

# Cultural Tourism Management in a Global Context

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AER Seminar on Cultural Tourism, Ustron, 14th May 2008**

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## Introduction

ICOMOS is the International Committee of Monuments and Sites based in Paris. It is an international non-governmental organisation of professionals, dedicated to the conservation of the world's historic monuments and sites. One role the organisation undertakes is to advise the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC) on the inscription of World Heritage Sites.

ICOMOS gave early recognition to the important role of cultural tourism in the conservation of monuments and sites. The 1976 International Cultural Tourism Charter acknowledged: *“Cultural Tourism is that form of tourism whose object is, among other aims, the discovery of monuments and sites. It exerts on these last a very positive effect insofar as it contributes - to satisfy its own ends - to their maintenance and protection. This form of tourism justifies in fact the efforts which said maintenance and protection demand of the human community because of the socio-cultural and economic benefits which they bestow on all the populations concerned”*.

The most recent ICOMOS Cultural Tourism Charter (1999) is discussed in this paper and circulated separately<sup>1</sup>. The 8<sup>th</sup> Charter builds on the ideals of the original Charter, now over 30 years old. It emphasises the need for ‘Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance’ and acknowledges the importance of both the tangible and intangible heritage. But the basic premise is the same. Cultural tourism provides a key reason for the maintenance and protection of the world’s cultural and natural resources; and one that is becoming increasingly important. Properly managed there are enormous benefits – social, economic, cultural and environmental for both the host community and visitors. In practice, however, tourism impacts are not always positive.

The phenomenal growth of tourism and growing popularity of cultural tourism is forcing some iconic sites such as Machu Picchu, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, to take drastic measures to limit visitor numbers and their damaging impact on the fragile environment, cultural values and social life-style of the local community despite the immediate economic benefits that might accrue. At the opposite end of the spectrum, away from the tourist gaze, many communities around the world struggle to safeguard their culture and heritage and seek ways to attract cultural tourists as part of a regional economic development strategy.

The cultural tourism industry’s challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to foster sustainable development within the exponential world-wide growth in cultural tourism whilst recognising that business development is based on irreplaceable heritage assets (more accurately described as resources<sup>2</sup>) located in their regional and local context.

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<sup>1</sup> ICOMOS Cultural Tourism Charter is available on the website:

[www.icomos.org/tourism/charter/html](http://www.icomos.org/tourism/charter/html)

<sup>2</sup> The current position is to use the term cultural & heritage ‘assets’ largely because they can provide financial benefits in the context of cultural tourism. However, if they are described as resources, often irreplaceable, but also able to be developed through a dynamic interface between local people, visitors and the ‘resource’ there is a paradigm shift from the notion of exploitation to questions of value. This

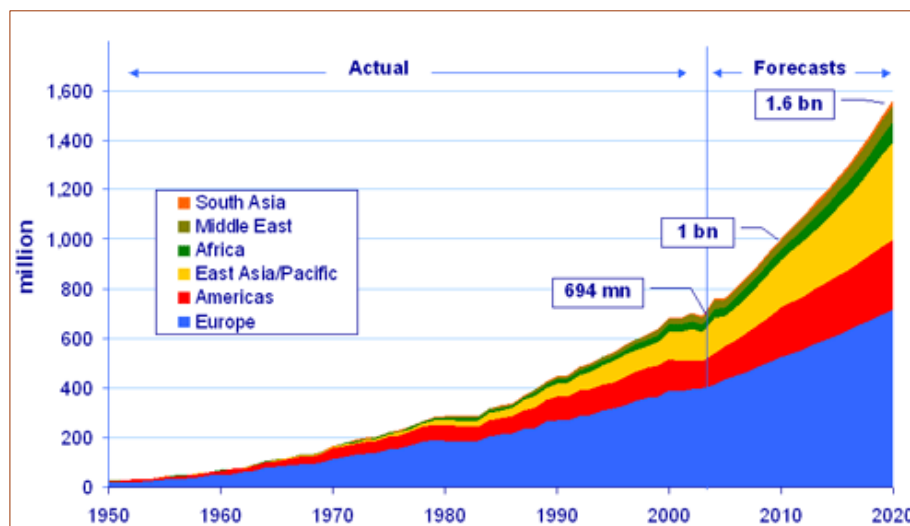
Whatever brand position heritage sites, monuments, historic towns and cultural landscapes hold in the hierarchy of international, national and regional cultural heritage and tourism significance they are always local for those who live nearby.

