



WORLD HERITAGE UK

WORLD HERITAGE

A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR GLOBAL BRITAIN

A World Heritage UK Statement





United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



World Heritage
in the United Kingdom

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FOREWORD



I am delighted to introduce this WH:UK Statement that is drawn from our recent Review of the UK's World Heritage Site Collection which offers a way forward for their future management.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites represent the best cultural and natural places on the planet. The UNESCO logo that celebrates the Sites is internationally recognised, is greatly respected, and is a powerful brand signifying both quality and significance. We are proud that the UK's 32 Sites are part of the World Heritage List and that the UK's local Site management regimes are considered exemplary by our global neighbours.

I commend Chris Blandford, WH:UK President, who has delivered the Review and demystified so much of the complexity surrounding our World Heritage Sites nationally and locally, and set an agenda for achieving a more consistent approach to UK World Heritage Sites in the future. Many people in the World Heritage sector including our sponsors have also contributed to the work and I thank them for this.

To our knowledge, this is the first time anyone has ever looked comprehensively at the UK's World Heritage, and we have carried out our Review professionally and objectively. Inevitably some may disagree with some of our findings or conclusions, or have valid perspectives on a particular issue which may differ from ours. So I should emphasise that we see this report very much as the starting point for a frank and constructive discussion about the future of this important issue and we should therefore like to know what you think.

World Heritage UK is the only independent body focussed exclusively on the UK World Heritage Sites with its membership drawn locally from the Sites themselves. WH:UK's goals are well aligned to those promoted by UK Government. We look forward to continuing to participate in ensuring that our outstanding World Heritage Collection goes from strength to strength in its contribution to the UK.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Crouch'.

Tony Crouch

Chairman of Trustees, World Heritage UK

A REVIEW OF UK WORLD HERITAGE SITES

World Heritage UK (WH:UK) is an independent charitable body that represents the UK's Collection of World Heritage Sites (WHSs). It has undertaken an independent Review of the state of the UK's World Heritage Sites to assist the UK Government and others in planning and supporting the future sustainable management of the Sites. This brief Statement is derived from the main Review Technical Report (UK World Heritage Collection: Asset for the Future) and its associated Summary Report.

The Review was carried out during 2018 and early 2019 and focussed on the 27 UK mainland World Heritage Sites prior to the inscription of the 28th UK mainland World Heritage Site – the Jodrell Bank Observatory (July 2019). Site management was assessed at an individual World Heritage Site level. This was used to highlight the key issues for the UK World Heritage Sites as a whole, and generate a plan of action to realise the national and local potential of the UK World Heritage Collection.

