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The Role of UNESCO in the Provision World Heritage Status

This paper seeks to clarify the status of the organisations which manage the following World Heritage sites in the UK the Tower of London, Stonehenge and Blenheim Palace. It also looks at International World Heritage sites that have some private sector involvement and other ways in which private sector organisations assist in the World Heritage project. Finally, the paper examines briefly, sites which have had their World Heritage Status revoked and the World Heritage Committee's list of sites in danger

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SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- For the purposes of this paper the following definition of ‘private sector’ is used:

The work of private individuals, business or industry that is managed by independent companies or private individuals rather than being controlled by the state

- The UK World Heritage Sites listed in the previous briefing document are managed by the following bodies:
 - The Tower of London – Historic Royal Palaces, an independent charity;
 - Stonehenge – English Heritage, a non-Departmental Public Body;
 - Blenheim Palace – The Duke of Marlborough, managed as a private estate.
- Internationally, World Heritage Sites are managed by non-governmental/private bodies. However, the interests of these bodies often extend beyond the purely commercial, an example being Monticello in the US, which is part of the University of Virginia.
- Other international World Heritage Sites are managed by a mixture of public and private interests.
- The Partnership for Conservation Initiative is a project which involves private and public bodies in the mobilisation of sustainable resources for the long-term conservation of World Heritage.
- Only one site, the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman, has ever had its World Heritage Status revoked.
- There are currently 30 sites on the World Heritage list ‘in danger’.

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INTRODUCTION

The following paper seeks to clarify the status of the organisations which manage the following World Heritage sites in the UK the Tower of London, Stonehenge and Blenheim Palace. It also looks at International World Heritage sites that have some private sector involvement and other ways in which private sector organisations assist in the World Heritage project. Finally, the paper examines briefly sites which have had their World Heritage Status removed and the World Heritage Committee's list of sites in danger.

CLARIFICATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN THE UK

After receiving further clarification of the term 'private' it appears that a number of the examples of World Heritage Sites used in the previous briefing document no longer fit the term's definition. Previously, private was taken to mean a non-governmental body rather than a commercial enterprise. For the purposes of this paper the following will be used as a definition of private:

The work of private individuals, business or industry that is managed by independent companies or private individuals rather than being controlled by the state¹.

With this in mind, it is worth examining the three UK World Heritage sites mentioned in the earlier document to clarify their status.

The Tower of London

The Tower of London is managed and maintained by Historic Royal Palaces, an independent charity that also looks after Court Palace, the Banqueting House, Kensington Palace and Kew Palace. Each of the palaces are owned by the Queen, the charity receives no funding from either the Government or the Crown and is instead dependent on the support of visitors, members, donors volunteers and sponsors².

Stonehenge

Stonehenge and its adjacent site Avebury are maintained by English Heritage. The UK Government's statutory advisor on the historic environment, English Heritage is defined as an Executive Non-departmental Public Body, sponsored by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. English Heritage is funded in part by the Government but is also reliant on income earned from their historic properties. In 2005/06 the body received £129 million in public funding, their income from other sources was £41.9 million³.

Blenheim Palace

Blenheim Palace is looked after as a private estate. It is owned and funded by the 11th Duke of Marlborough who also uses the site as his home for part of the year. The site did receive grant aid from English Heritage and the Countryside Agency in relation to the preparation of a World Heritage Management plan⁴. The Palace and surrounding gardens is open to the public for most of the year and also operates a function room for corporate and private events⁵.

INTERNATIONAL WORLD HERITAGE SITES

The majority of World Heritage Sites around the world appear to be maintained by the public sector in their respective countries. Of those maintained by non-public bodies the dynamic that exists between their commercial activities and other interests complicates the extent to which they can be considered purely commercial operations.

Those sites which are managed by non-governmental bodies are often run by bodies which have interests in areas outside commerce. Examples of such sites include Monticello in the US, which forms part of the University of Virginia, Pueblo de Taos, which is a large Native American Reserve in New Mexico, maintained by the self-governing Taos tribe⁶, and the Palau de la Música Catalana, which is owned by a private choral association and is managed by the Palau de la Musica Catalana Consortium whose members are nominated by the municipal administration, Barcelona City Council⁷.

Monticello

- Date of Inscription: 1987;
- Visitors: Figures not available;
- UNESCO Comments: None made.

Pueblo de Taos

- Date of Inscription: 1992;
- Visitors: Figures not available;
- UNESCO Comments: None made.

