

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

## Background

- 1.1 The Lake District is on the Government's tentative list of possible future World Heritage Site nominations. The process for submitting World Heritage nominations has become more selective in recent years and this country now expects to take forward only one proposal annually. The Lake District is in the fortunate position of having been nominated before and is therefore considered as a re-nomination that can be submitted at any time (DCMS 1999).
- 1.2 In many ways this is a flagship nomination. It was the Lake District's submission as a World Heritage Site that highlighted the shortcomings of the existing criteria and led to the creation of a new World Heritage category for Cultural Landscape Sites in 1993 (see 1.8 below). The re-nomination of the Lake District as a Cultural Landscape will be breaking new ground in applying the World Heritage criteria to the associative significances of the region - for its links with an outstanding literary and creative tradition, from Wordsworth to the present day, and for its central place in the growth of the conservation movement. It will also need to take into account the Lake District's continuing life as an evolving and actively used landscape (Denyer 2001). There has to be a balance between respect for its strong, distinctive culture and the natural assets of the environment, and the need to foster sustainable economic and social change for people who live, work and visit there.
- 1.3 If the nomination is successful, the area could become one of the largest and most complex of World Heritage Sites and the first World Heritage Cultural Landscape Site in England. It will need to be supported by the development of a Management Plan that reflects the interests of all the main parties involved in different aspects of the Lake District's landscape: farmers and local businesses, planning authorities and tourist organisations, environmental organisations and amenity groups, residents and visitors.
- 1.4 The vision for the World Heritage Site Plan needs to be based upon broad agreement among all these stakeholders on:
  - what matters about the Lake District's landscape in terms of its universal significance
  - how those outstanding universal qualities can be sustained
  - how inscription as a World Heritage Site can work to benefit the social, economic and environmental needs of the Lake District
- 1.5 Following a meeting of interested parties in October 2001, a Steering Group was set up to investigate these issues, to develop the dialogue among interested partners and initiate further work to advance the project. The **Lake District World Heritage Site Steering Group** currently includes representatives of the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature, the Forestry Authority, the Lake District National Park Authority, the National Trust, and ICOMOS-UK. Its membership will be reviewed in the light of the consultation that has taken place during this study.

- 1.6 This project forms the first phase of the study to support and take forward the proposed re-nomination of the Lake District as a cultural landscape. The study will be carried out in three phases:
- i. analysis stage of cultural landscape significance's
  - ii. Consensus building between stakeholders on what needs to be managed
  - iii. Defining the rationale for the management plan
- 1.7 The overall aim of this first phase of analysis is to assess how the World Heritage definition on cultural landscapes applies to the Lake District. The specific aims are to consider and assess:
- the significance of the Lake District cultural landscape measured against the World Heritage criteria
  - evidence for and definition of associative significances and significances of the natural world
  - the 'universal value' of these significances
  - the vulnerability of significant elements in the cultural landscape and the development of indicators for managing sustainable change.

## Previous nominations

- 1.8 The Lake District was nominated for inscription in 1986 and again in 1989. On both occasions, the nomination was deferred. This has given rise to misunderstanding in some quarters and a perception that the first nominations 'failed'. The history of the nominations is briefly outlined below.
- 1.9 The 1986 proposal of the Lake District as a 'mixed site' was both as a cultural property, under criteria ii. and v., and as a natural property. While the ICOMOS evaluation of the cultural aspects was favourable, the IUCN technical evaluation concluded that there was no significant justification for its acceptance under natural property criteria i. (ongoing geological processes) or iv. (natural habitat for threatened species). It remained open to the possibility of evaluating the site under criteria iii. (exceptional natural beauty). The IUCN report itemised a large number of areas of concern where it required clarification about future management and conservation measures. These included habitat loss, afforestation, agricultural incentives for overstocking, the effects of acid rain, military training activities, the presence nearby of a nuclear power station, active quarrying, the water abstraction industry, 'urban-oriented recreational facilities', motor boat traffic on lakes, use of pesticides and fertilisers, fox-hunting, and industrial expansion (see **Appendix X**).
- 1.10 The joint evaluation of ICOMOS and UICN in 1987 stated that 'les conditions assurant le maintien de l'intégrité de cet site ne sont pas remplies pour le moment, ce qui était souligné dans l'évaluation de l'IUCN', (*the conditions ensuring the maintenance of the integrity of this site are not fulfilled at the moment, as was outlined in the IUCN evaluation*). It encouraged the British authorities to take 'les mesures nécessaires pour que l'état de conservation de cet site soit amélioré' (*the necessary measures in order that the state of conservation of this site*

