



World Heritage UK

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Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy
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Dear Minister

Congratulations on your appointment to Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy. I write on behalf of World Heritage UK, a charity established in 2015 to represent the interests of all of the UK's World Heritage Sites; the majority of which are now full members.

My specific reason for writing is that we wrote to your predecessor the Rt. Hon Ed Vaizey on May 24th as a response to the White Paper. We expressed our support for the aspirational aims around World Heritage and the global problem of cultural protection, and indicated that we - the existing UK Sites - were keen to play our part.

Mr Vaizey was kind enough to reply, and I have attached his letter along with our own. Whilst your predecessors' reply was complimentary, and recognised that World Heritage UK have a role to play, it fell short of responding to our specific points. So as not to repeat what is already written, I will set our points out succinctly below.

- The designation of places as World Heritage Sites has been shown to provide economic, social and cultural benefits, locally and nationally. For example, a recent study into the Jurassic Coast, the Site that I manage, showed a GVA boost of up to £111m per year and 2000 jobs as a result of the designation and the work that has gone with it.
- On a national level, they represent the jewels in the crown of our heritage – industrial, natural, archaeological and so on – and have the potential to bring immense national pride, but in many cases their profile is very low, as is the profile of World Heritage overall in the UK.
- The UK's World Heritage Site management structures have a great deal of experience and expertise in managing such places, expertise that is quite scarce and which could be of significant benefit to help the Government meet its aspirations in the white paper.
- The management of many Sites has been impacted negatively by the cuts imposed on local government in recent year, and also the corresponding increase in competition within the charitable sector, to which many Sites are needing to turn. The UK's decision to leave the EU may also result in significant funding problems for some Sites, particularly those in the more deprived parts of the country.

I could go on, and would welcome the chance to brief you more fully. However, our principle request to your predecessor was that a small proportion, up to 20%, of the proposed Cultural Protection Fund should be ring-fenced and made available to UK Sites. This would be for at least three very good reasons:

1. It would provide much needed national level investment in our countries most internationally celebrated and recognised heritage assets, and help you to **“set a global standard in the stewardship of World Heritage Sites”**, as set out in the White paper. Management needs identified by our membership include: management planning; capacity building; visitor and digital infrastructure development; promotion and marketing; and research.
2. Spending money in the UK would ensure **visible results, seen by the UK electorate** and drawing their attention to the fact that it is part of a wider, largely invisible programme of spend overseas. When presented alongside the supporting evidence of the value of World Heritage, this will be appreciated by the British public.
3. Supporting UK Sites would help to **retain valuable expertise within the sector**, and which would then be available to support the overseas aims of the Cultural Protection Fund. As an industry, we are in danger of losing skills and knowledge built up over many years simply due to lack of resources, and from a smaller number of younger people coming through the sector.

World Heritage UK can help the Government to deliver this. As the industry body for the Sites themselves, we can work with our members and your advisors to determine priorities and clarify which of our world class heritage in Scotland, Wales, N. Ireland, England and the overseas territories is in greatest need and would satisfy the criteria for funding under this programme. We would also develop cross-UK initiatives to add value to the funded work and ensure that the projects are well publicised and properly appreciated. We would work with national and local partners and organisations to further promote the very real value and benefits of World Heritage.

To illustrate our case, I recently wrote to your colleague Tracey Crouch in respect of a critical issue with invasive mice on Gough Island. This will need significant investment else the Outstanding Universal Value of the Site will be under significant threat. This would be a very clear case by which the Fund could be used to show that the UK undertakes exemplar stewardship of its Sites.

In conclusion, therefore, we believe that we, with our partners in the sector, can play a significant role in helping the Government deliver the White Paper and realise significant benefits for heritage and people. Our request of you now is for a meeting with you and your officials, and with the British Council, to discuss this role in depth.

Yours sincerely



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CC: Tracey Crouch MP
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