



Photo: The Lake District National Park Authority

The Lake District *“a blended holiness of earth and sky”*

William Wordsworth

Towards World Heritage

December 2005



Photo: Ian Brodie, Friends of the Lake District

Shaped by the Ice Age more than 1 million years ago

Inhabited for over 12,000 years

885 square miles of national park

1,744 listed buildings

275 ancient monuments

21 conservation areas

132 sites of special scientific interest

12 million visitors each year

42,000 residents

One world-class cultural landscape

This paper is concerned with the notion of World Heritage Site inscription for the Lake District.

The aim here is to summarise the debate so far and describe the potential benefits, opportunities and value of achieving World Heritage Site inscription.



Photo: Ian Brodie, Friends of the Lake District

Achieving World Heritage Site inscription is a prestigious honour in a world of such stunning heritage assets.

Heritage

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today and what we pass on to future generations. It encompasses the landscape, the built environment, our cultural and artistic endeavours, the irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration.

World Heritage embodies the notion of ‘universal value’, with heritage as an asset that belongs to the people of the world, transcending political and geographical boundaries. The protection, conservation and management of our heritage are a vital part of celebrating what it is to be human. In the case of World Heritage it is the observation of human endeavour and nature at its most unique, thrilling and epic.

World Heritage Site Inscription

World Heritage Site status recognises that the most cherished heritage assets are irreplaceable. They are of such outstanding universal value, that their existence is more than part of our history; it is part of our identity.

As the name suggests, World Heritage inscription is first and foremost a global seal of approval, acknowledgement that a site has reached a status deemed to be of global significance. Such sites are inscribed on their merits by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre as the best possible examples of built, natural or cultural heritage. Of the 812 World Heritage Sites on the list, the UK has 26, with Liverpool’s – ‘Maritime Mercantile City’ being the most recent addition in 2004.

Other sites include the Great Barrier Reef, The Great Wall of China, the Pyramid Fields of Egypt, the Taj Mahal and Stonehenge. Achieving World Heritage Site inscription is a prestigious honour in a world of such stunning heritage assets.

The Lake District as Cultural Landscape

In 1992 the World Heritage Committee recognised ‘cultural landscape’ as a category within the convention’s guidelines. This new category, established in direct response to the Lake District’s previous submissions for World Heritage inscription in the 1980s, aims to “reveal and sustain the great diversity of the interactions between humans and their environment, to protect living traditions and preserve traces of those which have disappeared” (World Heritage Centre).

The Lake District is in many ways the epitome of a cultural landscape, an expression of the interplay of humanity and nature at its most triumphant. The category of ‘cultural landscape’ perfectly characterises the Lake District, whose historic landscape and cultural stature are a result of the inter-actions between social, economic, cultural and environmental elements.

The combination of epic landscape, dramatic geology, rich archaeology and tranquil lakes created a magnetism for cultural expression that led to writers, painters and intellectuals forming an almost spiritual bond with the a landscape they grew to adore.

“Bewitching” and “spiritual” are adjectives reserved for landscapes as awe inspiring as the Lake District, a place that has for over 300 years touched the heart and soul of millions of visitors, artists, poets, writers and those who seek to find a sense of escape and inspiration.



Wordsworth Trust

The area is an intoxicating mix of vibrant visitor destination and cultural attraction. “Bewitching” and “spiritual” are adjectives reserved for landscapes as awe inspiring as the Lake District, a place that touches the heart and soul of millions of visitors, artists, poets, writers and those who seek to find a sense of escape and inspiration.

As England’s largest and most visited National Park, the Lake District is already one of the nation’s national treasures. The expansive waterways, glacial valleys and chiselled peaks are overlain with the remains of a long and distinctive history of human settlement, which epitomises the cultural connection between people and places.

Archaeological sites, historic buildings and ancient and designed landscape features combine in the Lake District to form a rich and distinctive history, spanning at least 12,000 years.

There is evidence of Neolithic stone circles, Bronze Age settlements on the lower fells and medieval remains of the iron industry. Agriculture too, has left its indelible mark, with a legacy of distinctive, thirteenth century, stone-walled field patterns. From the seventeenth century there are numerous

heritage farmhouse and barn buildings, while the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries led to the development of country houses and Victorian hotels and mansions.

But what is so unique is how the Lake District for 300 years or more has been the life-force for artistic and intellectual movements that continue to resonate beyond the UK, to Europe and across the world.