This paper examines four strategic aspects of cultural tourism management in a global context. 1. Tourism Trends; 2. Tourism Impacts on Cultural Heritage; 3. Achieving Sustainable Development - The principles of the *ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter*; and UNESCO WHC and UNWTO<sup>3</sup> Project: *Sustainable Tourism at World Heritage Sites*; 4. Cultural Tourism Destination Management.

## 1. Tourism Trends

Despite the global economic downturn in 2007-2008 the WTO continues to forecast the growth of tourism with the mature markets of Europe and the Americas growing less rapidly than the emerging markets of the East Asia /Pacific region, Africa and the Middle East. The figures are staggeringly large – 1 billion people by 2010 and 1.6 billion by 2020.

**Table 1: Global Tourism Trends**



Source: World Tourism Organisation 2020 Vision Forecast

UNWTO Secretary- General, Francesco Frangilli, UNWTO News, Issue 1, 2008, sees the major growth and development opportunities in these emergent economies. "While mature markets remain the leading destinations in the world, the faster growth rate of new markets confirms UNWTO's main message of tourism's potential for the developing world."

What does this mean for Europe and indeed the emergent economies of Eastern Europe? Both the established markets to the west and the developing markets to the east are in an increasingly competitive global tourism market. The rich diversity of Europe's regions is not generally widely known. Stereotypes and preconceived notions of national characteristics abound. At a simple level Poland is associated with sausages, Warsaw, Kraków and Pope John Paul II.

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shift in vocabulary is not just semantics. It becomes even more significant when investigating the impact of climate change. However, in arguing for grants and investment the term 'asset' is still appropriate.

<sup>3</sup>UNWTO is the United Nations World Tourism Organisation.

Tourism in Britain grew by 6% in 2006. British culture and heritage continue to motivate people to visit the country. "Britain's strengths continue to be its heritage and culture with interesting cities and towns featured as an important visitor drawing card" ... "Other areas that Britain performs well on are the infinite opportunities to visit famous buildings, monuments, museums, art galleries and the contemporary arts."<sup>4</sup> Alongside red buses, red cast iron telephone kiosks first designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1924 – now largely redundant – are a familiar, well known nostalgic symbol of Britain's cultural 'street' heritage. The 'Union Jack' flag remains Visit Britain's logo.

Attempts to break away to create a new brand image for Britain as 'Cool Britannia' in the year 2000, epitomised by the Millennium Dome (now the successful music venue O<sup>2</sup>), failed. Attitudes and perceptions are difficult to change once they are established. The perception persists - often wrongly and sometimes rightly - that Britain is expensive and unwelcoming with awful food. Canada, Australia, and Spain are seen as the world's most welcoming nations, with the UK languishing in mid-table in the Anholt-GMI Nations Brand Index Welcome.

In the recent top ten league tables it is interesting to note that the UK – Britain - does not feature but that Poland does both in terms of volume of visits and spend. The Irish Republic is also doing well.

**Table 2: UK International Passenger Survey**

Top Ten Markets by Volume (2007P)		Top Ten Markets by Value (2007P)	
Visits (000s)	% total	Spend (£m)	% total
USA	3,751 11.1	USA	2,673 16.0
Germany	3,463 10.3	Germany	1,244 7.5
France	3,399 10.1	Irish Republic	976 5.9
Irish Republic	2,996 8.9	France	885 5.3
Spain	2,245 6.7	Spain	881 5.3
Netherlands	1,862 5.5	Australia	726 4.4
Italy	1,643 4.9	Italy	695 4.2
Poland	1,298 3.8	Canada	566 3.4
Australia	1,007 3.0	Netherlands	551 3.3
Belgium	1,006 3.0	Poland	395 2.4

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)  
(All monetary values are in outturn prices)

The Polish success story provides a strong basis for the development of cultural tourism in the Silesian Region, geographically close to Austria and Hungary as well as the traditional market of Germany.

