

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 16 NOVEMBER 2006

WORLD HERITAGE SITE STATUS FOR THE NEW FOREST

Report by: Stephen Trotter, Director of Conservation and Enhancement
Lindsay Cornish, Chief Executive

Summary:

This paper outlines the issues involved and the process by which the New Forest might secure the United Kingdom nomination to become a World Heritage Site.

Recommendation:

That members consider which of options A, B or C they wish officers to pursue.

Resources and Corporate Plan:

The potential total cost of preparing a full application – a significant proportion of which would fall to the Authority – could be circa £350,000 plus significant officer time. Further work to assess the feasibility of proceeding with an application could cost the Authority around £15,000 and 30–40 days of officer time. No budget provision has been made for this work.

Corporate Plan objective C1: Develop strategies and support schemes to help sustain agriculture and promote thriving commoning activity that is in keeping with the New Forest National Park.

Papers:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| NFNPA 141/06: | Cover paper |
| NFNPA 141/06: | Annex 1 – Criteria for inscription as a World Heritage Site |
| NFNPA 141/06: | Annex 2 – UK properties inscribed on the World Heritage List |
| NFNPA 141/06: | Annex 3 – Responses and views on World Heritage Site status |

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Summary:

This paper outlines the process by which the New Forest might secure the United Kingdom nomination to become a World Heritage Site.

1 Background

- 1.1 World Heritage Sites are 'inscribed' by the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). UNESCO also maintains the global register of sites.
- 1.2 UNESCO seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world through the Convention on World Heritage which was adopted in 1972.
- 1.3 The New Forest Committee successfully campaigned to have the New Forest included on the United Kingdom's tentative list of potential UNESCO World Heritage Sites. However, since the area was added to the list of prospective nominees in 1999, an application to secure the UK nomination has not been pursued.
- 1.4 Having initially led activity in this area, Hampshire County Council now want to pass responsibility for leading and developing any potential bid to the New Forest National Park Authority.
- 1.5 The UK 'tentative' list is managed for the Government by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport with the support and advice of English Heritage. A consultation and review of the names remaining on the current tentative list is likely to be announced in the near future.
- 1.6 As only one nomination is made to UNESCO each year and there is pressure for new sites to be included on the list as part of the review, it is now appropriate for the Authority to review whether the New Forest wishes to commit to securing a nomination for World Heritage Site status by seeking to remain on the tentative list.

- 1.7 If there is neither the commitment nor the resources to pursue the nomination, then it follows that the New Forest should withdraw from the tentative list. The opportunity to seek nomination would then be closed off until the next review – which might be in ten years' time.

2 World Heritage Sites

- 2.1 World Heritage Sites are places that are judged to be of 'outstanding universal value' because of their pristine natural environments and / or their exceptional cultural importance. As such they are recognised internationally and inscribed on a register by the United Nations.
- 2.2 World Heritage Sites are considered to be of universal application – and are therefore said to 'belong' to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located.
- 2.3 Inscription does not bring any additional direct funding for the management of a site.
- 2.4 Nor does World Heritage Site status confer any extra legislation or new powers to protect a site apart from a requirement for all statutory organisations to have due regard to the conservation needs of a world heritage site in undertaking their activities. This includes the local planning authorities which would need to develop adequate policies and plans to protect the World Heritage Site. This requirement is very similar to the Section 62 duties on relevant bodies imposed by the Environment Act 1995 in relation to the National Park designation. Indeed it could be argued that Section 62 might be more effective because of the associated monitoring and reporting requirements on national park authorities and Natural England.
- 2.5 The United Nations World Heritage Committee expects the host nation to take all necessary steps to ensure that the important features and special qualities of the area can be passed intact to future generations.
- 2.6 The criteria for inscription as a World Heritage Site are listed in **Annex 1**.
- 2.7 The New Forest would appear to satisfy the criteria for either a cultural landscape or a mixed site of outstanding universal value, on the grounds of the area's unique pastoral landscape, its rich archaeology, biodiversity, continuity of management, historic documentation and its commoning system. The UK tentative list recommends inclusion of the New Forest under:
- UNESCO cultural landscape category (ii)
 - UNESCO cultural criteria (iii) and (v)
 - UNESCO natural criteria (iii) and (iv).

