World Heritage UK

Towards an Outline
Research Strategy

October 2016

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Towards an Outline Research Strategy

1 This paper has been prepared by the Department of Geography and Planning, Liverpool University, on behalf of World Heritage UK. It sets out an outline research strategy which has been consulted upon and discussed with partners. This final version is now approved by the Board. The paper draws on the results of a survey with all mainland UK World Heritage Sites carried out in Spring 2015. The authors wish to express their thanks to all those who responded to the survey for their helpful and thoughtful contributions.

WHUK Charitable Objectives

2 The charitable objects of WHUK are:

3 To promote and support for the benefit of the public the protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the UK's World Heritage Sites, defined as those places considered by the United Nations Educational Cultural and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) as having such Outstanding Universal Value that they warrant being inscribed on the World Heritage List through the powers of the international Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972.

4 To support for the benefit of the public the development of World Heritage Site nominations for the UK's Tentative List Sites, defined as sites on the UK Government's official Tentative List for nomination for World Heritage Status.

5 To advance the education of the public in general in respect of the significance and values of the UK's World Heritage Sites and Tentative List Sites, as defined above.

Why Commission Research?

6 Well-founded research related to WHUK's charitable objectives can help to increase understanding of World Heritage Sites and the common issues which affect them. It will help to achieve educational objectives which are directly reflected in WHUKs charitable objectives.

7 Publishing a body of research will increase the status and standing of WHUK as an authoritative and knowledgeable body, well fitted to speak for the UK's World Heritage Sites and to represent their interests in relationships with other national and international bodies, and with government.

8 Similarly, setting the agenda for, as well as publishing authoritative research will raise the profile of World Heritage Sites with government, potential sponsors and other national and international bodies. A clear agenda may also help individual researchers to justify their funding applications.

9 Research can help to illuminate and clarify key management issues for the sites as a whole and sometimes for smaller groups of sites, thus assisting with practical site management.

What Sort of Research Should We Encourage and Commission?

10 WHUK is a member funded organisation and its research priorities should be driven by the research needs and practical concerns of its members, as well as other relevant national bodies. These include the priorities and interests of:

a) site managers and project officers
b) steering groups for the sites, as indicated by their chairs
c) key national bodies such as ICOMOS, Historic England, CADW, Historic Environment Scotland,the National Trust and the UK National Commission for UNESCO
d) the WHUK chair and trustees
e) research agendas of relevant university academic s and professional bodies such as the RIBA, RTPI and IHBC

11 In developing its initial research strategy WHUK will consult with these bodies, to understand their views and interests, and help shape the direction of research efforts. Responsibility for agreeing research priorities and expenditure will rest with the Board.

How Should the Research Agenda Be Pursued?

12 WHUK does not have its own staff resource for research. To deliver relevant and authoritative research it will need to operate through existing institutions, sometimes on a client and contractor basis, sometimes on an advisory basis.

13 Relationships have already been formed with the University of Liverpool and the Ironbridge Institute, but these should remain neutral and not preclude the development of relationships with other bodies, academic institutions and individual academic researchers. These two organisations should operate in partnership with others in a 'hub and spoke' relationship. The roles of the primary research partners would encompass research, research commissioning, publications, data management, archiving, alongside knowledge sharing with academic, professional and government bodies, through seminars and the dissemination of findings. The arrangements could take the form either of formal client and contractor relationships or informal networking relationships.

14 WHUK will seek to create a small research budget and seek sponsorship from other relevant bodies, including HE, Historic Scotland, CADW, AHRC, ESRC, Research Trusts, EU and UNESCO. Initially the research budget will be fixed at £500 per annum.

When Will Research Results Be Delivered?

15 Initially WHUK will seek to publish commissioned research, or work carried out in partnership with others, producing one or two research reports per annum. This document will be the first of these publications.

