



WORLD HERITAGE STATUS

Is there opportunity for economic gain?

A preview of unique research commissioned by the Lake District World Heritage Project into the economic impacts of World Heritage Status around the world

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LAKE DISTRICT WORLD HERITAGE PROJECT



“The site is better able to compete in world tourism markets as a result of its new identity.”

Jurassic Coast Economic, Social and Cultural Impact Assessment, 2009



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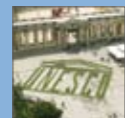
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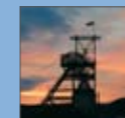
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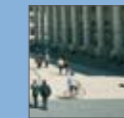
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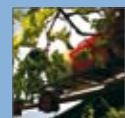
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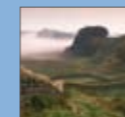
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Foreword



**by Lord Clark
of Windermere**

The Lake District is England's largest National Park; there are over 885 square miles to explore, including Scafell Pike—England's highest mountain and Wastwater—its deepest lake as well as thriving communities like Keswick and Windermere. The magnificent rural landscape and the bustling small towns have inspired great thinkers and encouraged positive, social and environmental changes since the 18th Century. In fact the Lake District has had such an impact on the way the world thinks about landscape and how nature and the environment are viewed, we are seeking UNESCO World Heritage Site designation.

Cumbria and the Lake District are vibrant, working places with a long cultural history. Generations of farming families have created the landscape millions of people enjoy today and international recognition for Cumbria is well deserved. However, the Lake District World Heritage Steering Group, which I chair, is not just seeking inscription for its own sake, instead the group has always strongly believed there should be economic and social impacts for Cumbria from the process and nomination itself.

In 2006 we commissioned a study of the potential economic and social benefits for Cumbria and further to this in 2009 we commissioned Rebanks Consulting Ltd to carry out the first ever international research project looking for examples of economic and social gain from World Heritage Inscription at sites around the world.

I believe the research findings are as valuable to existing sites as they are to potential new sites. In the true spirit of international cooperation Cumbria has decided to share the findings of the research and I hope you find the following summary as useful as we have as we move forward with our nomination.

“Having World Heritage status for this site will deliver worldwide recognition for the built heritage of the area.”

Alun Ffred Jones, Welsh Assembly Government Heritage Minister, 2009

UNESCO/WHS - Introduction

What is the UNESCO World Heritage Convention?

Gillian Clarke, Secretary to Local Authority World Heritage Forum, UK.



The Convention concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 1972, now referred to as the World Heritage Convention, embodies the idea that the international community has a duty to cooperate in the identification, protection and active conservation of cultural and natural heritage considered to be of outstanding universal value to the whole of humanity.

There are now 890 properties inscribed on the World Heritage list, of which 689 are cultural properties. These may be landscapes, places or buildings but all are considered to have Outstanding Universal Value, from the point of view of history, art or science, which we must pass on to future generations as an irreplaceable source of life and inspiration.

Places on the list include as unique and diverse Sites as the wilds of East Africa's Serengeti, the Pyramids of Egypt, and places like Stonehenge and Westminster Palace in the UK. What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application.

In recognition of the way in which certain valued places reflect the social and economic history of their particular community and the interface with the natural setting, the concept of cultural landscapes has been added to the World Heritage List. Cultural landscapes represent 'the combined works of nature and man'. Their special character needs to be maintained if the essential value of the site is to be conserved. Historic agricultural practises need to be respected in rural areas, and in villages, towns and cities local community activities and traditions are as important as the protection of the built fabric.

In both rural and urban situations there is a need to support traditional social and economic activities as a means of sustaining the World Heritage Site's Outstanding Universal Value.

In the UK, Local Authorities generally take the lead in the care, protection and nurture of World Heritage sites. The Local Authority World Heritage Forum (LAWHF) represents urban and rural communities that have inscribed or Tentative List sites within their areas. It aims to assist Government to fulfil its responsibilities in relation to the Convention, and seeks to ensure that communities derive maximum benefit from their World Heritage status whilst at the same time being properly equipped and resourced to fulfil their responsibilities. Local Authorities seek to protect their individual World Heritage Sites, taking pride in their international recognition. Many seek to achieve social and economic benefits for the community from inscription.



Is it worth it?



A summary of what existing research tells us about the benefits of the UNESCO designation.

Mike Clarke, Lake District World Heritage Project Director.

Having been employed two years ago to coordinate the Lake District's World Heritage nomination process, I was keen from the outset to explore the opportunities achieving World Heritage Status for one of the UK's best-loved National Parks would bring to Cumbria and the North West of England.

I was aware that in the UK over the past 18 months UNESCO World Heritage Site status has come under greater scrutiny than ever before in terms of its costs and benefits and one simple question has come to be asked of WHS status:

“Is it worth the cost and the effort?”

Research undertaken on behalf of the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport has revealed the average costs of inscription are now considerable; estimated in the UK as up to €462,000 (£400,000). This has led to a national debate about the costs and benefits of getting the UNESCO designation and how best to exploit the value of the designation for the benefit of communities.

Having visited a number of sites in the UK and in Europe, I strongly believed WHS status could be a positive and valuable catalyst for both economic and social change but this wasn't being reflected in the available research.

This research told me and the partnership I represent here in the Lake District that some benefits are relatively well-evidenced for some sites, but that few benefits appear to exist across all sites as a generic or automatic effect of World Heritage Site inscription alone. It was clear generic impacts across all sites suggest that World Heritage Site status is a catalyst for more effective conservation, partnership working, civic pride, social capital, learning and education and additional funding and investment. But that the tourism and economic development impacts are limited or that the existing evidence base does not justify some of the claims made of WHS status.

Tourism impact appears to vary from site to site, affected heavily by the predesignation status and branding of a location, the strength and focus of the post-inscription marketing campaigns. The impact on tourism footfall also appears to be negligible for most sites (in the region of 0-3% additional visitors) with established and large scale tourism destinations registering little impact on numbers. I also read that the regeneration impact differs enormously from one site to another depending upon the programmes of investment.

However, when discussing previous research methodologies with other World Heritage Site colleagues both at home and overseas there was agreement that existing studies seemed to have failed to do justice to the complexities of World Heritage Sites, tending to ignore the differing motivations and actions of sites with averages masking vast differentials in motivation, action and performance.

It was clear from the body of research that exists on World Heritage Site impacts that few tourism or regeneration impacts result automatically as a result of the international designation. It was also clear that some sites do seize the opportunity posed by the designation to achieve impacts across a range of areas. It seemed to me and others that if you asked questions about generic or automatic socio-economic impacts of unfiltered samples of World Heritage Sites you would, by definition, get unimpressive or negligible impact results.

