



Nestling amongst the low hills and valleys just west of Wrexham, North East Wales, Brymbo is a close-knit community with a strong sense of identity built upon years of coal mining and iron and steel making. In 1990 the last of its industries – its steelworks – closed. 1125 jobs were lost instantly. The community was devastated, and deep despair followed.



Most of the former works was soon demolished to contribute land for housing, but the oldest parts were protected and remained. Silence fell, and hope for the village's recovery seemed distant. Within a few years local interest in bringing the remaining buildings back to life as a heritage centre emerged, resulting in the formation of Brymbo Heritage Group. In 2004 its aspirations were given a huge boost by the accidental discovery of a dense and high-quality range of prehistoric tree and plant fossils.



The feasibility of celebrating the combination of Brymbo's industrial heritage and its natural history to tell their intertwined stories of coal, iron and steel was tested (and proven) in 2013, and over the years since then a rapid succession of scoping, engagement, masterplanning, business modelling, conservation, partnership development, costing and capacity building activities have taken place, building momentum to the point we're at today.



We are registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and are striving headlong to put the heart back into our community by developing our extraordinary site and giving it a new identity:

### Stori Brymbo: A 300 Million Year Story:

- A visitor attraction with an internationally significant fossilised forest dating back more than 300 million years, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial buildings and landscape of national significance, that tells stories of the people that made Brymbo's 20<sup>th</sup> century steel world-renowned;
- a learning centre, providing education in natural history and science, and training in construction, engineering and heritage skills;
- a space for the community to come together and for performance events; and
- a space for enterprise location, growth and celebration

And with help from a range of public and third sector partners it's all being delivered by the people with the greatest stake in its success - *our* people. From former workers sharing their memories and passing on their skills, to residents young and old bringing fresh energy and approaches...working together to care for and celebrate our special place. A community leading its own regeneration, using its common heritage as its bond.



The Trust is a registered charity with heritage conservation, education and regeneration objects. The scale of our community effort, leadership, capacity, competence and support has grown exponentially in recent years: Since 2017 we have secured significant funding to deliver our work to restore, repurpose and give new life to the site.

## Our proposition

Our proposals centre around the creation of the Stori Brymbo, a visitor attraction and a community park (Lodge Valley Park). The Trust's business model is to support the delivery and sustainability of both through widespread community ownership and involvement, the visible use of renewable energy, the letting of a series of workspaces, and the hosting and provision of a vibrant programme of year-round events. And by underpinning it all with a centre for learning people of all ages and needs – whether as school pupils, vocational trainees or post-graduate researchers – will be part of the team who are making it happen.

Our plans sit alongside a wider scheme of private and public sector development ('Brymbo Park'), with the construction of new homes, a primary school, and shops.

## The difference we will make

- Our work will spearhead our **community's regeneration**, embracing and developing our skills and talents, and supporting an increased sense of community cohesion and co-operation;
- Our work will support the conservation of Wales' natural resources, industrial heritage and social history, ensuring its **protection, management and access** for generations to come; and
- Our work will help **people develop their understanding** of earth sciences, of heavy industry, of social history, and of how Welsh industry grew, faded and is being reborn sustainably.