16 Where possible, publications will be launched at the WHUK annual conference.

Initial Views and Priorities from the World Heritage Sites

17 An initial survey has been carried out to establish the views and priorities of individual world heritage sites in the UK. Appendix One lists the sites approached. Appendix Two summarises the detailed comments received grouped around categories identified by the researchers after the event. Those invited to comment were given an open brief. Appendix Three provides an up-to-date audit of the research/ projects that have been completed, are already being undertaken or are planned in relation to the respective UK world heritage sites. It is important that the findings from these studies are understood to help inform and define the specific parameters of future research commenced.

18 There are 28 properties inscribed on the UK World Heritage list of which three are British overseas territories and the latter have not been contacted in this survey. 16 sites out of 25 have responded giving a response rate of 64%. Historic Scotland responded with a coordinated response on behalf of New Lanark, Edinburgh and St. Kilda.

19 Using the survey responses we identified key research themes and (where relevant) central research questions. These have been subject to further consultation with the sites, as well as key national bodies (see Appendix Four for a list of those consulted). This has resulted in the identification of the following 10 key research themes.

1 Planning and Regulation

How are the UK's systems of planning and regulation performing in terms of identifying and protecting the OUV of World Heritage Sites and what are the potential areas for reform? In particular how are World Heritage Sites, management plans, buffer zones and settings applied in local plans and planning decisions?

2 Tourism

How can World Heritage status be employed to support sustainable tourism, what is the value of the designation in commercial tourism markets and how best can a strategic and coherent approach to World Heritage tourism be secured? For example, could sites work together to promote and brand themselves?

3 Visitor Management

What experience can be systematically shared on successful visitor management and on the pitfalls of excessive visitor pressures?

4 Financial Support

Nationally and internationally what different financial models are used to manage and fund World Heritage Sites; what external financial resources have been made available for managing World Heritage Sites; and what might be the scope for increased self-funding and local funding as well as national funding for sites in the UK?

5 Culture and Identity

What is the international cultural significance (including intangible significance) of World Heritage and how does this relate to issues of national and local cultural identity in the UK and its constituent nations?

6 Brand Value and Economic Benefits

Beyond tourism, what are the key economic benefits of WHS to local economic development, image and identity and how do these relate to issues of international and national brand values for World Heritage Sites and for UNESCO, including commercial value?

7 Education and Learning

Who visits WHS's for an educational experience and why; how do we communicate OUV as part of such learning visits; and how do we better understand and engage with our audiences? In particlular, how best can digital technology be applied to engage with people, improve the visitors experience and allow 'virtual access'?

8 Environmental Pressures

What steps can we take to evaluate, minimise or mitigate the effects of climate change and extreme weather on OUV?

9 Longitudinal Evaluation

How can the long-term impact of practice, policies and initiatives be evaluated?

10 Sharing Research and Data

Can findings from existing research be better consolidated and shared, general lessons learned and gaps in the evidence be clearly defined?

Next Steps

20 Following agreement of these themes and principles by the WHUK Board, the initial priorities for specific research studies will be identified, and the paper together with these specific priorities will be launched at the next WHUK conference.

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October 2016

Appendix 1

Sites Contacted
Those sites marked in bold have provided responses.

Cultural

- **Blaenavon Industrial Landscape (2000)**
- Blenheim Palace (1987)
- Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey, and St Martin's Church (1988)
- Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd (1986)
- **City of Bath (1987)**
- Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape (2006)
- **Derwent Valley Mills (2001)**
- **Durham Castle and Cathedral (1986)**
- **Frontiers of the Roman Empire (1987)**
- **Heart of Neolithic Orkney (1999**)
- **Ironbridge Gorge (1986)**
- Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City (2004)
- Maritime Greenwich (1997)
- **New Lanark (2001)**
- **Old and New Towns of Edinburgh (1995)**
- Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey including Saint Margaret's Church   (1987)
- **Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal (2009)**
- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (2003)
- **Saltaire (2001**)
- **Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites (1986)**
- Studley Royal Park including the Ruins of Fountains Abbey (1986)
- **Tower of London (1988)**

Natural

- **Dorset and East Devon Coast (2001)**
- **Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast (1986)**