We return to the world stage to examine what cultural tourists are looking for on their travels by looking at a case study of Asia. The question is 'Where do tourists choose to visit searching for the unique spirit of the place? The spirit of the place is the dynamic essence underpinning the cultural tourism product and cultural tourism experience. Lose it, either at the iconic celebrity destinations or the special local sites and festivals, and the mutual benefits of cultural tourism for the particular place and community are lost too.

<sup>4</sup>Visit Britain Insight and Marketing Intelligence - *Visitor's Voice* – Issue 10, Spring 2008

Around the world the famous celebrity places, often World Heritage Sites, attract mass tourism. Many of the images are familiar but they are usually depicted without the crowds of people. In Asia and China there are serious issues of overcrowding. Congestion management is a major concern. China's internal domestic tourism is booming. The Great Wall of China suffers (and benefits) from its celebrity status particularly on public holidays. Historic trading ports such as Hoi An, Vietnam, are also well visited places.

Whereas some cultural tourists take secular pilgrimages, others participate in major religious pilgrimages and attend religious festivals in places such as Kandy, Sri Lanka. Angkor Wat, Cambodia is the largest religious monument in the world. Historic Towns such as Bahktapur, Nepal, historic buildings and natural heritage sites and national parks such as Lijiang, China as well as military fortifications, including the Fortress Museum, Hong Kong are popular destinations in Asia as much as they are elsewhere in the world.

The cultural tourism phenomenon has a range of ideal 'set piece' destinations. Cultural tourists are often 'authenti-seekers' looking for the real experience of cultural exchange although others are drawn in on the more superficial level of observers. These tourists are often attracted by wide-scale publicity and the 'wow' factor of a unique and special place. Historic cities with a diverse character, such as Buenos Aires, Argentina, and places of conflict or special memorial, such as Hiroshima, Japan reveal a fascination on the part of cultural tourists with both the positive and negative sides of human nature and human experience. Auschwitz is perhaps the best known example of the latter in Poland.

The lives and identities of other people, past and present, offer an endless allure for curious visitors. But how long can the historic traditions of indigenous people remain authentic? Whether it is the indigenous Uluru people sharing their culture in Australia, or special festivals in Kerala, India, or the tango danced in the cafés of Buenos Aires, Argentina, there is a balance to be kept between the desire of cultural tourists to see 'the real thing' and respect for the private community focus of many festivals and ceremonies, weddings in particular. However, tourism is often an impetus for continuing or for reviving arts and handicrafts and for helping people to identify and express their identity.

The dilution of the original product whether a festival, or a dance, or a carving – or even the adaptation of an historic building - through the need to produce in volume, to provide a modern relevance, and to please an external market is a global concern and one that falls within the remit of sustainable cultural tourism management. But it is part of a bigger picture. Communities are aware that for a variety of reasons their heritage and culture, and therefore their unique identity, is rapidly disappearing. Cultural tourism can provide one platform, one economic reason to retain and develop the community's cultural heritage. The emotive reasons for doing so are the province of members of the community.

Our sole purpose for making this homepage is to bond and unite Cambodians (Khmers) from around the globe. In our efforts, we have been faced with the huge challenge of how to go about preserving our culture for future generations. Our heritage and culture is a unique one that has stood the test of time. We have made it this far and have escaped from the realm of our darkened past. Despite this, it is quickly vanishing at an alarming speed and we must put our efforts into maintaining a tight hold on it as we once had before. It is our hope that this homepage will create active participation on the part of our people to retain their rich traditions, great values, and gentle memories.

Source: Web-site: 'Camweb' - Cambodian Cyber Culture

## 2. Tourism Impacts on Cultural Heritage

A synthesis and brief analysis of tourism impacts on cultural heritage is given in Table 3. The potential benefits and disbenefits of tourism impacts are listed both in terms of the tangible and intangible heritage at a destination and the economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts on the local community where the heritage assets (resources) originate. In this synopsis no attempt has been made to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' impacts or to cross reference from one column to another. The 'bundle' of key impacts reveals a complex web. Many possible advantages can become disadvantages and disadvantages can be overcome.