I knew that any new economic research which we commissioned as a partnership in the Lake District had to look instead to identify those sites that had bucked the trend and used the designation for socio-economic purposes—in doing so I believe we have shed light on the impressive results that can be achieved with the designation if the will exists.

“You can see how much has been achieved by the engagement of citizens.”

Dr Eberhard Brecht, Mayor of Quedlinburg, Germany, 2008



“It could be said that World Heritage Status is what you make of it.”

World Heritage for the Nation, DCMS, UK Government, 2008

Beyond automatic impacts

A summary of the new research approach to UNESCO designation

In late 2008, on behalf of the partnership, I commissioned the research team of Rebanks Consulting and Trends Business Research to begin an ambitious and unique research programme to move beyond the findings of previous studies on World Heritage Site impacts. At this point we had no idea what the team would uncover.

The team went back-to-basics and started by answering some relatively simple, but critical and often previously unanswered, questions about the designation and the existing sites. The research undertaken took seriously the differing approaches and perceptions of the designation and for the first time judged sites against their own objectives.

The research involved seminal analysis of all existing 878 World Heritage Sites (May 2009) with the creation of a new database that enables sites to be judged against 15 criteria to ascertain their defining characteristics, motivations and actions. The research began with a literature review of all existing analyses on this subject, and then through a widespread consultation exercise that involved more than 100 leading specialists and stakeholders. The work also involved more than 25 sites being investigated in some detail, leading to site visits to the 15 most valuable examples, with more than 60 stakeholder interviews—including interviews with private sector businesses.

It's interesting to note that prior to this commission no single database existed for World Heritage Sites that captured this kind of information. The new data revealed, amongst other variables, whether a site was urban or rural, populated or unpopulated, what

its tourism status was pre and post-WHS status, whether the site contained a business community, the nature of the OUV, and the focus of the management of the site—to provide a portrait of what World Heritage Sites are and do across the world.

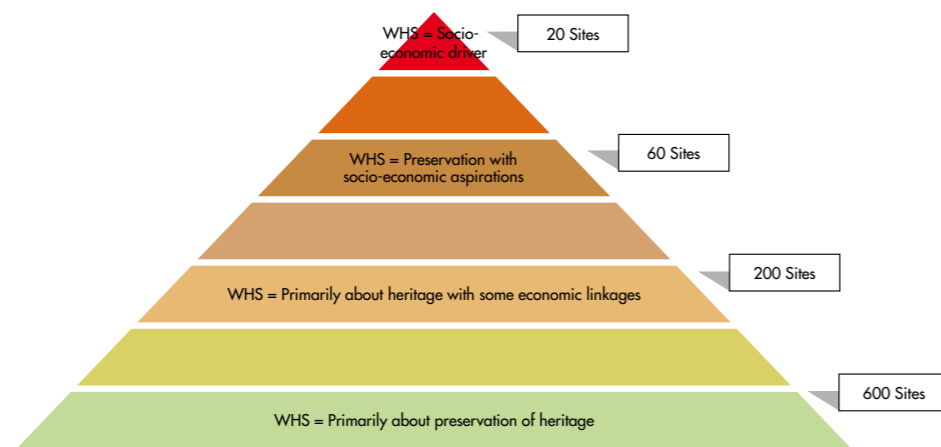
This filtering approach has provided new and fascinating insights into the activities and impacts of World Heritage Sites around the world:

- Most importantly, perhaps as few as 5-10% of the World Heritage Sites were motivated by socio-economic objectives.
- 70-80% of sites are about heritage for heritage's sake, not heritage for economic development's sake.

This finding renders much of the previous research looking for generic economic impacts of limited value.

After filtering the sites the team then focused on the 5-10% of progressive sites to study the conversion of opportunity into advantage. As a partnership these were the sites we wanted to investigate in detail. This progressive minority of sites were, for the most part, geographically clustered in Europe, North America & Australasia—suggesting that this approach to heritage-led development is more appropriate to some cultures and economies than others.

On behalf of the Lake District World Heritage Partnership, I welcome this opportunity to share these findings with you. This magazine gives you a snapshot of the research with the full report available at: www.lakeswhs.co.uk



Filtering the 878 WHSs by their socio-economic actions and motivations as revealed by their key documents and marketing materials reveals how few have innovated in using the designation in this way.



“If you're coming looking to prove impact, you might be twenty years too soon.”

Blaenavon shop owner



“As the cost of achieving WHS designation has risen in some states there is a growing need to show the socio-economic benefit”

James Rebanks,
Economic Researcher

Brave New World



How a growing number of places around the world are building their future economic development around UNESCO World Heritage site status

James Rebanks takes us through his research findings and case studies.

It sounded easy. Find a handful of best practice case studies from the 878 World Heritage Sites around the world that were using the designation to drive their economic and social development.

It wasn't easy. As I, and colleagues, started to wade into mountains of World Heritage management plans, economic impact assessments and marketing literature for sites around the world, I quickly discovered that we were breaking new ground. No one had ever tried to do what we were doing, and even basic information was often difficult to come by.

Everyone we spoke to named a handful of sites that seemed to be doing progressive things, but little evidence was forthcoming and even contacting many sites was surprisingly difficult. Some members of the World Heritage community think the question misses the point, and that heritage should be for heritage's sake, not to drive economics. But as the cost of achieving the designation has risen in some states there is a growing need to show the socio-economic benefit that is achieved for the cost—if for no other reason than that communities can judge whether the designation is suitable for them.

Previous studies only took us so far. Most had only included analysis of a handful of sites, had been confined to tight geographical areas or seemed to ask the wrong questions of the wrong sites. Several studies showed limited generic impacts, but tantalisingly included examples that seemed to buck the trend—suggesting that for some sites the designation was far more powerful, or far better exploited, than for the full cohort.

No one seemed able to explain this differential. So, however daunting it might be, a new approach was required—an approach that would see us go back-to-basics and investigate all 878 sites. The first step was to answer a critical, but deceptively simple, question:

“What exactly is World Heritage Site status?”

The short answer, ‘a heritage designation supported by UNESCO’s 183 countries to celebrate and protect heritage of ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ only takes you so far.

We found that the designation was more than this; it was a number of different things to different people in different places. And what people thought it was appeared to have a major impact on what they attempted to do with it, and what socio-economic impacts and benefits they achieved. Our findings suggested that the UNESCO World Heritage Sites really fall into four conceptual categories:

A ‘Celebration’ Designation

Many places treat it as a celebration or reward designation for heritage already preserved. Places that see designation as a ‘Celebration’ do not use it to achieve socio-economic impacts:

- preserving the heritage was the achievement
- World Heritage Site status the reward

A Heritage ‘SOS’ Designation

Many places treat it as an emergency attention designation for unique heritage at risk. The origins of the UNESCO World Heritage convention lie in this concept of the designation. Places that want the designation as an ‘SOS’ to save heritage, go on to try and do just that, namely saving heritage—the results are efforts to preserve heritage.