Mixed

- **St Kilda (1986)**

Appendix 2

Summary of Issues Identified by Individual Respondents

Planning and Regulation

Reconciling Development and Conservation- Protecting OUV

- Protection- how can we better protect OUV through the planning system?
- How can we strengthen the planning system to better recognise and protect OUV?
- Is UK planning law/guidance now strong enough to give WHS's the protection they need to retain their OUV's?
- How can we resolve UNESCO's timescales with those of the planning system across the UK?
- How can we raise awareness of OUV in planning developments?
- Development Pressures- how do we deal with proposed development outside WHS boundary (buffer zone)?
- How are WHS, buffer zones and settings reflected in Local Plan policies and applied to individual planning decisions and planning appeals?
- What is the role of WHS Management Plans in the statutory planning process?
- How do we deal with proposed developments which may affect the Site's setting (e.g. wind farms)?
- How do we prevent wasting of precious resources in planning processes by ensuring DECC etc. do not issue new oil, gas & mining concessions - that would/should never pass planning - are not issued by the government in the first place (e.g. new oil, gas and mining concessions overlapping WHS such as December fracking concessions overlapping Jurassic Coast that are now owned by energy companies).
- NRW recommends the use of LANDMAP, the Wales approach to landscape character to inform Buffer Zone and plan-making and protect WHS settings from insensitive development.
- We need better guidance on the impact of developments on Sites' settings
- How do we deal with proposed development where new Local Plans have not been established?
- Are there instances of good practice in proactively ensuring commercial development in WHSs benefits OUV?
- Useful to look at convergence and divergence in the devolved administrations within the UK and what can be learnt from this.

Governance

- Governance and public consultation – especially viz planning decisions
- Can we establish effective mechanisms for agreeing and addressing issues shared across the UK?
- What sorts of governance and regulatory system do others use for WHSs and what can we learn from them?
- How can friends groups be better involved in joined up advocacy to protect WHSs?
- Necessity for governance changes and potential outsourcing of WHS function from local authorities; loss of stability in core functions
- Scaler issues to do with management- How can we work together to agree and deliver UK aims, objectives and standards when heritage is a devolved matter and delivery is usually locally based?
- The benefits or otherwise of adding further sites to the World Heritage Site list – this links to demonstrating benefits and influencing politicians
- What is the role of UK WHS in understanding and promoting and supporting the global family of WHS?

Sustainable Tourism/Visitor Pressures

- How can we develop sustainable tourism and achieve successful visitor management?
- What is the WHS contribution to the UK Tourism brand- UKNC study is a useful starting point.
- It would be useful to explore how sites can work together to promote/brand themselves.

• Visitor management and engagement: what works in terms of engaging the visitor; how can OUV best be 'translated' to the audience; how can we encourage responsible visiting behaviour; evaluation of new ways of reaching audiences; predictions and preparations for responding to changes in technology
• Need a strategic approach- Role of UK and UNESCO bodies in promoting WHS tourism and protecting sites tourism (e.g. problem with use of UNESCO logo on road signage and lack of promotion of WHSs as a tourism brand)
• Can we approach tourism strategically, including use of UNESCO logo on road signage?
• Strategic Approach to Tourism: including signage, and a UK WH web-portal
• Over-visiting to a WHS; how do we deal with carrying capacity issues?

Environmental Pressures

• How do we deal with climate change impacts and how can we plan to minimise impacts on OUV as a result of climate change?
• Sustainable management (what does that look like for the long-term?)
• Climate change and extreme weather
• Climate change adaptation strategies and guidance

Sustainable Management

• Common Land management, how to involve commoners and resolve conflicts between stock management, biodiversity, access and overcoming problems associated with off-roading, vandalism, fly tipping, fire setting?

