

**World Heritage UK Annual General Meeting 2023
6 December 2023**

Item 4: Membership Fees 2024-2025

Background

At last year's AGM in December 2022, it was agreed to increase the membership fees in all categories by around by 15% due to the unforeseen rapid rise in inflation and interest rates, and the subsequent increased costs for WHUK. It was hoped that this would help stabilise the financial position of WHUK but unfortunately, this has not proved to be the case.

In considering the membership rates for 2024/25, there are a number of factors which are influencing the Board's position:

- Costs are continuing to rise for WHUK operations and there has been a loss of income from membership non-renewals and less income from the two key annual events as these now need to be run as hybrids, at the request of members, which incurs greater costs.
- A number of member Sites are downsizing their membership from Voting to Associate, even though the eligibility criteria indicates they should be Voting Members. Associate Membership was not intended for such Sites and it is not in the spirit of the Constitution for this to be happening.
- Local authorities are facing ever decreasing budgets and have to focus on statutory services. Discretionary spending such as organisational memberships, professional development and attendance at events are increasingly being curtailed.

The key source of regular income for WHUK is the membership subscriptions supplemented as much as possible by ticketing and sponsorship of the Events Programme. It does not benefit from any regular Government grant, unlike some comparable umbrella organisations which support designated assets. Although overheads are relatively low, and there are no premises to heat or light, other costs such as professional services, IT costs, salaries and travel and subsistence have increased and will continue to do so.

WHUK's main expenditure is the cost of staff: Alex McCoskrie, General Manager, and Natasha Maddocks, Finance Manager, both of whom work part-time. The work they do is essential to the day to day running of the organisation, in addition to administrating the regular WH Coordinators Forums, the World Heritage Chairs meetings and, this year, the in-person events in the Lake District and the Annual Conference at Stirling, the series of evening webinars and the joint webinars with ICOMOS UK on HIAs. These meetings are always well received and provide a vitally important resource for WH Coordinators across the UK and Overseas Territories.

The Board hopes to be able to continue this level of service to members in the future, but this will only be possible if WHUK can sustain and increase its current level of income. To address this, it has expanded the membership base with a new Academic membership offer and is encouraging all the new Tentative List Sites to join, in addition to continuing to submit a number of external funding applications that would support the core costs of the organisation.

Options

The Board has considered a number of options around any increase in membership fees for 2024/25 but reluctantly considers it would be irresponsible not to look at an increase in fees in the face of continuing rising

costs. It is proposing that membership categories and associated benefits, should be reviewed during the course of 2024/25, including looking at how to engage with a wider audience base.

However, in the meantime, in order to make Associate Membership a less attractive alternative to Voting Membership, fees for this category should be substantially increased, while the increase for Voting members, recognizing their own budgetary issues, should be limited to 3.3%, below the current level of inflation. Individual Member rates should be increased by only £5 per annum.

Recommendation

The Board of Trustees for World Heritage UK propose the following membership rates for 2024/25:

Membership Category	Current Rate	Proposed Rate 2024/25	% Increase
Voting Member	£750	£775	3.3%
Associate Member	£310	£400	29.0%
Individual Member	£35	£40	14.3%

*Paul Simons,
Chair of Trustees, WHUK
November 2023*