A Marketing/Quality Logo/Brand

A growing minority of sites have come to the realisation that UNESCO/WHS designation has value as a marketing or quality brand for historic places. Places that want designation for marketing or branding purposes go on to use it in their marketing with little additional activity other than that related to the development of tourism.

A ‘Place Making’ Catalyst

This view treats World Heritage Site status as a powerful catalyst for economic development using heritage as a tool to develop powerful new identities for places, and powerful programmes of actions to change places fundamentally. Only the ‘Place Making’ sites use it to generate wider socio-economic impacts and fundamental change to communities and places.

Why a place wants designation matters

The critical lesson that emerged from our analysis of the 878 sites was that how the management organisation and stakeholders perceive World Heritage Site status matters—the impact of sites is markedly different depending upon which one of these four categories a site belongs to. Only a very small minority of sites perceive World Heritage Site status as being about the third and fourth of these categories (i.e. as a tool for socio-economic impact), perhaps as few as 5-10% of sites. It is important to be really clear on this critical point; approximately 70-80% of World Heritage Sites appear to be doing little or nothing with the designation directly to bring about significant socio-economic impacts—they are not failing to deliver economic gain, they are not even trying.

This is critically important because socio-economic impact of the designation has until now been judged largely across unfiltered samples of sites—making no allowance for the samples being dominated by sites that have not been trying to achieve economic impacts; an exercise that proves little.

The research focused on the third and fourth categories of World Heritage Site—to address the question of whether World Heritage Site status can deliver socio-economic impacts if that is the focus of a site and its programme.

World Heritage-led economic development—a relatively new concept

Our seminal research revealed socio-economic motivations for World Heritage site inscription are relatively recent in origin. From the first designated sites in 1978 until the late 1980s virtually no sites had a socio-economic motivation for designation; between the later 1980s and mid-1990s a small minority of sites innovated with the designation to achieve a variety of socio-economic impacts, and since the mid-1990s a growing, but significant, minority of sites have had socio-economic motivations of one kind or another for securing the designation. This approach to using World Heritage Site designation is heavily focused on Europe, North America and Australasia, with a small number of other examples around the rest of the world.

The site-specific nature of the impacts

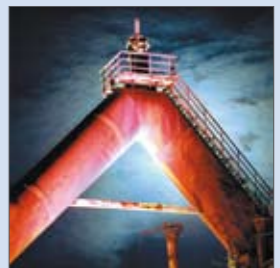
By filtering the 878 World Heritage Sites the research was able to identify shared characteristics of sites achieving socio-economic impact, and to reveal the ways that becoming a World Heritage Site had added value. The key finding of the research was that whilst World Heritage Site status has been a powerful catalyst for socio-economic change in some communities, the nature of the interventions made to achieve this were highly site-specific—there is no simple road map of where the designation can lead a place.

Sites looking for a free lunch from simply getting the designation are destined to be disappointed—but those that wish to use the designation to support meaningful programmes for changing places and communities for the better may find it a powerful catalyst.



“Sites looking for a free lunch from simply getting the WHS designation are destined to be disappointed”

James Rebanks,
Economic Researcher



“People take us more seriously now because we are part of a world class story.”

Kathryn Stowers,
The Big Pit National Coal
Museum, Blaenavon,
Wales, 2009

The ‘Network value’

Is there value in being part of the growing World Heritage Site network? Or is the UNESCO designation’s value decreased by the addition of new sites?

Oh, I didn’t realise there were so many...

To the layperson a ‘World Heritage Site’ is often assumed to be akin to being one of the Seven Wonders of the World—the assumption being that it must be extremely rare and exceptional; one of a tiny few such sites in existence.

In reality, UNESCO World Heritage Site status is a different kind of designation. Firstly, there were, at the time of this research, 878 sites around the world. Since that time UNESCO have added 13 new sites and withdrawn one—taking the total to 890.

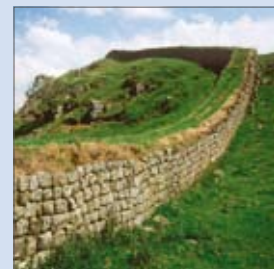
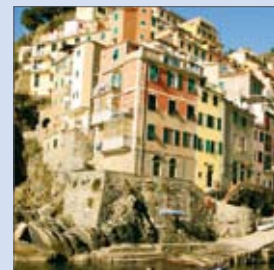
Our consultation with people outside of the heritage professions left us very aware that a typical response to this number was, ‘Oh... I didn’t realise there were so many’, the tone being one of disappointment. The assumption being that this renders the designation somehow less prestigious. Technically, in heritage terms, the designation cannot be devalued; it is fixed for all time by UNESCO and is only awarded to sites that meet its strict criteria.

This is not dissimilar to listed buildings in the UK, in that there can be a large number designated but they retain their importance and still remain overall a tiny percentage of the total number of buildings in existence. There are hundreds of thousands of sites around the world that have heritage—designating less than 1000 sites as of ‘outstanding universal value’ does not, technically, diminish their historic importance.

Secondly, our analysis and interviews with people using the designation suggest that the value of World Heritage Site status is more complicated than a classic value/scarcity model implies. A recurring theme in our interviews with World Heritage stakeholders was the growing brand recognition of the designation with a global audience.

‘World Heritage Literacy’

Many stakeholders including experienced marketing professionals (with little sympathy for heritage-for-heritage-sake) share a belief that something that might be called ‘World Heritage Literacy’ exists. This results from a critical mass of World Heritage Sites being inscribed in any given region to the point where the designation becomes part of people’s mindset for thinking about heritage—part of the way they think about special places in their own region, and, perhaps even more importantly, when they visit other places.



In short, in 1978 when there were 12 World Heritage Sites the designation may have been perceived by consumers as being an indicator of extremely high global historic value—but any given site had first to explain to visitors what the designation was and what it meant. In marketing terms, consumers did not recognise the ‘brand’, and as such did not value it or hunt it out as a ‘product differentiator’.

Now that several hundred sites exist, the historic value may be perceived as less exceptional by some consumers, but this may be overridden by the added brand recognition that results from many more people around the world recognising the brand from their more local heritage sites, and as a result of looking for the equivalent when visiting other places. World Heritage Site status is starting to be understood as being at the pinnacle of a hierarchy of national and international designations that people understand. This ‘network effect’ is not uncommon for products that require large numbers of people to use a product or understand an idea. Effective marketing of sites may require a critical mass of sites in states or even regions.

