

## The European Route of Industrial Heritage and the creation of regional routes

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## Introduction

On behalf of the European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH) I thank you for the opportunity to speak to your conference about ERIH and the approach that it takes to the creation of regional routes. My presentation will be in four parts detailing 'Why ERIH was established'; 'What has been achieved so far'; 'The East of England Regional Route as a specific example'; and 'The Way Forward'. When completed I hope to have provided a useful contribution to your discussions about the Museum of the Douro proposal for a linking of sites and museums in the Douro into a regional route.

## Why was ERIH Established?

In recent years massive economic change has left the former heavily industrialised regions of Europe in serious decline, many former factories are derelict and regeneration is leading to the wholesale removal of former industrial landscapes. Despite efforts by some to protect the more important and interesting sites support and funding for these efforts has been limited and there has been little marketing to encourage tourism to industrial heritage sites. It is against this background that ERIH came to be established by a group of partners from the countries of North West Europe.



The model for ERIH was the Ruhr Route der Industriekultur (Ruhrgebiet) in the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, which was launched in 1999 ([www.route-industriekultur.de](http://www.route-industriekultur.de)). This route was designed to lead visitors around the industrial heri-

tage venues of the Ruhr region, linking all the outstanding sites. The core of the network comprises 25 major sites, the Anchor Points, which include 6 museums of technical and social history. In addition, 25 theme routes connect hundreds of other sites, including 14 panorama points and 13 significant workers' settlements. Many of the disused factory sites have been transformed into lively venues and attractive centres for cultural activities. The concept for a European wide route was developed through a feasibility study (Master Plan, 2001) which was supported with funding from the European Interreg IIC programme (1999-2001). Realisation of the route has since followed again with support from the European Interreg IIIB programme (2003-2008). ERIH was formally launched on 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2005 at The Museum of Iron in Coalbrookdale, Shropshire, England, which provided an appropriate venue being the site of the works which made the Ironbridge which launched the Industrial Revolution.

The North-Rhine Westphalia region became the Lead Partner for the ERIH project with the Volkingen Iron Works, Saarland, as a second German regional partner. Dutch partners are the Foundation for the Industrial Heritage for the Netherlands and the Province of North Holland. In the UK the four partners are Torfaen County Borough Council, Telford and Wrekin Borough Council, University of Manchester Field Archaeology Centre and Essex County Council. This partnership has established the network since 2003 through numerous transnational meetings and site visits.



The objective of ERIH is to use the potential of European Industrial Heritage for stimulating sustainable local and regional economic development in the former industrial regions. This includes raising the profile of industrial heritage; improving the economic potential and attractiveness of former industrial sites; establishing industrial heritage as a European tourism brand; developing cross marketing approaches between industrial heritage sites; and increasing the numbers of visitors to them.

**What has been Achieved?**

ERIH has been developed through the work of three partner groups which have dealt respectively with branding, marketing and promotion and spatial development.

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**Branding:** The design of a logo and development of a concept for its use as a European brand was a first priority for the ERIH partners. This was followed by the application of the ERIH logo on all project presentations, multi-lingual literature, and signage at Anchor Point sites and on exhibitions.

**Marketing and Promotion:** It has been vital to raise the general awareness, knowledge of and identity for ERIH. The principal means of communication has been the creation of a high quality web-site ([www.erih.net](http://www.erih.net)) which presents information on every aspect of ERIH. This has been supported by a programme of public relations, press works, multi-lingual leaflets, travelling exhibitions, promotional events at sites, regional route launches, meetings with other organisations and numerous presentations such as this one. The aim is to market ERIH and its sites in order to attract visitors.

**Spatial Development:** This has been achieved through the identification of sites to build the ERIH network at three different levels.

*Anchor Points* are sites of national or international importance chosen according to agreed quality criteria. They are the best and most attractive industrial sites and together build the ERIH route. This is perceived as a virtual route from which sites to be visited can be selected. There are now 66 Anchor Points in 7 countries and a further 820 sites have been identified in 29 European countries as potential Anchor Points. Existing sites include:

North Duisburg Landscape Park, North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany (WHS)

Westphalian Museum of Industry, Zollern II/IV Colliery, Dortmund, Germany

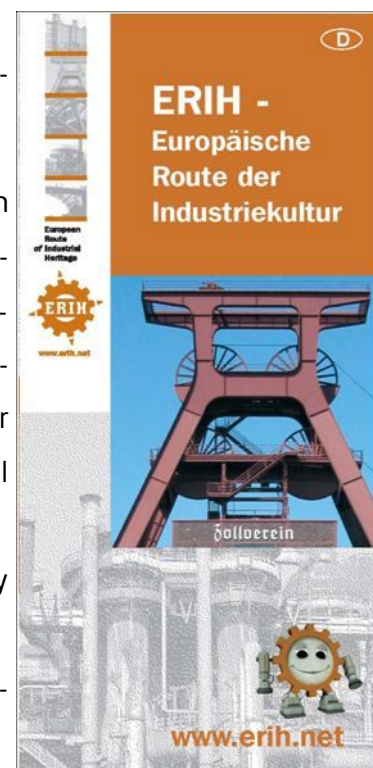
Volkingen Iron Works, Saarland, Germany (WHS)

