

WORLD HERITAGE SITE INSCRIPTION FOR THE LAKE DISTRICT

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Summary: This document outlines a proposal to seek World Heritage Site Status for the Lake District, and asks members to consider whether they wish to support the initiative.

Recommendation: That Members -

1. Consider, in the light of the information available at the present time, whether or not to support the initiative to obtain WHS Inscription for the Lake District.
2. Agree that further reports are presented in due course on the outcomes of discussions, and if appropriate on the draft proposals.

Impact on delivering Corporate Plan objectives: World Heritage Site Status could increase visitor numbers to the area. It could also potentially have an impact on planning and development within the WH Site and the “buffer zone”.

Impact on other statutory objectives (e.g. crime & disorder, LA21): WHS would give further protection to the Lake District and help to preserve it for future generations

Financial and human resource implications: Some limited time commitment for partnership working both during the development of the proposal and subsequently should it be successful. The Council is not being asked to make a financial contribution towards the cost of submitting a bid.

Project & Risk Management: N/A

Key Decision Status

- **Financial:** No
- **Ward:** No

Other Ward Implications: Wards within the proposed area would be affected

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 For some years now various bodies within the Lake District National Park (including the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature, and the Forestry Commission) have been looking at the possibility of obtaining World Heritage Site status from UNESCO for the Park. A nomination was previously made in 1986 by the UK Government, but was deferred. The

Lake District proposal is for inscription as a “cultural landscape”. There are 26 WH Sites in the UK, including Hadrian’s Wall.

- 1.2 A note regarding the requirements of The World Heritage Convention is attached at Appendix 1. It requires Governments (including the UK) to ‘identify, protect, conserve, present and transmit to future generations places of **outstanding universal value.**’ Such sites have to have a Management Plan which specifies how the site of universal value will be preserved. There is an expectation that the Management Plan should have the support of key stakeholders.
- 1.3 There are potentially planning implications which arise as a result of inscription as a WHS, although assurances have been given at meetings and in publications that in reality WHS Status will not make the planning system more onerous –

“World Heritage Site inscription need not inhibit or curtail growth...World Heritage Site status will serve to reinforce and strengthen this existing framework rather than add a further layer of planning control” (Appendix 2 –‘Towards World Heritage’, Future Development)

As the briefing note on the Convention states WHS status is a material consideration to be taken into account by local planning authorities when considering applications. There may also be implications for the “buffer zones” which immediately surround the WHS Site.

While the exact boundary of the site and its buffer zone have not yet been finalised it is clear from discussions which have been held that it would be a large area and include most if not all of the National Park within Copeland.

- 1.4 The likely cost of preparing a bid is estimated to be between £300k and £350k.
- 1.5 A meeting of interested parties took place on 14th October chaired by Lord Clark of Windermere, attended by the Chief Executive. While there was support for the proposal there was also scepticism about the benefits that inscription would bring, and concerns were raised about the planning implications. A consultants report (ERM Sept 2004) funded by NWDA casts doubt on the economic benefits of WHS Inscription –

“We do, however, have some concerns as to whether the WHS Nomination process is the most appropriate vehicle for delivering a new strategic strategy for the economic, social and environmental regeneration of the Lake District”

As a result of the consultant’s report the NWDA have not yet decided whether or not to support an application.

- 1.6 The Timetable indicated at the meeting was as follows:
 - Further meeting to decide whether to proceed (27th January 2006)
 - If yes – set up a Lake District WHS Partnership
 - By April 2006 have project team in place
 - March 2007 launch draft Management Plan & consult
 - December 2007 finalise Management Plan
 - February 2008 Bid submitted to UNESCO
 - June 2009 UNESCO decision

2. IMPLICATIONS AND POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF WHS STATUS

- 2.1 As indicated above, there are concerns that WHS status could make it even more difficult for development to take place within the National Park. There is also the issue of planning regulation within the “buffer zone” which could extend outside the National Park.
- 2.2 There would be an opportunity within the Management Plan to actively encourage sympathetic development within certain areas of the WHS, as Inscription does not necessarily mean that development should not take place. Until we see the draft Management Plan we will not know whether it will help or hinder development.
- 2.3 WHS status will increase the profile of the Lake District and could potentially result in additional visitors. It could assist with agricultural subsidies and funding applications.
- 2.4 It is likely that there will be a Visitor Centre associated with the WHS. This could be used as a vehicle to encourage investment and tourism in the West, or it could add to the congestion which already exists in the Central Lakes. Again we do not yet have any details.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 At this point in time we do not have enough information to judge whether or not WHS status will help the Council and its community to achieve key objectives, particularly regarding the regeneration of the area. We do not know the exact boundary of the WHS site and its “buffer zone”. We do not yet have even an outline Management Plan to know whether there is any intention to utilise WHS status to aid recovery in the West by for example actively encouraging visitors to this part of the World Heritage Site.
- 3.2 The options for the Council are therefore to:
 - Fully support the proposal and try to influence the Management Plan so that it benefits West Cumbria
 - Support the proposal in principle only at this stage and reconsider our position once we have further information
 - Not Support the proposal at this time and make it clear that our future support would depend on the Partnership being able to demonstrate clearly to us that WHS Status would be of benefit to our community.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Implications of World Heritage Protection
Appendix 2 Towards World Heritage

List of Background Documents: ERM Report Sept 2004

List of Consultees: Corporate Team. Councillors Woodburn, Ashbrook, and Tony Johnson