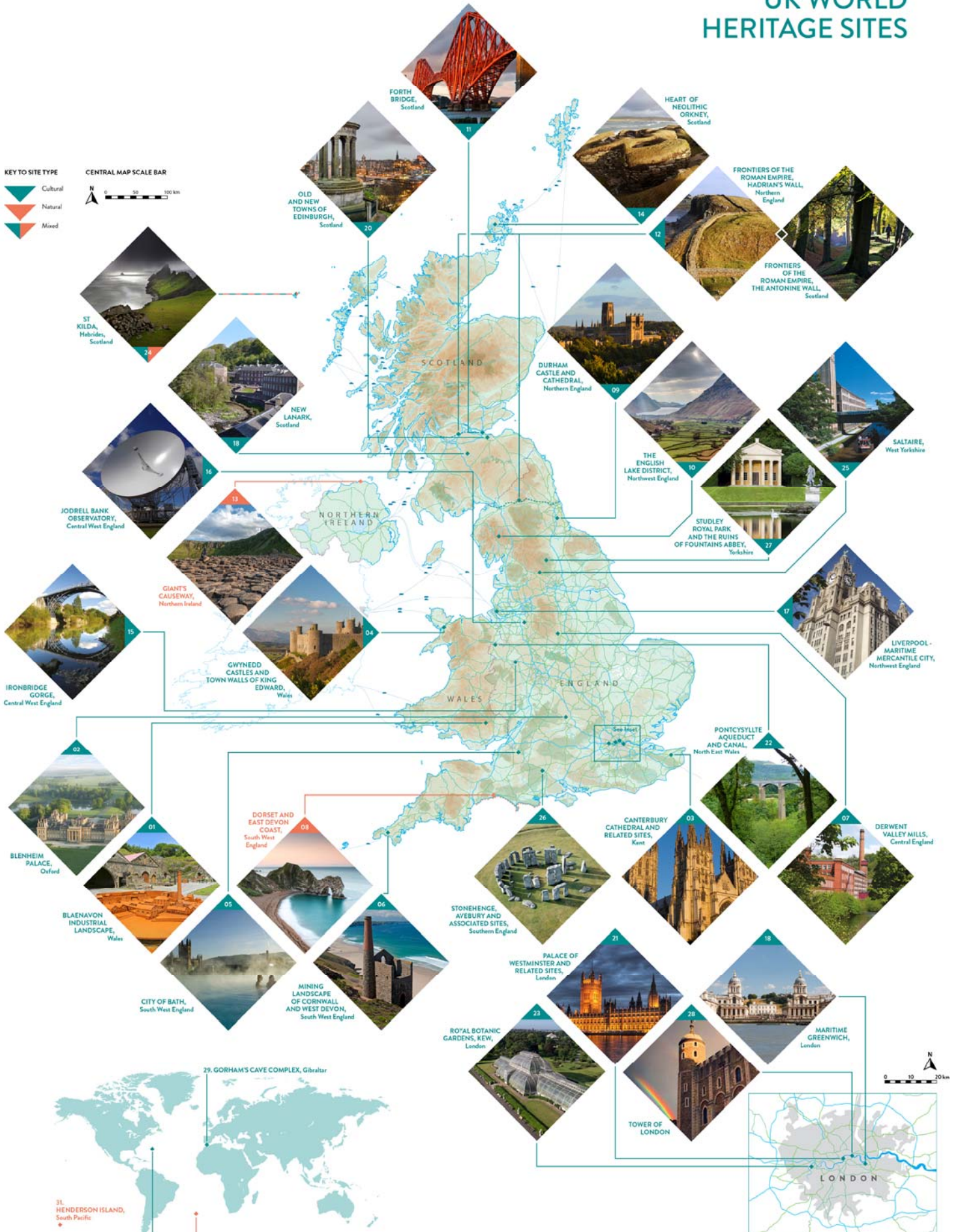
The overriding messages arising from the Review can be expressed succinctly. UK Government has an international responsibility to protect, nurture and enhance our World heritage, so that it is protected for generations yet to come. The UK's World Heritage is a major resource and a central part of the UK's cultural inheritance and major asset for the UK.

UK WORLD HERITAGE SITES

KEY TO SITE TYPE



CENTRAL MAP SCALE BAR



UK OVERSEAS WORLD HERITAGE SITES

OPPORTUNITY FOR GLOBAL AND LOCAL BRITAIN

The UK's World Heritage is a remarkable opportunity – a sleeping giant of cultural and economic potential. It includes many of the most important heritage assets in the UK, helping to spell out our island story capturing Britain's greatest global impacts, and offering the potential for local socio economic benefits to WHS communities. The UK World Heritage Site Collection amongst other things can play an increased role in the UK Government achieving its current broader goals, particularly in areas of social, cultural and economic wellbeing.

As a signatory to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, UK Government has an international responsibility to conserve, manage and enhance our World Heritage, so that it is protected for generations yet to come. With effective management the Sites can remain (and in many cases become) the crown jewels of eco- and heritage tourism in the UK, contribute to the projection of our Soft Power, whilst helping to regenerate and give greater identity to local communities and reshape the image of some of the less favoured parts of the UK.

