### Assets
- Closely linked group of sites in an urban setting; interpreted through Tullie House.

#### Description
- Sites in and around Carlisle reveal the dynamic nature of frontiers – Roman, before and after Hadrian’s Wall, and medieval between England and Scotland. The dynamic nature of the Roman frontier; moving a fort; the Roman cavalry; the Wall beneath Carlisle; Roman lives in fort and town; the castle and frontiers through history.

#### Audiences
- Primary: Learning families; sightseers; residents and schools of Carlisle and hinterland; lifelong learners; cultural, Roman and heritage interest visitors; people from northwest region; UK overnight break visitors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Cumbrian and Solway Coast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation Framework Themes</td>
<td>Main: The Roman Army; Edge of Empire; The Frontier and its Environment. Supporting: Britain – a Roman Province.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Site Cluster Concept</td>
<td>The Cumbrian Coastal Defences protected the province from raiders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>Coastal location with clear linked theme, Ravenglass Fort bath-house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Scattered coastal sites from Ravenglass to Bowness-on-Solway tell the story of Hadrian’s Wall’s coastal equivalent. Protecting the Cumbrian coast; coastal raiding; the military machine; the landscape of the Cumbrian coast and Solway Firth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiences</td>
<td>Primary: cultural, Roman and heritage interest visitors; families; general tourists; students; volunteers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.5 Linked sites

Understanding the frontier and its complex history benefits from inclusion of linked sites north and south of Hadrian’s Wall that can be fitted within the Interpretation Framework’s thematic structure. This provides a broader perspective on the idea of a dynamic frontier whose story can be explored across a great swathe of the UK stretching from the legionary fortresses at Chester and York up to Perthshire. It reveals rich connections between sites both geographically and thematically, drawing out stories that illuminate many facets of Hadrian’s Wall and the frontier. This approach can enrich the visitor experience and understanding as well as encouraging visitors to explore other places that have connections with the northwest frontier narrative. There are particular opportunities to develop interpretive and visitor links with the Antonine Wall, with sites along Dere Street and “outpost” sites such as Bewcastle.

As with the preceding tables, the suggestions below are purely indicative and need to be developed in detail with partners as proposals and opportunities arise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Hadrian’s Wall outposts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation Framework</td>
<td>Main: The Roman Army; Edge of Empire; Britain – a Roman Province. Supporting: Power and Control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Sites Cluster Concept</td>
<td>The Roman army beyond Hadrian’s Wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>Atmosphere and landscape of High Rochester; location of Bewcastle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>The Romans stationed troops in forts north of Hadrian’s Wall while it was garrisoned, revealing a broader concept of the frontier and its function. The Romans and the Brigantes; the tribes of southern Scotland and Nothumberland; intelligence gathering; defending roads north; Roman and native religion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Dere Street forts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation Framework</td>
<td>Main: The Roman Army; Edge of Empire; Britain – a Roman Province; Before and After. Supporting: Power and Control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Sites Cluster Concept</td>
<td>The Roman army behind Hadrian’s Wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>Piercebridge bridge abutments and fort; Binchester fort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Linked group of sites providing an introduction to Hadrian’s Wall approaching up the A1. Occupation of the north; supply and communications; late/post Roman legacy and change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Mapping the themes to Hadrian’s Wall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Hinterland sites in the Lake District and North Pennines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation Framework Themes</td>
<td>Main: The Roman Army; Edge of Empire; Britain – a Roman Province; Frontier and its Environment. Supporting: Power and Control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Sites Cluster Concept</td>
<td>Exploiting and controlling mineral production – lead and silver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>Whitley Castle; Maiden Way road; Hardknott fort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Exploring the exploitation of mineral resources by the Romans.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Campaign camps and forts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation Framework Themes</td>
<td>Main: The Roman Army; Before and After.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Sites Cluster Concept</td>
<td>On the offensive on the frontier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>Pennymuir Camp; Chew Green Fortlet; Cramond Fort; Ardoch Fort; Inchtuthil Legionary Fortress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>The Romans pushed their frontier into new territories, using camps to protect the invading armies from hostile natives. The role of the frontier to conquer; resisting and collaborating with the Romans; building camps; the Agricolan and Severan invasions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>The Gask Frontier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation Framework Themes</td>
<td>Main: Edge of Empire; The Roman Army; Britain – a Roman Province. Supporting: Before and After.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Sites Cluster Concept</td>
<td>Experimenting with frontiers – controlling movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>Ardunie, Parkneuk Kirkhill and Muir O’ Fauld watchtower sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>The Gask Frontier controlled movement, a frontier function with more in common with the WHS frontier in Germany and the Stanegate than Hadrian’s Wall. Controlling and/or defending a frontier; the Agricolan invasion; different frontier strategies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 6 Mapping the themes to Hadrian’s Wall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Other forts in Scotland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretation Framework Themes</strong></td>
<td>Main: Britain – a Roman Province; Edge of Empire; The Roman Army. Supporting: Before and After.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linked Sites Cluster Concept</strong></td>
<td>The failed attempts to conquer Scotland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assets</strong></td>
<td>Newstead Fort; Birrens training site; Durisdeer Fort; Bothwellhaugh bath-house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>A network of forts covers lowland Scotland north of Hadrian’s Wall, evidence of repeated attempts to conquer and subjugate Hadrian’s Wall’s northern neighbours. Failure had major repercussions for the province and Hadrian’s Wall. The frontier as cutting edge of conquest; enduring hostility to the Romans; legacy of not conquering Scotland; defending conquered territory; influence of Empire politics on Britain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Sites</th>
<th>Antonine Wall sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretation Framework Themes</strong></td>
<td>Main: Edge of Empire; People of the Empire; Before and After. Supporting: Exploration, Discovery and Values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linked Sites Cluster Concept</strong></td>
<td>The other Wall - a new frontier for Britain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assets</strong></td>
<td>Bearsden bath-house; Bar Hill Fort; Rough Castle; Watling Lodge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>The Antonine Wall raises the question of why the frontier was moved north and then returned to Hadrian’s Wall. It also raises the WHS status it shares with Hadrian’s Wall. Why Hadrian’s Wall was abandoned; building the Antonine Wall from turf; different frontier strategies; why the Antonine Wall was abandoned; World Heritage status.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Group of Sites: Other Roman sites in Northern England

**Themes**
- Main: The Roman Army; Before and After; Britain – a Roman Province.

**Linked Sites Cluster Concept**
- The Romans in northern Britain – living on the southern edge of the military zone.

**Assets**
- Legionary fortresses at York and Chester; opportunities to link interpretation; providing a reason to visit some of the smaller sites as well as promoting a visit to Hadrian’s Wall.

