

April 21, 2017—Plenary Session Talk: Management Plans for World Heritage Sites: An Introduction, World Heritage and U.S. Civil Rights Sites Symposium, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, Summary of Slides

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Slide 1: Management Plans are essential documents for conveying the curatorial approach of the stewards of World Heritage Sites. UNESCO requires that each nominated site submit a management plan and that it is updated every five years. Management Plans for all the World Heritage Sites can be found at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/?action=list&searchDocuments=Management+Plans>

I experienced writing management plans firsthand during my tenure as a Fulbright Scholar at the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site, located in Shropshire, England, in 2014. The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site is one of the original eleven British WHS's inscribed on the World Heritage Site list in 1983. The site consists of four parishes, or villages—Coalbrookdale, Ironbridge, Jackfield, and Coalport—situated within a gorge along the River Severn. Known as the “Birthplace of Industry,” it was here in 1708 where coal was first used to process iron and thus allowed this material to be mass produced on a large scale. Abraham Darby I invented and built the first coal burning iron furnace. His grandson, Abraham Darby III, built the first engineered structure ever built out of metal, the Iron Bridge in 1779. The Iron Bridge epitomized British innovation and technical prowess to the world during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Along with the Coalbrookdale Darby Furnace and the Iron Bridge, the WHS consists of the Jackfield Tile Museum, which is housed in the former Craven Dunnill Encaustic Works Factory, and the Coalport China Museum. The site has multiple owners but the primary owners are Historic England (The Iron Bridge) and the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (Darby Furnace/Museum of Iron, Jackfield Tile Museum, Coalport China Museum). The primary municipality, the Telford-Wrenkin Council, was designated the manager of the WHS. In 2013, they subcontracted the management of the site to the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (IGMT).

IGMT asked me to draft the update of the management plan for the Ironbridge Gorge. I examined the previous plan as well as numerous technical and legal reports pertaining to the WHS. I discovered that geological issues, which were exasperated by centuries of coal and iron mining threatened the site's stability. The tidal driven flooding by the River Severn also threatened the site. But the most formidable challenge in revising the management plan was the request to increase the site's boundaries to include the small town of Broseley, which was approximately five miles north of the WHS. After consulting with Historic England, it was determined that the boundaries should not be increased. This led to further discussions that prevented me to finalize the plan. Lesson learned:

Management Plans are evolving documents that must reflect changing perceptions of the World Heritage Site.

- Slide 2: What is World Heritage? See Slide 2.  
More importantly, **Outstanding Universal Value**: the standard set by UNESCO for determining placement of a site on to the World Heritage Sites List.
- Slide 3: What is OUV? See Slide 3. Also, listed on this slide the Criteria for OUV. Also, in this slide, I give examples of sites that meet each criterion. My point: That WHS listing is very exclusive and very significant.
- Slide 4: What do Management Plans do? See Slide 4.
- Slide 5: Forces that impact management of WHS's, warfare (Aleppo and Palmyra), excess visitors (Acropolis), Global Warming (a very big concerning across the planet), Incongruent development (The Tower of London and the Palaces of Westminster), and political changes, these are only a few conditions that can adversely affect a WHS.
- Slide 6: WHS Management Plan Structure: The Sheffield Template for a Model Management Plan for a World Heritage Site.
- Slide 7: The collective, consensus driven approach to developing a WHS Management Plan: This people-driven approach will work well in developing U.S. Civil Rights Sites for inclusion on the World Heritage Sites listing.