

**ICOMOS-UK PRESS RELEASE – 08.03.2007**

**The IMPLICATIONS of**

**THE HERITAGE PROTECTION REVIEW WHITE PAPER**

**for the UKs WORLD HERITAGE SITES**

ICOMOS-UK warmly welcomes the news that World Heritage sites (WHSs) are to be given statutory protection in the planning system in order to control development within sites and their settings, and to ensure there is no erosion of value over time; this is part of updating planning policy to strengthen WHSs in the planning system. We also welcome the announcement that specific call-in notifications will be introduced for significant developments affecting WHSs and that WHSs will, where appropriate, be given Buffer Zones.

ICOMOS-UK, with many other organisations, has become increasingly concerned in recent years about threats to some UK WHSs from inappropriate tall buildings, from new development that is not of sufficiently high quality, and from the lack of formal protection of some areas within inscribed sites, which has led to erosion of detail and in some places the demolition of significant buildings.

**The measures set out in the White Paper are a significant step forward to address these issues and we look forward to learning how they will be built on and consolidated.**

The White Paper sets out (para 55) the intention to include WHSs as Article 1(5) land under the Town and Country Planning Order 1995. This means they will be equivalent in planning terms to other protected areas such as conservation areas, National Parks and AONBs. However, although the White Paper suggests (para 55) that in such areas permitted development rights are more restricted (and would it is said preclude changes such as artificial stone cladding or dormer windows), we would welcome further details on how these constraints might be put into effect.

**ICOMOS-UK considers that clarification is therefore needed on how protection will be strengthened in WHSs through satisfactory and sufficient controls being put in place to resist adverse cumulative change.**

We welcome the intention to update planning policy to strengthen consideration of WHS in the planning system (para 53) and the new Planning Circular which is a revision of part of PPG 15. This planning circular is said by the White Paper (para 54) to recognise in national policy the need to protect WHSs and to make ‘more prominent’ the need to create

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management plans and ‘where needed’ buffer zones, and to clarify the impact of Design and Access Statements in relation to WHSs.

The Planning Circular does not set out how WHSs will be linked in planning terms to Local Development Frameworks nor is anything mentioned on Buffer Zones or Design and Access Statements. ICOMOS-UK considers that clarification is needed on all of these and in particular on the creation of, and protection for, Buffer Zones in line with the World Heritage Operational Guidelines, 2005.

Measures to review call-in directions for specific development affecting WHSs, (para 53) are strongly welcomed by ICOMOS-UK and long overdue and should make a crucial difference to the protection of urban WHSs in particular. However for this measure to be effective, it is essential that the setting of WHSs is adequately identified and protected in part of whole by a Buffer Zone, in order that the impact of development on WHSs and their setting can be rigorously appraised.

**The UK's 24 WHSs deserve the highest level of national protection in order that the UK Government may fulfil its obligations under the World Heritage Convention, 1972 to ensure the '*identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations*' of their Outstanding Universal Value, as part of the heritage of mankind as a whole.**

**The White Paper acknowledges (para 52) the need to strengthen current protection in WHSs: ICOMOS-UK looks forward to learning precisely how increased protection for WHSs and their settings will be put into effect, in order to give much greater certainty to all who are tasked with managing and protecting the UK's WHSs.**

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