

## Press Release

# Major new study to reveal the value of the UK's UNESCO sites

A major new study, announced today (Tuesday 14th October), will measure the economic and non-economic value of the UK's UNESCO sites.

From the world-renowned Stonehenge, Tower of London and the Lake District, to Biosphere Reserves, Global Geoparks and the Creative Cities network, UNESCO designated sites cover 14% of the UK's land area and are home to 9 million people.

The new study - a partnership between the UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) and the AHRC-funded Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC) will pioneer new methodologies to understand value not just in economic terms, but also the wider value of local partnerships and collaboration.

A.R.S Progetti has been announced as the lead consultant for the new study which is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Creative PEC under the [UKNC's Local to Global Programme](#).

**James Bridge, Secretary-General and Chief Executive of the UK National Commission for UNESCO said**

*"At a time when some may ask what the United Nations is really for, UNESCO sites give us a clear answer: they bring hundreds of millions of people, and multiple communities together around the world. They don't just protect world-famous cultural and natural heritage, they use it as a foundation to face today's challenges, whether that be community resilience or climate change. Through this study, we want to demonstrate that partnerships forged through UNESCO sites are practical, powerful, and laboratories for creating a better future together."*

The project builds on previous research, including **"The National Value of UNESCO to the UK"** (2020) and **"UNESCO Sites for Sustainable Development"** (2022). These studies emphasised how UNESCO sites function as influential multi-stakeholder

partnerships, bringing together communities, institutions, and organisations not only to safeguard cultural and natural heritage of global importance but also to promote the broader educational goals of the United Nations, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

Supported by a Steering Committee comprising over 20 representatives from the UK UNESCO network, A.R.S Progetti will work closely with sites to assess both their financial and non-financial value. The research will inform future investment, recognising UNESCO sites as anchors for partnerships that deliver cultural, environmental, social, and economic benefits.

The project will also pioneer new methodologies for understanding value, capturing not just economic outcomes but also the wider relational and collaborative dimensions of partnership working. Alongside the consultancy, the University of Manchester will deliver a series of workshops in September and October using Participatory Systems Dynamics. These workshops will help shape the typologies of value being developed and tested across the UK network of sites.

[UNESCO sites in the UK](#) range from world-renowned World Heritage Sites to Biosphere Reserves, Global Geoparks, and Creative Cities. While they include rural, urban, coastal, and island communities, they share a common role: to localise and fulfil UNESCO's global mandate of peace, sustainability, and international cooperation.

At a time when UNESCO and the wider UN system are seeking new ways to understand and invest in value and partnership, this study will demonstrate the UK's leadership and contribute to UNESCO's unique position as the only UN agency at the centre of a global network of people, places, and communities.

For more on the National Value of UNESCO to the UK report, see [unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000395301](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000395301)

**Professor Giorgio Fazio, Research Director, Creative PEC said:**

*“Understanding how UNESCO designation shapes the economic and social value generated through partnerships across UK sites is a complex but critical undertaking. We are delighted to partner with UNESCO UK in this pioneering project, working alongside ARS Progetti and the University of Manchester to develop innovative methodologies that fully capture such value. We hope these methodologies will become the new standard for measuring the value of similar partnerships worldwide.”*

**Daniele Fanciullacci, Chief Executive of A.R.S Progetti S.P.A., said:**

*“This assignment is a great opportunity for us to deepen a theme most important in our practice: cultural and natural heritage as vector of social balance, social change and innovation. The insightful brainstorming activated by UNESCO UK on how to measure the partnership’ benefits of UNESCO sites, cultural and natural, in the UK shall lead to innovative analytical frameworks, hopefully applicable to other sites in future.”*

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**About the UK National Commission for UNESCO**

[The UK National Commission for UNESCO](#) connects the UK to UNESCO’s global mission in education, science, culture, and communication. It supports World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Geoparks, and Creative Cities across the country, while fostering international collaboration and advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Through its networks and programmes, it helps ensure that the UK plays a leading role in promoting peace, sustainability, and cultural exchange worldwide.

**About A.R.S Progetti**

[ARS Progetti](#) is an international consulting firm dedicated to tackling complex social, cultural, and infrastructural challenges worldwide. Working across fields such as governance, cultural heritage, education, urban planning, and environmental management, the firm partners with public authorities and communities to deliver

practical, sustainable solutions. Guided by its mission “*to find, propose and help implement solutions that work*”, ARS Progetti ensures lasting impact at local, regional, and global levels.

### **About Creative PEC**

Creative PEC works to support growth of the UK’s Creative Industries through the production of independent and authoritative evidence and policy advice. Led by Newcastle University with the Royal Society of Arts and funded by the UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Centre comprises a core consortium of, Newcastle University, Work Advance, Sussex University and the University of Sheffield.

The Creative PEC works with a diverse range of industry partners. For more details, visit <http://www.pec.ac.uk> and [@CreativePEC](#)

### **About the Local to Global Programme**

[Local to Global 2.0](#) is a two-year initiative running from January 2025 to August 2026, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and HM Treasury. The programme is designed to build adaptive regional networks across the UK’s 60+ UNESCO-Designated Sites, including World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Geoparks, and Creative Cities.

By strengthening resilience, deepening collaboration, and amplifying community impact, Local to Global 2.0 will help sites share expertise and resources while aligning with UNESCO’s global mission.

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