Regions that have clusters of World Heritage Sites seem to be benefiting from commercial tourism itineraries that offer the chance to visit multiple World Heritage sites. It should also be noted that increasingly World Heritage Sites are embracing the designation as a way of articulating their unique identity not just for tourism impacts, but also to positively impact on the quality-of-life of residents and on perceptions of the community by inward investors.

In some locations the designation is supporting the development of new markets and products. If one looks at the marketing of best practice World Heritage Sites like Bamberg, Bordeaux, Laponia or Regensburg you are effectively being told that these are exceptional places; not just as historical artefacts, but as living, breathing, places where people do business and live their lives.



The World Heritage Site network effect

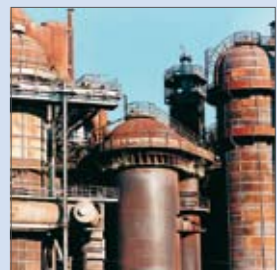
A key concept that emerged from the research and analysis was the idea of a ‘network effect’ resulting from the addition of new World Heritage Sites. In short, rather than the addition of new sites devaluing perceptions of the brand, the reality appears to be that the addition of new sites is increasing consumer understanding of the UNESCO World Heritage Site designation. Key World Heritage Sites believe they are succeeding in attracting high value cultural visitors because of their UNESCO/WHS status—this ‘WHS Literacy’ appears to result in dynamic World Heritage Sites attracting disproportionately large numbers of high-spending cultural visitors. Where sites can work together, as they do, for example, in Germany, to build products and collective value this has much greater potential in the future.

Can ‘World Heritage Literacy’ result in economic advantage?

The research revealed sites where the tourism profile is suggestive of a correlation between ‘WHS Literacy’ and the visitor profile of the site. The best evidenced example of this kind was Bamberg in Germany where for some years the marketing team have noticed a degree of correlation between their visitor profile and the number of World Heritage sites in any given country. The assumption is that these visitors know what the designation means, and have searched it out when they visit Germany—providing Bamberg with comparative advantage. Time and again in our research we came across references to the UNESCO/WHS status positively affecting the profile of places, and particularly through raising profile with opinion formers like guidebook editors and tour operators. The key insight here is that World Heritage Sites are disproportionately clustered in more affluent countries, making the brand a potentially powerful way of attracting high value cultural visitors.

“Where the status has been used to full effect it has brought many benefits.”

World Heritage for the
Nation, DCMS,
UK Government, 2008



“It’s increased visitor numbers but more importantly it has increased the kudos of the site.”

Kathryn Stowers, The Big Pit National Coal Museum, Blaenavon, Wales, 2009

What has WHS ever done for us ?

The impact areas of UNESCO World Heritage Site status

The research has shown that the socio-economic benefits of becoming a World Heritage Site are not automatic. The designation is often just a catalyst—what this results in is highly site specific. The variety of ways in which the designation has been used is astonishing—there is no simple cause and effect that results in a standard impact. Instead, dynamic sites are using the designation in a myriad of ways to achieve their own local objectives—from raising civic pride, to attracting inward investment, to creating a whole new brand identity.

But despite this variety of responses, it is possible to see some common ground between dynamic World Heritage Sites, and to see where future sites might learn from.

The significant impacts of World Heritage Site status are rarely accidental or unintended—they are overwhelmingly the result of coordinated and well thought through efforts to achieve targeted change.

Sites that have achieved significant impacts have had a clear logic chain from the identification of the issues and problems they wished to address, a clear understanding of how the status could be used to catalyse change, following through to investing in the resources, activities and processes to deliver the impacts desired.

The impact of World Heritage status is heavily affected by the pre-designation socio-economic profile of the site (including its existing designations, its tourism brand profile, and a range of other complex variables). But crucially, the research undertaken revealed for the first time the different motivations which led to places becoming World Heritage Sites.

Two simple rules

There are two simple rules for World Heritage sites when it comes to delivering socio-economic impact:

- 1) The motive for becoming a site is critically important, and
- 2) Actions that flow from that motivation deliver the majority of the socio-economic impacts

In short, the UNESCO/WHS status is a means to an end, not an end in itself. As with the EU City of Culture designation, a good World Heritage programme of activities can create an enduring and powerful socio-economic legacy. A poor programme creates little of lasting value.

Size matters

Many communities will continue to see the investment in attaining the UNESCO designation as worth it for reasons other than economic benefits—to, for example, celebrate their heritage for its own sake. But for those communities that need to judge the success or the worth of the designation by its ability to deliver economic benefits above and beyond the costs of achieving inscription, then scale is an important consideration.

The recent evidence suggests that the automatic tourism footfall impact of the designation is unlikely to exceed 0–3%. An established tourism destination might expect a negligible impact on overall visitor numbers as a result of becoming a World Heritage Site.

However, with effective marketing of a quality product, World Heritage Site status might be used more effectively to change the visitor profile. The key to socio-economic payback is the scale of the market, and the ability to use the UNESCO World Heritage Site designation to attract higher spending cultural visitors. For example, a relatively small shift (say 1%) in the visitor profile of a potential World Heritage Site like the English Lake District with its 8–9 million visitors could result in an absolute economic impact of up to €23 million (£20 million) per annum. The critical point is that only a significant economic entity can justify the cost of attaining the designation if growth in tourism spend is a primary objective.



UNESCO World Heritage Site status—the 12 impact areas

<p>Media/PR value</p> <p>There is a growing body of evidence of an automatic benefit of increased local, national and international media/PR attention.</p> <p>WHS acts a signal of exceptionality—telling the world’s media that a place is newsworthy.</p>	<p>Preservation of the heritage Unique Selling Point (USP)</p> <p>Whilst this is often viewed as a cost rather than an economic benefit, it is worth noting that some sites view their conservation and preservation industries as a dynamic and wealth generating sector.</p>	<p>New/improved identity image</p> <p>WHS can lead to powerful new, or improved, identities for places—providing in some cases a unifying brand identity for the first time.</p>
<p>Education</p> <p>A number of sites have realised that their OUV provides them with an opportunity to develop and sell education products and services that have high demand.</p>	<p>Civic pride/quality of life</p> <p>Many WHSs have realised that there is a powerful socio-economic rationale to developing their reputation for having a high quality of life and a dynamic lifestyle offer.</p>	<p>Culture & creativity</p> <p>Some of the most inspiring WHSs are those that have taken their heritage and reinvented how visitors and residents experience it by embracing culture and creativity.</p>
<p>Cultural glue</p> <p>Some sites have used the WHS process to take their existing and new cultural assets and fit them within a cultural narrative that residents, investors and visitors can understand.</p>	<p>Regeneration programmes</p> <p>Some WHSs have found themselves the focus of significant economic development programmes.</p>	<p>Strategic coordination of investment</p> <p>Some WHSs bind together, within an overall strategy and under a well supported management organisation, previously disparate communities and facilities to effectively coordinate investment.</p>
<p>Better/new services</p> <p>Some WHSs result in new or improved services for residents and visitors alike.</p>	<p>Business development</p> <p>A significant minority of WHSs have found that their WHS inscription has stimulated a commercial response from the private sector.</p>	<p>Quality infrastructure</p> <p>The focus of many WHSs has been to raise the quality of the infrastructure of their site—from the quality of the housing stock, through to the quality of working landscapes.</p>





