

Making Sense of Our Sites



UK UNESCO World Heritage Youth Summit 2009

On 22 May 2009, over 60 young people came together for a UK UNESCO World Heritage Youth Summit in Lyme Regis, Dorset. The event formed part of the Making Sense of Our Sites programme, a new initiative, jointly funded by the UK National Commission for UNESCO, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Jurassic Coast. Making Sense of Our Sites will support UK World Heritage Sites to communicate messages of World Heritage effectively to formal education audiences.

The Youth Summit participants were selected through a nationwide competition, where they were invited to submit entries that expressed how they felt about their local World Heritage Site. The winning entries included a selection of poems, short films and posters which communicated a real sense of pride and place about World Heritage in the UK today. 11 different

Sites¹ from Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and one overseas territory, Bermuda, were represented by youth delegations at the event.

The Youth Summit was a unique opportunity for young people to discuss their views and visions on the conservation of World Heritage Sites and how they can effectively engage young people who live near them. The event was opened by Professor Walter Erdelen, Assistant-Director General for UNESCO (Natural Sciences) who reiterated the importance of involving young people in UNESCO's work.

One of the key outcomes of the Youth Summit was an innovative and informative podcast to help inform the World Heritage community, on local, national and international levels, about how and why they should be managing World Heritage Sites for future generations.

¹ Blaenavon Industrial Landscape; Historic Town of St George and Related Fortifications, Bermuda; St Kilda's; Dorset and East Devon Coast; Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast; Frontiers of the Roman Empire; Stonehenge, Avebury, and Associated Sites; City of Bath; Darwins Landscape Laboratory (Site on the Tentative List); Lake District (Site on the Tentative List); Chatham and Naval Dockyard (Site on the Tentative List)

As part of the programme, the young people were asked to share their thoughts about the event and the challenges World Heritage Sites face:



"One thing I could say is that I think we should have a big community meeting where everyone could get together and not just one person makes ideas but everyone comes together"



"There needs to be a balance between protecting an area and sustaining its special atmosphere"



"It just made us more aware of how we can take action at home and how we can make a difference"



"Preserving natural beauty and protecting places of culture is important to sustain a special atmosphere world heritage sites possess"

"I would say that we should probably stop global warming for starters because that would just mean that we wouldn't have to die!"

"I think we need to preserve our heritage sites so that not only we can enjoy them, but future generations to come"

"The unique and special heritage sites need to be protected for future generations to keep a link with the past and enable sustainable development for the future"

