



L'Anse aux Meadows NHS and UNESCO World Heritage Site Management Plan Public Consultation Report



Introduction

This report presents an account of the public consultation period that informed the development of the L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site (NHS) management plan. Two meetings were held: A stakeholders' meeting on June 22, 2016¹ and an open house for the general public at the site Visitor Centre on June 5, 2017. Information on the management plan was also available online, with an invitation for interested parties to comment on the draft document and its key strategies until August 2017. All comments and suggestions received during the consultation process will receive special consideration while the management plan is being finalized.

The in-person meetings provided community engagement opportunities between Parks Canada managers and staff, area residents, and stakeholders. The face-to-face meetings allowed parties in attendance to update each other on matters of interest to L'Anse aux Meadows NHS. Formally, we received no comments or suggestions in writing.

Parks Canada's Western Newfoundland and Labrador Field Unit extends our sincere thanks to those who came out to meet us in person to share their memories, ideas, comments, and concerns with the planning team.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the public consultation process is to:

- Inform target groups and the general public about the management plan review.
- Gather their views on the issues and challenges, seek comments on the draft vision, key strategies, objectives and targets planned for achieving the expected outcomes in the coming years.

¹ Further details on the stakeholders' discussion is available in the report *What We Heard: Main Themes from Consultation Phase I, Stakeholder Meeting for L'Anse aux Meadows Management Plan* (Parks Canada, 2016)

- Provide a mechanism for participants to communicate any concerns, knowledge, ideas or suggestions that might influence the content of the 2018-2028 management plan for L'Anse aux Meadows NHS.

Specifically, the consultations were intended to meet the following objectives:

- Provide an opportunity, particularly for regional stakeholders and other target groups in particular, to participate actively in national historic site management decisions based on the directions set out in the draft management plan.
- Create an atmosphere of mutual trust and exchange by favouring a process that values different points of view and open discussion.
- Continue to foster productive and enduring relationships between Parks Canada and site stakeholders through a consultation process that recalls the mission of L'Anse aux Meadows NHS with respect to outreach, education, visitor experience and protection of the site.
- Foster harmonious integration of the national historic site into its surroundings and the recognition of its importance for all Canadians.

Public Consultation Process

The Western Newfoundland and Labrador Field Unit management team are working collaboratively to complete the management plan for L'Anse aux Meadows NHS. The results of the planning committee's reflections were published in a document entitled *Draft Management Plan for L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site* (January 2017). This document is available in both of Canada's official languages.

The draft management plan covers the following points:

- The significance of L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site and UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Planning context
- Planning priorities
- A new vision
- Strategic directions for the future of L'Anse aux Meadows

Four key strategies are:

- Increasing visitation and exposure through strategic marketing, engagement and outreach
- Engaging visitors through investments in, and enhancements of, the site's Viking Encampment living history program
- Preserving the unique landscapes, habitats, viewing points, cultural resources, and outstanding universal value of the site
- Maintaining strong relationships with stakeholders, including Indigenous groups and local communities

Interested parties or groups were also able to request a copy of the draft management plan by telephone (709-458-2417) or by email: pc.planlam.pc@pc.gc.ca. Information was also available online

Parks Canada presented these key strategies at two consultation sessions: a stakeholders' meeting (by invitation) on June 22, 2016, and an open house for the general public on June 5, 2017.

Information sessions with targeted groups and the public

These meetings provided participants with:

- An introduction to the draft management plan
- A venue in which to verbally express their questions, concerns, comments and first impressions about the proposals.
- Instructions on the proper procedure for formulating additional oral or written comments
- An occasion to inform target groups and the public on National Historic Site management
- An account of meetings with the target groups and the public
- An opportunity for interested public and stakeholders from the region to come together and discuss the site, ask questions of staff, and make connections together
- An opportunity to discuss maps and potential land use measures with Parks Canada staff
- An opportunity to discuss concerns and issues related to national historic site regulations and operations

Twenty-three key stakeholders in the fields of business, culture, tourism, and community development, area town councils, and members of the 2003 management planning team were invited to the June 2016 stakeholders' meeting to discuss the draft management direction and vision elements.