Financial Sustainability

• What is the long term future for funding of WHSs in the UK and how can we ensure their sustainable management?
• Funding availability/financial sustainability for WHS management teams/ financial changes
• We are being squeezed financially at both local and national government level – where else can we turn?
• Are there international funds? What models work? Can we learn from elsewhere?
• There are various models for managing WHSs and it would be useful to understand those models better.
• Learning from national & international best practice: How do other countries fund WHSs? UK National Commission for UNESCO may be able to provide introductions to other National Commissions.
• Prioritisation process for funding- understanding of the scale of restoration outstanding across the UK WHS sites
• What does long-term sustainable management look like for WHSs - can they ever be self-sustaining?
• Lack of core local authority funding and support for delivery of Management Plan objectives
• Capacity to deliver with decreasing resources, and difficulties meeting expectations
• How have reduced public finances impacted on WHSs and what can we do about this if so?
• Lack of, and reducing levels of funding. At present reliant on local authorities.

Economic Value

• Economic value of WHSs: to prove their worth in financial terms- it would be useful to be able to demonstrate better the positive impact our site has on the local economy and also to be more effective in how we engage with the Local Enterprise Partnerships.
• Demonstrating economic benefits – soft and hard data is needed and this needs collating
• Contribution to the local and regional economy (Use AIM economic impact model). Useful to do this nationally in order to provide consistent data.
• Understanding impact of WHS on the local economy- on property values, employment, tourism
• Lack of information places WH Status low down the ranking of issues for resourcing in simple terms
• Learning from national and international best practice: How do other countries use WH status to their economic advantage?

Inclusion/Ownership and Shared Understanding/Social Value/ Cultural Capital/Education

• Developing the educational and communicative role of WHS. They were never supposed to be just nice heritage but ambassadors for world peace and tolerance through their context (so looking out not looking in), who does that? how do we resource that initially?
• Development of citizen science projects: to encourage wider interest and understanding of WHSs and OUV and increased participation and inclusion, including in Site conservation and monitoring
• Using WHS as cultural capital (diplomacy, economic benefits, sense of identity)
• It would be interesting to see how the significance of WHS relate to issues of national – as well as local – identity.
• Understanding public awareness- how is it fed into teaching at schools, how many school children/students visit WHS sites each year?
• How is OUV communicated as part of learning (including informal learning) and interpretation and events?
• How do we ensure wide ownership of the WH concept?
• Public understanding of the status is confused
• Relevance and profile to none sector decision makers is problematic.
• Lack of understanding of the purpose and reasoning behind the designation.
• A feeling that maintaining the WHS is sufficient- not developing and maximising the understanding and impact, educationally, conservationally and economically.
• Socio-economic benefits (site specific and general, building on Rebanks work)
• Unless we tackle the lost purpose for WH which is the sharing and understanding of globally significant natural and cultural heritage, WH status is little more than an extra nonessential planning constraint to most people.
• Value (how do we articulate value effectively, and move away from a focus on risk/threats to a focus on opportunities?)- use the UK National Commission for UNESCO's (UKNC) reports on the Wider Value of UNESCO to the UK as starting point.
• How do we demonstrate public benefit?
• How do we demonstrate the benefit of WH to local and national communities?

Using WHS status to best advantage

• Consider any needs to support/develop findings from UNESCO's UK Commission's recent survey
• Are we placing enough emphasis in the UK on the protection of WHSs and how can organisations use their WHS status to best advantage?
• Demonstrating economic and social benefits and positive values of WHSs, building on previous work and developing UK case studies

Brand Value - International Research

• What are the international and national brand values of World Heritage? Can we enhance these and utilise them further to the UK's benefit?
• The impact and potential that World Heritage brings to the UK building on prior studies and looking at international models to add wider context to aid Governmental recognition
• How can WHSs meet UK Government overseas development goals (including sustainable development goals)?
• What can be done to improve support that WHSs can give to these goals?
• UNESCO UK/DIFED/DCMS could be more joined up in their approach in meeting the UK's international development goals such as increasing capacity, using heritage for development etc.
• a low understanding of the global linkage/purpose and profile abroad.