**Table 3: Tourism Impacts on Cultural Heritage**

<b>Tourism Impacts on Cultural Heritage</b>	
<b>Heritage Destination Tangible &amp; Intangible Heritage</b>	<b>Local Community Economic Social &amp; Cultural, Environmental</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income – café, shop, entrance</li> <li>• Congestion/Overcrowding</li> <li>• Seasonal Variations</li> <li>• Damage to the significance of the place</li> <li>• Degradation of site</li> <li>• Maintenance costs</li> <li>• Conservation grants</li> <li>• Interpretation – signage, ipods</li> <li>• Learning opportunities</li> <li>• Marketing &amp; brand management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic benefits &amp; disbenefits</li> <li>• Commercial exploitation</li> <li>• Temporary jobs</li> <li>• Social lives disrupted</li> <li>• Cultural Exchange</li> <li>• Authenticity of traditions challenged</li> <li>• Revitalisation of crafts</li> <li>• More entertainment - events &amp; festivals</li> <li>• Quality environment</li> <li>• Enhanced awareness of heritage assets</li> </ul>

### **Case Study: The Medieval City of Rhodes World Heritage Site, Greece**

Tourists and tour operators value World Heritage Sites as destinations with unique qualities but nevertheless there is a universal expectation for high quality services – refreshments, Carte D'Or ice-creams for example, comfortable cafes and rubbish clearance. In Rhodes even the shopping opportunities are less shopping with distinction than shopping in the distinctive environment of the medieval walled city. These historic ruins provide the theatrical and reassuringly familiar backcloth of a film set that gains credibility by being authentic. Gold jewellery shops and Ferrari T Shirts waving in the breeze from market stalls jostle with 'hard to find' Greek leather sandals, traditional woven bags and European-style restaurants. Tourists participate in the heritage experience by shopping, taking photographs, eating and possibly visiting the attractions. The quality of the public realm is extremely important and often ignored.

The City of Rhodes was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1988. During the period 1309 to 1523 the Knights of St John of Jerusalem – the Knights Hospitaller - made Rhodes one of their two strongholds. The other was on the island of Malta. Rhodes was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site because "With the Palace of the Grand Masters, the Great Hospital and the Street of the Knights, the Upper

Town is one of the most beautiful urban ensembles of the Gothic period.” No reference is made to the earlier Greek archaeology although the coexistence with mosques, public baths and other buildings dating from the later Ottoman rule is mentioned. The concentration primarily on one story, one period in city’s history has some strange consequences.

The Greek archaeological sites within the city walls are numerous but ignored in promotional material, interpretative plaques and unsurprisingly by visitors. The archaeological museum - a hidden asset – provides a quiet refuge from the summer heat. There is a marked contrast between the discrete, academically orientated, understated displays in the museum and mention of the medieval knights at all levels outside in the City.

With the absence of any guidelines to the contrary, the brand identity of Rhodes has become the medieval period, the knights and the defensive stone walls of the old city. At one restaurant aiming for a universal appeal with a local identity, a full-scale model of a Knight in armour holds the menu. The association of this symbol with a restaurant where the food is advertised in photographic pictures of different meals on separate plates shows the extent to which this story, this particular heritage has become embedded in the popular culture of the island in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and popular cultural tourism, almost to the exclusion of all others even the heritage craft skills that still provide cobble pavements.

Further research would be needed to establish whether the mainly package tourists, either on a Mediterranean cruise or staying at a nearby resort hotel, who become cultural tourists on a visit to the old city prefer this ambiance to that of the theme park resort of Faliraki further along the coast with fake Greek temples, European supermarkets and a hedonistic life-style. Or, is Rhodes city centre just the day-time medieval theme park complementing the Greek version with its strong evening economy?