- 2.8 There are more than 800 World Heritage Sites of which 27 are in the UK. A list of World Heritage Sites in the UK is provided in **Annex 2**.
- 2.9 A number of other sites accepted onto the tentative list in 1999 have already been inscribed. These include the Dorset and East Devon Jurassic Coast and the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape site. The Lake District National Park is also actively seeking inscription and the world Heritage Committee has twice deferred a decision on inscription so that the categories could be changed to reflect the nature of their site.

3 The inscription process

- 3.1 The World Heritage Committee meets once a year to consider applications for designation. The process is highly selective as the Committee reserves the honour of inscription for sites of truly global significance.
- 3.2 Nominations to UNESCO are made by national governments (in the UK this is done by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport) and they can only propose one site per year from the UK.
- 3.3 Potential nominees first have to be on the 'tentative' list of UK sites. The New Forest has been on this list since 1999.
- 3.4 The prospective World Heritage Site must prepare the detailed documentation and evidence to support their bid. This usually takes 12-24 months. The list of supporting documentation required is provided in **Table 1 of Annex 1**.
- 3.5 Once the bid is sent to the World Heritage Committee it usually takes a further 18 months for the judgement to be made.
- 3.6 The application process is a long one; the estimated period – from making an initial decision to submit a bid through to completion - would probably be around two to four years. A diagram summarising the likely process that a bid would need to follow is outlined in **Figure 1 of Annex 1**.
- 3.7 A bid would need to be coordinated and overseen by a partnership of core stakeholders, with the National Park Authority probably taking the lead role.
- 3.8 There seem to be a number of common elements and features that good bids share and which are essential for a successful outcome. These include being able to demonstrate:
- an active partnership of core stakeholders who are strongly committed and prepared to contribute both in-kind and financial support

- a wide base of community support for and involvement with the project
- the support and involvement of Government bodies for the area's nomination.

4 Resources required to make an application

4.1 The total resource requirement to prepare a bid is difficult to determine at this stage. However, based on the experience of the Lake District (having made two applications) and Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape (successfully inscribed in 2006) a financial commitment of **around £350,000** might be needed to meet the UNESCO World Heritage Committee requirements. The successful Liverpool Waterfront application (inscribed in 2004) cost in excess of £400,000 to prepare. None of these figures include contributions of *in-kind support* from partner organisations. This funding would be needed to cover the costs of:

- employing project staff to manage and coordinate the process
- public consultation and partnership development
- employing consultants to undertake further research and development
- producing a World Heritage Site management plan
- writing and producing the nomination documents.

4.2 The precise funding requirement is difficult to forecast because of the uncertainty over the extent to which existing information would be adequate to support a bid and would simply require collation into the format required. A more detailed gap analysis would need to be made as part of any project planning and feasibility assessment (see Figure 1). It is also unclear whether the National Park Management Plan, currently in preparation, would meet the requirement of a World Heritage Site Management Plan. Both these factors could help to reduce the overall cost, although the Lake District still estimate their costs will be £350,000 in spite of having prepared bids previously and completed their National Park Management Plan.

4.3 A common feature of other successful UK sites appears to be that they have employed a small dedicated project team to manage the application process and deliver a bid on time and to budget. This would be necessary in the New Forest and a unit of one or two additional staff would be needed; working to a partnership steering group for the duration of the process (i.e. on two to three year contracts). The National Park Authority would probably host the employment arrangements of the Unit.

4.4 At present there are no current or future Authority funds identified for the preparation of a World Heritage Site application and thus far no indications of significant contributions from other core stakeholders.

5 Potential benefits of World Heritage status – general

5.1 Many of the potential benefits of World Heritage status are very similar to those arising from National Park designation. The main benefits are:

- i) Increased recognition, status and an international profile for an area.
- ii) Belonging to an international community of appreciation and concern for universally significant places.
- iii) Increased responsibilities on statutory bodies and associated increase in political awareness. *This duplicates or may be weaker than Section 62 powers relating to the National Park.*
- iv) The economic benefits associated with the potential for increased international and national tourism arising from the higher profile of the area, coupled with further potential impetus to encourage a more sustainable and 'green' approach to tourism. *(Similar to National Park status.)*
- v) The potential to secure additional external funds for conservation projects. Experience from elsewhere suggests that World Heritage Site status can help attract external funding for conservation work.
- vi) Encourages participation by the local population in the preservation of their heritage, *as does National Park designation.*
- vii) Possible promotion of increased research and study of an area – leading to better knowledge and understanding of the site, *as with National Park status.*
- viii) The requirement for a comprehensive management plan, *as with National Park designation.*
- ix) The possibility for additional international pressure to be brought to bear on national governments to address any threats to the integrity of a site. For example, recent attention has been focussed on inappropriate development at the Tower of London and Liverpool Waterfront, and inappropriate and damaging levels of tourism.