The Palau de La Musica Catalana

- Date of Inscription: 1997;
- Visitors: 200,000 (year not given);
- UNESCO Comments: The site is deemed to be experiencing Visitor/Tourism Pressures.

There are also a number of sites which are maintained by a mixture of public and private bodies. Such sites include the Rock Art of the Mediterranean basin, ownership of the properties that make up the site is shared between public bodies (national, provincial, and communal) and individuals, the majority being in public ownership⁸. Similarly, the Historic District of Panamá and Salón Bolívar operates within such a context, 45% of the sites infrastructure is maintained by the public sector, 5% by the church and the remaining 50% is privately owned⁹.

Rock Art of the Mediterranean Basin

- Date of Inscription: 1998;
- Visitors: Figures not available;
- UNESCO Comments: None made.

Historic District of Panamá and Salón Bolívar

- Date of Inscription: 1997;
- Visitors: Figures not available;
- UNESCO Comments: None made.

PACT

The relationship between World Heritage Sites and the Private Sector goes beyond the management of sites. Since 2002, the World Heritage Committee has implemented an initiative known as PACT, or the Partnership for Conservation Initiative. PACT is an international cooperation system between different institutions, organisations and companies who implement the World Heritage Convention, based upon strategic priorities and objectives identified by the committee. The initiative has two primary objectives¹⁰:

- To raise awareness about World Heritage;
- To mobilize sustainable resources for the long-term conservation of World Heritage by addressing the mutually agreed upon issues and problems identified by the World Heritage Committee.

In pursuit of these aims PACT employs the assistance of both Private and Public sector bodies. Private partners of the World Heritage Centre gather non-state actors, foundations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private sector profit-making institutions interested in the promotion and preservation of World Heritage¹¹.

All parties involved in the PACT initiative, whether they are public or private bodies, and including the World Heritage Committee itself are required to operate under the following principles¹²:

- Common purpose;
- Transparency;
- Bestowing no unfair advantages upon any partner;
- Mutual benefit and mutual respect;
- Accountability;

- Respect for the modalities, aims and principles of the United Nations;
- Striving for balanced representation of relevant partners from developed and developing countries with economies in transition;
- Maintaining the independence and neutrality of the United Nations system.

DE-LISTED WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Since the first sites were inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1978 there has only been one site de-listed, the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman. The World Heritage Committee deleted the site from the list when the Oman government decided to reduce the size of the protected area by 90%. The Committee deemed this action to be in breach of the Operational Guidelines of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

Commenting on the Oryx Sanctuary's deletion UNESCO stated:

After extensive consultation with the State Party, the Committee felt that the unilateral reduction in the size of the Sanctuary and plans to proceed with hydrocarbon prospection would destroy the value and integrity of the property, which is also home to other endangered species including, the Arabian Gazelle and houbara bustard¹³.

The site was deleted from the World Heritage list in 2007 just over a decade after its original inscription in 1994.

WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN DANGER

The World Heritage Committee has listed 30 sites upon its World Heritage Sites in Danger directory. The sites are viewed as 'in danger' based on the criteria outlined in Article 11 (4) of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The Articles holds:

The list may include only such property forming part of the cultural and natural heritage as is threatened by serious and specific dangers, such as the threat of disappearance caused by accelerated deterioration, large-scale public or private projects or rapid urban or tourist development projects; destruction caused by changes in the use or ownership of the land; major alterations due to unknown causes; abandonment for any reason whatsoever; the outbreak or the threat of an armed conflict; calamities and cataclysms; serious fires, earthquakes, landslides; volcanic eruptions; changes in water level, floods and tidal waves.

All of the 30 sites listed on the in danger list are located outside of the developed world.

1

http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50188922?query_type=word&queryword=private&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&search_id=WEHO-udW6G5-2407&result_place=1

2 <http://www.hrp.org.uk/aboutus/whoweare/default.aspx>

3 <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/contWebDoc.166>

4 <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/periodicreporting/EUR/cycle01/section2/425-summary.pdf>

5 <http://www.blenheimpalace.com/index.htm>

6 http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/492rev.pdf

7 <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/periodicreporting/EUR/cycle01/section2/804-summary.pdf>

8 http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/874.pdf

9 http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/790bis.pdf

10 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/pact>

11 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/partners/sector=20>

12 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/Partnershipprinciples/>

13 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/654>