**Description**
- North from the two legionary fortresses at York and Chester, a network of roads, towns and forts linked the southern part of the province with the hinterland of Hadrian’s Wall. The power of the Roman legions; impact of Roman Empire politics on Britain; importance of the transport network; resisting the Romans and policing local people; supporting Hadrian’s Wall.

### Group of Sites: Indigenous sites

**Themes**
- Main: Before and After; Britain – a Roman Province.
- Supporting: The Roman Army.

**Linked Sites Cluster Concept**
- The native people responded to the Roman presence in many ways.

**Assets**
- Stanwick Camp; Ewe Close; Warden Hill; Traprain Law; Edin’s Hall Broch; Greaves Ash Camp.

**Description**
- Indigenous sites reveal many responses to the Romans – some adopted Roman habits and luxuries while others seemed relatively untouched. Imposing a Roman frontier on non-Romans; influence of Roman culture; diplomatic bribes and frontier politics; supplying the Roman army.
Using the Interpretation Framework - delivering change on the ground

A young girl participates in experimental archaeology © Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums
7.1 Planning interpretation

So far, this Interpretation Framework has presented the argument for change and provided the principles and thematic framework through which the issues identified with Hadrian’s Wall can be addressed. This section provides guidance on how these changes can be implemented on the ground.

This guidance is underpinned by the knowledge that organisations will need to undertake detailed interpretive planning for the sites in their care. This interpretive planning process will be informed by organisational practices and procedures but should be iterative and comprise the following elements devised to reflect the particular circumstances and issues of Hadrian’s Wall.

Identifying the assets – review of a site and/or collections to identify opportunities i.e. features, objects, etc. for enhanced presentation and interpretation with a view to broadening audiences to Hadrian’s Wall.

Ideally, these assets should be mapped to the key themes of the Interpretation Framework to help demonstrate how the physical assets of Hadrian’s Wall can sit within the intellectual logic of the Interpretation Framework and how it can be delivered on the ground.

The key point here is to recognise that objects can be considered in many different ways and can be used to illustrate many different themes. This is familiar territory to an archaeologist who is used to thinking about an object in many ways – in terms of technology, art, social status, trade, manufacture and so on. This way of thinking simply needs to be informed by an audience perspective and in relationship to the framework themes, identifying those themes that the objects best illustrate and how these may work effectively with potential audiences.
Identifying access opportunities – access to the sites along Hadrian’s Wall is extremely variable and is therefore a primary consideration within any strategy that seeks to develop audiences through enhanced interpretation. Alongside the asset review an access review should be undertaken, identifying opportunities for on- and off-site interpretation.

At Birdoswald, the westerly location of the site provides an opportunity for a close link with the Frontier Gallery at Tullie House Museum and with the Roman Army Museum at Carvoran to create a visitor offer for visitors based or holidaying in Cumbria. Corbridge is potentially well located as an information and interpretation hub for the central section of Hadrian’s Wall while the relatively flat access at Chesters provides opportunities for “access for all”.

Identifying themes and stories – based on the asset review, site themes and stories for communication should be identified and mapped onto the Interpretation Framework themes. This process should include development of an overarching site concept or central theme statement that draws together all key themes so that the site has a clear identity and message which can be communicated and promoted simply.

For example, a review of collections at Roman Vindolanda identified the writing tablets as a key archaeological asset and the stories and people revealed by the tablets as a key interpretive opportunity that would resonate with visitors. This led to the development of “Roman Lives on the Frontier” as the overarching interpretive concept for the site. This site theme maps to the Interpretation Framework theme Frontier Lives.

Identifying audiences – review of existing audience data to highlight visitor and non-visitor groups both of whom should be the target for enhanced interpretation. This is covered in more detail in section 7.2 below.

Identifying opportunities for differentiated interpretation – the focus groups highlighted that responses to themes are inextricably linked to how themes are delivered. Therefore, the final element of the interpretation planning process is to identify ways in which the identified themes and stories can be delivered that are different, yet complementary, to adjacent and more distant sites.

This requires an assessment of the widest possible interpretive methods and media. Special consideration should be given to approaches that enable the greatest levels of active participation and engagement and response to audience questions as well as the conservation and management needs of sites.

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*93 In this context access includes ease of access by all forms of transport as well as pedestrian access and “access for all.”*
7.2 Meeting audience needs

Effective interpretation of Hadrian’s Wall depends on shifting the focus from the resource to the audience; on creating experiences that balance audience needs with resource considerations.

While we know that visitors value authenticity and sincerity, imaginative interpretation cannot be restricted to absolute knowledge as determined by academic rigour. Acknowledging gaps in understanding, informed speculation and challenging accepted views are all effective ways to engage with visitors. Admitting what we do not know is a powerful way of inviting visitors to engage with scholarly discussion. By relaxing control over the interpretation to a degree, audiences can be empowered to contribute their own perspectives and understanding. This will help visitors to learn and make Hadrian’s Wall part of their cultural environment.

This approach has scope to address many of the public benefits that have been targeted by the British Government, public agencies and other bodies, including encouraging learning, transferable skills development, contributing to local culture and engaging with issues such as identity and citizenship.

Clearly, this has implications for the interpretive methods used. A focus on encouraging community learning in an urban area, for instance, will require a vibrant, interactive and constantly changing offer to meet the needs of repeat visitors. On the other hand, a site that is popular with coach-tour operators and older visitors would demand a different solution.

Knowing your target audience is critical to creating effective and successful interpretation.

A young girl plays with an interactive display at Arbeia
© Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums
7 Using the Interpretation Framework

7.3 Making better use of available assets and resources

Critical to delivering change on the ground is the better use of all the available resources. Current interpretation along Hadrian’s Wall draws on four key assets – archaeology, collections, landscape and people.

