

Beacons Leisure Park, Blaen y Garth Merthyr Tydfil: Heritage Statement

Introduction

- 1.1. This Heritage Statement has been produced for Beacons Leisure Limited regarding land at Blaen-y-Garth, Merythr Tydfil (Fig. 1, henceforth referred to as 'the Site'), which is proposed for redevelopment as a caravan and camping site. The Site comprises c. 3.4ha of land approximately 280m north-west of Pant, on the northern outskirts of Merthyr Tydfil. The northern part of the Site is occupied by a vacant farmstead, which includes the derelict Grade II Listed Farmhouse Blean-y-Garth (Photo 1, Fig. 1) and a number of dilapidated farm structures. The remainder of the Site comprises a number of grassed fields, currently used for pasture.
- 1.2. A planning application and Listed Building Consent application for the proposed development of a tourist holiday park was submitted in 2016¹ and approved in October 2018. Condition 1 of the approval required the development to commence within five years of the decision, which has since lapsed. Accordingly, Beacons Leisure Limited is applying for a five-year extension on this condition². There are no changes to the consented development design associated with this application. This Heritage Statement has been prepared as part of the current application, to provide an update to the heritage resource.
- 1.3. A Heritage Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in 2015³ was submitted as part of the 2016 applications. This assessed the impacts of the proposed development on the known and potential heritage resource, the Grade II Listed farmhouse and associated structures within the Site, the historic landscape character, and nearby designated historic assets.
- 1.4. The aim of this Heritage Statement is to provide an update on the historic environment and identify any changes to the baseline since the 2015 assessment. It is not intended to repeat the information within the DBA, which is instead summarised below. Accordingly,

¹ Planning references P/16/0094 and P/16/0095

² Planning references P/23/0028 and P/23/0029

³ Cotswold Archaeology 2015 *Beacons Leisure Park, Blaen-y-Garth, Merthyr Tydfil: Heritage Desk-Based Assessment*

this Statement should be read in conjunction with the DBA for a full assessment methodology, and background context on the heritage constraints identified. In addition to a summary of the above works, this Statement also includes analysis of an updated HER search for the 1km study area (conducted in December 2025) and site visit (carried out on 14 January 2026) and presents any changes to planning policy and industry guidance since 2015 which would be relevant to the proposal.

- 1.5. The key changes identified relate to the condition and level of survival of the buildings within the Site. Changes since the 2015 report, including reasoning as presented in pers comms (February 2026, Geraint Jones), are as follows:

Listed Farmhouse

- Loss of the roof structure which was stolen in September 2013
- Collapse of lean-to during adverse weather conditions, and subsequent clearance of rubble. This was noted in 2024, but the property had been left open to the elements for 11 years
- Loss of whitewash/render and clearance of loos detritus
- Gradual collapse of perimeter wall by cows grazing in the field. In 2024, the remaining stone was removed from a health and safety/risk management perspective

Northern barn

- Collapse of lean-to during adverse weather conditions, and subsequent clearance of material. This was noted in 2024, but the property had been left open to the elements for 11 years.

- 1.6. These changes, and their impact on the significance of these buildings, are discussed in detail below.

Proposed development

- 1.7. There are no changes to the consented development proposed as part of this planning application. This includes the restoration of the derelict farmhouse to an office and shop serving the caravan site, and the associated barn to a small café. The paddocks would be developed as camping pitches, including tent pitches, touring caravan pitches and two static caravans, with associated access and parking. Further amenities within the area would include shower blocks and a playing area. The development would also include access and landscaping.

Heritage Baseline

Built Remains

- 1.8. The Site contains the Grade II Listed 19th century Blaen-y-Garth farmhouse, an extant barn to the north, and a second barn to the south-east (Fig. 1). The 2015 Assessment did not comprise a full Historic Building Recording but identified that the Listed farmhouse was in a state of ruin, having been abandoned and subject to extensive vandalism. The gabled roof no longer had slate coverings, and the roof frame was fully exposed to the elements (Photos 1 and 3; Appendix 1). Whilst some elevations of the buildings were obscured by vegetation, the building was clearly in a disused and damaged state. The significance of the Listed farmhouse derives from its surviving physical fabric as an example of a single-storey farmhouse which has evidential and historic value. However, the dilapidated state of the structure and the wider farmyard have affected the values contributing to its significance.
- 1.9. The barn to the north comprises a mid-20th century stone structure with concrete door and window lintels, and brick quoins, jambs and windowsills (Photo 5). In 2015, a lean-to comprising a timber frame with corrugated steel roofing and cladding was attached to the north-east, however, this has since been demolished and removed. The barn to the south was in an advanced state of ruin at the time of the 2015 survey (Photo 7) and was heavily obscured by trees and vegetation. The visible remains in 2015 comprised heavily overgrown stone walling.
- 1.10. The barns do not contain features of architectural interest and are not of sufficient heritage significance to warrant statutory designation; however, they do hold historic value as agricultural structures complimenting the Listed farmhouse and contributing to its understanding, and evidential value through their surviving historic fabric. However, any significance they may previously have held has been substantially eroded by their derelict/ruined state and loss of original fabric.

