

Historic England International Strategy and Principal Activities 2015-2018

Summary

England has well developed provisions for research, identification, conservation, protection and presentation of the historic environment. Public engagement with and participation in these provisions is increasing nationally and internationally. Our knowledge and expertise is well regarded and continues to be sought by colleagues from the home countries and further afield.

The English approach to heritage does not exist in a vacuum; historic environment policy and practice is constantly evolving within intergovernmental organisations such as UNESCO, the Council of Europe and, more recently, the European Union, as well as within other national heritage organisations. While Historic England needs to share good practice, it also needs to learn from the experience of others.

At the UK national level culture is a devolved responsibility but at the international level cultural heritage is led by the UK government, through DCMS. As the statutory advisor on cultural heritage to DCMS, Historic England provides advice not only on England's heritage but also, where international matters are involved, can add value to the advice of Cadw, Historic Environment Scotland, the Scottish Government Historic Environment Policy Unit and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Where appropriate, particularly in relation to European matters, Historic England works in partnership with these agencies in providing such advice to DCMS. Other government departments, which can seek the impartial specialist advice of Historic England on international heritage, include the Department for International Development (UNESCO), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Overseas Territories), the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (natural environment, farming and rural issues), the Department for Justice (Crown Dependencies) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (planning). These Departments can disclose the advice they have received from Historic England, together with details of their own decisions to ensure transparency.



Historic England plays a prominent role in working with UNESCO's World Heritage Centre and its advisory bodies and with the European Union and the Council of Europe, both indirectly (through government) and directly, to ensure the best results for the conservation, protection and promotion of the historic environment of England and, where applicable, of other parts of the UK. It is important that Historic England has a clearly set out strategy and well defined prioritised activities to achieve this result. This document is one of a number of such strategies for important areas of activity that we will be putting in place to underpin the Historic England Corporate Plan 2015-2018 and its accompanying Action Plan for the same period.

This strategy sets out three areas of work on which we will focus and identifies the key activities that we will undertake in order to assist the UK Government in delivering the best possible heritage outcomes within England, the UK and internationally. One of Historic England's internal programme boards will evaluate our performance in relation to the activities and outcomes that we have defined, where appropriate in consultation with the devolved administrations, and the activities will be periodically updated in the light of this evaluation.

Historic England's International Focus

Historic England has defined those areas of activity where it believes that its international work will have the most positive impact and deliver the best heritage outcomes in relation to the resources invested. In what follows there is a distinction between activities that relate only to England and those that are UK wide. In the latter case Historic England will work in support of the devolved administrations and their heritage agencies where this is appropriate, particularly in areas where we may be able to add value.

To this end Historic England will ensure that our international work focuses on:

1. **Where the UK Government has entered into or accepted wider international regulations, directives or conventions that have an impact on the historic environment of the UK as a whole (i.e. UK State Party responsibilities) or is considering so doing. To achieve this we will:**
 - a. concentrate on areas where our advice is most needed by Government;



- b. together with the devolved administrations, assist Government in ensuring the UK meets its international heritage obligations;
 - c. promote public understanding of and engagement in the World Heritage Convention, UK World Heritage Sites and helping to realise their economic and social value;
 - d. focus on initiating and responding to measures such as regulations, directives, and conventions that will have the greatest potential impact on the historic environment (whether adverse or beneficial);
 - e. advise on cases where change, or proposals for change, may have a significant effect on cultural World Heritage Sites in England.
 - f. advise on the potential for the UK to ratify conventions such as the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage
2. **Partnerships, research, funding & training. This will:**
- a. enable us to exchange and learn from good practice elsewhere in the world;
 - b. enable us to identify and promulgate appropriate EU and other international funding opportunities and partnership projects for the UK historic environment sector and for Historic England;
 - c. identify where our current and future research is relevant to international cultural heritage and offers opportunities for mutually beneficial partnership working with other countries and international heritage organisations.
 - d. facilitate training and development in international heritage to build capacity within the sector.
3. **Promoting key aspects of English and UK heritage policy at the international level by:**
- a. In relation to England concentrating on key targets that have an international dimension in the Historic England Corporate and Action Plans for 2015-2018;
 - b. More widely promoting UK heritage good practice, e.g. heritage as an integral element of sustainable development;
 - c. encouraging co-ordinated and effective working within the international heritage sector in the UK and beyond.