The archaeological assets – the Wall and associated structures – are the principal focus of interpretation in the WHS at present. This reliance on archaeology is particularly true of the central sector, where the upland terrain has preserved more remains than in the heavily cultivated lowland areas. The approach understandably tends to be accompanied by an emphasis on conservation rather than the needs and interests of visitors. By contrast, there is much less visible archaeology in the urban areas of Carlisle and Tyneside, and so different approaches to interpretation are more common, including the use of reconstructions and outreach activities.

In future, there needs to be a greater balance in the use of archaeology with other resources and interpretive methods that can aid in the visitor experience. This is critical in creating an offer that engages visitors and potential visitors, and will provide variety.

Another example is the altars at Roman Maryport. From an academic perspective the altars are of great importance in revealing the career paths of senior military officers as well as the obvious religious connection. From a visitor-facing interpretive perspective, they can be used to illustrate the physical and personal journeys officers made across the Empire, the multicultural identity of the Empire’s senior officials, communications, supply and trade, using named individuals to bring these themes into sharp, personal focus. These site themes map to the Interpretation Framework key themes “People of the Empire”, “Frontier Lives”, “Edge of Empire” and “Exploration, Discovery and Values”.

Greater and more varied use can be made of collections to convey the story of the north-west frontier and in enhancing visitors’ experience of Hadrian’s Wall. As well as archaeology, collections also include archives and documents, pictures and photographs, sound recordings etc. Used appropriately, these authentic and often familiar objects provide personal insights into the people who built Hadrian’s Wall and lived in its shadow that can help audiences empathise and connect with the past.

The landscape provides not only a visible influence on and context for Hadrian’s Wall but also has appeal in its own right, from lowland countryside and upland crags to the great Solway estuary and the urban sprawl of Carlisle and Tyneside. Interpreting the landscape surrounding the WHS’s sites can help visitors look beyond a few individual monuments to explore more of the area. Many of these opportunities are set out in the complementary Interpretation Framework for the Natural and Cultural Landscape of Hadrian’s Wall. However, there is also a need to explore the historic landscape – for instance, the climate was warmer during the Roman occupation but it still rained a lot, and must have been bitter for those soldiers who came from much warmer countries.

Staff at sites along Hadrian’s Wall and who live and work in the countryside around the WHS constitute perhaps the best resource for communicating with visitors. They provide a human face to the WHS, welcoming visitors and helping them make the connections to Hadrian’s Wall and its sites. Their daily interaction with visitors means that these individuals probably know most about visitors to Hadrian’s Wall – what they want and where they go – and can be an invaluable tool in the ongoing evaluation and development of the visitor experience.

Volunteers can add to the staff resource and provide essential support to the work of organisations and sites, from guiding and managing visitors to participating in archaeological investigations. Their active engagement with sites presents a remarkable learning opportunity as well as the chance to learn new skills. Volunteering opportunities can strengthen community links through the recruitment of local people. Their enthusiasm and knowledge makes them effective goodwill ambassadors for the site and powerful communicators for visitors.

A key principle of this Interpretation Framework is the need to work in partnership. This includes joint initiatives and arrangements between different parties with a direct interest in the interpretation of Hadrian’s Wall. It might also include other bodies, such as community groups, local authorities, educational establishments, national heritage organisations, museums, funding bodies and businesses.

By working together, a greater pool of expertise and resource can be brought to bear to provide better visitor experiences.

All these resources play a vital role in developing audiences for Hadrian’s Wall.
7.4 Methods and media

There are many methods and media that can be used to deliver interpretive messages along Hadrian's Wall. While research tells us that some of the most effective experiences are those created by personal interpretation, this method is simply not always appropriate, practical or affordable. Therefore, other methods and media need to be used.

The following sections explore some of the main methods and media for interpreting Hadrian's Wall and highlight their strengths and weaknesses. Case studies are used to illustrate interpretive principles and methods in practice and to inspire those who are using this Interpretation Framework to develop their own interpretation.

Whatever method is used, research has identified that maintenance and cleanliness are key factors that affect perception, value and visitation along Hadrian's Wall.

7.4.1 Personal interpretation

Personal interpretation, or live interpretation, encompasses a range of activities that involve someone talking to visitors. It includes guided tours, demonstrations, costumed interpretation, re-enactments, performances and storytelling. It can also encompass interpretive conversation delivered by front-of-house employees and volunteers.

People can deliver some of the most effective interpretation, making personal connections with visitors that help them empathise with past lives and experiences and make their own meanings. They can deliver authentic, dynamic experiences that can respond flexibly to the challenges and requirements of each visitor or group and they can prompt repeat visits. On the downside, personal interpretation requires quality-controlled training to impart the required skills to ensure quality and consistency and can be a drain on stretched operational budgets. In spite of this, visitor research consistently highlights the value visitors place on personal interpretation.

Moreover, personal interpretation can provide clear community benefits. It offers employment to local people and it gives people the opportunity to volunteer. There is no better advocate for a local area than the people who live and work there and whose pride in the area can be communicated through their interaction with visitors. As cultural ambassadors, they can convey not only an understanding of the place but also a deep understanding of the value of the place, cultural capital that can be spread by their contact with others. Furthermore, if volunteers receive training there may be opportunities for employment or to develop the commercial potential of their new skills and knowledge and re-invest it in the local economy.

The thoughts of Volunteer Heritage Guides for Hadrian’s Wall give a clear insight into the opportunity:

“Guiding at Vindolanda is really worthwhile and enjoyable as one communicates the benefits of ‘digging up the past’, and preserving and interpreting it” (Neill Harris, Hadrian’s Wall Volunteer Heritage Guide, central cluster sites)

“I personally feel that I am going from strength to strength. I consider myself to be a fairly shy person but this wonderful experience is definitely bringing me out of my shell. Just the other day I was able to guide 40+ visitors around Vindolanda and talk them through the delights of a complicated site in a beautiful setting” (Catherine Jarvis, Hadrian’s Wall Volunteer Heritage Guide, central cluster sites)

The benefits that can be derived from personal interpretation mean that it provides an important method through which the issues associated with Hadrian’s Wall can begin to be addressed.
Case Study: Audley End House, Essex – bringing stories to life

Costumed interpretation was introduced to Audley End, a stately home in Essex, in 2008, to provide personal and dynamic interpretation. Its purpose is to engage visitors with the history of the property and, specifically, to encourage family and repeat visitors. Professional actors bring life to the rooms, performing tasks and interacting with visitors to help them empathise with, understand and relate to the lives of staff in the Service Wing of the house in the 1880s. This should prompt them to make their own powerful and memorable meanings. Characters’ stories are based on research into named individuals who lived and worked at Audley End, thus creating an authentic visitor experience. The approach was extended to the stables in 2010.