2015 Impact Assessment Conclusions

- 1.11. The 2015 assessment identified that whilst the proposals would result in a change of function to the Listed farmhouse and associated barns, it would enable the preservation of what remains of these buildings. It is considered that the development, which would give the derelict and unviable farmstead a new life (with a new function), would provide

for a long-term survival of these assets and would also allow for a public appreciation of the historic buildings.

- 1.12. It was recommended that any substantive works proposed to the Listed Building and associated structures should be preceded by a Historic Building Recording at an appropriate level.

2026 update

- 1.13. A Site visit was conducted in January 2026 to identify any changes in the baseline. This did not include a Historic Building Recording but identified that the Listed farmhouse and associated barns have been subject to further deterioration and change as detailed below, and shown in Photos 1-8 in Appendix 1.

- 1.14. Changes to the Listed Farmhouse include:

- The remains of the roof are no longer *in situ* (Photos 1-4). This appeared to comprise a comparatively modern addition, although the date is unconfirmed, and thus made a limited contribution to the heritage value of the farmhouse.
- The whitewash has been removed (Photos 1-4). Subsequent review of the 2015 photographs suggests that this was possibly a modern cementitious addition; potentially making a limited contribution to the heritage value of the farmhouse, though this cannot be confirmed.
- The lean-to has been removed (Photos 1 and 2). It is possible that this is not contemporary with the farmhouse, however this has not been confirmed.
- The removal of the lean to and whitewash has revealed clear phasing within the east elevation, strongly evidencing a later date of the north extent of the building.
- The previously attached wall has been removed (Photos 1 and 2). There is insufficient information from the previous assessment to determine its possible former curtilage status, however it is feasible that this is contemporary with the farmhouse and thus its removal or collapse has resulted in a small loss in the significance of the farmhouse.
- The modern uPVC window frames, door, and former porch canopy (Photos 1 and 2) have been removed.

- 1.15. Changes to the northern barn include:

- The lean-to has been removed. This appeared to have been a modern addition of no heritage value and made no contribution to the significance of the barn.
- Wooden supports on the roof have been removed. Again, these appear to be a modern addition of no heritage value and thus made no contribution to the significance of the barn.

1.16. Given the extent of vegetation present in the 2015 survey, the extent of change of the southern barn is unclear, however, it is presently in a dilapidated state.

1.17. In summary, there have been changes to the Listed farmhouse and associated barns since 2015, some of which has resulted in the loss of historic fabric which has had a very limited effect on the significance of the Listed farmhouse. Many of the removed features/changes were likely of a comparatively modern date (although this is unconfirmed) and of limited to no heritage value.

1.18. In the context of the proposal, the conclusions of the 2015 remain valid, and the redevelopment of this Site and conversion of the buildings to support a caravan park will provide a viable long-term use, thereby preserving what remains of their significance. As such, the proposed development will result in a heritage benefit.

Archaeology

Summary of baseline

1.19. The 2015 Assessment identified no evidence for early prehistoric activity within the environs of the Site and limited later prehistoric activity. The Bronze Age was represented by remains of a ring cairn on Morlais hill. This funerary activity suggest settlement within the wider area; however no contemporary remains were identified within 1km of the Site. Likewise, an Iron Age Hillfort, known as Morlais Castle, was identified 1km west of the Site but no associated settlement or agricultural sites were identified in the study area. Accordingly, whilst there is confirmed prehistoric activity on and around Morlais Hill, there is no evidence to suggest any remains are present within the Site.

1.20. No Roman remains have been recovered from within the study area, although two conjectural Roman Roads traverse the study area in a general north/east direction.

- 1.21. During the medieval period, the surrounding landscape was characterised by enclosed fields and isolated farms in the valley bottom and lower slopes, with the upland areas providing summer grazing pastures. Located at c. 340m above Ordnance Datum, the Site would have likely provided upland grazing areas during this period.
- 1.22. The Site and surrounding landscape saw limited change until the 18th century, at which point the landscape was partially transformed as a result of industrialisation and the establishment of transport links. Twynau Gwynion quarries, located at the Merthyr Common c. 1km north of the Site, were worked from the late 18th century by the Dowlais Ironworks and several tramroads serving the quarries and nearby ironworks were established in the late 18th and 19th century. During the 19th century, a transport corridor based on the Taff Fechan valley was constructed, including the Brecon and Merthyr Joint Railway, built in 1873 located approximately 150m north-east of the Site.

