

THE OXFORD DECLARATION ON LANDSCAPE

We, 100 people involved in landscape matters from the United Kingdom and abroad, gathered in Oxford from 3-5 May 2000 for the ICOMOS UK Conference on “Europe: a Common Heritage - the Cultural Landscape”, have adopted the following declaration.

1. We believe that the landscape is important it provides a cultural, social, spiritual, ecological, environmental and economic standpoint, and is a vital element in the quality of life of all people and in their sense of local identity.
2. We recognise that most European landscapes contain both natural and cultural components, reflecting the long-standing interaction between people and the land, and that they thus embrace a vital part of both the cultural and the natural heritage of Europe.
3. We declare:
 - our recognition that landscapes inevitably change and evolve over time, in response to natural processes and to the changing needs and activities of people, and that such change is bound to continue;
 - our concern, however, that many present-day changes are progressively reducing the quality and diversity of landscapes;
 - our belief that it is possible to guide the processes of change in ways which meet essential human needs but which is also ensure that the character, diversity and quality of landscapes is enhanced rather than diminished;
 - our conviction that the peoples of Europe must be involved, notably at local level, in making this happen;
 - our affirmation that future generations should be entitled to inherit and enjoy landscapes at least as rich as those which now exist; and
 - our conviction that this implies the need both for a comprehensive and integrated approach to understanding protection, management and planning of the landscape as a whole, and for specific measures related to landscapes of particular significance, set within a broad policy of sustainable development.
4. We therefore welcome:
 - the increasing recognition, among peoples and governments throughout Europe, of the importance of landscape and the need to care for it;

- the growth, in many European countries, of action at national level to record and assess the landscape heritage, to protect, manage and plan landscapes in general, and to protect key landscape areas;
 - the initiatives at European level, including the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, the proposed European Landscape Convention and the inclusion of landscape as a central element in the Council of Europe's 1999/2000 campaign on "Europe: A Common Heritage"; and
 - the addition of cultural landscapes to the categories of sites on the World Heritage List, and the willingness of the governments of the United Kingdom and other European countries to bring forward landscapes of outstanding universal value as candidates for inclusion on that List.
5. We strongly support the adoption of the European Landscape Convention, and hope its early opening for signature.
6. We call on the Government of the United Kingdom, and (as appropriate) on the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to promote the cause of landscapes by:
- giving active support to the adoption of the European Landscape Convention, and then using it (when it is signed and ratified) as a positive framework for management of landscapes in the United Kingdom;
 - promoting public awareness of landscape as an asset to local communities, from which they can benefit through knowledge, use and enjoyment;
 - encouraging involvement of owners and managers of property, and of the general public in measures to identify, evaluate, protect, manage and plan landscapes;
 - recognising the importance of protecting, managing and planning landscape in all relevant legislation, government policies and programmes, notably those which relate to:
 - the operations of the town and country planning system, noting the need for planning and other policy guidance on the subject of landscape;
 - alterations and additions to infrastructure including roads;
 - agriculture, noting the need for further expansion of agri-environment programmes, and forestry;

- other economic activities noting particularly the importance of tourism;
 - programmes for creation of new landscapes where these are needed, as in the community forests;
 - education, training and provision of information at all levels; and
 - the allocation of lottery and other funds;
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- requesting national agencies in the fields of protection of the historic environment, of countryside protection and enjoyment, and of nature conservation, to work together, and with regional bodies and local authorities, in the assessment of both rural and urban landscapes, and to encourage local authorities;
 - resourcing the national, regional and local bodies concerned in the above work landowners and managers of property, professional advisers and all relevant others to protect, manage and enhance landscapes;
 - working vigorously within the European Union to ensure that agricultural, regional structural and other relevant policies and funds take the needs of landscape, people, and its other benefits fully into account; and
 - undertaking a comprehensive assessment of sites within the United Kingdom suitable to be nominated for recognition as cultural landscapes under the World Heritage Convention of UNESCO.

We ask ICOMOS UK, in co-operation with IUCN and other bodies, to disseminate this declaration as appropriate, and to take action to follow through the ideas, including the possible production of guidelines on the subject.