Historic England's International Activities

The areas of work identified above provide the framework for Historic England's international activities, which are set out in more detail below, together with the outcomes that should result. The International Team, which comprises two FTEs - a Head of International Advice and a Senior International Advisor - will undertake some of these activities itself, although many will be led by others. In the list of activities below the International Team will take the lead, where necessary with the support of others, unless otherwise stated. In order to keep track of Historic England's international work the International Team will maintain an overview of, and coordinate where appropriate, all international activities within Historic England. We will also continue to work in partnership with the devolved administrations in matters pertaining to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Our activities that relate to England are in line with the aims of the Historic England Corporate Plan 2015-2018, and are indicated below in brackets alongside each heading. For ease of reference these aims are:

Aim 1: Champion England's heritage

Aim 2: Identify and protect England's most important heritage

Aim 3: Support change through constructive conservation

Aim 4: Support owners and local authorities to have the expertise to look after England's heritage

Aim 5: Achieve excellence, openness and efficiency in all we do

Aim 5 applies to all the activities referred to below and is not therefore listed in each heading. If we are to succeed in relation to Aim 5, effective communication between the International Team, other parts of Historic England and our partners within and beyond the UK will be crucial.



1A Where our advice is most needed by Government (Corporate Plan Aims 1 and 2)

Activity: providing specialist heritage input in response to existing and proposed European regulations, directives and conventions.

Outcome: emerging proposals ensure that heritage plays a positive role and that any inadvertent negative impact from EU directives or regulations is mitigated so far as possible.

- **Activity:** advising on opportunities to take forward beneficial heritage initiatives and place heritage within wider strategies such as the current interim review of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Outcome: recognition of the role that cultural heritage plays in growth and by consequence the role of culture as the “fourth pillar” of sustainable development.

- **Activity:** in conjunction with the devolved administrations, providing advice to DCMS and other government departments on the World Heritage Convention, relations with UNESCO and its Advisory Bodies, the UK National Commission for UNESCO, UK World Heritage Sites and joint working with other countries on existing and potential transnational World Heritage Sites. This work will also involve providing support to government in its work with UNESCO on reform and effectiveness.

Outcome: Government continues to meet the terms of and benefit from its role as a State Party to the World Heritage Convention and assists UNESCO’s operational effectiveness.

- **Activity:** offer advice to DCLG, via DCMS or directly, on strategic planning and decision making where this has a significant bearing on World Heritage properties in England.

Outcome: strategic plans and decisions that take full account of the need to protect UK World Heritage Sites.

1B Meeting International Heritage Obligations (Corporate Plan Aims 2 and 3)

- **Activity:** advising DCMS on the heritage implications of adopted EU regulations and directives, where the governments of member states are required to take



measures within their own legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure compliance.

Outcome: introduction of appropriate heritage measures in legal and regulatory arrangements.

- **Activity:** providing advice on behalf of DCMS on wider EU legislative or procedural measures that have an impact or relevance to cultural heritage; promoting UK heritage policy within these measures, whilst maintaining the principle that culture (and cultural heritage) is a national responsibility; support DCMS with advice in relation to relevant Council of Europe initiatives.

Outcome: cultural heritage provisions are embedded in relevant measures.

- **Activity:** providing advice to DCMS on the management of English cultural World Heritage Sites, especially those subject to development pressures and/or the effects of reductions in funding. Historic England, with its locally based National Planning and Conservation teams and International Team, will support local authority historic environment services in relation to significant development proposals. In Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales it is the devolved administrations and heritage agencies that carry out this role. Within English World Heritage Sites where there is significant development pressure, and where identified as a priority within Historic England's Action Plan, Designation Department will consider prioritising designation reviews where this can make a particular difference in promoting positive management. We will also work with the relevant nature conservation agencies to establish the most effective way of providing advice to DCMS on existing and proposed natural World Heritage properties.

