



ENGLISH HERITAGE



Scoping Study on the Socio-Economic Benefits of Heritage in the National Parks

Research Summary No. 5

The heritage of National Parks is fundamental to their unique present-day character and central to the sense of identity of local communities. It is also a key factor encouraging inward investment and tourism. However, the socio-economic benefits of heritage have yet to be fully defined and there remain a number of major methodological challenges to enable the full range of heritage benefits to be measured and evaluated in ways that can usefully inform policy formulation and management practice.

This study was commissioned by English Heritage and Cadw in 2007 to address this knowledge gap and in turn to provide Government and its agencies at all spatial levels with a research programme to enable the socio-economic benefits of heritage in the National Parks to be recognised, measured and evaluated in an academically sound and rigorous way.

The research comprised an extensive scoping study involving a literature review combined with various forms of stakeholder consultation, including email and telephone surveys, face-to-face interviews and participatory workshops. The research programme was therefore a product of the existing evidence base, consultation with stakeholders at varying levels of governance and management and a gap analysis undertaken by the research team.

At the outset, five themes were agreed with English Heritage and Cadw which acted as a guide to the content and structure of the literature review. These were:

- Definitions and boundaries of heritage;
- Recognising the importance of the historic landscape component in National Parks;
- Public and social aspects of heritage;
- Economic valuations and approaches; and
- Heritage and tourism.

The literature review revealed a wealth of relevant publications to help guide and inform further research but uncovered comparatively little material relating specifically to the socio-economic benefits of heritage and even less on the benefits of heritage in National Parks. As such, a number of research gaps were identified, as well as methodologies to help inform such gaps, which the research programme begins to address.

Findings from the stakeholder consultation revealed a great deal of interest in, and need for, establishing a programme of social and economic research for heritage in National Parks spanning all spatial levels. At the heart of this was the need to recognise the specific importance and value of the historic environment in National Parks, as distinct from the wider natural environment, and that heritage conservation deserves comparable parity of support to that of nature conservation in these areas.

Findings from three stakeholder workshops sought to identify the priorities for research on the socio-economic

benefits of heritage in National Parks, with a strong evidence base seen as the bedrock for achieving many of the wider goals of heritage policy and management. Central to these priorities was a need to improve the understanding of heritage across all stakeholder groups, comprehensively measure the economic impacts of heritage in and around National Parks, and begin a much needed programme of research to capture the social benefits of heritage in parks, including health and wellbeing and wider cultural influences on park residents and visitors.

A total of 22 research projects (or groups of projects) are contained in the programme derived from the study, structured around four themes:

- Generic policy and management (4 projects);
- Social (5);
- Economic (8); and
- Tourism (5).

As well as a study to produce a cultural map of heritage values, importance and understanding across the range of National Park stakeholders, which was deemed a priority by stakeholders, the programme encompasses projects focusing on: health and well being; social capital; institutional, intrinsic and instrumental values of heritage; local economic multipliers; historic environmental accounting; heritage and rural development and tourism values and management.

This project is funded by English Heritage and Cadw and was completed in October 2008.

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