At the present time the UK is not turning World Heritage to its advantage. Some Sites are exemplars of effective sustainable planning and management, but good management, promotion and interpretation is patchy, and at too many Sites it is underfunded and under resourced. Well-known Sites are coming under visitor pressure that must be carefully managed, whilst less well-known Sites would often welcome (and could with benefit accommodate) additional visitors.

Collectively the UK is not yet making the most of its inheritance. It is not properly delivering the international commitments made as a States Party when the Sites were inscribed. The UK could make better use of the Sites, as tools for regeneration and for securing our national cultural identities and cohesion, especially in England.

UK's World Heritage is a remarkable and valuable resource, is a central part of UK's cultural heritage, a significant national tourism asset, and an asset for local communities

The UK is not yet making the best use of its WHSs either as tools for benefitting communities or for enhancing UK national and international cultural identity

GLOBAL ASSETS

There are 32 World Heritage Sites in the UK Collection: 28 spread across the UK mainland and the adjacent islands of Orkney and St Kilda, and a further 4, part of the UK's Overseas Territories, in Gibraltar, The Gough and Inaccessible Islands, Henderson Island and the Town of St George, Bermuda. Of the mainland Sites, 26 are classified as cultural. Two mainland Sites are natural (Dorset and East Devon Coast/Jurassic Coast and the Giant's Causeway) and 1, St Kilda, is in the mixed category.

The Sites show great contrasts in planning, management and operation. The range of types and themes is similarly great. They include palaces, parklands, historic townscapes, prehistoric sites, places of worship, industrial heritage, castles, geological sites, ecological sites, and cultural landscapes. A particular contrast arises between Sites centred on monuments or tightly defined groups of historic buildings, and Sites centred on large-scale townscapes and city centres. The latter have complex patterns of land ownership and sometimes strong development pressures.

There are now over 1,100 UNESCO World Heritage Sites inscribed worldwide. In terms of their cultural and natural significance it is fair to describe the worldwide list as some of the most important places in the world. It follows that World Heritage Sites are amongst the most significant heritage locations in the UK. One might expect them to be funded and managed accordingly, but this is often not the case.

The Sites are enshrined in the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, which was ratified formally by the UK as a States Party in 1984. It is therefore the UK's responsibility to meet the terms of the convention. Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention sets out the expectations and responsibilities of States Parties, as follows:

World Heritage Convention Article 4: 'Each state party to the Convention recognizes the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage...'

Quite apart from the potential economic, environmental and social benefits they may confer, caring for the Sites is amongst Britain's global responsibilities.

The UK Government (like many other Governments) is currently seeking to identify strategic assets which can contribute to its emerging Soft Power Strategy. The UK's existing soft power assets have already taken us to the top of the international soft power listings and the UK's World Heritage Sites have almost certainly contributed to this status although their significance may not have been fully understood.

The World Heritage Collection of Sites is a significant tourism asset. Tourism is the fastest growing industry in the UK and growth is expected to continue. It is worth £126.9 billion to the UK economy, with inbound tourism alone contributing 9% of UK GDP. Although all visitors may not be aware of World Heritage status it is estimated that the 27 mainland World Heritage Sites (excluding the recently inscribed Jodrell Bank Observatory) receive some 60 million visitors per year. This varies from as much as 15 million per year in the Lake District to 350,000 visitors at Saltaire.

A large part of the Collection relates to Sites that reflect preindustrial town and landscape planning, the impact of the industrial revolution, and the environmental mitigation of its worst effects, often through town planning and the creation of model communities. Many of these Sites resonate with Britain's global role as a great power and shaper of world events, especially through the British Empire, the industrial revolution and the world wide export of ideas for town planning and environmental management. These are therefore assets of immense global cultural significance. They are of central importance to the understanding of Britain's island story, to its historic role as a sea power, and thus to the central features of its political culture. And they are of growing significance to developing countries as they grapple with the social and environmental consequences of industrialisation and rapid urbanisation.