“ Tourism is a huge industry supporting 35,000 jobs in Cumbria. The Lake District is the key to this success and to the 15 million visitors who come to this outstanding area every year. The NWDA is pleased to support the bid for World Heritage status which would not only preserve and enhance the Lake District but would secure significant economic benefits for the Northwest region. ”

Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive of the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA)

“ The English Lake District is home to almost 46,000 people. In UNESCO terms, its outstanding universal value could lie in its rural landscape and farming traditions; its role in the development of the Picturesque aesthetic; its place as the cradle of English Romanticism; and its inspiration of the landscape conservation movement. We believe these four themes form a ‘Chain’ of Outstanding Universal Value and special significance for the Lake District. ”

**Keith Jones OBE, Regional Director, Forestry Commission
Chair Lakes WHS Cultural Landscape Technical Advisory Group**

“The benefits of WHS status are related to what they have used the status for.”

World Heritage for the Nation, DCMS, UK Government, 2008

The case studies...

From the analysis of all 878 World Heritage Sites, a handful of best practice examples emerge that illuminate the uses of the designation.

Nothing illustrates the way that dynamic places can embrace a designation like UNESCO World Heritage Site status as well as looking at real examples—places that have grabbed the opportunity by the scruff of the neck and made it work for them.

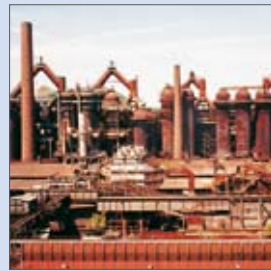
The best practice case studies are a sample of 14 included in the Economic Gain final report—and were selected to illuminate the diversity of responses that the designation can result in, and the wide variety of socio-economic actions that different places have attempted to achieve.

They were selected after an extensive process of filtering with the new database, and demonstrate the key areas of impact. Their diversity of approach makes comparisons and collective impact measurement difficult, but they serve as an illustration of why previous studies, which were based on a single idea of World Heritage status, fell short of success. They are also excellent examples of communities that have used the designation as part of a process of re-defining the identity and value of their cultural and natural heritage.

These sites provide a spectrum of UNESCO/WHS-influenced development models. It should be noted that these case studies are the progressive minority—they are by no means typical of World Heritage Sites in general. The examples are offered here to evidence the fact that whilst this may be a minority approach to using UNESCO designation, it can be effective—it may also be an approach that existing or future sites may wish to learn from.

It is probably no coincidence that some of the most innovative World Heritage Sites are those that have faced the challenge of ensuring the future of extremely expensive heritage—from whole landscapes like that of Cinque Terre, to whole towns and cities like Blaenavon and Bordeaux, to major industrial sites like Völklingen.

These sites often have to recognise the brutal truth that relying upon the public purse to fund their preservation is simply unfeasible. These sites often need to embrace change and use their World Heritage Site status to support their reinvention. This can result in quite radical reinventions of heritage sites. These are places that took UNESCO designation and turned it into a catalyst for positive change in their communities—they are the new breed of heritage sites.



Bordeaux-Port of the Moon



A modern city embraces World Heritage Site status as part of a sophisticated destination identity to attract both visitors and investment.

Bordeaux has only been a World Heritage Site since 2007 but its UNESCO World Heritage Site status is already embedded deep into its identity. Right from the first internet click (<http://www.bordeaux-tourisme.com>) the potential visitor to Bordeaux is left in no doubt that this destination is a World Heritage Site, and that this is a badge that shows it to be a place that offers a rich cultural, social, economic and historic experience for visitors, investors and residents.

The city (or more accurately 1,810 hectares, more than half of the city area) was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2007 as a Cultural Landscape, so it is clearly too early to offer any detailed analysis of impacts created. However, the destination marketing developed by Bordeaux since inscription is, we believe, a prime example of the emerging use of the World Heritage designation to raise quality, authenticity and distinctiveness.

Bordeaux uses the designation not as part of a niche heritage tourism offer (though it does offer guided tours to key sites, etc), but as a quality brand to define its whole identity covering everything from the 'liveability' of the city to the inward investment benefits of the city. This is not a backward looking approach but heritage supporting the wider progressive economic development of the city.

In short, this is about World Heritage status as a catalyst to the dynamic reinvention of a 21st century city based upon quality, distinctiveness, and a strong cultural identity. As a result, Bordeaux is perhaps the best single example of a new site putting into action the ideas and emerging themes that we have identified—Bordeaux looks like it has learnt the lessons of other World Heritage sites.

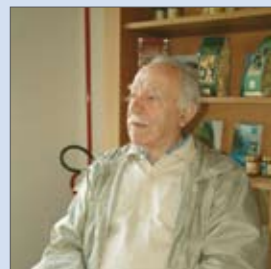
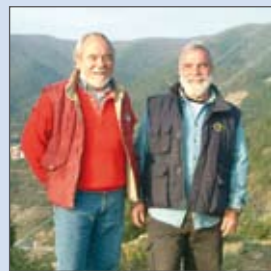
Pages from the website: <http://www.bordeaux-tourisme.com>



“Being a WHS offers a potential advantage, but you also need really great products... This is the primary issue.”

Roberta Aluisini
Parco Nazionale delle Cinque Terre

Portovenere, Cinque Terre & the Islands



An Italian World Heritage Site with focus on the preservation of a socio-economic way of life that preserves a unique agricultural landscape.

The landscape and communities of Cinque Terre are a fascinating case study in the use of the World Heritage Site designation as a catalyst to the preservation and regeneration of an entire landscape-scale socio-economic system.

For most of the 20th Century the population of the historically isolated region of Cinque Terre, Italy, was in steep decline. The population declined from c.8,000 in 1951 to c.4,500 in 2008. In the 1960s and 1970s the local population was haemorrhaging away to the cities of Milan, Genoa and Rome in search of a better standard of living. In the 1980s the social and economic crisis facing this landscape and its communities was recognised by regional and national governments.