6 Specific benefits for the New Forest

- 6.1 Designation might strengthen long term protection to the whole of the “New Forest” – if the boundary of the site extended beyond the National Park to include those areas that are historically and culturally within the New Forest landscape.
- 6.2 Designation could also help to secure the New Forest’s pastoral economy by raising the profile of the importance of the undeveloped Southampton and Solent coastal area and other agricultural areas surrounding the Park to the north and west. World Heritage Site status would identify these areas as having special significance and formally recognise that they are an intrinsic part of the New Forest.
- 6.3 Designation might bring overt recognition of the international importance of the cultural heritage of the New Forest. There is a perception in the Forest that the administrative arrangements and focus of current designations give a high priority and profile to the natural environment and landscape. For example, the area is well covered by European wildlife designations but little that officially recognises the value of commoning. The designation of the New Forest as a ‘cultural landscape of outstanding universal value’ could address this imbalance and raise the profile of cultural heritage amongst statutory bodies, stakeholders and the public. National Park designation does of course recognise the importance of protecting the cultural heritage within the National Park. However all of these potential advantages are critically dependent on the approved boundary and there is no guarantee that UNESCO would want it drawn any more widely than the National Park or could even look to a smaller area within it.
- 6.4 Designation might help to create a comprehensive database of cultural heritage features and provide a coherent picture of the cultural landscape as a whole. It would help to strengthen respect for the cultural identity of the New Forest. However, this is likely to be an expensive and time consuming task; one of the fundamental core costs of preparing a bid.

7 Potential disadvantages of World Heritage Site status

- 7.1 The application process is very demanding of time and resources which would require significant financial investment from the Authority and core partners against an uncertain outcome. As the lead partner, the Authority can expect to carry the largest share of the project costs.
- 7.2 There is a strong probability that World Heritage Site status could result in an increase in visitor pressure particularly from national and international tourism. Although the experience of other Sites on this issue is mixed, there is a perception that this can add to problems in areas that are already under pressure. This risk would need to be

assessed for the New Forest and a strategy to avoid / mitigate the impacts would need to be agreed before any bid is pursued.

- 7.3 A Management Plan is required to demonstrate to UNESCO how the proposed World Heritage Site will be managed to preserve its special features. It is unclear whether the National Park Management Plan will meet UNESCO requirements for a Management Plan and this might complicate or delay the existing strategic policy processes.
- 7.4 Inscription would bring only limited added value in terms of extra protection above and beyond the existing designations, although it could strengthen recognition of the New Forest's cultural heritage, and protection might be extended to a larger area than the National Park.
- 7.5 The National Park and other stakeholders have other more pressing priorities at present. It is also not clear that there would be widespread support for inscription from local communities, statutory bodies and stakeholders, many of whom already believe the area has as many designations as it needs.

Table 2: A summary of the pros and cons of World Heritage Site status

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| Prestige and raised profile internationally | Another designation to deal with |
| Membership of an international community of appreciation and concern for places of universal significance | Very limited extra protection above and beyond existing designations |
| Could help secure additional funding for conservation projects | The application process is long and very expensive – requiring funding and other resources and could be a major distraction on officer time |
| Could increase economic benefits from tourism | A probable increase in visitor pressure |
| Further research and study – and better knowledge and understanding | Added complexity in the number of Plans, complicating and possibly delaying the National Park Management Plan process |
| Protection for areas that are outside the National Park boundary but which are historically and culturally part of the New Forest landscape | |
| Recognition of the cultural heritage and identity of the New Forest | |

8 The boundary of a potential World Heritage Site in the New Forest

- 8.1 This issue has not yet been addressed and would need careful consideration as part of any public consultation. The original application to join the tentative list in 1999 used the New Forest Heritage Area, as defined by the New Forest Committee, as the basis for a World Heritage Site.