UK's soft power strategy seeks to identify strategic assets such as WHSs that bring added value and influence to UK's international standing

WHSs are significant tourism assets; it is estimated that the 28 onshore WHSs receive 60 million visitors per year

UK WHSs are of immense global cultural significance and importance to the understanding of Britain's 'island story' and central to its political culture

LOCAL ASSETS

Increased awareness of WHS presence and values would generate greater socio-economic benefits to the communities that host WHSs

World Heritage Site status contributes to social and economic benefits to local communities. In disadvantaged areas such as Cornwall the presence and significance of the World Heritage Site has encouraged increased inward investment and grant funding, contributing to regeneration and Site conservation and management.

The World Heritage Sites that are the ‘iconic’ most visited national tourist destinations (eg Tower of London and Blenheim Palace) already make significant contributions to the UK’s visitor economy. Some of the less well known Sites around the UK are also contributing more modestly to their local economies – predominantly through tourism spend. The potential for increasing local benefits for communities in such Sites is great. Once an increase in national and local awareness of World Heritage values and associated promotion has been achieved for the World Heritage Site Collection as a whole, and the Sites individually, this potential can be realised more fully.

Local World Heritage Site Coordinators and Managers have already achieved some successes raising World Heritage Site awareness in the community through numerous outreach, engagement and education activities. At some Sites where regeneration remains a key issue this has helped generate an improved sense of place and civic pride and identity for the community. The potential to build on this to further encourage local World Heritage Site stewardship is great.



Mining Landscape of Cornwall & West Devon, South West England

CHALLENGES FACING WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Some 80 different organisations have a responsibility for, or interest in, the management of the UK's UNESCO World Heritage Sites, contributing to a 'jigsaw puzzle' of different responsibilities at the international, national and local levels. At national and international level there are the roles and responsibilities of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and their advisers, UK central Government departments and agencies, the UK National Commission for UNESCO, the planning system, ICOMOS UK, and a range of Non-Governmental Organisations. It is a complex picture and not easy to understand. At local level management structures for the Sites vary, having evolved to suit local circumstances. Taken together, the local World Heritage Site steering groups involve a further 500 interested parties and partners.

After inscription, World Heritage Site planning, conservation, management and operation in the UK falls for the most part to local authorities or other local organisations. Government's role is relatively limited and normally confined to involvement at those Sites that are directly managed by Government agencies or where a serious problem has emerged.