In the 1990s a number of initiatives emerged, which have halted this decline and changed Cinque Terre markedly. Cinque Terre and Portovenere successfully lobbied to become a World Heritage Site and were inscribed in 1997 as a Cultural Landscape—followed in 1999 by the area being designated a National Park.

The unique hillsides of Cinque Terre are terraced for the production of grapes, olives, herbs and lemons. The terraces are held in place by thousands of kilometres of high-maintenance dry stone walls. Achieving World Heritage Site and National Park status were from the start part of a parallel approach to stopping the socio-economic decline and promoting the area at a national and international level. The structures created have resulted in additional investment being secured from EU, National and regional funds.

The socio-economic focus of Cinque Terre is important—because it suggests the future sites may benefit by being explicit from the start about the relationship between their heritage ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ and the socio-economic systems that support their heritage. The stakeholders in Cinque Terre knew what they wanted from becoming a World Heritage Site—‘world-wide visibility

for Cinque Terre’ and a means to ‘empower the communities and their way of life to survive’.

Cinque Terre is a good example of a trend we noticed in several large and progressive heritage sites—of embracing the private sector investment in innovative ways. The National Park’s Lorena Passini summarises the three goals as being:

- 1) Reducing the cost of cultivation
- 2) Improving the quality of products and
- 3) Developing the international reputation of the products produced in the Park

The economic development of Cinque Terre is, of course, about more than its UNESCO designation—a key ingredient is the relationship between the National Park and the agricultural cooperatives who produce the products and market them. These cooperatives provide a structure that allows collective investment in product development, processes and marketing of the region’s products, and the National Park provides a marketplace through tourism information centres.

The attitude to World Heritage Site status has changed over time in Cinque Terre—initially there was a healthy amount of scepticism whether it would create more red tape, restrict planning, and generally slow economic development. Today that view has overwhelmingly changed. When Matteo Bonani, Director of the Groppo co-operative took on his job in the 1980s he was warned that he would be lucky to still have a job in 10 years time because the farming was in such severe decline. He now has 190 farmers supplying the co-operative.

There are young men and women working on the land producing innovative and high value products that are increasingly successful, being sold as far afield as the UK and Japan. Population decline has been halted. Abandonment of the terraces is slowed, or even partly reversed. Young people are not leaving the area for work as they once did—having an option to stay and work in tourism, marketing, product development or other sectors.

Travel journalists from around the world visited Cinque Terre in the 1980s and penned articles urging everyone to visit quickly before its impending disappearance. But this hasn’t happened, and UNESCO/WH status has played a prominent role in the process that prevented it from happening.



“You need a full basket of products—just 2–3 is not enough to be a serious food destination.”

Roberta Aluisini
Parco Nazionale delle Cinque Terre

“Where we had empty, derelict shops they have been dramatically improved, there are new shop fronts and vendors.”

Brian Whitcombe,
Blaenavon councillor,
Wales, 2009

Blaenavon



The regeneration of a town in the Welsh valleys around the 'cultural glue' provided by its industrial World Heritage.

Blaenavon is a town in South Wales that experienced the extremes of both industrialization and de-industrialization. It also probably offers the best model of the potential for World Heritage-led regeneration in the UK.

Wales was the first country in the world with more people working in industry than in agriculture; it also had the world's largest concentration of iron production. Blaenavon is one of the birthplaces of worldwide industrialization; it went from a tiny village to a significant industrial centre for iron and coal production in a few short decades. Its economy and community expanded and contracted radically throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

By the 1990s the decline was such that it was recognised as facing severe social and economic challenges. The population which had been less than 2,000 in 1811, and which had exploded to more than 12,000 in the 1920s, plummeting to fewer than 6,000 in 2000.

In the 1990s stakeholders began to explore the idea of an economic development plan for the town based upon its exceptional industrial heritage. This was a brave move, as this same heritage was viewed by some stakeholders as the source of the problems rather than the source of the solution. The result was the Blaenavon Heritage and Regeneration Strategy.

Many places have developed similar strategies with similar words, but what makes Blaenavon so interesting is that they have delivered this programme, and becoming a World Heritage Site was a key part of the process. The partnership taking forward the strategy achieved World Heritage Status in 2000. The site covers 33 hectares, and includes the town itself and the landscape within which the industry took place—half the site is within the Brecon Beacons National Park. Many stakeholders were sceptical—the harsh post-industrial landscape offered little of the romance of other World Heritage Sites.

The implementation of the strategy was built on the back of the status provided by the UNESCO/WHS designation; in each area of delivery (Community and Partnership, Conservation, Education, Funding, Networking, Promotion, Protection, Renewal and Tourism) UNESCO World Heritage Site status has been the catalyst. Critically, the World Heritage nomination documents were quite explicit that socio-economic renewal was part of the motive and actions that status would result in:

‘The prime aim of the Blaenavon Partnership is to protect and conserve this landscape so that future generations may understand the contribution South Wales made to the Industrial Revolution. By the presentation and promotion of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape it is intended to increase cultural tourism and assist the economic regeneration of the area.’

The €35.5 million (£30.8 million) investment programme that resulted has been a mixture of additional funding, accessed because of the World Heritage status and management team, and an inspired use of existing investment to achieve the objectives of the strategy. It ranges from €8.4 million (£7.3 million) spent on the restoration of Big Pit, €3.5 million (£3.1 million) for the creation of the World Heritage Centre, through to more mundane investments in things like new public toilets and commercial property renewal. It is, in short, a significant and holistic regeneration programme for a community of its size and its aim has been to change the socio-economic trajectory of the community.

The results are impressive and include:

- The conservation and interpretation of the built environment
- Over 100 jobs created annually in construction
- 65 FTE jobs created and safeguarded in tourism
- 10 new businesses created
- Visitor numbers increased by 100 per cent from 100,000 to 200,000 in 5 years
- Major shift in perception and in community pride

But perhaps most impressive of all is the way that the town now has a clear story—its cultural assets bound together in a single story that visitors and residents alike can easily comprehend.

As a result of these achievements Blaenavon has built a reputation as an exceptional case study of how heritage can drive economic development. The stakeholders in Blaenavon believe that the factors in their success are simple: They had a clear regeneration need; an overall strategy; leadership from the principal local authority; they actively pursued UNESCO/WHS status as a socio-economic catalyst; they had a committed partnership and effective coordination.

Blaenavon secured investment by partners in multiple assets; they accessed project funding from the EU, the Welsh Assembly and Heritage Lottery Fund; they focused on an authentic regional culture; and they were fully aware throughout that communities can achieve socio-economic gain through perceptual changes.

