

ZERO CARBON RUGELEY

WP17-D8: USER-CENTRIC DESIGN AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: ENERGY HERITAGE PERFORMANCE WALK

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User-centric design and community
engagement:
Energy Heritage Performance Walk



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Executive summary

This report outlines the engagement design of the Rugeley Energy Heritage Performance Walk.

1. Introduction

The Rugeley Energy Heritage Performance Walk was conducted as a fringe event for the 2022 Lichfield Festival and as part of the community engagement work package within the InnovateUK Zero Carbon Rugeley (ZCR) project. The walk was designed as a public engagement piece in response to the strong sense of energy heritage stemming from Rugeley's coal mining industry and coal-fired power station, that had emerged from previous user-centric design and community engagement activities. The term performance walk as used in the context of this report describes a fixed route walked with participants which combines character actors as well as facilitated discussions.

With a view towards situating society's required transformation for the net zero energy transition within Rugeley's broader industrial heritage, the performance walk explored how the different aspects of a smart local energy system had changed over time within the town of Rugeley. This encompassed the strong coal mining and power station heritage as well as more historic energy systems, and aspects of building transformation and changing mobility modes and patterns.

Keele University worked alongside research practitioners from New Vic Borderlines, Equans and Rugeley community members to design and deliver the performance walk. The performance aspect of the walk was designed to appeal to participants who may not typically engage with research and to act as a provocation that would encourage participants to engage critically with their own perspectives about the relationship of Rugeley and themselves to different parts of a smart local energy system. The walk lasted approximately 2 hours and was performed twice in one day in July 2022, for two groups of diverse participants, including local Councillors, former power station employees, members of local arts and fishing clubs, and local families. This report discusses the design and delivery of the walk, as well as detailing discussions that occurred during both walks and both debrief sessions.

2. Design of the performance walk

1.1 2.1 Route selection

This section outlines the process and decisions that underpinned the design of the performance walk. This engagement piece could be delivered again beyond the life of the Zero Carbon Rugeley project, as a regular Lichfield Festival fringe event, and the principles could be adapted to work in other communities.

Following the principles of user-centric design underpinning the Zero Carbon Rugeley project, that champion place-based engagement and local knowledge and co-design, the design of the performance walk began by considering the local history of the town in collaboration with Friends of Hagley, a local heritage group in Rugeley. The term 'energy heritage' in the context of this walk is used to describe several different aspects of the smart local energy system design of the Zero Carbon Rugeley project as a whole, this includes energy generation and use, building retrofit and energy efficiency as well as aspects of mobility. Key locations that represent different aspects of Rugeley's energy heritage were identified as part of planning a route that would lead from Rugeley town centre to the power station site. The power station site was chosen as an end point for four reasons: i) to create a physical link between the town and the power station site that is planned to become a new housing development and is a source of contention for the Rugeley community, and ii) to reflect the link between the Zero Carbon Rugeley project which focused on the design of the existing town, with the power station site; and iii) to provide access to community members to the power station site which has been an important site of employment and leisure for the Rugeley community prior to its closure and becoming a closed site (with the exception of access to the lake for the angling club; and iv) due to its obvious role in Rugeley's energy heritage.

The route was selected to allow the performance to encourage discussions around the core themes of energy past, present, and future. The existing 10-mile-long Cannock Chase

Heritage Trial¹ ends on the outskirts of Rugeley Town Centre at Elmore Park, with the planning of this walk seen as an opportunity to create a new section of the heritage trail that passes through Rugeley and specifically focuses on the energy heritage of the town. Keele researchers worked in collaboration with New Vic Borderlines facilitators to create a series of “stations” along the route where key discussions could take place inspired by the landscape and physical locations such as street names, buildings, and transport infrastructure. The stations were chosen specifically to represent the key themes of Rugeley’s energy past, present, and future, and to encourage participants to consider Rugeley’s broader heritage and future beyond the power station. The engagement design shares similarities with Ambrose (2020) who conducted an Energy Visibility Walk as an engagement piece in Sheffield that aimed to reconnect individuals with energy generation.

