



Ed Vaizey  
Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport,  
100 Parliament Street,  
London,  
SW1A 2BQ  
enquiries@culture.gov.uk

18/02/2016

Dear Minister

### **Culture White Paper: response from World Heritage UK**

1. This letter sets out a brief response to your request for input into the Culture White Paper, from World Heritage UK (WH:UK), a new organisation established to represent the views of all the UK's World Heritage Sites, and those places on the UK World Heritage Tentative List. My apologies for the lateness of the submission.
2. Since formation in late 2015, WH:UK already has the majority of the UK's WH Sites represented in the organisation as voting members, and held a successful conference in Saltaire, for which your ministerial colleague Tracey Crouch did us a welcome video.

### **General points**

3. The UK's World Heritage Sites represent those places in the UK that have such global resonance that they are considered the responsibility of the whole of mankind. They are by no means the only important heritage that the UK has to offer, but they are recognised as having Outstanding Universal Value – being unique and exceptional.

**Key point one:** Many of the UK's World Heritage Sites represent traditions, innovations and knowledge development that have had a profound influence on global culture, notably through industrial and geological heritage; this legacy has great potential to be developed nationally and internationally.

4. In contrast to other countries, World Heritage in the UK is understated and very poorly known amongst the wider public. This Culture White Paper gives the UK Government, through DCMS, the *opportunity* to change that, to really start to celebrate and shout about the globally important heritage that we have on our doorstep.
5. The UK's World Heritage spans all our four nations and a number of our overseas territories. It links together our industrial heritage that shaped the world, our historic and pre-historic past, and brings together culture and nature under one roof. Collectively the UK's World Heritage tells the story of the UK's past, from 250 million years ago to the present day, and everybody can name at least one Site, even if they are not sure why somewhere might be a World Heritage Site, or what that means.

**Key point two:** World Heritage in the UK is poorly known and understood, but can be a *unifying asset* for the UK as a whole and for the wider population, whether or not 'heritage' per-se is their interest. The Culture White Paper presents a chance to begin to realise that opportunity.

6. Over the past 15 years or more, and on very limited resources, many of the UK's world Heritage Sites have shown themselves to be cultural leaders and innovators. Work involving the arts sector in Cornwall and along the Jurassic Coast has led the way for arts and World Heritage globally. Pioneering approaches to regeneration and tourism have been a hallmark of Sites like Blaenavon and New Lanark, and Stonehenge and the Giant's Causeway have set new quality benchmarks for visitor facilities.
7. Most of the Sites are managed by partnerships of public, third sector and private bodies. In demonstrating success in management and engagement, they have also established best practice in managing heritage assets through partnership, and normally with a very low resource base. This will be increasingly critical as the UK progresses across the life of the proposed White Paper.

**Key point three:** Many of the UK's World Heritage Sites have become vibrant hubs, leaders and catalysts for partnership development and management. They can play a wider leadership role in for the UK in this respect, particularly for tourism and cultural innovation.

### **Places / people / funding / Cultural Diplomacy.**

The following four points provide a short commentary against each of the headings you raise in your consultation documents.

8. **Places:** The UK's World Heritage Sites represent the pinnacle of your aspiration under the 'Places' banner. Sites have already not only demonstrated that they are able to be vibrant and innovative, to drive regeneration, but also, as shown in a recent UK UNESCO report and other similar documents, have significant and lasting economic benefit. They can be seen as models or case studies for other heritage places, and should be celebrated as knowledge and innovation hubs for the sector; their profile can be a significant asset.
9. **People:** The 1972 Convention talks about 'integrating World Heritage as a function in the life of the community', which is something all Sites do on a daily basis. Tourism is often at the heart of this, with sustainable tourism practices leading the way across many Sites, but our Sites are also about skills retention, livelihoods, knowledge transfer and *always* about participation. World Heritage is a cultural construct made by people, for people, and so participation is at the core of what we do; not least in the formal and informal education sectors where nearly all Sites have regular, ongoing and meaningful interaction with students of all ages.
10. **Funding:** The majority of World Heritage Sites in the UK undertake their activity through support from Local Authorities, national bodies (such as the National Trust) or local charities. They should be congratulated for this, especially as many of the partnerships are finding funding increasingly difficult to come by, yet still recognise the local value and global responsibility of looking after our Sites effectively. There is no central UK Government funding for the majority of World Heritage Sites. This is not a request for funding, but a request that how the sector – our collective responsibility – is funded is looked at across the board, and what role DCMS can play in that. This links to the wider policy request at the end. We are extremely grateful for the support that HLF have given to projects at the UK's World Heritage Sites over recent years, but request that *all* Sites may be given equal opportunity by this body, irrespective of their corporate governance.
11. **Cultural Diplomacy:** We at World Heritage UK are committed to supporting DCMS's aspiration that the UK becomes an *exemplar* steward of its World Heritage Sites. The country is well placed to do this but government need to work more closely with practitioners and Site managers, particularly to build up the reputation and profile of our World Heritage from the ground up. Word of mouth, either directly from local business, or indirectly through social media is the most important promotional tool for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, yet to make this work on a national and international level, needs collaboration with government.

## World Heritage Policy

12. In light what has been said here, and your aspirations for the White Paper, World Heritage UK requests that the Government integrates into its approach for *delivery* of this paper the **development of a UK World Heritage Policy**, including consideration of primary legislation for its ongoing protection. We would be please to galvanise the sector to assist you in this.

This response has been, by necessity, brief. As such, we would be pleased to meet up with you, or others in your ministerial or officer team to discuss any aspect of this in more detail.

Yours sincerely



Dr Sam Rose  
Chair of Trustees  
World Heritage UK

[sam.rose@worldheritageuk.org](mailto:sam.rose@worldheritageuk.org)

07713 250273

45 Burton Road, Bridport, Dorset DT6 4JE

CC: Keith Nicol, DCMS  
The Rt Hon David Evennett MP