“Someone asked where I came from the other day...”

...and for the first time in a long time I said ‘Blaenavon’—I’ve often lied and said Cardiff, but now I’m proud to be from Blaenavon and people have heard of it.

Blaenavon resident



Regeneration in Blaenavon before (top) & after

“One of the most precious results of WHS status for me seems to be the deep thankfulness of people to live in such a wonderful city.”

Dr Karin Dengler-Schreiber,
World Heritage Centre,
Bamberg, Germany, 2009

Bamberg



“For the city of Bamberg the world heritage title is like a lighthouse. This ‘unique selling position’ is priceless. Which is why, as mayor, I have put the world heritage title at the very top of my list of priorities. The citizens of Bamberg also give special attention to everything that has to do with world heritage. The way in which the citizens identify with their city, which was always very close, has grown even stronger since designation...”

“There are direct and indirect advantages. Firstly, there is the economic factor of tourism, which has certainly been strongly reinforced as a consequence of the title. That has an impact not just in the hotel and catering trades but also indirectly as well, for example for retailers, local publishers, the number of visitor guides, etc. The greatest benefit, however, as far as I can see, lies in the City’s own commitment to protect its valuable heritage. That may not always be easy, but in my view it represents a sustainable approach to the future. After all, a city with a unique and irreplaceable ensemble of buildings, which will have an ever more important locational advantage in a world where towns and cities are increasingly all coming to look the same.”



Andreas Starke—Mayor of Bamberg

The historic city of Bamberg in southern Germany competes with its neighbours on its World Heritage cultural significance.

Bamberg was inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1993 and like most other sites from this period the motivation for World Heritage status was primarily about the preservation of its built heritage. But since then stakeholders in the city have been at the forefront of experimenting with UNESCO/WHS status as a lead tourism brand and a quality-of-life driver.

Indeed the highly competitive tourism market, in which Bamberg competes with other German attractions for visitors, seems to have stimulated stakeholders to seize on the designation as a way of proving and validating the distinctiveness and authenticity of the city relative to its competitors. The marketing of Bamberg is heavily focused on its UNESCO status, providing an excellent case study of whether or not this works.

The outstanding universal value of Bamberg, in southern Germany, is as an outstanding example of a central European city that has grown and evolved around a Middle Age core. The city has one of the largest intact old town centres in Europe, with 2,400 listed buildings covering 1000 years of architectural history and an intact market gardening landscape within the city walls. The city has a population of 70,000 and is a prosperous business location with a growing international tourism reputation.

Impressively, the city has grown its visitor numbers from 255,000 in 1993 to c.400,000 in 2008—a growth rate of 64% since UNESCO/WHS inscription. The marketing officer for Bamberg Tourism and Congress Service has analysed this and believes this growth rate is ‘not possible to attribute to other factors’ other than the UNESCO designation and their use of it.

International media visits/interviews relating to Bamberg as a destination have risen year on year from approximately 3-4 enquiries a year in 1993 to 32 in 2008. 80% of these interviews feature the UNESCO/WHS status of the city as a matter of interest/importance for viewers in the host country.

The result appears to be the city attracting more international cultural visitors from states with large numbers of World Heritage Sites than other comparable non-World Heritage destinations in Germany. The tourism marketing professionals of Bamberg believe passionately that the UNESCO designation has given them a comparative advantage that impacts on the bottom line for tourism businesses in the city.



“WHS status creates a feeling of responsibility which is a socio-economic engine you cannot estimate highly enough.”

Dr Karin Dengler-Schreiber,
World Heritage Centre,
Bamberg, Germany, 2009

“The genius of Völklingen WHS lies in the way its management has created something that is more than simply an industrial heritage attraction”

James Rebanks,
Economic Researcher

Völklingen



In the heart of the industrial Saarland lies this vast relic of a not-so-distant past—one of the most exciting heritage and cultural sites in Germany.

Völklingen Ironworks, which covers some six hectares, physically dominates the industrial city of Völklingen, in the Saarland. In the 1960s 17,000 people worked at the ironworks, but in 1987 the ironworks went out of production. It was preserved as the only intact example in the whole of Western Europe and North America of an integrated ironworks built and equipped in the 19th and 20th centuries. In 1994 it became the first industrial monument inscribed on the UNESCO/WHS Cultural Heritage list.

The genius of Völklingen’s World Heritage Site lies in the way that its management has created something that is more than simply an industrial heritage attraction. The scale of the site and investment required to maintain it necessitate a significant footfall of paying visitors.

In the 1990s the key Saarland stakeholders made a strategic decision to make Völklingen a marriage of industrial heritage and art. They established ‘The World Cultural Heritage Site Völklingen Ironworks, European Centre for Art and Industrial Heritage’. The focus of the site since that time has been an intriguing mixture of industrial heritage and contemporary cultural and creative activities.

Völklingen is at first glance an unlikely visitor attraction. But this 600,000 square metre lump of iron and steel now attracts 200,000 visitors a year, double the figure for the year 2000. This is even more impressive when it is known that the vast majority of former workers and residents vowed never to set foot in it again after the closure in the 1980s.

Völklingen has succeeded in establishing itself as a ‘must see’ tourism destination—evidenced by its inclusion on several guides showcasing the unmissable attractions of Germany. The marketing team at Völklingen are convinced that UNESCO/WHS status has given them a profile boost that manifests itself in tour operators from a range of international locations bringing visitors to the site.

The visitor profile for the site supports the idea that the designation and the cultural exhibitions result in the site attracting a higher percentage of visitors from outside the Saarland—both German and international visitors—than comparable non-UNESCO/WHS attractions.

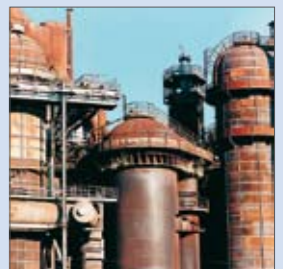
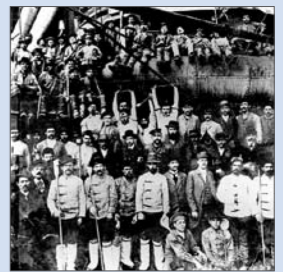
Völklingen benefits from a steady stream of international media attention, much of which is heavily focused and motivated by understanding the World Heritage ‘Outstanding Universal Value’. The difference that UNESCO/WHS status has made in Völklingen has been partly political, partly about funding, and partly about vastly increased profile.

Because of its World Heritage status the management organisation can punch above its weight in discussions about the investment priorities for the region; has been able to access additional investment; and has benefited significantly from being perceived as a place of global interest. The site works hard to convert these factors into economic impact for the local community. The signs are that their efforts and their vision are paying dividends.