Known and potential archaeological remains

- 1.23. The edge of the Site is defined by drystone walls (Photo 9) and earth banks. These are associated with the post-medieval enclosure of former medieval upland pasture and as such they represent historic assets of limited historic interest.
- 1.24. The Site is located along the line of the former Brecon and Merthyr Railway Line and the access road to the proposed caravan park is proposed to cross the embankment of the railway line. The embankment is in poor condition (Photo 10), with several instances of damage, and is of low historic interest.
- 1.25. No additional historic assets were identified in the 2015 Assessment. A low potential for remains of prehistoric and Roman date was identified given the known activity within the study area, alongside a potential for buried remains associated with the medieval pastoral and post-medieval agrarian activity.

2015 impact assessment

- 1.26. The 2015 assessment identified that the proposals have the potential to truncate any buried archaeological remains which survive in the footprint of groundworks. This includes, but is not limited to, the excavation of foundation trenches and service trenches, and stripping associated with landscaping and the creation of access roads/car parking.

1.27. The proposals will also impact upon the embankment to the south-west of the Site, during the construction of the access road. This will result in harm to a non-designated asset, however, proportionally this represents only a small section on the linear embankment, which has already been truncated in part.

1.28. The boundary features are all being retained and therefore will receive no harm.

2026 update

1.29. An updated search of the Historic Environment Record (HER) was conducted in December 2025 and reviewed in January 2026. No additional HER monuments were record which would alter the archaeological baseline and potential of the Site as identified in 2015. Accordingly, the conclusions from the 2015 assessment remain valid.

Historic Landscape Character

1.30. The Site lies within the Merthyr Tydfil Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest (LOHI), specifically within the Garth and Blaen-y-Garth Character Area. Consultation with Neil Malyan at Cadw in 2015 confirmed that an Assessment of the Significance of the Impact of Development on Historic Landscape 2 (ASIDOHL2) was not required.

1.31. Land within the Site comprises one of the key elements of the Blaen-y-Garth Character Area, and along with the farmstead at Garth, provides the rural context for this area. However, the significance of this character area has been diminished by the abandonment of the Blaen-y-Garth farmstead. The 2015 assessment identified that the Site made no contribution to the character or significance of any of the additional character areas within the Merthyr Tydfil LOHI.

2015 impact assessment

1.32. The Assessment identified that the development would change the character of Site, replacing the fields with camping areas, associated access and planting. However, the repair and conservation of derelict farmstead would give the building a new life and a viable function ensuring the preservation of the designated farmhouse. Furthermore, the historic access track to the farmhouse, and the external boundaries of the Site would be retained.

- 1.33. Therefore, whilst the historic character of the Blaen-y-Garth character area would be changed as a result of the development, the proposals would result in a heritage benefit, enabling the significance of the Grade II Listed farmhouse to be retained as a result of a new function and allow the public enjoyment of the historic remains.

2026 update

- 1.34. Changes within the Site since the 2015 assessment include further deterioration of the Listed farmhouse and associated barns, as discussed above. This has not materially changed to contribution that the Site makes to the significance of the Blaen-y-Garth Character Area. Accordingly, the conclusions from the 2015 assessment remain valid.

Additional designated assets

- 1.35. Additional designated assets within the environs of the Site include two Listed ventilation shafts for the Morlais Tunnel, situated c. 125m and 220m south of the Site, and the Listed war memorial in Pant. The Scheduled Morlais Hill ring cairn and the Scheduled Morlais Castle lie c. 750m and 1km to the west respectively.
- 1.36. The 2015 Assessment identified that the Site did not contribute to the significance of the Listed War Memorial in Pant or the Scheduled remains on Morlais Hill, and therefore these assets would receive no impacts as a result of development within the Site. Likewise, land within the Site did not form a part of the setting for the Listed ventilation shafts that contributed to their significance. As such, no impacts would be received from the proposals.
- 1.37. However, the 2015 assessment discussed the creation of the access road, south-east of the Site, which would be located c. 30m to the west of the central shaft. It was noted that providing the access track did not require the construction of an embankment within the vicinity of this shaft, which would interfere with the visual relationship between the shafts, no harm would be afforded to the Listed Buildings.

2026 update

- 1.38. No change to the baseline was observed which would alter the way the above-mentioned assets are experienced in the context of the Site. Accordingly, the conclusions from the 2015 assessment remain valid.