9 Discussion

- 9.1 The New Forest appears on the face of it to be a good candidate for inscription and this would be a compliment of the highest order reflecting very positively on the input over many years from a range of organisations to sustaining the Forest's special character. However, there is no guarantee that the New Forest, in competition with other sites, would secure the UK nomination nor is there certainty of success should an application be made to the World Heritage Committee.
- 9.2 Designation brings only limited additional and real benefits to the conservation and enhancement of the New Forest while undoubtedly raising the status and profile of the area, particularly in the international arena.
- 9.3 It is by no means clear that there is or will be a wide base of strong support for the bid amongst key partners and the local community, without which any bid would founder. Initial soundings suggest some support but most of the informal views received could at best be categorised as indifferent through to strongly negative (from some key and influential partners). Based on several direct responses and the oral feedback received at the Consultative Panel (summarised in **Annex 3**), a considerable amount of work would be necessary, and even then might not be sufficient to win, enough political support to make any bid convincing.
- 9.4 There are major resource implications and a decision to proceed with a bid could divert significant staff time and energy away from other priorities for the Authority and its partners in the New Forest. Currently there is no financial provision in the Authority's budget nor any prospect of finding the likely sums needed without switching much of the currently available discretionary funding out of current programmes deemed to be high priority in the Corporate Plan.
- 9.5 The Authority should only seek to remain on the tentative list if it is genuinely committed to pursuing World Heritage Site status. It must consider carefully whether the potential resource cost is affordable at all and, if so, whether sums and staff endeavour on the likely scale set out are justified by the benefits, or better devoted to the activities set out in the Corporate Plan, particularly at this relatively early stage in the Authority and National Park's development.

- 9.6 We understand that the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's expectation is that the size of the tentative list will be reduced as part of the review. If the Authority chooses to stay on the list but takes no action to develop a bid it could potentially block the chances of other worthwhile candidates. Moreover, we also understand that the Department would expect sites on the tentative list to "be actively working towards the production of a Nomination Document and Management Plan".
- 9.7 The Authority has three options:
- A withdraw the New Forest from the UK tentative list of World Heritage Sites;
 - B remain on the UK tentative list but not actively pursue nomination at this stage, subject to the views of the Department of Media Culture and Sport;
 - C remain on the UK tentative list and prepare a project plan that would assess the feasibility of securing the UK nomination in a few years time. This initial phase would involve securing the necessary financial resources and assessing the level of support from other potential partners for the New Forest to proceed with a serious application under the leadership of the Authority.
- 9.8 **Option A** would send a clear message about the Authority's intention not to be distracted from its approved Corporate Plan. But this risks closing the door for say ten years before the option of going back on the list could be pursued. In making such a decision the Authority would need to re-assert its wholehearted commitment to the conservation and enhancement of the National Park, making it clear that it believes that this is better achieved by different means. This does not rule out seeking re-nomination in the longer term and once the benefits of national park designation are sufficiently tangible to provide the basis for a real comparison with the benefits of World Heritage designation.
- 9.9 **Option B** is in effect the 'do nothing' option which would postpone the decision to some future point. This leaves options open for a later date but if the Authority has no real prospect of finding the resources to complete a bid, and is uncertain about the level of local political support, it could be criticised for being disingenuous. The Department for Media, Culture and Sport could remove the New Forest from the list during the review if it doubts the New Forest's real commitment.
- 9.10 **Option C** would keep the door open but at the cost of some commitment of funding and staff time in further work to prepare a feasibility and development study. It is estimated that this might cost around £15,000 (in terms of research, consultation and small consultancy projects) and 30 – 40 days of officer time to put together. No funds have been allocated to such a project in this year's budget.

Recommendation:

That members consider which of options A, B or C they wish officers to pursue.

Criteria for inscription as a World Heritage Site

To qualify for inscription on the World Heritage List, nominated properties must have values that are outstanding and universal. *The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* provide guidance to the World Heritage Committee in deciding which nominations should be included on the List. These Guidelines state that nominations should be based on cultural, natural and/or mixed cultural and natural criteria

Cultural heritage

The World Heritage Convention defines cultural heritage as:

“MONUMENTS: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

GROUPS OF BUILDINGS: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

SITES: works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view.”

Cultural Landscapes represent the “combined works of nature and of man” They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal. Cultural landscapes include diverse examples of the interaction between humans and the natural environment and fall into three main categories:

- i) the clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man;
- ii) the organically evolved landscape; and
- iii) the associative cultural landscape.