Outcome: the State Party to the World Heritage Convention is able to meet the terms of the Convention.

- **Activity:** promoting the constructive conservation approach to the management of change in historic places. National Planning and Conservation Department local teams will take the lead for Historic England on engagement with strategic and development planning issues (see 1E below) in English World Heritage Sites; the International Team will liaise with DCMS, and work in partnership with the devolved administrations, UNESCO and its Advisory Bodies in order to promote constructive conservation.

Outcome: effective management of change in WHSs so that new developments



and the protection and enhancement of the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties are compatible and levels of risk to UK WHSs are reduced.

- **Activity:** providing specialist advice to Government on the content of State of Conservation reports for English WHSs, acting as the UK focal point for UNESCO on the periodic reporting on the condition of World Heritage properties, providing advice on the fitness for purpose of UK World Heritage Site Nominations and revised WHS Management Plans, taking part in the Technical Evaluation process for properties on the UK Tentative List of potential WHSs and assisting Government and the UK National Commission for UNESCO in the review of the Tentative List of potential WHSs scheduled for completion in 2021. This will involve working with the devolved administrations and British Overseas Territories/Crown Dependencies, and the relevant nature conservation agencies as appropriate.

Outcome: the State Party continues to play an active and positive role in the effective management of UK World Heritage properties and in the identification and development of candidate sites for nomination.

1C Promoting Public Understanding of and Engagement in the World Heritage Convention and UK World Heritage Sites and helping to realise their economic and social value (Corporate Plan Aim 4)

- **Activity:** In partnership with others in the historic environment, development and visitor economy sectors promoting greater understanding of the UKs World Heritage Sites and of the benefits that derive from the World Heritage Convention and from World Heritage Site status. Also setting out clearly the procedure for those aspiring to this status to follow, making clear how high the bar is set, the cost of the process and the responsibilities that must be accepted in the event of a successful nomination; this in addition to working with partners to ensure that these procedures are as efficient as possible.
- Outcome:** improved levels of public understanding of what the purpose of the World Heritage Convention is; enhanced public understanding of and engagement with UK World Heritage Sites; and a fuller realisation of the potential



of World Heritage properties to contribute to economic growth and social cohesion.

1D Initiating and Responding to Measures that will have the Greatest Impact on the Historic Environment (Corporate Plan Aims 2 and 3)

- **Activity:** initiating and responding only to those, mainly European Union, measures that will have a significant impact on the historic environment within the UK. While the EU cannot create legislation (directives or regulations that have force in England) that is directly aimed at culture (including heritage) because this is a national responsibility, the cross-cutting nature of heritage means that legislation developed in other areas within the EU competence can have an impact (positive or negative) on heritage. The Historic England International Team will continue to be on the secretariat of the group of heritage professionals drawn from each of the European heritage agencies - the European Heritage Legal Forum - which monitors the development of EU directives, regulations and other initiatives that could have an impact on the way that we protect and conserve our heritage at the national level. In addition the International Team will continue to advise the UK government on any EU actions that relate to cultural heritage.

Outcome: protection of heritage through the positive benefits, and avoidance of inadvertently harmful impacts, of directives and regulations, and realising opportunities for heritage benefits.

- **Activity:** responding to and influencing Council of Europe Initiatives in light of the fact that the Council can create binding cultural heritage legislation.

Outcome: helping to ensure that initiatives are beneficial to our cultural heritage.

1E Advise on change or proposed change that may have a significant impact on England's cultural World Heritage Properties (Aim 3)

- **Activity:** our National Planning and Conservation Department teams around England advise decision makers where development proposals may have a significant impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage



properties. The International Advice Team notifies DCMS of any particularly significant cases so that they in turn can notify UNESCO.

Outcome: Local Planning Authorities are aware of World Heritage issues before they take decisions and DCMS, as State Party to the World Heritage Convention, is able to notify UNESCO of any cases where there may be a significant impact on Outstanding Universal Value. The same applies to change that lies outside the remit of the planning system, such as that caused by natural disasters.