Consultation

- 1.39. As part of the 2016 applications¹ Cadw, Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT), and the Heritage and Conservation Officer for Merthyr Tydfil Council were consulted on the proposed development. Cadw noted that *'the proposed development will not have a physical impact on the scheduled monuments and is likely to have a negligible adverse impact on their settings'*. They also highlighted the need to consult the GGAT Historic Environment Record which formed part of the 2015 assessment.
- 1.40. GGAT recommended that a Level 2 Historic Building Recording was carried out for the Grade II Listed farmhouse prior to the commencement of development, and that an archaeological watching brief was conducted during groundbreaking works. The recommendation for these works to be conditioned to any decision was taken forward by the case officer and formed condition 13 of the planning permission.
- 1.41. In 2018, the Heritage and Conservation Officer confirmed their approval of the scheme following design revisions and supported the proposed development for approval of listed building consent subject to several conditions and any further direction from Cadw.
- 1.42. Following the 2023 application² to extend the timescale in condition 1 of the 2018 permission, both Cadw and GGAT were reconsulted. Cadw raised no objection and GGAT had no objection, assuming the existing archaeological conditions were retained.

Planning Policy Context

- 1.43. Since the 2015 assessment there have been changes in both National and Local policy, as well as industry guidance. The currently policies are detailed below, however, it should be noted that none of these new policies have altered to such an extent that it would materially affect the conclusions of the 2015 assessment.
- 1.44. Nationally policy is provided by the *Historic Environment (Wales) Act (2023)*. The Act sets out the controls of works affecting Scheduled Monuments including provisions regarding Scheduled Monument Consent. Contrary to the requirements of the Part 3 of the Act which regards historic buildings, there is no provision for the 'setting' of Scheduled Monuments. Work affecting Listed Buildings are subject to the provisions laid out in Part 3, Chapter 2 of the Act. Under Section 88, the demolition of, nor the alteration nor extension of a Listed Building in any way that would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest, are not permitted unless authorised under Section

89. Section 89 defines the form of written consent required for these works to be permitted, i.e. the LPA or Welsh Ministers.

- 1.45. National planning policy is provided by *Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12; February 2024)*. Chapter 6 (pages 129-135) discusses the historic environment and notes that this is comprised of ‘*all the surviving physical elements of previous human activity and illustrates how past generations have shaped the world around us*’. Policy then goes on to stipulate that ‘*The historic environment is made up of individual historic features which are collectively known as historic assets*’. This policy is supplemented by guidance contained in Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment and Cadw associated best practice guidance on the historic environment.
- 1.46. Policy dictates that the planning system must take into account the Welsh Government’s objectives to protect, conserve, promote and enhance the historic environment as a resource for the general well-being of present and future generations. Any decisions made through the planning system must fully consider the impact on the historic environment and on the significance and heritage values of individual historic assets and their contribution to the character of place.
- 1.47. Local Policy is provided by *Policy CW1: The Historic Environment* in the *Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016 – 2031*. This policy reflects national objectives and states that ‘*the integrity of our historic environment assets will be conserved and enhanced*’ and that development proposals will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that they would preserve or enhance the architectural quality, character, or historical/cultural importance of assets.

Summary on the heritage resource

- 1.48. There are no changes to the historic environment baseline which materially alter the conclusions of the 2015 assessment. The updated site visit identified that the condition of the Grade II Listed farmhouse and associated barns have further deteriorated since 2015. This has resulted in the limited loss of historic fabric which has impacted their evidential value. However, the proposed development will enable the re-use of these buildings, resulting in the continued appreciation of their remaining heritage significance. This is consistent with the conclusions in the 2015 assessment. No further changes have occurred within the baseline.

- 1.49. Furthermore, whilst planning policy has changed, both at a national and local level, there is no material difference which will alter the conclusions of the 2015 assessment.
- 1.50. The current application is for the extension of timeframe concerning condition 1 of the consented development, which relates to the construction programme. Importantly, there is no proposed change to the consented design. Accordingly, the conclusions from the 2015 assessment remain valid.

Eva Heimpel, Senior Heritage Consultant
Cotswold Archaeology March 2026

APPENDIX 1: PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1: Grade II Listed Farmhouse in 2015 (east elevation)



Photo 2: Grade II Listed Farmhouse in 2026 (east elevation)



Photo 3: Grade II Listed Farmhouse in 2015 (north-west elevation)



Photo 4: Grade II Listed Farmhouse in 2026 (north-west elevation)



Photo 5: Barn to the north in 2015 (south elevation)



Photo 6 Barn to the north in 2026 (south elevation)



Photo 7: Barn to the south in 2015 (north elevation)



Photo 8: Barn to the south in 2026 (north elevation)



Photo 9: Drystone walls defining the edge of the Site in 2026



Photo 10: Embankment of the former Brecon and Merthyr Railway Line in 2026