“Völklingen has succeeded in establishing itself as a ‘must see’ tourism destination”

James Rebanks,
Economic Researcher



Hadrian's Wall



Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site has recently reinvented itself with a more dynamic and effective management structure.



Like most World Heritage Sites inscribed in the 1970s and 1980s the motivation for securing the designation for Hadrian's Wall was almost exclusively about preservation and celebration of heritage—and the impacts, or lack of them, reflect this.

For the first 15-18 years after UNESCO/WHS inscription in 1987 visitor numbers to Hadrian's Wall were falling, and the quality of the site's visitor infrastructure was deteriorating. This was a case study in how UNESCO/WHS inscription alone achieves very little, other than some initial media attention.

However, in the past five years, Hadrian's Wall has intellectually reinvented itself from an older perception of World Heritage, to a more modern focus on socio-economic impact that can be delivered by investment in its heritage. The stimulus to this change was research, which suggested the potential to deliver an additional €254 million of economic activity (£220 million) to the entire corridor through further development of the Hadrian's Wall product, potentially creating another 3,600 jobs.

The establishment of a management organisation—Hadrian's Wall Heritage Ltd, in 2005-2006 appears to have given the site a new strategic impetus. Hadrian's Wall now forms part of a transnational site called 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site'.

Detailed evaluation of this new approach reveals significant early successes. Several key investors reported higher levels of confidence in making investments as a result of having a sole coordinating body that makes the strategic case for investment by developing the evidence base, coordinates capital projects, and that encourages quality improvements in the capital projects in a holistic manner.

Prior to the establishment of HWH Ltd funders were dealing with up to 70 different sites and organisations. Most encouraging of all is the fact that 450 stakeholders, many of whom were from small private sector companies, reported high levels of support for the work of the lead organisation in using the UNESCO/WHS designation as a stimulus to positive socio-economic change.

It appears that the unity provided by the UNESCO/WHS designation is finally being exploited more effectively with structures in place to achieve significant socio-economic changes. It is an excellent case study demonstrating that the designation alone achieves little, but that it can be used to catalyse positive change.

Back to the Future

Lessons for future World Heritage Sites with a socio-economic aim.

Many, perhaps most, World Heritage Sites will continue to be motivated primarily by a focus on preserving and maintaining unique and globally important heritage. This is entirely appropriate and reflects the nature of many World Heritage Sites and the origin of the UNESCO designation itself—but a growing minority of sites, and more are being added each year, have a different motivation; to use their historic environment as part of their future identity and economic development.

This fusion of heritage preservation and economics isn't easy, and poses challenges for all concerned. The evidence from around the world suggests that this is a process that can work. Some places are more suited to such an approach than others. Sites where the heritage was created by, and is preserved by, a living socio-economic system are much more likely to focus on preserving and developing that economic foundation.

UNESCO 'Cultural Landscape' sites are more likely to have this focus than 'Natural' sites—natural sites focused on the preservation of wilderness are, almost by definition, not focused on socio-economic development and arguably never will be. It is unlikely that ecclesiastical and archaeological sites or monuments will ever be the focus of regional economic development. Urban sites are much more likely to have a socio-economic focus than rural ones—because of their socio-economic profile. Cities like Vienna and Edinburgh have developed a more dynamic vision of World Heritage status that incorporates change.

In summary, achieving socio-economic impacts through becoming a World Heritage Site is not a race between equals: More recently designated sites are more likely to have a socio-economic focus—this reflects a growing belief that heritage can be an economic driver for some places. Existing sites may find it harder to change focus. Similarly, the motivation of the stakeholders for pursuing the UNESCO status is critical—perceptions of the socio-economic role of heritage are different in different places around the world.

A key lesson appears to be that dynamic sites appear to have written a socio-economic focus into their OUV statements and management plans; they also ensure they have appropriate management and investment structures to implement their strategies for change. And critically successful sites work together—it is no coincidence that so much best practice takes places in Germany where the collective marketing, investment and interpretation of World Heritage is so much more advanced than elsewhere.

Scale matters if the benefits are created through tourism. So does the relationship between a World Heritage Site and the tourism brand identity of a destination—different places will see different levels of value in the UNESCO WHS brand.

The resulting picture is not the end of the debate. It raises many questions, but it does provide a more nuanced and intelligent basis from which to think about the socio-economic value of a designation like UNESCO/WHS status for a range of potential World Heritage Sites in the future.



“Hadrian's Wall WHS is the catalyst for social, economic and cultural regeneration. 79% of local businesses say that it is very important to their business success.”

Linda Tutti
Chief Executive
Hadrian's Wall Heritage Ltd

“We never got the international visitors that we get now, it has changed a lot.”

Anonymous, Riomaggiore, Cinque Terre National Park, Italy, 2009

The WHS catalyst

The new research revealed that for a significant minority of places becoming a World Heritage Site creates a situation whereby the local stakeholders collectively ask themselves the critical question:

‘Why is our place unique, special and globally important?’

This in itself is a critically important economic question. It is the basis of effective tourism marketing, the key to attracting inward investment or relocation of businesses and often the key to adding value to commercial products and creating prouder, more dynamic communities that are more confident to engage with the rest of the world.

A handful of World Heritage Sites have, as a result of answering that question, found themselves at the cutting edge of a movement around the world which seeks to focus the economic development of places on their uniqueness, their authenticity,

their distinct sense of place, and the depth of their identity and culture (as validated and endorsed by UNESCO’s 185 countries).

They use the added stimulus of World Heritage Site status to engage with the rest of the world from a position of confidence selling distinct products, experiences and services at added value based upon their provenance.

Achieving these aspirations is not easy, or achieved on the cheap. Successful places direct significant effort and investment into achieving this—but it appears that World Heritage Site status, and the catalyst and confidence it provides, can play a significant role in this movement to high quality and distinctiveness.

To request your copy of the full report please contact Mike Clarke email: mike@lakeswhs.co.uk



Acknowledgements

LAKE DISTRICT WORLD HERITAGE PROJECT

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(in alphabetical order)

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Lake District National Park Authority

National Trust

Natural England

Natwest Bank plc

North West Regional

Development Agency

South Lakeland District Council

United Utilities

“The greatest benefit, however, as far as I can see, lies in the City’s own commitment to protect its valuable heritage.”

Andreas Starke—
The Mayor of Bamberg





LAKE DISTRICT WORLD HERITAGE PROJECT

For more information about the Lake District World Heritage Project visit
[**www.lakeswhs.co.uk**](http://www.lakeswhs.co.uk)

To find out more about visiting Cumbria and the Lake District go to
[**www.golakes.co.uk**](http://www.golakes.co.uk)

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