Letters of invitation to the stakeholders' meeting were also sent to area Indigenous governments and organisations, including the Qalipu First Nation, Miawpukek First Nation, Innu Nation, Nunatsiavut Government, and NunatuKavut, with an offer to meet separately if desired.

All households in the communities of L'Anse aux Meadows, Hay Cove, Straitsview, Noddy Bay, Gunners Cove, St. Lunaire-Griquet, Raleigh, Ship Cove, and St Anthony received an invitation by mail to the open house on June 2017. Stakeholders were also contacted by mail, email, and/or phone. Information on the open house was available on the site website, and posted at the Visitor Centre, available to interested on-site visitors several days before the event. Approximately 85 people attended the open house.

Target groups and individuals participated largely by asking questions and discussing their particular concerns and interests with Parks Canada staff and other community members and organisations in attendance. No written comments, recommendations or suggestions were submitted (a comment box was available). The open house in particular was as much a social

gathering as a meeting – local community members were pleased to come out to reminisce and share their experiences of L’Anse aux Meadows. No direct concerns were brought to the Parks Canada staff in attendance at the open house.

These consultations provided opportunities to review and discuss the draft management plan, including its key strategies and vision elements. General support and positive feedback was received from partners, stakeholders and the general public. As such, the key strategies, objectives and targets detailed in the L’Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site Management Plan reflect what was heard during the consultation period.

Parks Canada staff in attendance at the consultations included the Field Unit Superintendent, WNLFU Partnering and Engagement Officers (2), L’Anse aux Meadows NHS Site Supervisor, NHS Product Development Officer (based in L’Anse aux Meadows), a Planner from National Office, and the Manager for Management Policy and Operations. Site staff were also in attendance at the open house.

Summary of the Main Points Expressed during the Public Consultation Process

The following is a summary of the key elements expressed orally by participants in the public consultation process. Comments are organised below as they pertain to each of the management plan’s key strategies.

Key Strategy 1: Increasing Visitation and Exposure through Strategic Marketing, Engagement, and Outreach

Destination development

- Consultation participants acknowledged that L’Anse aux Meadows NHS and UNESCO World Heritage Site is the destination attraction in the area for most visitors. There is also a diverse range of visitor experience offers and attractions throughout the region, and a need for further destination development and marketing to a wider variety of audiences.
- Participants identified a need to link the three nearby UNESCO World Heritage Sites together (Gros Morne National Park and Red Bay National Historic Site are well within driving distance) as a way to encourage tourism north of Gros Morne National Park.
- Participants identified the need for better cellular and internet coverage throughout the region in order to support tourism marketing tools and visitor-based promotion via social media.
- Participants noted that hiking is one of the top 20 activities drawing visitors to Newfoundland. A range of stakeholders are developing the Iceberg Trail, connecting an extensive network of existing community hiking trails. Participants noted that there are world-class hiking and walking opportunities in the area, with amazing ‘signature’ vistas. There are also options to connect Parks Canada trails at L’Anse aux Meadows with the Iceberg Trail hiking network (the terminus of the Appalachian Trail’s Newfoundland section is in close proximity to the site).

Site Season and Service Offer

- Participants suggested the further incorporation of cultural components and oral histories to the interpretation available at L'Anse aux Meadows NHS, to deliver a full visitor experience.
- Participants recommended that Parks Canada extend the operating season and schedule for the site, even with a smaller complement of staff. A self-guided experience could be available to the archaeological site. Visitors come to visit L'Anse aux Meadows from around the world, including during the shoulder seasons.

Pre-trip planning

- Participants encouraged Parks Canada to further develop trip-planning content for the L'Anse aux Meadows NHS website, and to encourage site staff to highlight the variety of tourism offers in the region when engaging with visitors.