The full breadth of cultural significance that the Lake District landscape engenders is too numerous to be captured here, but of most significance is the blossoming of the Picturesque and Romantic movements, which became synonymous with the area.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, increasing numbers of artists were attracted to the Lake District as a landscape comparable in status and beauty to that seen on the European Grand Tour. The Lake District was seen to embody the essential elements of the Picturesque and the Sublime, an approach to defining and viewing different types of landscape. Some of the greatest English artists were inspired by the landscape’s combination of ‘beauty, horror and immensity’ and paintings by Turner, Constable and Thomas Gainsborough have immortalised

the Lake District through their picturesque interpretation of the landscape. Writers of the Romantic period (1780 to 1830) were influenced by theories of the Picturesque and the Sublime, and viewed the Lake District landscape as an embodiment of the Romantic idea of man and nature bonded in total harmony.

Romantic poetry is said to have begun in 1798 with the publication of ‘Lyrical Ballads’, a collection of poems by the English poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge who lived most of their lives in the Lake District. As the guiding light in the Romantic movement in English poetry, Wordsworth was instrumental in articulating the mystical correspondence between man and nature, with the Lake District as its apotheosis.

It was, for them, their life-blood and along with Robert Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge became known as the Lake Poets. Other writers such as Thomas Gray, John Keats, John Ruskin, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Alfred Lord Tennyson were also strongly associated with the Lake District.



Brantwood Trust



John Ruskin (left) and William Wordsworth

John Ruskin (1819 – 1900) was a key figure and one of the greatest Victorians. Ruskin's intellect was immense and his achievements span across disciplines from the artistic and literary to the religious and philosophical. He was also one of the earliest conservationists, inspiring the founding of the National Trust, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Labour Movement. Ruskin's work influenced the thinking of Gandhi, Tolstoy and Proust and his advocacy of the Romantic movement and Wordsworth helped shape the cultural landscape of the Lake District.

On the world stage, arguably the most widely known of the Lake District's literary talents is Beatrix Potter whose love of the area not only created a literary legacy but also an environmental legacy when her land and property assets were bequeathed to the National Trust.

In 1905, Beatrix used her publishing earnings to buy Hill Top farm and her acquisition of property and land continued with her growing success and wealth. Beatrix was a passionate conservationist and as a farmer she became best known for the breeding of Herdwick sheep, Lakeland's own breed. When she died in 1943, aged 77, Beatrix Potter had written 27 books and left £211,636, 14 farms and 4000 acres of land to the National Trust, together with her flocks of sheep.

The Lake District's history is also inextricably linked to the conception of the conservation movement, more specifically the establishment of the National Trust and the UK National Parks model.

The National Trust is now the largest conservation body in Europe and during its 110 years has influenced the conservation movement of a host of countries in Europe as well as those in Australia, Malaysia, Malta, Barbados, Canada and New Zealand, to name but a few.

The UK National Parks movement also has its origins in the Lake District, with the notion of a park for the people being first described by William Wordsworth in 1810 when he referred to the Lake District as **“a sort of national property in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy.”** This concern for environmental conservation manifested itself again in the 1936 agreement between the Forestry Commission and the Friends of the The Lake District. The Lake District National Park was established in 1951 and since then, the area has played a pioneering and influential role in developing international models of park management that include and involve local communities and recognise social and economic imperatives, along with the protection of natural assets.

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Photo: Friends of the Lake District

For the Lake District, World Heritage Site inscription is an opportunity to re-position one of Britain's most cherished landscapes on the global stage, to join a prestigious list of the very best of the world's heritage assets.

What are the benefits of World Heritage status?

From wild fell tops and rugged peaks to tranquil tarns and lakes, the Lake District already commands international attention – World Heritage Site status can only strengthen this further.

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World Heritage status will develop international understanding and acknowledgement for the Lake District's cultural heritage, boosting its image and appeal throughout the world. This wider recognition could also be used to help unlock new funding opportunities of heritage-focussed projects both within the World Heritage Site and, by close association, throughout Cumbria.

New visitor appeal

World Heritage Site inscription, if marketed and managed successfully, can bring global attention and new audiences to an area. International visitors, heritage specialists, cultural tourists, eco-tourism, poets and artists would all see the Lake District afresh as a 'must visit' destination.