### **3. Achieving Sustainable Development**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century effective partnerships are acknowledged as the most successful way to achieve the sustainable development including the development of cultural tourism. The 1999 ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter offers a philosophical rationale and strategic direction for tourism and cultural & natural heritage partnerships. In 2007 the ICOMOS, IUCN, ICCROM and UNESCO WHC and UNWTO World Heritage Tourism Programme 2007 – 2009 was set up<sup>5</sup>. This builds on the Charter principles (and others) with the aim of enhancing inter-agency and stakeholder coordination for joint actions.

The six principles of the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter are applicable for strategic planning at regional and local levels too. They are:

1. Encourage Public Awareness
2. Manage the Dynamic Relationship
3. Ensure a Worthwhile Visitor Experience
4. Involve Host and Indigenous Communities
5. Provide Benefit for the Local Community

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<sup>5</sup> IUCN is the International Union for Conservation of Nature; ICCROM is an intergovernmental organization (IGO) dedicated to the conservation of cultural heritage. It exists to serve the international community as represented by its Member States, which currently number more than 125; UNESCO WHC is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation World Heritage Centre based in Paris.

## 6. Responsible Promotion Programmes

The *Charter* identifies and promotes conservation in the context of cultural tourism and considers

- That one of the major reasons for undertaking any form of conservation is to make the significance of the place accessible to visitors and the host community, in a well managed manner.
- That both the conservation community and the tourism industry must work cooperatively together to protect and present the world's cultural and natural heritage, given their mutual respect for it and their concern for the fragility of the resource.

Although this last point has been an aspiration of the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Committee for many years, there has been a general reluctance amongst the conservation community to take cultural tourism seriously. World Heritage Site Management Plans have in many cases paid lip-service to managing cultural tourism and the visitor experience; and the UNESCO World Heritage mission does not mention the subject.

UNESCO's World Heritage mission is to:

- encourage countries to sign the World Heritage Convention and to ensure the protection of their natural and cultural heritage;
- encourage States Parties to the Convention to nominate sites within their national territory for inclusion on the World Heritage List;
- encourage States Parties to establish management plans and set up reporting systems on the state of conservation of their World Heritage sites;
- help States Parties safeguard World Heritage properties by providing technical assistance and professional training;
- provide emergency assistance for World Heritage sites in immediate danger; support States Parties' public awareness-building activities for World Heritage conservation;
- encourage participation of the local population in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage;
- encourage international cooperation in the conservation of our world's cultural and natural heritage.