Cruquius Pumping Station, Haarlemmermeer, Netherlands

Flemish Mining Museum, Beringen, Belgium

Ironbridge Gorge, Shropshire, England (WHS)

Big Pit, Blaenavon, South Wales



New Lanark, Lanark, Scotland (WHS)

Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills, Essex, England

The Manchester Museum of Science and Industry, England

*Regional Routes* demonstrate the regional history of industrial heritage by linking significant civil and engineering monuments and structures which illustrate specific aspects of technology. They can be visited as routes by tourists and offer a good visitor experience. The ERIH partners, to date, have helped to create with other regionally based organisations, a total of 10 pilot routes in the participating countries which each serve as regional route models which other regions may follow. The Industrious East Route in the East of England described in detail below is one of these routes.

*Theme Routes* were initially developed at the transnational level to show the thematic and historical European links of Industrial Heritage, comprising:

- Mining: The assets of our Earth
- Iron and Steel: Blast Furnaces
- Glowing
- Textiles: From Fabric to Factory
- Production and Manufacturing: Goods for the World
- Application of Power: What makes us go

Transportation and Communications: The tracks of the industrial revolution

Water: Blue Gold

A further three were later added to cover:

- Housing and Architecture
- Service and Leisure Industry
- Industrial landscapes

Research for these theme routes was carried out by specialist industrial archaeologist, Barrie Trinder. He has also researched personalities who have influenced European Industrial history. To date ninety biographies of significant individuals including



entrepreneurs, inventors, engineers, scientists, authors, workers and others have been identified (for details see the ERIH web-site ([www.erih.net](http://www.erih.net))).

Success for ERIH has been demonstrated by a growing number of visitors to the ERIH web-site. More than 500,000 leaflets in four languages have been printed and distributed. Over 40 press conferences have been held in association with the unveiling of signs at Anchor Points. Numerous presentations at events and conference have been made with resulting media coverage on television, in national and local papers and specialist heritage publications. The success of this has been shown by the number of enquiries about ERIH and how to become a part of it.

### The East of England Regional Route

The East of England does not offer high profile industrial heritage attractions similar to those found in the Ruhr and the other UK regions from which UK ERIH partners come, industrial heartlands like the West Midlands, South Wales and Manchester. However, research for the ERIH project East of England regional route has revealed a wealth of industrial heritage that has not previously been assessed collectively and therefore never fully appreciated.

The region is located to the north of London and the Thames river valley. It is rich agriculturally and the farm land still produces an abundance of all kinds of crops. Much of the former industrial activity was related to farming activities, but not exclusively. Many of the industrial sites are now museums run by the local authorities, of which



there are 10, or by voluntary trusts. The management and funding for these sites is subsequently diverse, promotion for them is uncoordinated and many have poor visitor numbers and struggle to survive. ERIH has provided an opportunity to raise the profile of the sites and encourage them to work together more closely. In addition to sites representing a wide range of industrial activity there are also many stories to tell of the individuals associated with industry in the region, of both national (e.g. Garretts, Paxman, Burrell, Crittall, Coke) and international (e.g. Congreve, Marconi, Rennie, Courtauld) repute.

Essex County Council as an ERIH partner took on the Lead role for creating the route, but working with a Steering Committee. This included representative from the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills, which is an ERIH Anchor Point, archaeologists working for the local authorities, representatives for the regional route sites (as identified) and other organisations. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) provided additional funding that enabled the County Council to employ a project co-ordinator.

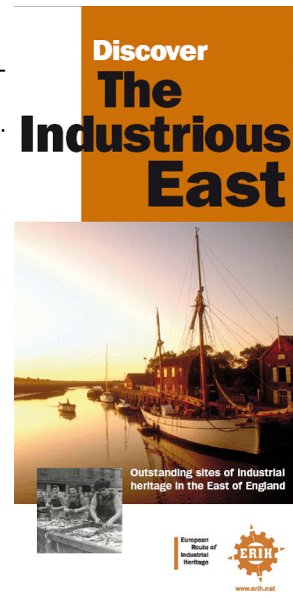
The first task was to compile an inventory of all of the industrial heritage sites across the region from which selection to form a regional route could be made. This involved consulting all of the local authorities, the National Trust, local societies, other organisations and individuals with information and/or a particular knowledge of the region's industrial heritage. While some of the sites identified were already recognised and protected by national legislation the majority were non-listed and unprotected. In addition to individual sites the industrial landscapes of towns like Chelmsford, Colchester, Norwich and Luton were assessed along with linear features such as the Great Eastern main line railway and the Chelmer/Blackwater Canal Navigation. Once identified



the sites chosen would form the main ERIH regional route and also provide local nodes for clusters of sites.