Budget constraints restrict the amount of costumed interpretation that English Heritage can afford so in the absence of real people, video footage of the characters is projected onto walls. Text panels add a further layer of interpretation. Visitor research has shown both actors and video are popular, with visitor numbers increasing by 12 per cent from 2008 to 100,000 in 2009.

Case Study: Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh – inspiring and enthusing visitors and the community through volunteer guides

The garden guide programme aims to both inspire and enthuse visitors while fostering community support for the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE). Local volunteers lead twice-daily tours that reveal hidden dimensions of the garden, such as the scientific research, horticultural activities and conservation work carried out by staff. Some 1,000 visitors were expected to join these tours in 2010.

The programme relies on guides having the depth of knowledge required to respond to the many questions that visitors might ask. The latest group of recruits went through a four-month training programme to prepare them to lead tours, which represents a significant investment of resources by the RBGE. Monthly meetings for all the guides are addressed by representatives of different sections of the RBGE to keep them informed of the latest developments and to tie the tours into garden events and activities. The meetings also provide opportunities for volunteers to express observations and views that are often acted upon, further developing their sense of ownership and support of the RBGE. The volunteers are thus presented with a remarkable opportunity to learn and gain skills.

A key aspect of the programme’s success is maintaining the guides’ enthusiasm. The tours play a major role in explaining the RBGE’s work to the public, and the contribution of volunteers is clearly and actively valued. This recognition engenders loyalty and the volunteers’ passion is infectious both within the RBGE and in the wider community, further encouraging local support for the RBGE.
7.4.2 Events and public programmes

Events and public programmes are regularly used to attract new audiences to sites and give repeat visitors new perspectives and experiences. They can also be used to spread visitor numbers throughout the year, particularly outside of the peak season, which is a particular issue in the central sector of Hadrian’s Wall.

However, events and public programme also work on another level. Public programmes are often intangible. In order to make them tangible they need to develop substance, and this requires promotion. By creating programmes around a single theme or idea, or set of themes, public programmes can become campaigns; calls to action. They can take on substance, both ideologically and physically, through the venues that host the activities. They can become a core part of the visitor offer in a vibrant, imaginative and relevant way, adding value and variety to the visitor experience.

Public programmes can also be focused around particular types of activity in order to attract audiences who are not prompted to visit through existing presentation or interpretive approaches. For example, by putting on theatrical performances, by hosting storytelling events, by providing arts-based activities, the appeal of Hadrian’s Wall can be broadened beyond the interests and needs of existing audiences.

English Heritage already runs a very successful events programme at its Hadrian’s Wall sites. Historically, these were largely re-enactment spectacles. However, more recently there has been greater use of living history and experimental archaeology displays. Further development of this engaging programme would encourage family visits and develop new audiences.

In addition, a move towards more widespread public programming that would provide a more diverse range of activities, such as music, dance, theatre, storytelling and opportunities for audiences to participate and get involved whatever their age, is required. This would complement and add value to the existing re-enactment programme.

With so many sites along Hadrian’s Wall whose interpretation focuses on communicating the story of the north–west frontier of the Roman Empire, there is enormous potential to work in partnership to use events and public programmes as a key strategy for audience development.

Case Study: Party at the Palace, Linlithgow Palace – attracting new audiences through storytelling, drama and experimental archaeology

A recreated royal marriage was the focus of Party at the Palace, but it was the personal interaction that helped make the event a highlight of Scotland’s Year of Homecoming. Costumed figures mingled with the public and answered their questions, while the palace kitchens were reinstated with period food such as a gilded boar’s head and costumed staff who helped local children prepare bread. The multitude of opportunities for engagement and participation drew on a single theme and event.

Two days of costumed interpretation, celebrations and jousting began with a costumed royal marriage procession escorted by eight mounted knights in armour that paraded up Linlithgow High Street to the ruined palace in May 2009. It was loosely based on the marriage of James IV and Margaret Tudor in 1503. Although the actual wedding was staged at Holyrood Palace, its recreation was relocated to Linlithgow as a contemporary royal palace that could hold large numbers of visitors.

Party at the Palace aimed to attract new audiences, add value to the experiences of repeat visitors and strengthen community links between the property and local people. It seems to have succeeded, attracting 6,149 visitors, 73 per cent of whom lived less than 30 miles away. Anecdotally, some subsequently became repeat visitors. Partly as a result, visitor numbers for the Historic Scotland property in the 2009 season rose to 61,588, compared to 47,766 the previous year.

Medieval celebration: A new audience was drawn to the Party at the Palace, which attracted record visitor numbers to Linlithgow Palace and significantly boosted levels relative to other Historic Scotland sites in 2009. Picture © Rob McDougall www.robmcdougall.com
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Case study: Up the Wall, Chester Performs – redefining sites

A two-day annual contemporary arts festival – Up the Wall – transformed Chester’s city walls into an arts venue that attracted more than 3,000 visitors from Cheshire, Merseyside and Wales in October 2009. A large proportion of these visitors were families and there was evidence of subsequent repeat visits. This audience was attracted to engage with Chester’s heritage by artists from the Chester area, the UK and abroad, who had been invited to interpret a brief that focused on the walls themselves. In 2009, the unifying theme was the decline of the Roman Empire, in 2010 walls and barriers.

Up the Wall is organised by Chester Performs, a body supported by West Cheshire and Chester Council, to celebrate the walls, attract a new audience and give the existing audience a new perspective. Visitors make a twilight promenade around the walls encountering artists and installations along the way. The event also serves as a platform for Cheshire’s arts scene with community involvement, in 2009 from local design students.

