

## **Sites for Sustainable Development: Realizing the potential of UNESCO designated sites to advance Agenda 2030**

### **Background Information**

#### ***UNESCO***

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in education, sciences and culture. UNESCO's programmes contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in the 2030 Agenda, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

#### ***Agenda 2030***

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

#### ***UNESCO Designated Sites***

UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, Global Geoparks and World Heritage Sites together give a complete picture of celebrating our heritage while at the same time conserving the world's cultural, biological and geological diversity, and promoting sustainable development. They span 10 million km<sup>2</sup> of the world's land area and comprise partnerships between millions of communities, organisations, charities, and businesses.

**Biosphere Reserves** are sites recognized by UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme as models of a sustainable future that protect and celebrate cultural and biological diversity, and that empower people to engage with one another and with nature in healthier ways. Biosphere Reserves in Canada and the UK actively work to conserve biodiversity and implement the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. There are 7 biosphere reserves in the UK and 19 in Canada.

**UNESCO Global Geoparks** are areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed using a holistic approach that favours protection, education and sustainable development. UNESCO Global Geoparks explore, develop and celebrate the links between geological heritage and all other aspects of the area's natural, cultural and intangible heritages. They aim to reconnect human society at all levels to the planet we all call home. There are 8 UNESCO global geoparks in the UK and 5 in Canada.

**World Heritage Sites** are landmarks or areas that benefit from international legal protection through the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (commonly referred to as the World Heritage Convention). To be considered for designation, sites must have special cultural or natural significance that is of Outstanding Universal Value. There are 33 World Heritage Sites in the UK and 20 in Canada.

### ***Canadian Commission for UNESCO***

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) serves as a bridge between Canadians and the vital work of UNESCO—the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Through its networks and partners, the Commission promotes UNESCO’s values, priorities and programs in Canada and brings the voices of Canadian experts to the international stage. CCUNESCO operates under the authority of the Canada Council for the Arts. For more information see: <https://en.ccunesco.ca/>

### ***UK National Commission for UNESCO***

The UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) supports the UK’s contribution to UNESCO and brings the benefits of UNESCO to the UK. We are the central hub for all UNESCO-related matters within the UK. We are an independent not-for profit organisation, supported by grant funding from the UK government. Our core functions are: To provide expert, individual policy advice to the UK and devolved governments on UNESCO related issues, to support the UK government’s agenda to help UNESCO achieve its core goals, to advise and assist individuals and institutions in the UK and its’ Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, with accessing UNESCO accreditation and prizes. We also support and enhance the value of the UK’s 165+ UNESCO sites and projects. For more information see: [www.unesco.org.uk](http://www.unesco.org.uk)

***Example:***