For a property to be included on the World Heritage List as cultural heritage, the World Heritage Committee must find that it meets one or more of the following criteria, the test of authenticity and be adequately protected. Sites nominated should therefore:

- i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; or
- ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in

- architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design; or
- iii) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared; or
- iv) be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; or
- v) be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement or land-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; or
- vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance (the Committee considers that this criterion should justify inclusion in the List only in exceptional circumstances and in conjunction with other criteria cultural or natural);

Natural criteria

The World Heritage Convention, defines natural heritage:

- i) “natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;
- ii) geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;
- iii) natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.”

For a property to be included on the World Heritage list as natural heritage, the World Heritage Committee must find that it meets one or more of the following criteria and fulfils the conditions of integrity. Sites nominated should therefore:

- i) be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features; or
- ii) be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals; or
- iii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance; or
- iv) contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

(A more detailed description of World Heritage natural and cultural criteria can be found in: UNESCO. Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. World Heritage Centre.

This document can be found in full at the World Heritage Centre web site at <http://www.unesco.org/whc/nwhc/pages/doc/main.htm>

Figure 1
The process

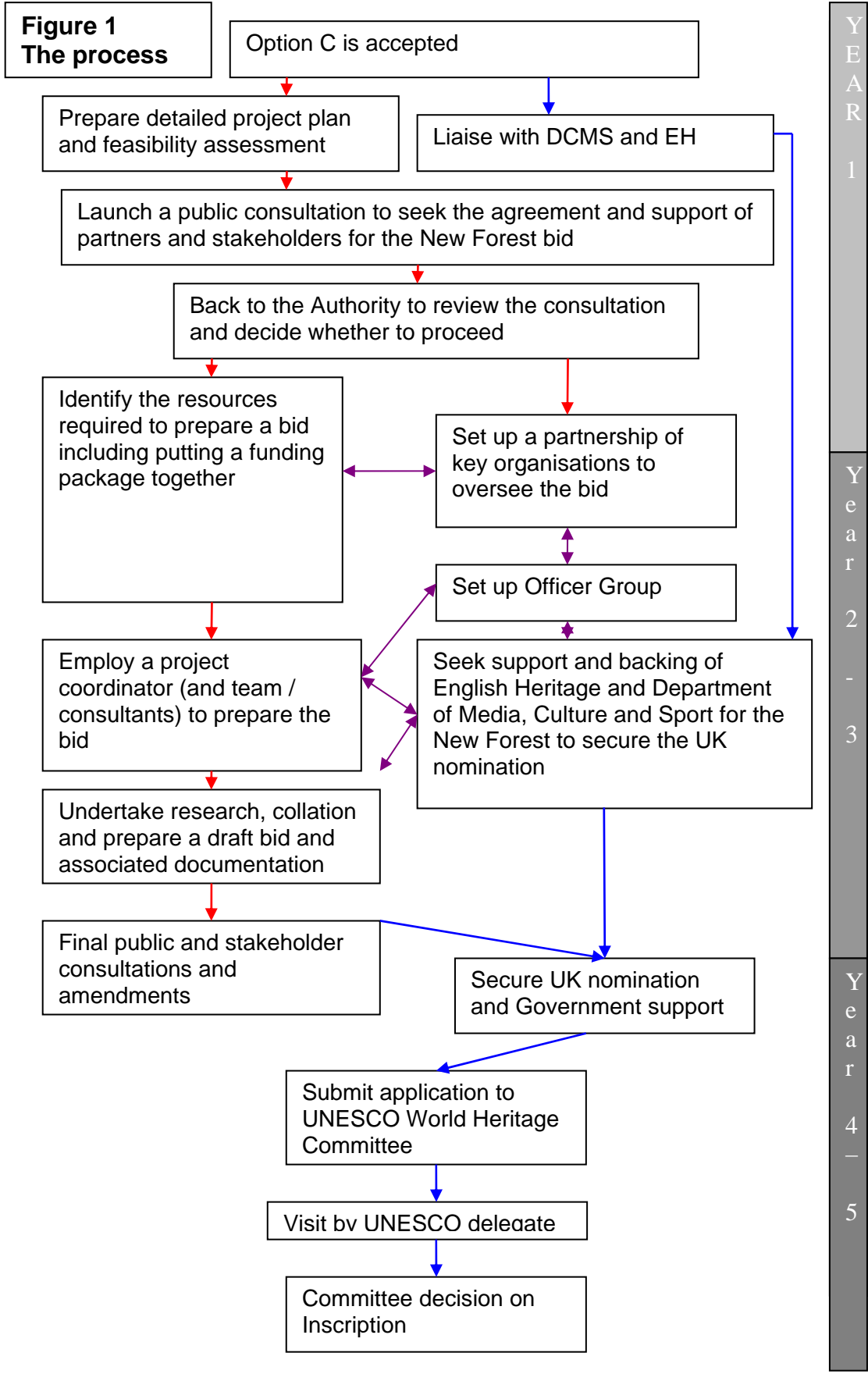


Table 1: Documentation required for a bid

| |
|--|
| Site selection criteria |
| Identification of the property |
| Statements of significance |
| History of the site |
| Physical characteristics |
| A comparative analysis |
| Assurance of Authenticity and integrity |
| Management Plan |
| Factors affecting the site |
| Monitoring arrangements |
| List of references and documentation in support of the bid |

UK Properties inscribed on the World Heritage List:

Cultural

- Blaenavon Industrial Landscape (2000)
- Blenheim Palace (1987)
- Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey, and St Martin's Church (1988)
- Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd (1986)
- City of Bath (1987)
- Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape (2006)
- Derwent Valley Mills (2001)
- Durham Castle and Cathedral (1986)
- Frontiers of the Roman Empire (1987)
- Heart of Neolithic Orkney (1999)