Longitudinal Evaluative Work

• Evidential study to test what the benefits have been when a site (including all its statutory bodies) has taken a proactive/holistic decision to 'change the message' locally on many fronts. The study could identify a UK site but also at least one European one – perhaps for example where many parties (including Air travel providers, education and businesses locally, highway landscapes such like) have all agreed to use fundamental messages and physical investment in a common objective manner for a defined period of time – with stated goals.

Uncovering the Living and Multiple Values of a site

• Exploring modern perceptions of the site (especially in a living site)
• Capturing Intangible heritage- ways of providing audits for intangible heritage

Management

• Data- how do WHS sites deal with large quantities of data?
• A shared database of key planning policies and decisions (especially appeal/judicial review, etc.) could be a useful data sharing resource.

Political Concerns

• How WHS's (and the arts and heritage as a whole) can influence politicians who promote 'evidence based policy making' but actually take no notice of it.
• Elections and political uncertainties
• Government Support- Confirmation of commitment of national government bodies to support WHSs into the future (which may be influenced by forthcoming key planning/danger listing issues).
• Relevance to the UK population and UK Government

Provision/Attractions

• Variety of provision within WHS and varying quality. Attractions within the site are all independently owned and managed.

Appendix 3

Summary of Research Completed/Ongoing/Planned

• Intention to review MP revision process to try to simplify and streamline approach, using Edinburgh as a test case as it is next in line for review in Scotland. Recently completed Antonine Wall socio-economic study has aspects that could be applied more widely, particularly to linear WHS that straddle administrative boundaries.
• Saltaire- there is a discussion with Fountains Abbey WHS to conduct a joint economic benefits study – regional tourism, rural, urban differences. Cost is estimated at 5-10K. Historic England (Yorkshire) are interested but funding needs to be sought.
• The first joint Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Research Framework will be published later this year which is updating the separate Avebury (2001) and Stonehenge (2005) frameworks. These look at specific queries related to the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS but clearly any work here will inform archaeological studies elsewhere in the UK and Europe. Stonehenge and Avebury already have both UK and European institutes working in the WHS.
• Climate Change Research project with Trent Peak Archaeology
• 2015 – 19 action plan recognising the need for wider understanding of best practice across a number of areas that effect the protection, understanding and sustainability of the WHS.
• Durham- Academic research is planned into the Roman context of the site answering questions posed in the Hadrian's Wall Research Framework (which can be found on the Durham CC website) this will be reviewed this year for the next 5 year period.
• Consolidation activity being reviewed to understand what has worked and not worked. This is being done with European colleagues and local universities.
• Education partners are looking at developing the narrative presented by the core UNESCO values in order to expand and make more robust the curriculum based for the WHS as 'Romans' is one line on one page of one subject. Utilising the multi-cultural aspects of the Roman Empire they are building outwards to look at individual and cultural identity and awareness today, this development work saw its first main output with an exploratory 'Living Wall' conference in 2014 showcasing archaeological research alongside documenters of the Berlin Wall, aid workers in conflict areas and artists in Israel. This was to fellow partners and peers along the WHS and will form the basis for discussions in developing these areas this year.

• Some research work into sustainable transport best practice is about to be commenced to allow an effective look at long term plans for the long running Hadrian's Wall bus. This is at early stages and needs better defining.
• Areas of community engagement- best practice needs to be assessed and used to inform development of a more embedded and democratic WHS.
• Economic evaluation, due to be undertaken and completed 2015/16 (Jurassic Coast)
• Research Framework for DVMWHS (Derwent Valley)
• Climate Change mapping within DVMWHS (Derwent Valley)
• UK National Commission for UNESCO and Price Waterhouse- The Costs and Benefits of World Heritage Site Status in the UK- the Wider Value of UNESCO to the UK Study.

Appendix 4

National Bodies Consulted
Historic England
Historic Environment Scotland
Cadw
Natural Resources Wales
Natural England
Scottish Natural Heritage
Department of the Environment Northern Ireland (DOENI)
ICOMOS UK
National Commission for UNESCO
Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
National Trust
WWF
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)