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Ed Vaizey MP
Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy
DCMS
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Dear Minister

Culture White Paper 2016: response

I am writing on behalf of World Heritage UK (WH:UK) in response to the publication of the White Paper in May 2016.

WH:UK is a charitable organisation established in 2015 to undertake networking, advocacy and promotion on behalf of all of the UK's 29 World Heritage Sites, and those that are progressing towards World Heritage status. Currently representing more than two thirds of the UK's existing World Heritage Sites, the organisation aims to bring together all the agencies and interested parties in the UK World Heritage sector to:

- Raise the profile of World Heritage at home and abroad
- Advocate for support, resources and policy change
- Exchange expertise and good practice and link culture with nature

WH:UK welcomes the publication of the White Paper and supports its long-term ambitions for culture, especially the recognition that culture has an intrinsic value in itself, as a public good, as well as its impact on tourism, secondary spending, regeneration, health and education. We also welcome the establishment of Heritage Action Zones, which should bring about real benefits across the country. These should enable existing and aspiring World Heritage Sites to amplify their role in protecting, enhancing and promoting their Outstanding Universal Value. We hope that applications from within UK World Heritage Sites will be looked upon favourably.

WH:UK also welcomes the aspiration within the White Paper that the UK should be at the forefront of cultural protection at home and abroad and wishes to set a global standard in the stewardship of World Heritage Sites. The UK's World Heritage Sites are outstanding, and while in many cases their assets for culture, education, the environment and the economy are valued at a local level, at a national level this is not always the case. The UK could do so much more collectively to recognise its Sites and WH:UK wishes to take a lead in ensuring this happens, working with government and its agencies where appropriate.

The aspiration laid out in the White Paper will require some level of central government investment to ensure that the UK achieves it. As you will be aware, the funding and management of the UK's World Heritage Sites is very diverse. Some are owned and managed by bodies such as the English Heritage and the Historic Royal Palaces. Others, like Giants Causeway, New Lanark or

Blenheim, remain in charitable or private ownership. Others rely on local government funding to work within complex mosaics of relationships. This is especially true of Sites like Cornish Mining, the Jurassic Coast, the Derwent Valley Mills, Old and New Towns of Edinburgh, Blaenavon, Westminster and Hadrian's Wall. The decline of local authority cultural funding (a reduction of £236 million since 2010) as a direct result of centrally imposed cuts is not fully recognized in the White Paper and their contribution to the co-ordination and management of Sites has already significantly reduced, putting significant stress on already pressed UK World Heritage Site Management Functions.

WH:UK further welcomes the establishment of the Cultural Protection Fund to support overseas Sites experiencing or emerging from conflict, and the ratification of the 1954 Hague Convention. Given that this funding will be the responsibility of the British Council we are assuming that none of it will be allocated to UK Sites. We feel that this is a lost opportunity and that discussion should be directed to allocating a proportion of this funding to support the UK Sites, to improve their protection, conservation and presentation and thus better meet your aspiration of being at the forefront of cultural protection. This will have the further benefit of building capacity within the sector to be able to offer expertise to colleagues overseas.

I am sure that you are aware that the much-lauded work of the British Council in the former Soviet Union, Asia and the Middle East has relied upon the experience of culture professionals from both the national, local government and charitable sectors. Continuing local government cuts will only diminish that talent pool, which is essential to work with overseas partners to both train and build the capacity that your performance indicators expect. WH:UK will be writing to the British Council to offer its support as a 'talent broker' to work with them on developing innovative projects and delivering support to overseas Sites. We see this as a huge opportunity to achieve the ambition of the White paper, promote World Heritage and raise standards of cultural protection at home.

To conclude, on behalf of our members, WH:UK is pleased that the government is taking its contribution to the global problem of cultural protection seriously and we wish to play an active part. However, we and our members will struggle to do this in a climate of diminishing resources, so we therefore propose that a percentage of the Cultural Protection Fund, say 20%, is allocated to the home Sites to enable the State Party to confidently affirm that it is at the forefront of cultural protection and will be able to utilise the Cultural Protection Fund in a targeted and effective manner. I look forward to your response and would be pleased to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely



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CC: Rt Hon David Evennett MP
Sue Owen, Keith Nicol, Hannah Jones (DCMS)
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