2.2 Characters

Three characters were designed and performed by New Vic Theatre facilitators, with the characters stationed along the route of the walk to catalyse conversations with participants alongside Keele researchers who led the walk and discussions. The characters were designed to reflect Rugeley’s energy past, present and future, with participants meeting each character as the walk progressed. The characters included:

1. *Mr Heron Fisher (Past)*

Mr Heron Fisher, named after Heron St in Rugeley, greeted the participants at the beginning of the walk and introduced the principle of the conservation of energy alongside the theme of energy invisibility. The character spoke of Rugeley’s past, discussing the formation of coal and explaining that the participants would meet other characters throughout the walk.

¹ The existing Cannock Chase Heritage Trail can be found at:
https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/heritage_trail_map.pdf

2. *Dr Mugwort (Present)*

Dr Mugwort was introduced to the participants at one of the stations along the walk. This character was designed to embody the current uncertainty of Rugeley's energy landscape, expressing both optimism and anxiety towards the future of the town since the loss of the colliery and power station.

3. *Lady Damsel (Future)*

Lady Damsel was introduced to participants at the end of the walk. This character led discussions around Rugeley's future and encouraged participants to reflect upon how the walk had expanded their view of Rugeley's energy heritage.

The choice of water and plant-related names of the characters makes connection to the water course (Rising Brook), that flows through Rugeley, that paralleled the route that the walk took and discussions of the natural world and resources that took place.

2.3 Route discussion points

Elmore Park: Introduction

The walk began with Elmore Park chosen as a meeting point (figure 1, point 1) for participants and facilitators. This location was used as an introductory space for participants who were greeted by Mr Heron (past). Elmore Park contains a lake fed by the Rising Brook stream from the west (figure 1, point 2), with the stream continuing on from the lake via the east end of lake. Here, the stream is culverted underneath the town centre of Rugeley (figure 1, point 3), with this used to introduce the theme of 'energy invisibility'.



Figure 1: Aerial view showing Elmore Park where the walk began, and the route that the walk took displayed by the orange line.

Brook Square: Energy Invisibility

The route exits Elmore Park and follows the culverted Rising Brook stream through the town centre of Rugeley. In Brook Square, the stream briefly re-surfaces (figure 2, point 1), which was the location of the first 'station' (figure 2, point 2) on the walk. Here participants were encouraged to think about how sources of energy have changed over time and how energy has become invisible as the burning of solid fuels in the home has reduced. The stream acted as an abstract emblem demonstrating how sources of energy (such as the potential energy in water) change and lead to individuals interacting less directly with energy sources.



Figure 2: Left image showing aerial view of Brook Square and the area where Rising Brook stream briefly resurfaces. Right image: photo of Rising Brook Stream.

Forge Lane: Energy Past.

The third stop on the walk took place at a road junction of Brewery St and Forge lane with the theme of remembering Rugeley's past discussed at this point. This location was chosen as several nearby streets are named after previous industries such as 'Leathermill Lane' and 'Mill Lane'. The purpose here was to encourage participants to think about what industries and activities took place at this location in the past, and also reflect on how new streets could be named to recognise Rugeley's more recent industries such as the colliery and power station.

Severance Street: What has been lost?

The fourth stop on the walk took place at Severance Street. Here the street name 'severance' was used to encourage participants to consider how Rugeley had changed over time and what it had lost.

The Mill: Retrofit.

Stop number 5 took place along the canal tow path opposite a derelict building that was previously a mill (figure 3). This station was chosen for two reasons. First, the mill represents

Rugeley's industrial heritage, with the adjacent canal used as a transport corridor for trade, demonstrating changing mobility. Second, given the age of the building, it presented an opportunity to discuss the role of buildings in the energy transition and explore participants' perceptions of how buildings are always being changed and how they are required to change as part of the energy transition.



