

PRESS RELEASE For Immediate Release

UK National Commission for UNESCO Welcomes Publication of the Draft Heritage Protection Bill

London, UK – 7 April 2008. The UK National Commission for UNESCO welcomes the Draft Heritage Protection Bill published last week as a major step towards a single system in the safeguarding and management of the UK's historic places. The draft Bill sets out the primary legislation required to implement the proposals in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Heritage Protection for the 21st Century White Paper (March 2007).

Sue Davies, Chair of the Commission's Culture Committee, noted, "The draft Heritage Bill is a welcome step towards the protection and management of historic places in the UK. Particularly encouraging for us is statutory recognition of World Heritage Sites for the first time and the proposals for greater public and community involvement in heritage protection."

"Like any other instrument, the draft Bill will not be able to achieve its purpose without sufficient resources to implement it. The Commission shares the concern of heritage sector colleagues over funding, training and local authority capacity in the draft Bill's implementation. The Commission urges the Government to ensure adequate support and resourcing, including public education and outreach, in an implementation programme based on wide engagement with all stakeholders."

The Commission's Culture Committee will be monitoring and examining the draft Bill in its development phase before its introduction in the 2008-9 Parliamentary session and looks forward to collaborating with Government and heritage sector colleagues.

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Notes to Editors

For further information, please contact Ian White at the UK National Commission on 020 7766 3492 or iwhite@unesco.org.uk.

- **The UK National Commission for UNESCO** is an independent civil society organisation set up by HM Government in 2004 as the focal point in the UK for policies relating to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). The Commission brings together a network of over 200 experts from across the UK in education, culture, natural & social sciences and communication & information. By working closely in partnership with HM Government, the Commission enables it to engage a wide range of UK organisations and specialist institutions in the above fields.

The Commission's Culture Committee has 20 volunteer members, nominated by organisations across the spectrum of the culture sector, including the arts, museums and cultural heritage. The Committee aims at being the formal link between civil society, relevant HM Government departments and UNESCO on matters relating to all aspects of culture; advising and working with HM Government on UNESCO's cultural activities which have specific relevance to the UK including UNESCO requests and initiatives, Conventions, World Heritage Sites matters, and cultural education; and providing independent and expert analysis to HMG on cultural matters relating to UNESCO, including as input to UK policy-making on key UNESCO programmes and cultural issues.

- Read more about the **Draft Heritage Protection Bill** on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) website: http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications/archive_2008/pub_drafthpb.htm
- **The Heritage Protection for the 21st Century White Paper (March 2007):** Promoting a more coherent and holistic approach to our heritage, the proposed new system would unite for the first time landscapes, archaeology, monuments, parks and gardens, battlefields, world heritage sites, buildings and their settings and marine heritage in a new 'super register', the Register of Historic Sites and Buildings for England (RHSBE). It would restore Conservation Area protection to pre 1997 levels. It would introduce protection for locally important heritage assets; new marine protection zones (MPZs) and new Heritage Partnership Agreements. Altogether the measures aim to strip out bureaucracy and duplication, demystify the listing procedure and make the heritage protection system fairer and more accessible.

For a list of the main changes proposed by the Heritage White Paper see www.helm.org.uk/server/show/nav.11237

- The concept of **World Heritage Sites** is at the core of the World Heritage Convention, adopted by UNESCO in 1972. The UK ratified the Convention in 1984 and presently has 24 World Heritage Sites (27 if including Sites in Overseas Territories).