



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

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Caity Marsh
Heritage for the Nation Consultation
Culture Team
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Dear Ms Marsh

WORLD HERITAGE FOR THE NATION: IDENTIFYING, PROTECTING AND PROMOTING OUR WORLD HERITAGE CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the leading professional body for spatial planners in the United Kingdom. It is a charity with the purpose to develop the art and science of town planning for the benefit of the public as a whole. It has over 22,000 members who serve in government, local government and as advisors in the private sector. This response was drafted following input from members through RTPI Scotland, a RTPI Urban Design Network event, the RTPI North West Region, and from individual RTPI members.

The RTPI broadly supports the proposals set out in the consultation document to better manage the nomination process for World Heritage Sites. Specific responses to the questions set out in the consultation paper are provided below.

Q1 Which option should we adopt in relation to the future nomination of sites for World Heritage Status?

The RTPI supports Option iii: Spacing nominations from a shorter and more focused Tentative List as a means of complying with the World Heritage Committee's priorities to reduce over-representation of sites in Europe (particularly Christianity, historical periods and elitist architecture), as well as priority for natural sites.

In addition, a shorter more focused list of candidates for nomination for inscription is supported, given the rate at which future nominations is likely to progress. We also agree that it would be more cost-effective to have a two-stage application process, the first stage being a basic test of suitability and priority.

The RTPI's views regarding the current 'National' and 'European' Heritage designations are that they provide a useful hierarchy of designations, but most significantly none of these designations would be worthwhile if they were not suitably protected, publicised and funded (see also Q2). We would advise that the 'cost/benefit' approach in the consultation document is not the appropriate way to look at nominations. The critical issue is a cultural one; whether the history/story of each site is worthy of preservation for future generations.

Q2 What further measures should be considered to improve the management and promotion of our World Heritage Sites?

The RTPI strongly advocates for The Heritage Bill to be prioritised in the next parliamentary cycle to increase powers of protection for World Heritage Sites. The Heritage Act therefore needs to be followed up with more detailed Circulars/guidance in each jurisdiction that would bind local authorities and planning inspectors to the 'values' protected by inscription, which go significantly beyond the buildings alone. The weight given to them as a 'material consideration' needs to be strengthened as currently the use of 'Conservation Area' status has proved too weak and too narrow to reflect the World Heritage Site international status adequately. Guidance should include the implications of WHS status, design, and landscape/setting appraisal. Local Supplementary Planning Guidance would then stem from centrally endorsed guidance. It is also important to support the integration of the historic environment through the planning system, including statutory planning recognition for WHS and improved training and skills for many planners. Ideally policies should be introduced into the development plan (LDPs in Wales, LDFs in England) as soon as feasible following designation, adding more strength to the designation as a material consideration.

One driver for The Bill is the significance of the 2012 Olympics in which the Cultural Olympiad would provide an excellent vehicle for promoting UK World Heritage Sites.

Consideration should also be given to affording the World Heritage sites a status equivalent to the National Parks but without the added bureaucracy of planning authority status. Site management plans could then be adopted formally by all the local planning authorities involved.

The RTPI suggests that the DCMS should have a programme to promote and publicise the inscribed sites throughout the UK and abroad, and appropriate funding should be allocated.

It would be helpful to incorporate the findings of the PricewaterhouseCoopers report on management and promotion within good practice guidance. This should firstly be circulated to all heritage officers, including those responsible for relevant planning controls, for their observations.

If you require any further assistance, please contact Rebecca Coates, Planning Policy Officer on 0207 929 9466 or email Rebecca.Coates@rtpi.org.uk.

Yours Sincerely



Rynd Smith
Director Policy and Partnerships