From the long list of sites (150+) produced by the research selection had to be made using criteria agreed by the ERIH partners. These stipulated that sites/museums should have:

- An important regional profile
- Long-term sustainability with tourism potential
- Authentic industrial heritage
- Good quality historical interpretation
- Local educational value



**Minimum standards of visitor hospitality and experience.**

The 30 sites finally selected embraced all of the industrial themes recognised by ERIH, but with some having a higher profile than others. Textiles, Mining/Quarrying, Manufacturing and Production, Transportation and Communication and Energy, particularly water power, were strongly represented. Once the sites had been agreed by the Steering Group a brochure was produced to promote the route.



Over 20,000 copies have been distributed through the route sites, tourism and information centres, libraries and other outlets. It has also provided opportunities to work with the press and tourism information services to advertise the route. The brochure was also the focus for a launch of the route at the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills Anchor Point on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2007. Presentations at this event explained the background and development of ERIH and provided explanation of how the regional route would help to raise the profile of industrial heritage in the region, increase site visitor numbers, create new jobs





at the sites, increase tourism benefit and also create a new regional industrial heritage forum. An "Industrious East" web-site was also created ([www.industriouseast.org.uk](http://www.industriouseast.org.uk)) providing details of sites and events (Fig. 10). The Heritage Lottery Fund has now agreed to fund a second stage which will see the production of a travelling exhibition and aim to raise awareness of industrial heritage in schools by producing lesson plans for the 14-19 age groups.

### **Moving ERIH Forward**

The future objective for ERIH is to establish it as a sustainable and self-financing network for European Industrial heritage. This requires the stabilisation of what has already been created (web-site, marketing, content), a permanent membership and management structure and the gradual extension of the network all over Europe. In order to achieve this a number of decisions have been made and actions taken.

In February 2008 at Duisburg, Germany, ERIH was established as a new legal entity under German Law, an interim Board was elected and categories of membership were agreed. Linked to this process, national lead partners and management arrangements for regions already committed to ERIH have been confirmed. For example, in the UK the leading national industrial heritage centre, the Ironbridge Institute has taken on the Lead Role (coordinator, David de Haan, [uk@erih.net](mailto:uk@erih.net)) and a new UK Steering Group has been established.

Action has been taken to expand ERIH to new countries and regions across Europe with the identification of former industrial regions where there are suitable new Anchor Point sites and potential for regional routes. In these areas individual sites and national or regional organisations have already been contacted and many have confirmed their interest in joining ERIH. New members are to be invited to attend the Annual Conference of ERIH in the autumn of 2008 at which the members of a permanent ERIH Board will be elected.

Other specific actions include revamping of the ERIH web-site (July 2008), a reprint of ERIH multi-lingual leaflets and the investigation of potential new funding options to help the process of expanding ERIH in both existing and new regions of Europe.

In the light of this activity it is hoped that sites and organisations in Portugal will soon become active members of ERIH. The sites shown to me during my visit to the Douro region have demonstrated to me the potential which exists for an attractive and

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extremely interesting regional route and I wish both the Museum of Douro and the rest of you well in your endeavours to create it.

### **Acknowledgements**

Apologies were presented by David Morgans, Coordinator for the East of England Regional Route, who originally undertook to give this presentation but was unable to do so due to illness. Thanks are given to him and to Paul Gilman, Essex County Council, for their assistance in the preparation of this paper.

I also acknowledge the general contribution to the content made possible through the efforts of all of the ERIH partners, in particular Christian Baum, the transnational project coordinator.

### **Figures**

- Figure 1 Floodlit furnaces at the former Thyssen Ironworks, North Duisburg Landscape Park, Ruhrgebiet
- Figure 2 Ironbridge Gorge, Telford, World Heritage Site and ERIH Anchor Point
- Figure 3 ERIH Anchor Point Sign with the logo
- Figure 4 Front cover of the German Version of the ERIH Leaflet
- Figure 5 Plan of the regional route linking industrial sites, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Figure 6 Map showing the location of UK regional routes
- Figure 7 Engine for pumping water at the Museum of Power, Langford, Essex, UK
- Figure 8 Front cover of the Industrious East brochure
- Figure 9 Trevor Knapp (centre left), Director of the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills Anchor Point with guests at the Industrious East Launch Event, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2007
- Figure 10 Maritime exhibition gallery, at the award winning Time and Tide Museum, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, UK, an Industrious East site