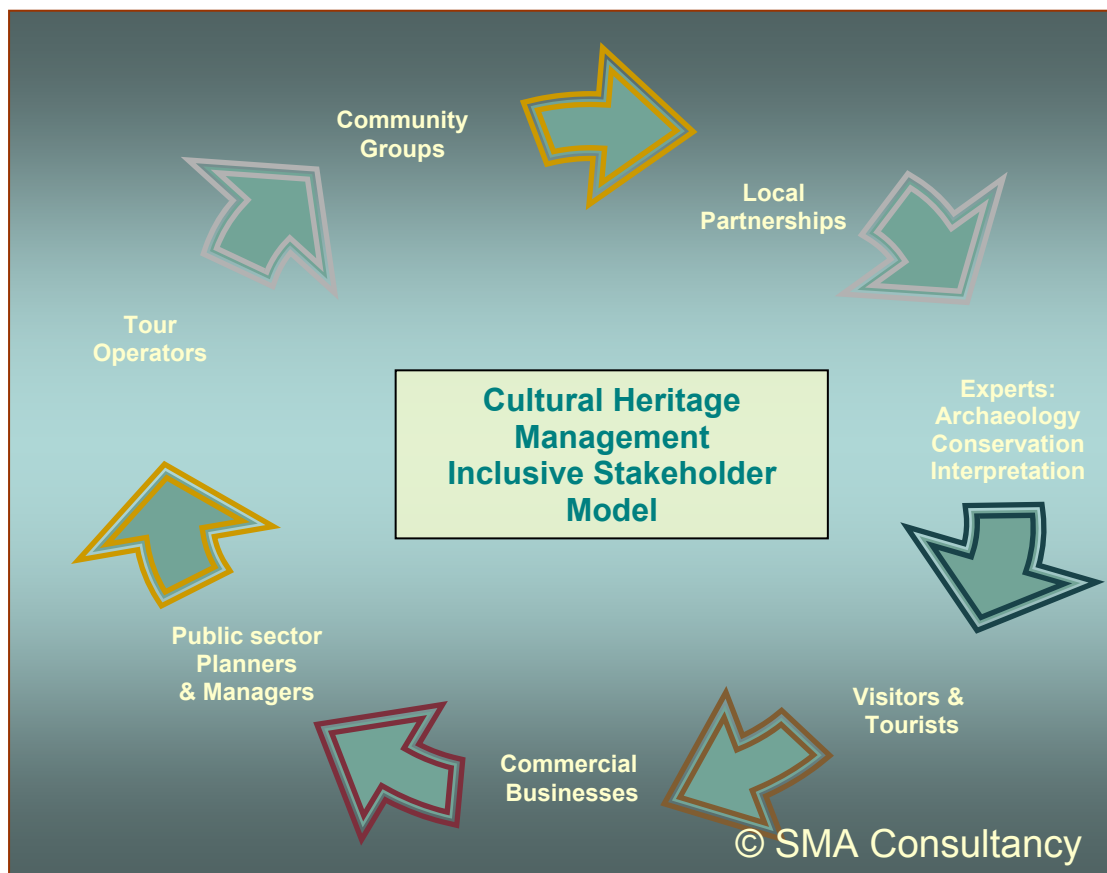
The exponential growth of cultural tourism suggests that whatever strategic partnerships are formed in the long term protection of cultural & natural heritage sites requires a grass roots movement. It requires both a commitment from local communities and a change in visitors from passive consumers to active guardians of cultural & natural heritage Sites and their values. A change is needed from '*People who Stare*' to '*People who Care*'.

## 4. Cultural Tourism Destination Management

Our research has shown that stakeholder models need to be far more inclusive than they have been hitherto for effective cultural tourism destination management. The relevant stakeholder groups are identified in Table 4. They include community groups – amenity societies, special interest groups, conservation societies; local partnerships – marketing & promotion, tourism associations, schools & colleges; experts: archaeologists, conservationists, interpretation; visitors & tourists – local, regional, national and overseas; commercial businesses – heritage attractions, theatres, shops, hotels, guest houses, restaurants; public sector planners and

managers – museum directors, tourism officers, heritage site managers, planners;  
tour operators – coach companies, special interest tourism, tour guides.

**Table 4: Cultural Heritage Management Inclusive Stakeholder Model**



The twin objectives of cultural tourism management, first to provide a worthwhile visitor experience; and second, to protect the significance of the destination/ site are central goals. But it is now clear we should go further in strategic policy planning and the implementation of actions for sustainable cultural tourism.

Destination managers, visitors & local communities are partners in the process of ratifying the appropriate development of cultural and heritage assets. They are also partners in the process of communicating the conservation message. Through the engagement and involvement of all stakeholders in the interpretation and promotion of the cultural heritage destination there is the opportunity for serious fun, entertainment & learning and even 'edutainment'.

**Case Study: Greenwich Market within Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site**

Maritime Greenwich was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997. The aerial photograph introducing the parallel power point presentation to this paper shows the "The ensemble of buildings at Greenwich ... and the park in which they are set, (which) symbolise English artistic and scientific endeavour in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Queen's House (by Inigo Jones) was the first Palladian building in England, while the complex that was until recently the Royal Naval College was designed by Christopher Wren. The park, laid out on the basis of an original design by André Le Nôtre, contains the Old Royal Observatory, the work of Wren and the scientist Robert Hooke". (*Maritime Greenwich WHS inscription*)

The Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site is set alongside the River Thames to the east side of London opposite the new city and financial centre of Canary Wharf. Rising sea levels and flooding due to climate change could have a devastating effect on both the buildings and social fabric of this historic settlement<sup>6</sup>. Yet it not the possible effects of climate change but the imminent redevelopment of Greenwich Market, (which falls within the World Heritage Site boundaries and is rarely mentioned in official documents), that has been the subject of intense debate and scrutiny over the past year. Scruffy, lively and ripe for re-development, the owners, Greenwich Hospital Trust, put forward plans for the regeneration of Greenwich Market to include a hotel, apartments and general improvements to the market area.