New types of visitors bring their own demands on the landscape but they also bring new wealth and spending patterns. The 'cultural visitor' market is an opportunity to expand the out-of-season tourism offer and capitalise on the international appeal of the Lake District's poets, artists and writers. Currently, the most commonly cited reason to visit the Lake District is walking, with other forms of recreation following close behind. The World Heritage 'Cultural Landscape' brand is an opportunity to develop new visitor experiences, extending the product offer and bringing new wealth to the area.

World Heritage inscription would be a natural extension of the democratisation of the Lake District that began over 300 years ago with the arrival of the first landscape tourists to the area. It continues the grand tradition of the area as a place for people – this time from all corners of the globe.

Image and pride

World Heritage Inscription also matters to the Northwest as a region. Inscription for the Lake District would contribute to the image transformation of the region, providing further evidence that the Northwest offers a high quality national and international visitor destination and cultural experience.

For this reason, the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) will continue to work with the Lake District World Heritage Site Group to advocate that any WHS designation is pursued only where it has true cultural landscape significance and helps positively address the issues faced in the communities and economy of the Lake District. NWDA's position is set out in more detail in its Lake District Economic Futures Study Policy Statement.

It is an opportunity to heighten awareness of Cumbria, both its assets and challenges, with key decision-makers at both a national and international level. This new awareness is an important step towards greater influence over key issues that could affect future developments in the area.

Locally, World Heritage status is a new tool to capture the imagination of the public and boost the ambitions of the many partners working to protect and enhance the Lake District. World Heritage Site inscription is an opportunity to bind together all those living and working in the county under a shared vision; re-igniting a sense of shared civic pride and responsibility.

World Heritage Site status will serve to reinforce and strengthen this existing framework rather than add a further layer of planning control.

Future development

World Heritage Site inscription need not inhibit or curtail growth. There is no existing legislation in the UK to regulate World Heritage Sites as the necessary powers to sustain them are contained within current planning legislation.

World Heritage Site inscription is already a planning consideration and National Park designation along with the existence of the National Park Management Plan provide a level of protection appropriate to sustain the proposed World Heritage Site. World Heritage Site status will serve to reinforce and strengthen this existing framework rather than add a further layer of planning control.

Inscription does provide a major opportunity and a process to reassess priorities for the area's future and, if required, develop a more holistic management approach embracing environmental, social and economic dimensions, underpinned by a shared view on the value of the cultural landscape.

The benefits World Heritage Site status can bring to the communities, the economy and environment of the Lake District and to Cumbria as a whole are many and varied. **That said, these benefits are not set in stone or inevitable. Like any accolade it is what you make of it that counts.** The benefits differ for each of the 812 sites currently on the World Heritage registry, with some sites taking a more proactive approach to maximising the opportunities than others.

World Heritage Sites are not 'museum' communities, trapped in time, but living, breathing and evolving places, with buoyant economies and dynamic environments. World Heritage status does not equate to halting development, rather it is means of focusing attention on protecting and enhancing the assets the Lake District has for maximum social, economic and environmental benefit.

In short, WHS status could be used as a tool to attract new visitors, new investment and a new sense of purpose to The Lake District National Park. It is a means of bringing partners together to re-energise the park's image, its tourism offer and its economic development. What's more, in terms of added security World Heritage Site status could provide added 'insurance' for the area in the long-term.



Photo: Ian Brodie, Friends of the Lake District



Photo: The Lake District National Park Authority

The notion of World Heritage inscription already has the support of many key stakeholders in the area, but understandably there are challenges to be resolved as the process moves forward.

Towards World Heritage

The Lake District is renowned as a high quality environment that combines conservation and protection of landscape and heritage assets with a modern approach to land management, and a significant visitor industry. World Heritage Site inscription is a major opportunity to champion the Lake District's assets and generate benefits for all by placing the area at the forefront of internationally recognised destinations.

Many of the key stakeholders in the Lake District have already invested in the process of World Heritage Site inscription. Two previous bids were deferred in 1986 and 1989, which culminated in a review of the inscription criteria in 1993 and the creation of a new category of site – Cultural Landscape.

An initial steering group has been meeting and progressing the intelligence-base required for a third application for some three years. Two reports have been commissioned to assess the potential for a World Heritage Site: 'The Study of Cultural Landscape Significance' 2002 and 'An Objective Appraisal of the Impact of WHS Inscription of the Lake District' 2004.