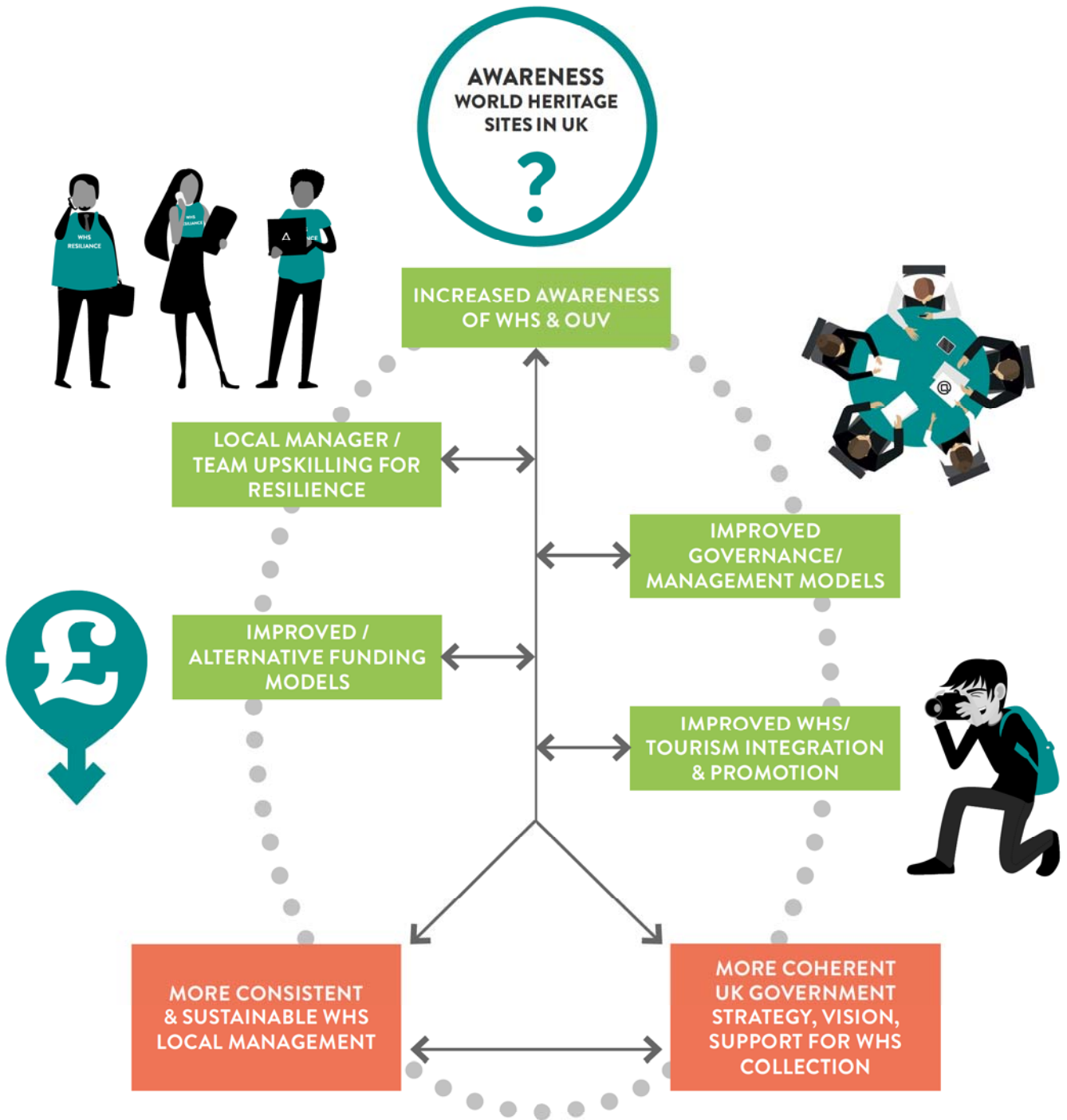
Approximately 50 percent of the UK World Heritage Sites are managed and funded by local authorities or public partnerships; 20 percent by central Government organisations; and 30 percent by independent trusts. Thus the management and operation of the majority of UK Sites is greatly dependent on public funding. There is great variation in the level and sources of this funding. Most Sites have a Site Coordinator with small budgets. Infrastructure for interpretation on the ground is inconsistent and limited in many Sites. Only 5 Sites have dedicated World Heritage Site visitor centres.

The influences that have created the complicated and inconsistent mix of governance types include time of inscription, availability of existing management support bodies or regime, degree of complexity, and the range of stakeholders involved. But the complexity may also reflect the lack of Government strategy and direct support. Thus the 28 mainland Sites are governed by a variety of public or publicly responsible bodies, independent charitable organisations with wider remits and independent charitable organisations dedicated exclusively to particular Sites.

80 different organisations are involved in the management of UK WHSs – a confusing 'jigsaw' of roles and responsibilities

Management and operation of the majority of UK WHSs is greatly dependent on public funding – a diminishing resource

CHALLENGES FACED BY UK WORLD HERITAGE SITES



- Challenge
- Vision

In the initial years of World Heritage designations, from 1986 onwards, Sites nominated focused on primary archaeological and 'monument centred' Sites, many of which already had worldwide recognition – such as Stonehenge, Hadrian's Wall and the Tower of London. Post 1995, many of the Sites added included cultural landscapes and townscapes, sometimes with a busy urban or industrial history focus, such as Liverpool or Blaenavon. These include large areas in multiple private ownerships. Their management is correspondingly complex and difficult.

