

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

Background and aims

The National Parks of England and Wales are renowned for the quality of their cultural and natural assets, which together create some of our most cherished environments and landscapes. Of equal importance to tourism, recreation and nature conservation is the heritage of National Parks, which is fundamental to their unique present day character, to the sense of identity of the communities living there and to the encouragement of inward investment and local economic development. However, despite its importance, the socio-economic benefits of heritage have yet to be fully understood and there remain a number of 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. To address this important gap, this scoping study aims to:

1. Define the heritage resource in the context of National Parks;
2. Identify and examine the knowledge and research base relating to the socio-economic benefits of heritage within National Parks; and
3. Identify any gaps in the knowledge and research base and provide a costed programme of work to fill such gaps.

The study, commissioned by English Heritage and Cadw, commenced in September 2007 and is due for completion in June 2008.

Methods

The study will combine an extensive literature review with various forms of stakeholder consultation in order to achieve the above aims. A review of the academic, policy and 'grey' literature will critically examine relevant work relating to the socio-economic benefits of heritage in terms of approach, methods and findings. The review will encompass, and be structured around, the following five themes:

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

The review will also identify obvious gaps in the knowledge and research base. In conjunction with this, four types of stakeholder consultation will systematically help identify, and refine, knowledge and research gaps and priorities:

- E-mail survey (October 2007)
- Telephone interviews (November 2007)
- Participatory workshops (January 2008)
- Face-to-face interviews (February 2008)

Findings from the literature review and stakeholder consultation will then be used to design a research programme to fill any gaps in the knowledge base.

The research team

The research is being carried by the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) at the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham. Further information about the study can be obtained from the project manager, Paul Courtney: Email pcourtney@glos.ac.uk Tel: 01242 714132.