- Historic Town of St George and Related Fortifications, Bermuda (2000)
- Ironbridge Gorge (1986)
- Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City (2004)
- Maritime Greenwich (1997)
- New Lanark (2001)
- Old and New Towns of Edinburgh (1995)
- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (2003)
- Saltaire (2001)
- Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites (1986)
- Studley Royal Park including the Ruins of Fountains Abbey (1986)
- Tower of London (1988)
- Westminster Palace, Westminster Abbey and Saint Margaret's Church (1987)

Natural

- Dorset and East Devon Coast (2001)
- Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast (1986)
- Gough and Inaccessible Islands (1995)
- Henderson Island (1988)

Mixed

- St Kilda (1986)

Properties submitted on the Tentative List

- Gibraltar defences (1996)
- Lake District (1996)
- Chatham Naval Dockyard (1999)
- Darwin's Home and Workplace: Down House and Environs (1999)
- Manchester and Salford (Ancoats, Castlefield and Worsley) (1999)
- Monkwearmouth and Jarrow Monastic Sites (1999)
- The New Forest (1999)
- The Great Western Railway: Paddington-Bristol (selected parts) (1999)
- Shakespeare's Stratford (1999)
- The Cairngorm Mountains (1999)
- The Flow Country (1999)
- The Forth Rail Bridge (1999)
- Pont-Cysyllte Aqueduct (1999)
- Mount Stewart Gardens (1999)
- Fountain Cavern, Anguilla (1999)
- The Wash and North Norfolk Coast (1999)
- Frontiers of the Roman Empire: Antonine Wall (2006)

Responses and views on World Heritage Site Status:

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| National Trust | No detailed view either way but they would be concerned about the cost-effectiveness of the process when there are so many other calls on funding at the moment |
| NFU | NFU not in favour of World Heritage Site designation as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ it does not fit their idea of deregulation and minimising bureaucracy ▪ feel we have enough on our agenda in the New Forest as it is ▪ question over the resources bearing in mind the likely outcomes of the comprehensive spending review ▪ the area is already well protected ▪ worries about drawing more people to the area |
| Verderers of the New Forest | Not in favour of World Heritage Site designation due to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cost ▪ no tangible benefits ▪ increased visitor pressure ▪ money could be better spent elsewhere |
| New Forest Consultative Panel | Mixed views |
| Forestry Commission | While recognising some of the benefits, the Commission is not convinced that the time is right for the Forest to proceed with a serious application to become a World Heritage Site. The resource implications of a bid at this time in the establishment of the National Park seem to outweigh the benefits that would accrue from designation and would detract from other work and priorities. We would therefore favour your Option A at this time – to withdraw from the tentative list – but would not wish to rule out seeking re-nomination in the longer term. |