Since 2008 there have been very substantial cuts in funding for many public sector organisations, both in central and local government. For the many Sites where local government has perforce assumed the role of World Heritage Site Coordinator and supporter, this has led to a difficult situation for resourcing. Most local Coordinators report 30 to 50 per cent cuts in the budgets available for management and operation. Awareness of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of many Sites continues to be generally low. In general the protection of the majority of World Heritage Sites continues to be relatively successful through the overlap of other designations and the national and local planning policies and guidance relating directly to World Heritage Site values. However, the perceived impact of some new major development proposals in relation to inconsistent national and local planning policies has been controversial and is scrutinized by UNESCO, with UNESCO Missions visiting and reporting on Sites including Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscapes, Stonehenge, Westminster, Liverpool and Edinburgh.



Forth Bridge, Scotland

The Review revealed numerous local issues and management challenges which vary from Site to Site across the Collection. At a strategic level for all Sites, but in particular for the ‘publicly’ managed Sites, the five central challenges faced by the UK World Heritage Collection include:

- **Awareness:** low awareness of the UK World Heritage Site Collection and lack of understanding of Outstanding Universal Value, both nationally and locally.
- **Management Capacity:** the need for increased capacity, resources and diversification of skills in management and promotion.
- **Governance Models:** the emerging need for alternative governance and management models which offer greater scope for self-sustaining finances and less dependence on traditional public sector support.
- **Consistent Funding:** the need for improved Government support, coupled with alternative and consistent funding sources for management and conservation.
- **Tourism Integration:** improved integration of tourism marketing and World Heritage promotion at local and national levels.

A comprehensive Government led WHS strategy and vision is needed to guide the future development and sustainability of the UK WHS Collection

50% of UK’s 28 onshore WHSs are already well-established tourist destinations, 50% are less well known – awareness of WHS values is low at most Sites

Addressing these interrelated challenges is critical if a coherent UK wide World Heritage Site strategy, together with more consistent and sustainable World Heritage Site local management, is to be achieved. Within the framework of the strategy, initial priority should be given to raising awareness of the national importance and local benefits of the World Heritage Site Collection and individual Sites. Without greatly raising World Heritage Site awareness, improving management capacity, governance and funding the integration of tourism will continue to be challenging.

There is currently no Government strategy for the future of the UK’s World Heritage. The most well-known Sites are the ‘iconic’ destinations - the 50 per cent of Sites which are already well established as tourist destinations such as Stonehenge and the Tower of London. The remaining 50% are distributed across the UK, but are much less well-known, appreciated, or promoted as national tourist and cultural assets. Unlike National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, for example, there is no national legislation, legal framework and annual funding support

to underpin the World Heritage Sites. Not surprisingly, awareness of the Sites is relatively low, especially amongst Government departments and agencies in England, beyond the Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport. There is however greater understanding and support for the smaller number of World Heritage Sites in the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales. In these nations the Sites appear to be well understood as part of, and beneficial for, the promotion of their cultural inheritance and story, together with the social and economic advantages they can bring both locally and nationally.

At a local level some 55 per cent of local Site communities are reported to have a relatively high degree of awareness of their World Heritage and its values. At the rest, local communities are only partly aware or wholly unaware of this. Low awareness appears to reflect a number of factors, including lack of resources for promotion; lack of interpretation on the ground; recent designation; and marketing dominated by tourism agencies, rather than cultural bodies. Notwithstanding these figures, at many Sites, particularly in disadvantaged areas, some local communities are passionate about their Sites and fully support initiatives, for example, such as the local World Heritage Site Ambassadors schemes. Low awareness often results from lack of resources for community engagement and awareness raising, rather than a lack of community interest.



