



## **Visitor management at a World Heritage Site**

**New Lanark World Heritage Site, Scotland**

### **Case study and student material**

**Anna Leask, Edinburgh Napier University**

#### **Contemporary Cases Online**

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Design and setting by P.K. McBride

## Introduction

There are currently 878 designated World Heritage Sites (WHS) inscribed on the [UNESCO World Heritage List](#) (WHL), located in a total of 145 States Parties. The designation process is a highly formalised one. Every year, States Parties have the opportunity to nominate up to two sites from within their national territory for inclusion on the list. The resources of each nominated site are then evaluated against ten set criteria, of which the site should meet at least one. Successful sites are inscribed onto the WHL and the States Parties responsible for them must agree to follow the [Operational Guidelines](#) determined by UNESCO. This case study outlines the general process of WHS designation before going on to examine how it operates in the UK. The discussion then moves on to consider the specific case of [New Lanark](#), an industrial conservation village in Scotland (see Figure 1). The case study focuses on how the site achieved WHS status and the implications of this designation for the ongoing management of the site.



**Figure 1:** New Lanark. Photo printed by kind permission of New Lanark Trust

## World Heritage Site Designation Process

The “Convention concerning the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural Heritage” (also known as the “[World Heritage Convention](#)”) was approved by UNESCO in 1972 and came into force in 1976. The purpose of the Convention is to ‘ensure the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of cultural and

natural heritage of outstanding universal value' (UNESCO, 2008, p.2). The [World Heritage Committee](#) (WHC) coordinates the inscription process, encouraging nominations from States Parties that have signed up to the Convention. Each nomination is evaluated by experts from the [International Council on Monuments and Sites](#) (ICOMOS) for built sites, the [International Union for the Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN) for natural sites, or both in the case of mixed sites. The experts' task is to determine whether or not the site does indeed demonstrate 'outstanding universal value'. The aim is to 'encourage conservation of the resources within the designated site and surrounding buffer zones on a local level and also to foster a sense of collective global responsibility through international cooperation, exchange and support' (Leask, 2006, p.7).

Before a site can be formally nominated, it should be shown on the [Tentative List](#) of the States Party. This is an inventory of sites considered to be appropriate for inclusion on the WHL, often the result of intense lobbying within a States Party, and those that the States Party plan to nominate over the following years. Each States Party may nominate up to two sites per annum, provided that one is a natural site. Once agreed, the relevant site must prepare a [Nomination Document](#) that details the criteria for inscription, site boundaries, buffer zone and features of 'outstanding universal value' inherent to the site. Since 1996, sites must also at this stage submit a Management Plan, detailing how the integrity of the site is to be maintained. Once these documents are submitted to the World Heritage Centre, experts undertake an in-depth evaluation of the site, culminating in a recommendation being made to the WHC. The options include inscribing the site onto the WHL, deferring the decision pending further detail or discussion of documents, or rejecting the nomination. The future of the WHL is currently under debate (Fyall and Rakic, 2006), particularly in view of the present imbalances that can be seen to exist in terms of the different types of site represented on the List and their geographical distribution. Full details of the inscription process can be seen on the web pages of UNESCO (2009) and in Leask (2006).

The motivations for heritage sites to aspire to be inscribed on the WHL are varied and complex, as are the benefits to be derived from WHS status. Seeking access to the WHL may be to gain international recognition for the resource, to source conservation expertise and support, or to achieve the perceived economic benefits from the additional tourism activity such designation may bring. It has been argued that the motivations are 'varied, debatable in their benefits and often politically intensified' (Leask, 2006, p.12). Meanwhile it has been found that the anticipated tourism benefits of inscription – an increasingly common ambition among States Parties – are not always as clear cut as they might at first appear (Fyall and Rakic, 2006).

The implications of designation for a site depend upon a number of factors, including past and present conservation efforts at the site, the environment within which it is situated, and the planning and management policies that apply to it. Various authors, including Hall and Piggin (2001), van der Aa (2005) and Shackley (2005), have researched the potential implications of WHS designation either at the national, regional or site level. As with the motivations for seeking designation, its implications are varied and depend on a wide range of factors, including the state of the heritage resource at the time of inscription, local interpretations of how UNESCO's Operational Guidelines should be applied and varying levels of commitment among stakeholders.

**Chapter extract**

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