A detailed mapping exercise has been undertaken using Geographical Information System (GIS) data sets. Considerable staff time and resources have already been invested in bringing the partnership together and working towards a third bid for World Heritage inscription.

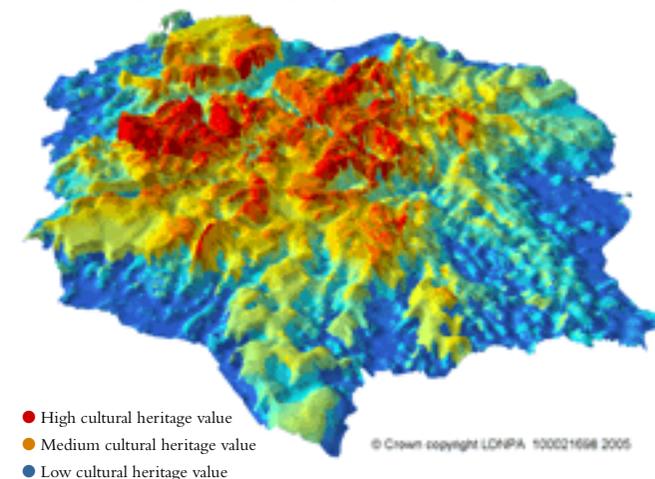
Extensive work carried out by the Lake District World Heritage Site Steering Group has established that a robust case can be made

for inscription in line with the World Heritage Committee's criteria for Cultural Landscape. The intelligence-base for this assessment has been further boosted by a Technical Working Group which has identified a potential World Heritage Site boundary and buffer zone both lying within the National Park boundary, using a programme of (GIS) modelling.

Despite this, the work required to 'make the case' for World Heritage Site inscription is far from over, but the groundwork and intellectual rigour are being taken forward to make a strong and compelling bid.

Cultural Heritage Map – Work in Progress

Indicative map of cultural heritage depth throughout the Lake District.



Support for World Heritage

The notion of World Heritage inscription already has the support of many key stakeholders in the area, but understandably there are challenges to be resolved as the process moves forward.

Despite the potential benefits, there remain concerns amongst local stakeholders and organisations within Cumbria that World Heritage may fail to deliver tangible benefits to the area. These concerns appear to stem mainly from fears over increased bureaucracy, increased regulation or doubts that WHS inscription will address wider social and economic issues in Cumbria.

It is clear that World Heritage is not a panacea for an area's economic or social ills; it is, however, an opportunity to join an exclusive global community that is taking positive steps to manage and maintain the very best of our planet's cultural landscape assets. If managed appropriately, **inscription would not create barriers or blocks to further development or progress; indeed it should provide a catalyst for economic growth.**

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World Heritage status would not supplant other efforts to regenerate or improve Cumbria; it is an additional tool to enhance and re-energise those efforts.

At a more local level, the advantages are there to be built upon and exploited. From hotels, guest houses and the leisure industry to local food suppliers, manufacturers and retailers, World Heritage inscription would provide a new and exclusive key selling point; a valuable asset in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

As the jewel of Cumbria, the Lake District already has the market potential to support the revival of Cumbria as a whole. World Heritage status can also become an income generator in its own right, as illustrated in Liverpool (inscribed in 2004) where the work of the project officer helped to draw in £4.5 million of public subsidy, which has been more than matched by the private sector.

If embraced with conviction and energy, World Heritage status could provide a powerful catalyst for change, an opportunity to determine the future of the Lake District and to set a new benchmark that sees the area's management as a genuine fusion between conservation and sustainable economic progress. The Lake District as a living embodiment of an environmental economy – a new heritage for future generations.

What happens next

The World Heritage Site inscription process is detailed and extensive, taking some years to achieve. The timetable includes the development of a co-ordinating partnership, the drafting of a statement of significance, management plan and inscription document, a period of wide ranging consultation, followed by the submission and evaluation of the nomination itself.

The immediate step is to develop an active partnership to take the bid forward. This partnership will be responsible for putting the case to Government through a submission to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The final decision on the nomination rests with the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee and their chosen advisory bodies.

There is no guarantee that the bid, if submitted, would be successful. What is clear is that the Lake District is an iconic cultural landscape which combines spectacular natural features with the unique heritage of human settlement. Sharing these assets within a global community under the auspices of World Heritage is the natural place for such wonders to be found.

For further information

For further information or to comment on this paper please contact in the first instance:

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