*would be ameliorated*). In 1989, the Lake District was re-nominated under criteria ii., iii., and v. relating to cultural properties and criteria iii. relating to natural properties. Despite support from ICOMOS, it was deferred once more, apparently again because of the difficulties of evaluating the integrity of the natural element in a cultural landscape, like that of the Lake District, where the natural environment has been substantially changed by human intervention.

- 1.11** The inclusion of cultural landscapes in the World Heritage List in 1993 has gone some way to remedying the difficulty that was encountered in previous nominations. This year's nomination for Kew Gardens will go forward in that category (Whitbourn 2002, 8-9). Elsewhere in the UK, Blaenavon industrial landscape, Wales, was inscribed as a cultural landscape in 2000 and St Kilda's, Scotland, currently inscribed as a natural site, is also in the process of being re-nominated as a 'fossilised' cultural landscape. Given the history of the Lake District's previous nominations, however, particular attention will need to be paid, in the development of the re-nomination proposal and the management plan, to the issues that IUCN identified as matters of concern.

## Methodology

### 1.12 Gathering information and views

- Orientation and initial discussions included visits and contacts with key organisations to raise awareness, to obtain preliminary views and seek information about relevant local research, expertise and initiatives. The attitudes of respondents are presented in Section 2.1 - 2.10.
- A literature review, carried out in parallel, identified key sources in Lancaster University Library, the Armit Library, and the Ruskin Library. The Countryside Agency, Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Tourist Board, DEFRA's Regional Development Service, English Heritage, the National Park Authority and the National Trust Regional Office also provided access to useful information from recent regional research studies.
- Related research projects and programmes were contacted to share experience of this type of landscape assessment and of other world heritage sites.

### 1.13 Scoping and analysis

- The first stage of analysis developed a comprehensive framework to recognise the multi-dimensional benefits that the Lake District's landscape offers, in terms of its social, economic, environmental and cultural resources. The wide-ranging observations gathered in discussion interviews were used to build a 'map' of significant attributes of the Lake District landscape - the particular aspects of the place that add value by providing a flow of benefits. The approach, and the model of environmental-social-economic-cultural groupings, employed here is that commonly used for Quality of Life capital studies (see CAG and Land Use Consultants 2001 and [www.qualityoflifecapital.org.uk](http://www.qualityoflifecapital.org.uk)). It is essentially based on the range of benefits that are necessary for human well being.
- Findings are presented in a series of tables in section 2 (pp. 12 - 17). Balancing each of the identified attributes, in the opposite column, is a

commentary constructed from the comments and reported experience of respondents. It includes views on the vulnerability of each aspect of the Lake District and other issues that are relevant, such as opportunities for growth and change, constraints on change, and knowledge requirements for a better understanding of the process of change.

- The 'mapping' of the benefits of the cultural landscape in this way allows us to identify the key issues around the vulnerability and management of the Lake District landscape in relation to important social and economic factors as well as environmental and cultural considerations.

#### **1.14 Assessment of significance**

- The framework for assessing outstanding significance, presented in Section 4, is based on analysis of respondent views (pp.21-2).
- Four 'key themes' are identified and data sheets have been compiled to support each of these themes. These draw together academic research, published information and expert views. The methodology for the analysis draws on the tried and tested approach to assessment of significance for Conservation Plans (Kerr 1996, Clark 1999) and on English Heritage's recently published good practice guide for Conservation-Based Research and Analysis (CoBRA) (Clark, 2001).
- For each key theme there is a statement of overall significance, followed by summary statements of each significant cultural or natural aspect, with an assessment of its particular significance on a regional/national/international scale, based on published studies, expert opinion and national/international designation.
- The identification of vulnerability and vulnerable aspects is drawn from the earlier stage of analysis. The scale of vulnerability is based on professional judgement using evidence and opinion gathered from discussion interviews and recent studies.

#### **1.15 Universal value**

In the final stage, the key themes are assessed against the UNESCO criteria (UNESCO 1992).

*View at Langdale, John Constable 1806*