7.4.3 Outreach

Closely associated with public programming, is outreach. Outreach can engage communities and school audiences in Hadrian’s Wall. It can bring heritage to audiences that might not otherwise encounter it, or who perceive it as irrelevant. It not only enables policy objectives to be met but can also encourage future visits and nurture community ownership, pride, engagement and support in the site. The public engagement exercise highlighted a lack of community interest and ownership in Hadrian’s Wall that was expressed through the difficulty in recruiting participants to on-site visits and focus groups. Outreach activities are an important way through which to explore this issue further and break down barriers between local people and the WHS.

Case study: Who Do We Think We Are? Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery – tackling issues in schools

Who Do We Think We Are? was a touring assembly enjoyed by 1,081 children, many at schools within 10 miles of Hadrian’s Wall. It engaged children, aged between seven and 11, in issues of race and identity. Many were from families who would not normally visit museums or heritage sites.

The assembly, which was produced and delivered around Cumbria in 2009 by Tullie House Museum, used the Romans as an example of the contribution of different peoples to contemporary British identity and culture. Modern foods like olives and figs were used alongside genuine artefacts and the stories of Hadrian’s Wall to explore the Roman legacy in Britain. This was then linked to contemporary multiculturalism, giving heritage relevance and a human dimension.

The assembly had cross-curricula educational potential, while serving to encourage school groups and families to subsequently visit the museum, where a temporary exhibition about multiculturalism was being held.
7 Using the Interpretation Framework

7.4.4 Exhibitions and displays

The display of archaeology, artefacts and collections should be determined by visitor needs, interests and perspectives. It should therefore be strongly influenced by the identified target audiences. At the same time, these audiences should help to determine the themes and stories presented, to interpret evidence and to engage with uncertainty. They should also be offering fun experiences that can support learning where appropriate. Having fun is particularly important for children and hence families as visits undertaken in early years of childhood can help foster family capital that is drawn on in later years. With imagination, play can be effectively mixed with interpretation.

Case Study: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow – empowering visitors to influence display

The perspective of visitors was put at the heart of interpretive planning and practice at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. Prior to the museum’s reopening in 2006, following a three-year repair and redisplay programme, extensive engagement with visitors, non-visitors and other interested parties helped inform the work of the project team in determining themes, stories and exhibits. Their needs, interests and views provided fundamental reference points for the redisplay. Audience panels continue to influence every element of the museum’s displays from interactives and panel texts to learning resources and retail products.

Objects are used to tell stories that inspire visitors to look closely and think deeply. Particular displays are targeted at particular audiences, an approach that impacts on everything from the height of plinths to the design of graphics. Maintaining a meaningful dialogue with visitors has kept the museum’s interpretation focused on delivering the best possible visitor experience. The upshot is some provocative and playful juxtaposition and innovative labelling of artefacts to tell those stories in which visitors are most interested. Partly as a result, the redisplayed Kelvingrove is Scotland’s most popular visitor attraction with 1.3 million visitors in 2009, while its schools activities and programming are consistently oversubscribed.

Getting heard: a young visitor at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow © Culture and Sport Glasgow: Museums
Case Study: Varus Battle Museum, Germany – engaging visitors with uncertainty

The uncertain nature of archaeological evidence is embraced by the Varus Battle Museum in Kalkriese, Germany, and visitors are encouraged to speculate and propose their own interpretations. The express intention is to present facts, spark curiosity and get people involved.

The museum, which opened in 2002, contains artefacts recovered from ongoing excavation of a battlefield where it is thought three Roman legions were destroyed by Germanic tribes in AD9. The interpretation around those artefacts is based on alternative perspectives, including those of: the Roman general Varus and Germanic leader Arminius; of historians seeking to assess the significance of the battle as modern propaganda; and of archaeologists assessing whether this really is the site of the battle and how the physical evidence can be interpreted. Visitors are empowered to make their own meanings, creating a particularly memorable experience.

The experts maintain that admitting gaps in their knowledge does not diminish their authority. Instead, this openness involves visitors and makes the museum more engaging. Last year, the 2000th anniversary of the battle, 220,000 people visited the museum, despite its distance from urban centres.

Case Study: Budongo Trail, Edinburgh Zoo – learning through fun

The interpretation at Budongo Trail, Edinburgh Zoo's chimpanzee enclosure that opened in 2008, helps visitors learn through having fun. This approach starts from the understanding that learning is a relatively low priority for visitors, most of whom simply want a family day out.

So the focus is on providing entertaining visitor experiences that impart take-home messages using interactivity and game playing to maximise learning. For instance, a floor-level animation prompts viewers – principally young children – to knuckle walk, hence exploring chimpanzee anatomy, while touch-screen memory games – intended to appeal to older children – simulate foraging behaviour. Staff further engage visitors with hands-on experiences, while there are further layers of interpretation that repeat visitors and those who want to learn more can explore. Parents whose children are engaged in play are then freed to engage with more serious messages.

The success of Budongo's mix of interpretation and play can be a source of inspiration for heritage sites.

The new facility has an average dwell time of between 15 and 20 minutes, compared to three minutes at the old chimpanzee enclosure, which restricted interpretation to graphic panels. This extra time makes visitor learning more likely.
7 Using the Interpretation Framework

7.4.5 Interpretive methods to support site presentation

While much of the investment in interpretation along Hadrian’s Wall to date has been concentrated on just 12 major sites, the great swathe of sites in between has great potential for visitors. These are recognised in the tables in Section 7 and comprise clusters of sites that could provide different visitor offers that, through the use of appropriate interpretation, can encourage new, repeat and longer visits.

Interpretation panels
At present nearly all the unstaffed sites along Hadrian’s Wall are interpreted through the use of interpretation panels. These offer a number of advantages:

• Visitors are very familiar with them and like them
• Can carry site orientation as well as interpretation i.e. plans
• Communicate through images and text aimed at target audiences
• Can include Braille and tactile opportunities
• 24 hour access
• Affordable
• Durable

However, these are balanced by disadvantages:

• Size constraints mean that panels can convey only a limited amount of interpretation
• Not easily updateable (although by keeping costs down this disadvantage can be negated)
• Largely passive i.e. visitor reads/looks at the panel
• Work best when located at key features leading to visual intrusion (although with careful placement and colouring this disadvantage can be negated)
• Can be subject to vandalism
• Require cleaning
• Can be subject to weathering and other wear issues associated with the chosen production process

Given the strengths and weaknesses of panels, the research investigated audience responses to a series of interpretive methods for Hadrian’s Wall.