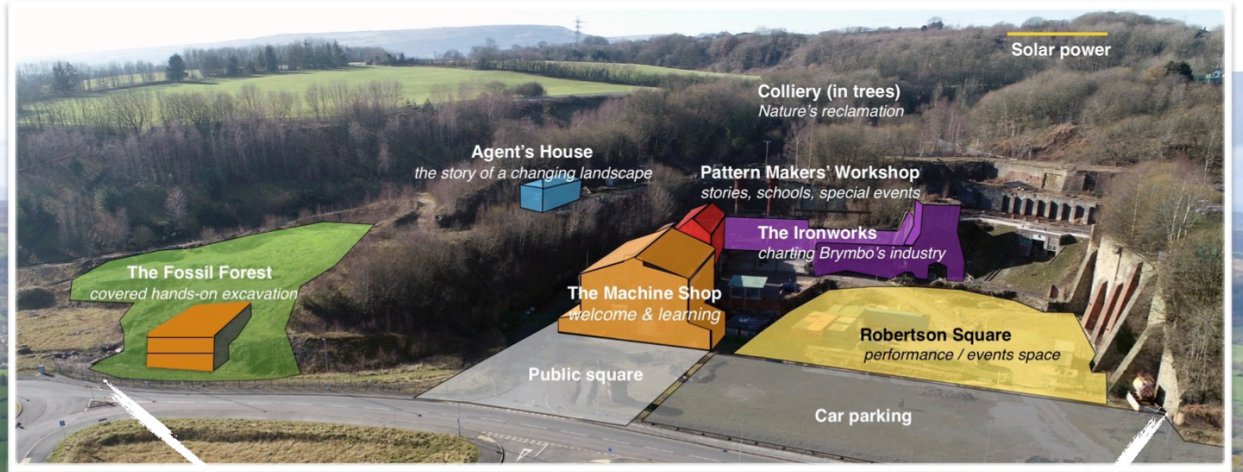
## Why the difference needs to be made

- Over the past 30 years Brymbo has become associated with issues of social and economic deprivation, of **social isolation and hopelessness**. Compared to Welsh and UK averages life expectancy is lower, rates of chronic illness are higher, rates of qualification attainment are lower and household incomes are lower. Brymbo needs investment to address these inequalities.
- In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Wales became the world's first industrial nation. Now it's leading the way in tackling issues **around sustainable development**. Brymbo's story has the potential to mirror Wales', to play a role in the looking after our assets for generations to come. Brymbo needs to be associated with a vibrant future as well as a proud past.
- In a digital age where skills and knowledge can be learned from an armchair people need access to ways of learning that provide **meaning and connection**, where having a go and failing serves to strengthen resolve and satisfaction. Brymbo can become an exemplar of hands-on learning.



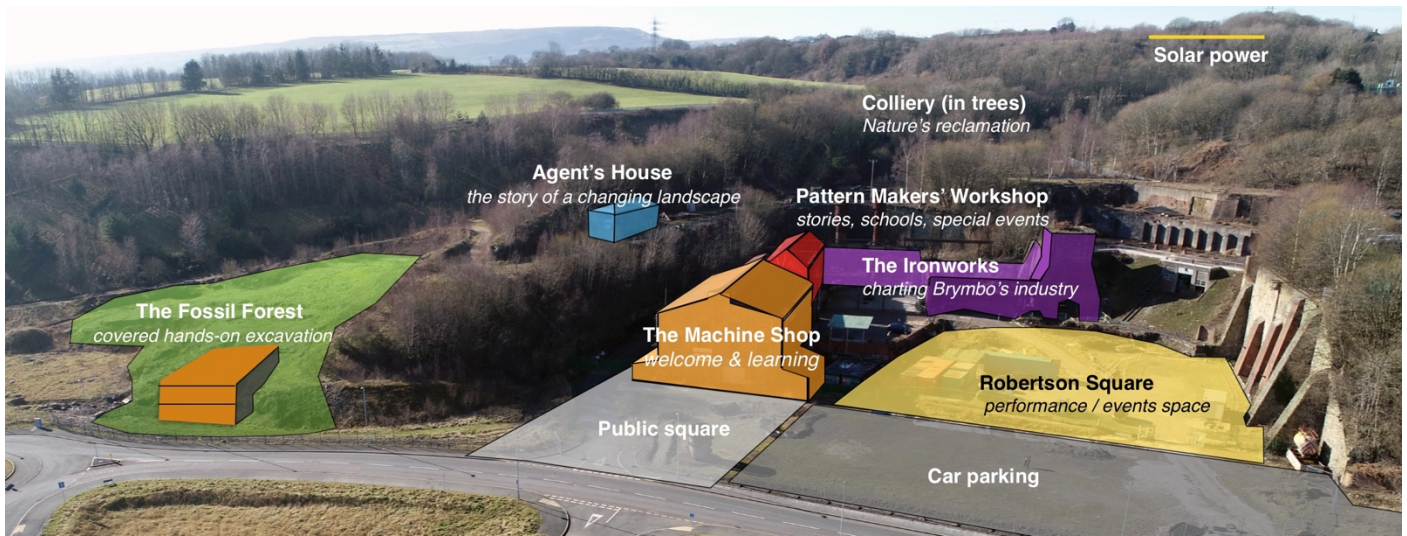
## BRYMBO: A 300 Million Year Story

Visitor attraction    Events Space  
 Learning Centre    Lettable Space  
 Community Park    A New Heartbeat



## Our physical proposals – the changes we want to make...

From arrival to departure, whether as visitor, resident, learner, tenant, event-goer or co-deliverer – our work will make people go ‘Wow!’.



## ...that will enable us to deliver a diverse range of activities

We're proposing to build on our current work to provide five mutually reinforcing 'offers':



### Visitors – A 300 Million Year Story

- Rich, dynamic, awe-inspiring interpretation
- Hands-on activities
- Playful and uplifting experience

### Learners – Learning Centre

- Schools programme, traineeships and apprenticeships, placements and internships
- Adult community provision and taster courses

### Enterprises – lettable spaces

- Retail units, offices in railway carriages
- Workshops, maker spaces and 'pop-up' uses

### Residents – Events Venue & Community Park

- Outdoor music, film, theatre, exhibitions, enthusiasts' meetings, and themed events
- Accessible, co-managed, exciting and beautiful spaces for all ages to enjoy

## When will it happen?

- With building works taking place between July 2024 and late 2025, we'll be open in 2026.
- Ongoing community and learner involvement will enable many more spaces, disused landscapes, nooks and crannies to come to life along the way.