Figure 3: Photo of the old Mill building along the canal.

The Railway Bridge

Stop number 6 took place along a section of the canal tow path that has two railway bridges crossing it, one that is in use (figure 4, point 1) and one that previously took coal to the power station site and is no longer in use (figure 4, point 2). This station (figure 4, point 3) was chosen as it represents how industry and transport in Rugeley has changed overtime, with the aim of encouraging participants to reflect on Rugeley's recent industrial change in the loss of the power station and changing transport routes.



Figure 4: Aerial image of the two railway bridges and canal.

Power Station Site

The walk culminated with a debrief session at the Power Station Site (figure 5). This station was designed to allow participants to reflect on the Performance Walk and in particular to explore their thoughts on Rugeley's energy past, present and future, through a set of questions to think about and discuss.



Figure 5: Photo of the lake on the power station site where the walk debrief session took place.

Figure 6 below summarises all of the stations along the route of the Performance Walk, demonstrating how the walk progressed through Rugeley's energy past, present and future.

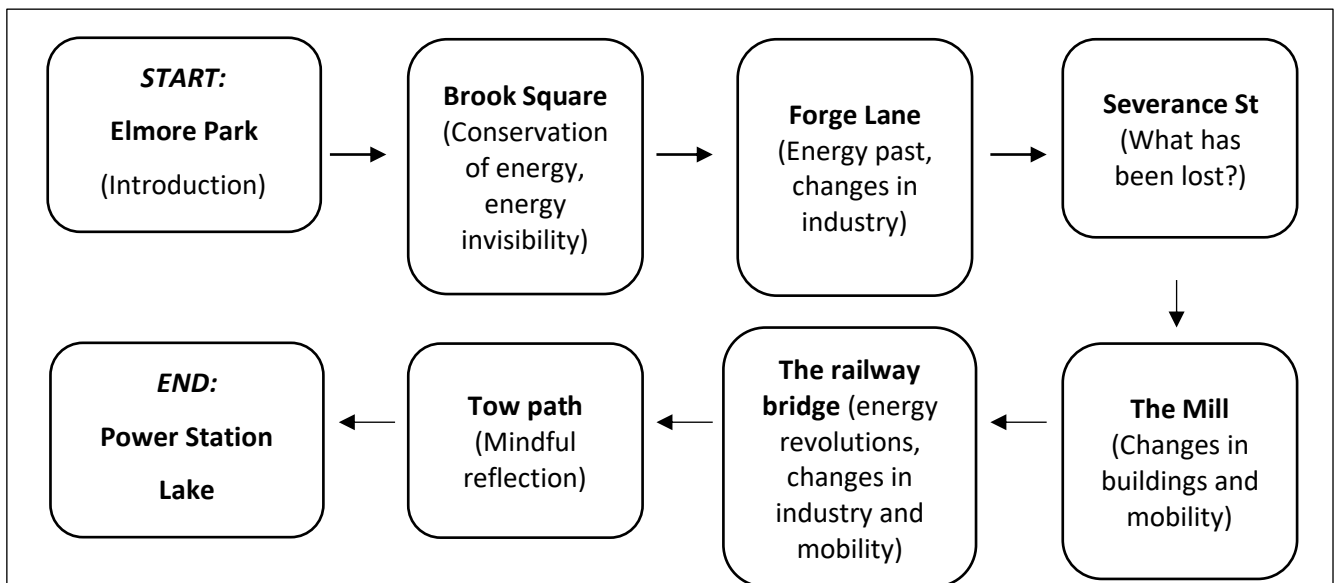


Figure 6: Chart showing each station along the route of the Performance Walk and the key themes covered at each station

3. Conclusion

This report summarises the design of the Rugeley Energy heritage performance walk. It outlines the decisions made to include each station, chosen to reflect certain aspects of Rugeley, as well as the creation of each character.