

European Heritage Heads Forum (EHHF) 2-4 June 2010.

Heritage and Tourism: Benefits and risks.

Thank the organisers: For their kind invitation and for giving me the opportunity to make this presentation

I am honoured to be here as a representative of ICOMOS International (where I serve as the President of the Advisory Committee and as President of one of the International Scientific Committees, I am a member of the UK Executive Committee).

I have worked for many years as a technician, a conservator of Heritage places, both standing properties and archaeological sites. My focus has changed to include more theoretical, political and ethical ideas. I work in part, as a consultant to a heritage conservation funding body, Global Heritage Fund, based in California, USA. One of the objectives of this body, who fund in developing countries only, is to balance conservation with community engagement and this is frequently focussed around training local communities in the **values** of heritage assets, including the financial value to be gained through the exploitation of tourism.

Sir Bernard Feilden my early mentor, once reminded me that the beggar at the gate was the most important stakeholder, as her food for the day was entirely dependant on the site. I have had the opportunity to spend months and sometimes years within the heart of, and depending upon, local communities and so my presentation will represent some of the views of often **less empowered stakeholders**.

So this presentation is coming from the view of a reputedly ethically strict site conservator who specialises in developing countries and has learned to soften his opinions in order to understand what developing countries expect from heritage assets and what is acceptable in terms of tourist control and management.

I could speak to this topic for hours but as I have 15 minutes only, I will press straight on.

Heritage management and tourism strategies are seen here at the sharpest end, in developing countries. The issues are generic and for the most part concern European sites as much as those in the developing world.

I will start with a list of benefits to be gained from receiving tourists at heritage sites. The list is generally in order of importance to local populations.

SLIDE

Pride of place

Cultural pride.

These are closely connected and together enhance....

Self respect

Continuation of cultural traditions, tangible and intangible, Traditional festivals, costume, music, dance, storytelling.

Continuity of craft skills and artisanship

Tourists **may** wish to buy traditionally and locally made souvenirs.
These are both closely connected to.....

Local trade opportunities

General interpretation of place is also an opportunity that tourism offers.

Local people also learn regional history, historic skills and the foundations of the civilisation, of which they are a part.

Revenues from tourism often seem more remote to local communities, it is a greater matter that presents the opportunity for governmental level **reinvestment in the cultural heritage asset**.

SLIDE

So let us look at a cosy paradigm of heritage and tourism interrelating perfectly well.

A good site of OUV

Authenticity, The real thing

Integrity, A real and uncompromised package

Good management

Good planning. Planning with teeth.

Informative and accurate interpretation. Unbiased by political advantage. Including good didactic information covering a wide range of interest

Visitor control. Visitors will often prefer a disciplined visitor protocol

Good security

Maintenance

Advantage for local artisanship and trade

Revenue reinvested in cultural asset

SLIDE

Risk and challenges

To the site and the visitors

Natural disaster, seismic, flood, fire

Conflict, iconoclasm

Looting, theft, poor security

Excessive uncontrolled tourism and visitation

Poor management

Poor planning

Inappropriate development

Lack of funding and investment

Corruption

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Images to amuse and shock

Excessive visitation: Ankor

SLIDE

Excessive visitation: Ankor

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Uncontrolled development

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Mitigating risks

Disaster planning and management

Including disasters that may involve tourists, escape routes, safe zones.....

Risk assessment.

Regular review

Retrofitting

Management planning

Conservation planning

Site development planning

Visitor control

Zoning, number control, appointment systems, agreements with tour operators (who usually want the best possible environment of their clients).

Reinvestment of revenues in the cultural asset.

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New trends, emerging risks

Looking for appropriate sites to spread the load of tourism

On favourite sites

Attracting Tourists to districts and locations where the visitor will stay longer

Adding to the commercial advantage. Perhaps closer to the capital city.

Accepting projects that are tourist and revenue driven, rather than led by ethics and best practice.

Brief case study: Jordan. Qsar Halabat

I could have selected many sites for this study, but since Jordan is close to my mind at present I have selected this case as an example of a new trend in risks.

I was scoping for an Umayyad site in Palestine and included researching sites in neighbouring countries. I had in my mind some kind of serial group of monuments and in encouraging trans-boundary co-operation.

Petra is the principle World Heritage site in Jordan and tourists often arrive from tour ships in the red sea, stay for one night near the Petra site and then return to their cruises.

Jordan has been looking for other sites, perhaps closer to the capital city of Amman. Qsar Halabat is one such possibility.

I was visiting Halabat due to an opinion that I had heard, that Qsar Halabat may have the quality to be a stand alone nomination for World Heritage status.

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I had an air photograph, taken in 2001, and this looked interesting.

Halabat is originally Roman but constructed including a continuous inscription in Greek, carved in Black basalt stone.

The Umayyads converted the castle into an elaborate palace in natural sandstone, with decorative internal plasters and representational mosaics in the very early Islamic period.

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When my team arrived we saw cranes in place from a distance.

A “conservation” campaign had been continuing for 8 years.

This campaign had used cement as its main mortar material, therefore rendering the work irreversible and electric cables and conduits for a son et lumiere presentation were embedded in the walls.

Some of the work was well researched, but the Greek inscribed stones had been replaced randomly and several of the inscribed stones had been re-used away from their original positions, to “decorate” a newly constructed visitor centre. Other elements of the reconstruction are fanciful, to say the least.

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In effect, OUV has been compromised through lack of authenticity and by compromising integrity.

In this conservators view, World Heritage status has been severely obstructed or even denied through this work.

The site is however a wonderful place for tourists, who have less expert concerns for integrity and will enjoy the sites monumentality and the show that they are intended to experience.

This is one of numerous examples of fine sites around the world where conservation intervention has been tourist driven, rather than based on good ethics, reversible materials and best practice.

This is a recent tendency and in my view, disastrous element of the negative potential of ill considered tourism access, the word Disneyland comes to mind.

Thank you.

End