Partnering

- Stakeholders and businesses in tourism were very interested in partnering with Parks Canada to further mutual tourism objectives, strengthening the regional tourism offer.
- The Historic Sites Association noted their interest in promoting L'Anse aux Meadows beyond the site itself, for example during outreach events or travelling exhibits in the off-season. They also expressed interest providing further support to site activities that showcase local artisans and crafters.
- Participants suggested partnering with Norstead to interpret broader stories from the Viking age and to foster joint site promotion to visitors and commercial groups.

Key Strategy 2: Engaging Visitors through an Enhanced Viking Experience

Skills Development and Succession Planning

- Further staff training is required to develop and maintain the quality of visitor experience at site.
- Parks Canada could support local tourism and strengthen relationships by offering joint training to providers where possible, e.g. QVE training, interpretation training, visits with archaeologists, etc.
- It was suggested that Parks Canada partner with the College of the North Atlantic in St. Anthony to offer a course on Norse interpretation.
- Further options for local residents to apply and qualify for employment at the site was suggested.
- Participants also mentioned that further engagement with the regional schools could benefit both succession planning and foster long-term interest in the site.

Key Strategy 3: Preserving the Unique Landscapes, Habitats, Viewscapes, and Cultural Resources

- Stakeholder participants supported the proposed "Cultural Landscape and Land-use Guidance Document," noting that this tool is relevant to many tourism operators in the area, and would be very beneficial in guiding any future tourism proposals in the region.

Key Strategy 4: Maintaining a Strong Relationship with Local Communities

- Many families in the area have long histories tied to this landscape. People told us about their experiences with traditional activities. Many residents had worked for Parks Canada at L'Anse aux Meadows NHS over the years, and/or worked with the archaeology team and the Ingstads. Many individuals and organisations have close ties with Parks Canada, both as an organisation and individually among staff.
- Traditional activities and land use is important to local residents. Rules and regulations governing the management of national historic sites were discussed, including permitted activities within the site boundary. Participants recommended Parks Canada improve communications to the public with regards to permits and allowances for traditional activities, such as duck hunting.
- Participants suggested hosting more local artists involved in regional and Norse-related craft through the heritage shop and in on-site demonstrations or activities.

The report of the stakeholder meeting noted on page 1 (*What We Heard (June 2016)*) provides a comprehensive list of main points of interest to partners, stakeholders, and the general public.

Conclusion

The Western Newfoundland and Labrador Field Unit has worked over many years to engage communities interested and invested in the significance of L'Anse aux Meadows NHS and UNESCO World Heritage Site. This field unit has long placed a high priority on community engagement, cultivating positive working relationships with many of the nearby communities and stakeholders on the Great Northern Peninsula. The long history of these relationships has created strong ties and connections with both individuals and organisations. For many of our Parks Canada staff, the amazing story of human exploration and settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows NHS – as well as the years of work at the archaeological site with the Ingstads – is more than just a fantastic tale: it is intertwined with their family history and background. As such, the ideas and opinions of our partners, stakeholders, and the general public provides us with extremely valuable feedback to create a long-term vision for the site that fosters mutual interest and cooperation. Parks Canada is committed to giving due consideration to the concerns and recommendations expressed during the public consultation process.

The vast majority of comments received from the target groups and the general public were very positive, particularly concerning the vision and key strategies of the draft management plan. These comments reassure Parks Canada that its strategies are well-chosen.

As feasible, changes made to the draft management plan will respond to the expectations expressed during all the face-to-face meetings.

The management plan for L'Anse Aux Meadows NHS is scheduled to be completed by spring 2018. Once finalised, the Superintendent of Western Newfoundland and Labrador Field Unit and the CEO of Parks Canada will submit the management plan to the Minister of the

Environment and Climate Change Canada for approval, and once approved it will be tabled in Parliament.

We conclude by thanking all those who participated in the public consultations and on whom we rely for support during the production of the 2018-2028 Management Plan.

Geoffrey Hancock
Field Unit Superintendent
Western Newfoundland and Labrador Field Unit
Parks Canada