Telephone survey responses suggest that a wide range of media was liked. Visitors with children under 16 were much more likely to want events, costumed interpreters, hands-on activities and children’s trails. The ideal “offer” would be a combination of different media.

The results are interesting in that responses reflect the media principally used to interpret historic and archaeological sites and belies the popularity of reconstructions at sites such as Vindolanda, Arbeia and Segedunum and sites that have recently introduced multimedia technology such as Culloden. Therefore, it appears that familiarity with various media may have had an influence on responses, and that responses therefore cannot be taken as definitive guidance on introducing new media to interpret Hadrian’s Wall. More focused research may help inform the design and introduction of such media.

However, the research makes clear that audiences value existing interpretation panels, and that opportunities to enliven these through personal interpretation should be maximized. The recent introduction of the Hadrian’s Wall Volunteer Heritage Guides is an important step in this direction, as is suggested by visitor feedback:

“Very good guide – very knowledgeable and humorous too”

“He was an excellent guide, giving factual detail in a friendly and interesting way”

“What a wonderfully enthusiastic guide whose knowledge didn’t feel like a history lecture”
Publications
Research has identified that visitors find it difficult to comprehend Hadrian’s Wall and like guidebooks as an interpretive medium. Given these findings, consideration should be given to the introduction of a guidebook that better enables visitors to plan, learn from and enjoy a visit to Hadrian’s Wall. This publication should represent the “Official Souvenir Guide” to Hadrian’s Wall and be visitor facing, having a more populist writing and presentation style than existing information literature. The guidebook should cover the whole of Hadrian’s Wall, focusing on the major sites as well as highlighting key minor and linked sites. It should also provide much needed information about site facilities, access arrangements and cross-site referral – therefore supporting wider infrastructure provision including website and signage.

Multimedia
Research identified that people generally liked multimedia interpretive media, although to a lesser degree than more traditional methods such as interpretive panels, etc. However, given the audience development aim of this Interpretation Framework, consideration should be given to a greater use of multimedia in order to attract and meet the needs of audiences to whom such approaches are more familiar. Evidence gathered from the introduction of multimedia at museums, such as Tate Modern, suggests that it appeals to younger and teenage audiences, and that involving them in the development of content creates powerful connections between cultural organisations and local people. This, in turn, may support the realisation of the purposes of WHS status and promulgation of UNESCO’s values, particularly if actioned through the World Heritage in Young Hands programme.
Infrastructure – more than interpretation needs to change
8.1 Good interpretation needs good information to work well

Research has shown that it is not simply interpretation that needs to change along Hadrian’s Wall. A series of related activities and provision will also need to change if the benefits of improved interpretation are to be fully realised.

The clearest finding from the research is the need for a single public face and co-ordinating voice for the promotion of Hadrian’s Wall and its attractions, to inspire visitors and to provide them with easily accessible information to enable them to plan and organise their visit. The existing arrangement whereby each organisation provides information about and promotes its own site or sites results in confusion, perceived duplication, perceived lack of value for money and decisions not to visit Hadrian’s Wall. This is damaging not only to Hadrian’s Wall but also to the local economy.

Visitors find the multitude of different organisations confusing. This was evident in the comments received during the facilitated visit to Housesteads where the site is operated jointly between English Heritage and the National Trust.

While the different sites need to retain their own identities, they also need to be seen to be part of a coherent whole. Although the existing suite of WHS information panels at sites contributes to this Wall-wide identity, they need updating and replacing.

8.2 Imagery

The imagery used to position and promote Hadrian’s Wall and its sites needs to better reflect the variety of visitor experiences that are available. Hadrian’s Wall bisects some of the most beautiful and protected landscapes in England. A new portfolio of images that celebrates this natural diversity with its innate appeal to a broad range of audiences is required. From remote upland areas to coastal bays and industrial heartlands, Hadrian’s Wall has the ability to appeal to a wide range of audience needs.

Moreover, new images should focus on communicating the differences between sites across Hadrian’s Wall and avoid conveying a message that sites are similar. Key to this are images that depict not only the sites themselves, but also the exhibitions, facilities and staff within them. Also key is that new images show people visiting, interacting with, and enjoying sites, in all weathers. The recent focus of imagery on winter landscapes empty of people has clearly had an impact on audience perceptions and motivations to visit, and this should be addressed as a priority.

By adopting an artistic brief that focuses on conveying the breadth, diversity and ease of access to Hadrian’s Wall, perceptions that it is “hard work” and “all the same” can be addressed.
8.3 Website

There needs to be one central website portal for Hadrian’s Wall Country that must be visitor facing, with content based on serving identified visitor needs and inspiring people to visit. Website development should start from consideration of the reasons why people will choose to visit the website in the first place, such as seeking inspiration for or planning a visit to Hadrian’s Wall Country, or accessing educational resources. The homepage should enable all of these audiences to continue their online journeys through appropriate links that are clearly signposted.

“A website with all the information about the area as a whole would be great with all the info about pubs and restaurants”
[Focus group participant]

“You could market it like the Yorkshire Dales, as a whole area to go to with lots going on”
[Focus group participant]

The website’s mission will direct its function and enable priority audiences to be identified and prioritised. This can cater for different levels of knowledge (such as a special heritage interest or the simple desire for a family day out) as well as different purposes (such as touring or a school excursion). Practical visitor information like directions or what a site can offer to children should be easily accessible. Some visitors will be unable to visit Hadrian’s Wall in person and could be offered virtual experiences. But it is impossible to optimise a website for all audiences – each one should focus on those whom are most important for the site or sites in question.

The website should be structured around the online journeys that people want to make, not around the internal structure of the organisation responsible for the content. Background information that might appeal to visitors, such as the archaeology or broader Roman context, can then be offered as appropriate along the way. This should include links to websites for other sites on Hadrian’s Wall where there are clear connections, both thematically and geographically, so the physical journey can be developed. The website should also be aware of its place in the broader digital landscape, integrating social media such as the image-sharing website Flickr and the social networking site Facebook.