St Kilda, Hebrides, Scotland

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL

Unlocking the potential offered by the WHS Collection will require increased commitment and collaboration by Government and stakeholders

The World Heritage Site Collection is very important for the UK. The potential for the Sites to further contribute to UK Government achieving its current broader goals in the areas of social, cultural and economic wellbeing is great. Unlocking the potential for this and for increasing the benefits for all from UK World Heritage Sites, both nationally and locally, will require dialogue and action by both Government and stakeholders. With effective management the Sites in the Collection can remain (and in many cases become) the crown jewels of heritage tourism in the UK, contribute to the projection of Soft Power, whilst helping to benefit and reshape the image of some of the less favoured parts of the UK.



Pontcysyllte Aquaduct & Canal, North East Wales

PLAN OF ACTION FOR UK WORLD HERITAGE SITES

The Review has highlighted the need to turn the UK Collection of World Heritage Sites from undervalued places to major national and local assets and to establish their future management as exemplary in global terms. WH:UK is recommending a Plan of Action which should be the essential starting point and a catalyst for addressing the current shortcomings of World Heritage Site management in the UK. WH:UK is encouraging the UK Government to build on the Review and take a lead with other stakeholders in progressing the propositions in the Plan. The benefits of action would be significant and the costs could be surprisingly low.

And eight point Plan of Action is recommended:

1. National World Heritage Sites Strategy and Vision - The UK Government, in collaboration with the devolved nations and other key stakeholders, should commit to preparing, implementing and regularly reviewing a National World Heritage Site Vision and Strategy.

2. UK World Heritage Fund – A fund should be established, bringing together public funds and philanthropic contributions, to enhance, interpret and manage World Heritage, with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable Sites where greater management resilience is needed.

3. Independent National Body for World Heritage - The UK should support and resource an independent national body for World Heritage, coordinating World Heritage Site Collection promotion, policy and action, and sharing best practice nationally and internationally.

4. Campaign for Raising World Heritage Awareness - The UK should commit to running a national campaign to raise the awareness of the World Heritage Sites and their values, involving Government departments and agencies, the private and voluntary sectors, and the individual Sites.





5. UK Planning Policy and World Heritage Convention – A dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders and research should be initiated to engender a more effective relationship between the UK planning policy framework and the principles enshrined in the World Heritage Convention.

6. Local World Heritage Sites Upskilling - Steps should be taken to ensure that all Sites have properly funded and multi skilled management teams which are not over dependent for their resourcing on local government and wherever possible with independent sources of long term income.

7. Alternative World Heritage Site Governance - A more detailed review should be undertaken of the alternative mechanisms for World Heritage Site governance to highlight opportunities and options for Sites to be more self-sustaining and less dependent on public structures and support.

8. Integration of Tourism and World Heritage Sites - Action should be taken to secure a much closer and effective working relationship between tourism promotion and the effective management of Sites.

NEXT STEPS

The Review concludes that alternative and more sustainable and consistent levels of resourcing and support are critically needed to unlock the potential for improved national promotion of UK Sites and for more resilient local management of the Collection. Government local wellbeing, cultural, tourism and international standing agendas will greatly benefit from this when achieved. The initiation of a UK wide World Heritage Strategy would facilitate collaboration by the many stakeholders in the World Heritage sector for the further refinement and detailing of other propositions highlighted in the Review. Some central Government public funding will be needed to kick start awareness raising, upskilling and greater WHS resilience allowing the most vulnerable Sites to develop a better blend of public and other funding sources to support management.

World Heritage UK (WH:UK) is at the heart of the UK World Heritage community and is the only body which is entirely focussed on representing and promoting all the UK's World Heritage Sites. Already working with colleagues and partners in central and local Government, the private and voluntary sectors, WH:UK stands ready to assist in the implementation of the strategic priorities proposed by the Review, enabling positive change in the World Heritage sector.