- **Activity:** advise Government on the potential to ratify heritage conventions such as the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage.

Outcome: helping to ensure that government is able to make fully informed decisions on relevant cultural heritage conventions, and where appropriate, to ratify them.

2A Learning from Good Practice Elsewhere (Corporate Plan Aims 2 and 3)

- **Activity:** looking for learning opportunities and disseminating relevant good practice, from the devolved administrations and from overseas, within the UK.

Outcome: partnership working with devolved administrations and overseas colleagues and improved management of heritage in the UK.

- **Activity:** managing inbound visits to England from overseas delegations and sharing knowledge gained where this has wider relevance..

Outcome: learning opportunities and exchange of good practice with other countries and with UNESCO.

- **Activity:** continuing to provide the Secretariat for the Historic England Chief Executive's two meetings that explore common standards and shared approaches with other countries – the Home Countries Heritage Agencies Chief Executives meeting (HACE) biannually and the European Heritage Heads Forum (EHHF) annually. Where appropriate making available and promoting the outcomes of these meetings.

Outcome: improved coordination in UK and European heritage management.



- **Activity:** together planning, conservation and designation colleagues within Historic England exchanging good practice in the fields of heritage management, practical conservation research, data protocols and designation.
Outcome: enhancement of standards in these areas as a result of learning from other countries and vice versa.

2B Identifying and Promoting European Funding Opportunities and Partnership Projects (Corporate Plan Aim 4)

- **Activity:** exploring and developing opportunities for Historic England and sector partners, following on from the 2014 Communication on Cultural Heritage. This Communication highlights the various initiatives and funding streams which the European Union has developed that are of benefit to cultural heritage and calls on member states to take advantage of them. In tandem there is a mapping document which gives a more detailed outline of all the policy, legislation, programmes and funding available across the European Commission for cultural heritage.
Outcome: a report on funding and partnership opportunities, the subsequent promotion of these opportunities and the development and delivery of suitable initiatives. Within Historic England such initiatives will be led by the relevant department, such as Heritage Protection, while the International Team will maintain an organisation wide overview.

2C Identifying international cultural heritage research opportunities (Corporate Plan Aim 2)

- **Activity:** Some of the research that we undertake, particularly in our Heritage Protection Department and Conservation Teams is of value to the understanding and management of international cultural heritage and offers the opportunity for partnership working with other countries and international heritage organisations to mutual benefit. We will identify these opportunities, and explore the potential to take the most significant ones forward.
Outcome: improved understanding of cultural heritage and its beneficial management in England and in partner countries, together with strengthened relations with other countries and international heritage organisations.

2D Training, Development and Capacity Building (Corporate Plan Aim 4)

- **Activity:** together with the Heritage Protection Department Capacity Building Team, devolved administrations, World Heritage UK and other partners, preparing and delivering an international heritage training and development programme focused on those parts of the heritage sector and WHS management organisations that could benefit most.
Outcome: increased awareness of the relevance of European and wider international measures for the study, management and presentation of the UK's own heritage, of the need to comply with relevant provisions, and of the opportunities these measures afford.

3A Concentrating on key targets from the Historic England Corporate Plan 2015-2018 and its accompanying Action Plan

- **Activity:** working to ensure that Historic England's International Strategy and key activities within England fall within the framework of the Corporate Plan for 2015-2018 and its supporting Action Plan which sets out what Historic England will contribute to the delivery of Heritage 2020, the English historic environment sector's plan for 2015 to 2020.
Outcome: Historic England's international work within England is clearly focussed on corporate and sector priorities and delivers the best possible results within these frameworks.