The website needs to be supported by a limited suite of print publications that present the WHS and Hadrian’s Wall Country as an integrated destination with a range of complementary and differentiated offers. This suite would include accommodation and travel information, maps and introductory guides, enabling visitors to understand what is available.

This approach can emphasise the richness of Hadrian’s Wall Country, the potential for different visitor offers and hence encourage longer and repeat visits as well as the possibility of the experience extending before and after the visit itself. It can also place sites in their broader context and encourage a deeper understanding of Hadrian’s Wall, the WHS and connections to other monuments such as the Great Wall of China.

Case study: Come Walkabout
http://walkaboutplanner.australia.com/

This interactive website begins by asking potential visitors planning a trip to Australia what sort of experience they would like to have. Visitors virtually explore the country by filtering various possible trips according to the desired experiences and selecting suggested appropriate highlights along the way to ultimately produce a downloadable personalised itinerary.
Case study: Yellowstone Park
http://www.yellowstonepark.com/

This clear and effective site focuses on the visitor, with prominent practical elements based on maps and guides, activities, highlights, themes and tips posted by previous visitors. The background information is segmented and signposted in support of the primary function of visit planning.

Case Study: Golakes
http://www.golakes.co.uk/

A clear website based around two central online journeys – inspiration and planning a visit to Cumbria – with themes and events in support. The practical clarity of the site underpins its audience orientation, making it effective in handling a variety of visitor interests, serving to market and enable tourism.
8.4 Signage

Research has highlighted that existing signage for Hadrian’s Wall compounds audience perceptions that Hadrian’s Wall is “all the same” and is “hard work”. In particular, the signage along the A69 that signs “Hadrian’s Wall” at multiple points was cited as problematic. A new signage scheme is needed that helps visitors orientate and navigate their way along Hadrian’s Wall and to its different sites. This should be aimed at helping visitors who are travelling by car, foot or bicycle.

Wherever possible, the use of physical signage should be weighed against the use of other methods to mark sites to mitigate visitor and visual impact in more sensitive locations.

Pointing the Way: Signage can help visitors navigate Hadrian’s Wall while marketing the range of places that can be visited

8.5 Orientation and cross-site referral

While it is important to emphasise the rich variety of experiences that Hadrian’s Wall Country offers, it is equally important that all sites associated with Hadrian’s Wall are perceived as part of a single destination and clearly relate to each other. This will help to reassure, orientate and empower audiences to explore Hadrian’s Wall and its many sites. This, in turn, will foster increased awareness and understanding of Hadrian’s Wall, the various Interpretation Framework themes that are explored in different ways at different locations, and engagement with the universal values of the WHS. This, in turn, will encourage return visits to sites and the area as audiences become familiar with the richness of the experience that Hadrian’s Wall Country provides.

The most overt type of orientation is through the provision of leaflets. HWHL introduced an orientation leaflet in 2007 and this is distributed free of charge through local accommodation providers, shops, tourist information centres and travel stations.

This leaflet is supported by a series of orientation and cross-site referral panels at key sites along Hadrian’s Wall and which need to be updated in line with site developments, imagery, website and signage.

In addition to these physical orientation tools, there are a number of other ways in which orientation is provided.

Local people and businesses throughout the WHS have a major role to play in the effective orientation of visitors and in encouraging multi-site visits. This contribution is far more than simply having received Welcome Host or similar types of training. It involves in-depth understanding of the WHS, its landscapes, places of interest, the opportunities available at different sites and enthusiasm and interest in communicating this knowledge to visitors. The Know Your Hadrian’s Wall Country learning programme and business network (based on the model developed initially in the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) is an example of how such a people-based, Wall-wide information and communication system can be developed.

In addition, the Hadrian’s Wall Volunteer Heritage Guides programme that is currently being piloted, could also be developed into a Wall-wide service that engages local people with the WHS and at the same time enables them to act as WHS ambassadors and champions. A useful model is that of the Limes Cicerones which provides an integrated volunteer guiding service across the German Limes. These volunteers provide the WHS in Germany with a unified, public-facing image that transcends the many different organisations involved in managing and presenting the WHS.

Co-ordinated use of the WHS and Hadrian’s Wall Country logos alongside high-quality person-to-person communication developed through schemes such as the Hadrian’s Wall Volunteer Heritage Guides and Know Your Hadrian’s Wall Country training programme is key to realising and presenting the coherent, integrated offer required to orientate and create empathy with audiences.

These approaches emphasise the need to work in partnership to provide the appropriate orientation to help visitors appreciate not only the range of what is being offered but also how to find it within the context of Hadrian’s Wall and relating one site to another. The approach will help visitors to understand the nature of the monuments and encourage them to extend their visit or return another day to take in more sites.
8.6 Facilities and ticketing

The public engagement exercise clearly identified that good facilities and amenities were key characteristics of the most popular sites. Good and reasonably priced catering and clean and well maintained toilets were identified as underpinning a positive visitor experience. These facilities should therefore be improved as part of any development plans along Hadrian’s Wall.

“All most people want is toilets and a cafe”

“...the ‘visitor experience’ needs the services i.e. toilets, easy disabled access, picnic facilities”

In addition, the research indicated that value for money plays a key role in influencing a decision to visit. Although what exactly constitutes value for money varies according to each visitor or group, all focus group participants identified the multiple ticketing of sites and car parking charges as barriers to visiting when factored on top of distance/time and travel costs and incidental expenses such as drinks, food and souvenirs.

“I wonder about the cost of it ...do you have to pay to go to each different site individually, or can you get a special ticket that you can use in all the sites? Because otherwise it would end up being quite expensive”

“...the cost of it is a major issue.”

“I think if you’ve got a year pass to somewhere, you’re much more inclined to go and visit. Paying individually works out very expensive”

“The best way of getting us to go is to give us more information about what is there, and some special offers with money off”

In addition, participants made clear connections between the cost of admission, and qualities that they felt provided value for money, including:

• A visitor experience which justifies the ticket price (this is benchmarked against experiences elsewhere i.e. new attractions or new experiences at existing attractions)

• An experience that all or most of the party have enjoyed. For families, an experience that engages children and keeps them happy is critical as without this an entire visit can be spoiled and be viewed as a waste of money

• Not feeling cheated or ripped off

• Good and affordable food that was filling and met the needs of the entire family – children and adults

• Easy access

“If it’s expensive to get in then you need to be able to stay all day, not just go for half an hour and then get bored”

8.7 Marketing

Changes to the interpretation, information, orientation and directional signage for Hadrian’s Wall will help create a holistic visitor experience and better realise its benefits to the local economy. However, the adoption of this co-ordinated approach has clear implications for the marketing of Hadrian’s Wall.