The starting points for the Plan of Action are development of the National WHS Vision and Strategy and establishment of UK World Heritage Fund

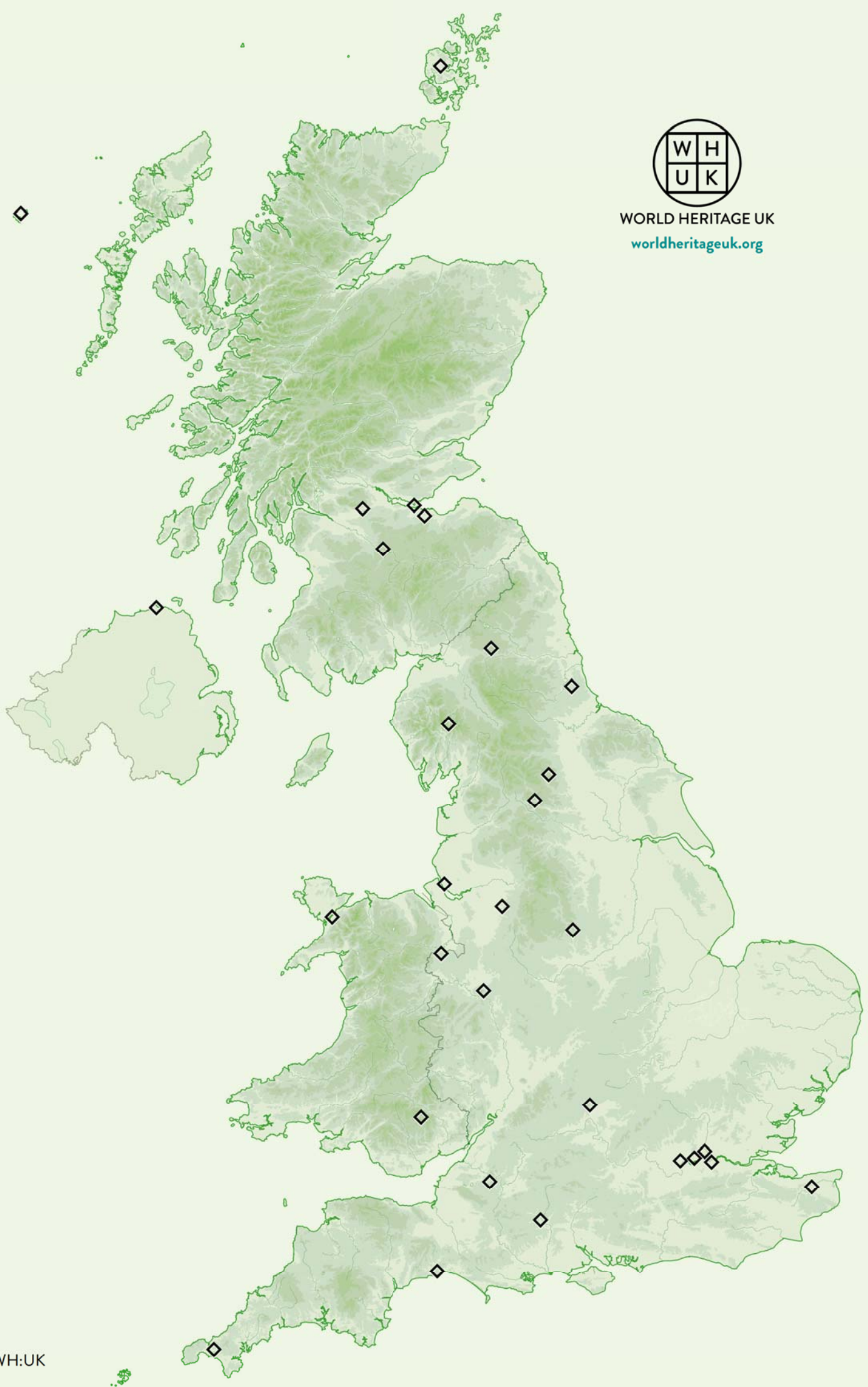


Acknowledgements

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- A large number of persons and organisations contributed to the Review at interviews, meetings and discussions during 2018 and 2019. WH:UK is grateful to all of these and their contributions.

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