The consultation process showed a degree of sensitivity and maturity rarely seen at national level. An extensive community and stakeholder consultation exercise included a public exhibition, October 2007, accompanied by a questionnaire that was also made available on-line<sup>7</sup>.

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**Greenwich Market Survey Response**

Public Exhibition	264	79%
Postal Responses	31	9%
Internet Responses	38	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>100%</b>

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The Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Executive Group, Greenwich Conservation Group and the Greenwich Society all made formal representations.

“The Greenwich Society's Executive Committee was very positive in their views on your proposals, as displayed at the recent public exhibition. More broadly, we have been very encouraged by and appreciative of the Greenwich Hospital's openness in respect of its hopes and aspirations for the Market site, both publicly and in the context of the Key Stakeholders' Group. We have particularly welcomed the Hospital's declared intention to maintain the character and eclectic nature of the Market's operations and offer”.

In depth analysis of the results revealed that of the 166 respondents who indicated that they supported the proposals, but with suggestions, 57 expressed a concern that individual stalls/traders would be replaced by ‘run of the mill’ high street shops and/or that they would like assurances that independent stores would be protected and chains stores limited. Almost three quarters of respondents indicated that they visit the market on at least a monthly basis, whilst 9% do so less often.

There was almost unanimous agreement that the market stalls should be retained as they create the special atmosphere of the place.

“While the retention of the character of the market is welcomed there is concern that the scale of the proposal may threaten some of the small traders. Their businesses are small and therefore fragile, although they are essential to the special nature of the place. It is understood that Greenwich Hospital has recognised this concern and has given assurances that it will strive to create a unique and diverse trading environment which will be attractive and affordable to the market traders and to small independent enterprises”  
*Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Executive Group*

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<sup>6</sup> [http://whc.unesco.org/documents/publi\\_climatechange.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/documents/publi_climatechange.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Communiqué, a consultancy company that provides the specialist services of local political liaison, community and stakeholder consultation, and media communications designed the questionnaire. The company employed ERS (Electoral Reform Services) to undertake the ballot and subsequent analysis of the questionnaire.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century market place is where much cultural exchange happens today in the surrounding cafés and pubs. Old customs are revived. Mr Humbug's sweet shop for example, sells sweets from large jars rather than in plastic bags. New heritage is made – "Have your children's hands/ feet cast here today".

It is also the place where we as Europeans need to ask ourselves questions. We can celebrate the diversity of our regions but are we also prepared to embrace the new heritage of Europe's creative industries? On Greenwich Market one young Greek art student designs the material and makes her own unique, brightly coloured shopping bags. Her work could be interpreted either as following the Greek tradition, mentioned earlier, or as developing a new tradition. Modern day 'Euro-kids' with the flexibility to move and the openness to be inspired by wherever they happen to be living within the European Union are creating a new reality of European cultural fusion. For as much as the cultural heritage assets from the past are irreplaceable, new heritage is being created in our own times.

## **Conclusion**

The spirit of the place is the dynamic essence underpinning the cultural tourism product and cultural tourism experience. The current ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter provides the platform for the sustainable development of cultural tourism. If the relationship between tourism, culture and heritage is to move forward there has to be greater awareness of the value of the irreplaceable cultural and heritage resources and how this awareness should influence the management of destinations.

Making sustainable cultural tourism destination management truly sustainable involves a number of factors: recognising the importance of the spirit of the place; balancing protection with exploitation; improving interpretation & communication – telling the heritage stories & showing how the tangible & intangible heritage is conserved; engaging tour operators & tourists alongside communities and heritage experts in the cultural tourism product/ experience development process.

Ultimately there is a need to turn visitors from '*People who Stare*' to '*People who Care*'. Only then can the sustainable cultural tourism destination management agenda be truly sustainable. International cooperation on the World Heritage Tourism Programme 2007 – 2009 should lead the way forward and provide models of good practice for the future.