3B Promoting UK Good Practice (Corporate Plan Aims 1 and 3)

- **Activity:** Continuing to promote the skills, knowledge and good practice developed by English Heritage and others on the international stage. From 1984 to 2015 English Heritage developed a number of important initiatives, such as Heritage at Risk, active beneficial engagement with rural development issues and



improving data management. These are well regarded internationally so Historic England will continue these initiatives and promote them on the international stage. We will also develop new initiatives where necessary, continuing the tradition of innovative approaches that we have developed in the past. Other heritage organisations in the UK (whether private, public or third sector) have done the same; where agreed Historic England will promulgate their work with overseas partners as well. Within England this activity will be led by the relevant departments within Historic England, with the International Team taking an overview and co-ordination role. Elsewhere in the UK comparable activity rests with the devolved administrations and their heritage agencies.

Outcome: increased recognition of the value of, for example, English Heritage's *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, the constructive conservation approach and the methodology adopted for tackling Heritage at Risk. A further outcome should be increased understanding of the adoption within the English planning system of the principle that heritage conservation is an integral component of sustainable development, as this ties in with emerging international policy and will be promoted by Historic England.

- **Activity:** continuing to engage in partnership projects with other countries which wish to draw on the skills of Historic England staff (to take some disparate examples these include industrial archaeology, digital survey and the heritage significance of seaside towns) and which align with the Historic England Corporate and Action Plans. This activity will be led by the relevant Historic England departments, particularly the Heritage Protection Department, with the international Team providing advice, support and an overview of cross departmental activity. The devolved administrations and their heritage agencies undertake comparable work in line with their own priorities.

Outcome: collaborative initiatives that increase understanding of key heritage assets and their protection, management and presentation

- **Activity:** continuing financial support for and helping to maximize the value of ICCROM's architectural conservation capacity building programmes.

Outcome: further development of conservation skills in countries where current capacity will benefit from enhancement.

3C Coordinated and Effective Working within the International Heritage Sector in the UK and Beyond (Corporate Plan Aims 2 and 4)

- **Activity:** engaging with organisations, particularly the UK National Commission for UNESCO, World Heritage UK (formerly the Local Authority World Heritage Forum) ICOMOS-UK, the devolved administrations, Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and their heritage agencies, natural heritage agencies including Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, especially in relation to natural World Heritage properties, to facilitate effective joint working and cooperation so far as this is achievable within the differing remits of these bodies.
Outcome: effective partnership working and efficient use of resources applied for the benefit of the UK's existing and potential World Heritage properties.
- **Activity:** assisting the UK Government in relation to potential serial transnational nominations for World Heritage Site status. This includes supporting DCMS in the work of the Inter-Governmental Committee for the transnational Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site (together with the devolved administration in Scotland) and on the Great Spas of Europe transnational WHS nomination. The ultimate aim of the former is to see all the component parts of the Roman Frontier in Europe, the Near East and North Africa that contribute to its Outstanding Universal Value inscribed as a World Heritage Site, with the European sections being taken forward first. The latter involves six European countries led by the Czech Republic. Also, advising the UK government on other transnational World Heritage initiatives involving the UK that may emerge, for example the potential for the Cornish and West Devon Mining Landscape WHS to become a part of a serial property with other countries where the influence of Cornish mining technology was of outstanding importance to mineral exploitation and industrialisation. Other potential transnational nominations involving the UK include the Royal Sites of Ireland, an initiative led by the Republic of Ireland. In all cases we will support DCMS and the UK National Commission for UNESCO in the technical evaluation of these proposals that will be necessary to determine whether they should be taken forward.
Outcome: the potential for UK involvement in transnational nominations to be developed is properly explored and taken forward where a strong case for OUV and significant benefits can be demonstrated.



- **Activity:** together with DCMS working closely with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and it's Advisory Bodies particularly on any novel and/or contentious matters relating to the management of UK World Heritage properties and also promoting the constructive conservation approach.
Outcome: good working relationships that provide a sound framework within which UK WHSs will be managed and increased understanding of the constructive conservation approach.
- **Activity:** continuing to represent the UK at the EU Reflection Group which seeks to ensure that heritage is taken into consideration in relevant EU policy areas and continuing to be represented within the other EU heritage networks such as the European Heritage Heads Forum, the European Heritage Legal Forum, Europa Nostra and the HEREIN Observatory on policies and values of the European heritage.
Outcome: heritage matters recognised and taken into account consistently across Europe.

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