It is important to recognise that “the north-west frontier of the Roman Empire” is not intended as marketing proposition. Instead it is a concept which reflects the WHS designation and opens up opportunities for enhanced interpretation. Its use and the implications for marketing need to be considered more fully along with other proposals in this section. This is one of the actions identified in section 9 - Next steps.
Next steps

A young girl participates in a living history event at Walltown Crags © Graeme Peacock
9 Next steps

9.1 Introduction

This Interpretation Framework sets out a Wall-wide vision for interpretation and supporting visitor information and signage along Hadrian’s Wall. This vision focuses on developing existing and new audiences for Hadrian’s Wall through the adoption of a series of audience development and interpretation principles, a thematic approach to interpretation and the co-ordination of interpretation with wider communications provision.

A number of actions are needed to realise this vision. Some of these actions are already in progress through the major new galleries that have recently opened or are about to open along Hadrian’s Wall, and which will transform the visitor experience. Other actions are planned or in development and will be co-ordinated through a project-based action planning approach engaging with partner interests along Hadrian’s Wall.

This action planning approach is being adopted to enable ongoing project planning and development to take place in a collaborative manner, engaging all interests along Hadrian’s Wall and avoids the need for further overarching strategy and plan documents. Given the history of planning along Hadrian’s Wall and a perceived lack of change, a project-based action planning approach is more likely to deliver the vision and will also ensure efficient use of resources – both financial and time – whilst also maximising the involvement of local communities and businesses. The approach to implementation in the Interpretation Framework is one of engagement and inclusivity.

Working collaboratively with the key stakeholders along the WHS, HWHL will have a key role in co-ordinating and initiating many of the actions needed to realise the vision set out in the Interpretation Framework documents. HWHL will support interpretation developments initiated by the many partner organisations along the WHS corridor and will endorse funding applications where they demonstrate adoption of the principles and approaches advocated in the Interpretation Framework – increasing the chance of success. The research undertaken with potential audiences for the WHS has indicated strongly the approaches and themes most likely to engage visitors and encourage greater understanding of the WHS. It is important that all new interpretation takes advantage of this knowledge.
9 Next steps

9.2 Key actions:

1. Launch and public dissemination of the Interpretation Framework.

2. Improved communications and networking between stakeholders in the areas of audience engagement and interpretation.

The existing Site Managers’ meetings and the Education Forum provide potential vehicles through which improved communications and networking can be realised. The Education Forum has recently initiated an annual practitioners’ workshop for education staff across the WHS. This model could be applied to the establishment of an equivalent mechanism associated with the Site Managers’ meeting but including wider site staff, heritage and interpretation professionals and volunteers involved strategic and frontline engagement with visitors. Whatever method is ultimately chosen, links to the Education Forum would be beneficial as there is significant overlap between interpretation for visitors and interpretation for education audiences.

This mechanism would help facilitate action 3 and 4 below.

3. Development of a Wall-wide understanding and agreement on interpretation principles and good practice based on evidence and research.

Interpretation practices within organisations operating across Hadrian’s Wall vary significantly. In order to work better together, they need to develop a shared understanding of good practice relevant to each organisation. Effective mechanisms for this could include facilitated workshops involving partners from different organisations in reviewing and considering best practice in interpretation; adoption of a common understanding and shared language for interpretation by all interests operating along Hadrian’s Wall; adoption of a common interpretive planning approach; a programme of interpretation training days and workshops including interpretive planning, interpretive methods and media and so on.


One of the easiest and most cost effective ways in which communications, networking and interpretation delivery could be improved along Hadrian’s Wall is through the development of joint interpretation projects. This would enable underlying development issues to be addressed at the same time as delivering organisational plans and projects. The Hadrian’s Head and Eagles Have Landed touring exhibitions are examples of joint interpretation projects that have explored new interpretive and audience engagement approaches and led to significantly increased visitor numbers at participating sites. The Wall-wide Volunteer Heritage Guides project is another example of a Wall-wide partnership-based project that is delivering significant benefit to the WHS, to visitors, to local people and to participating organisations. Further joint developments with national museums such as the British Museum and international colleagues offer the potential to embed greater understanding of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire WHS locally, nationally and internationally. This approach will have a significant effect on audience development and visitor numbers over time.

5. Engagement with local resident and business communities.

Local resident and business communities are a key part of the visitor experience and can make significant contributions to the interpretive offer alongside the major sites and museums. Projects such as Know Your Hadrian’s Wall Country and the Volunteer Heritage Guides are examples of projects that engage local communities with improved interpretation. The Interpretation Framework provides the basis for a programme of community-based interpretation projects exploring local landscapes and their connections with the WHS. Local people proud of their heritage and its international significance will add greatly to the growth in world-wide understanding of the WHS through their interaction with friends, family and visitors.

6. Establishment of a Wall-wide marketing and promotions group to work collaboratively on priority projects.

The audience research clearly demonstrates the need for improved co-ordination of marketing and promotion for domestic and international markets focused on the destination and the provision of clear, accessible and holistic information about the overall visitor offer. There is a need to build on existing world-wide knowledge of the destination to enrich and deepen understanding of the depth, breadth and richness of the offer as this develops through delivery of Interpretation Framework principles and approaches. Key areas for co-ordination and co-operation include:

- Market segmentation (discussion of adoption of common approach and terminology; joint market research and data collection; sharing of research and data)
- Single destination development (brand values, promotional identity)
- Joint marketing and promotion activities and materials

7. On-going evaluation of action projects.

Evaluation should be an integral part of each project, enabling both projects and the Interpretation Framework to be reviewed and lessons learned. Any future evaluation should:

- Evaluate projects against project objectives and SMART targets (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timed)
- Evaluate projects against the objectives of the Interpretation Framework which has informed and been informed by such projects
- Gather feedback from existing and new audiences as well as non-visiters.