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Point 7 de l'Ordre du jour provisoire: Etat de conservation de biens inscrits sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial et/ou sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial en péril

MISSION REPORT / RAPPORT DE MISSION

Skellig Michael (Ireland) (C 757) / Skellig Michael (Irlande) (C 757)

26 – 28 November 2007 / 26 – 28 novembre 2007

This mission report should be read in conjunction with Document:
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**Report on the Mission to
SKELLIG MICHAEL, IRELAND
26– 28 November 2007**

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Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government: AnneMarie Caulfield (Principal Officer with responsibility for liaison with UNESCO).

National Monuments Service: Finian Matthews (Principal Officer), Ann Lynch (Senior Archaeologist (assisted by Alan Hayden, consultant archaeologist); and Edward Bourke (Senior Archaeologist).

National Monuments Service, Office of Public Works, Department of Finance: Dermot Burke (Principal Officer) and Grellan Rourke (Senior Conservation Officer).

Evidence was presented to the mission in person by: Ian Lumley (An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland); Michael Gibbons (independent contract archaeologist); and Joe Roddy and Joe Feehan with other Skellig boatmen.

The mission was welcomed by Peter Cox (Vice-President) and other members of ICOMOS Ireland.

Dr Mechtild Rössler (Chief, Europe & North America, UNESCO World Heritage Centre) provided practical advice and support and Regina Durighello (Director, World Heritage Secretariat, ICOMOS) coordinated the arrangements from Paris.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The object of the mission was to examine the state of conservation of the monastic remains on the island of Skellig Michael, Ireland. These remains have been the subject of a long campaign of conservation and reconstruction. Well argued and supported criticisms have recently been made of the conservation of the island's dramatic hermitage. The mission concluded that, whilst the works have transformed the appearance of these remains, they are justifiable and that the Outstanding Universal Value remains intact. The mission also examined other aspects of the island's management in the context of a draft Management Plan and, in particular, a dispute between the Irish authorities and local passenger boatmen over landing permits.

The mission makes the following recommendations:

- a fully resourced programme of publication should begin;
- an Academic Advisory Committee should be appointed to advise on publication and future research;
- annual minuted meetings should be held with the boatmen;
- the criteria for the granting of new landing permits should be identified;
- a Site Manager should be appointed for the property;
- no changes should be made to the site boundary;
- a detailed visitor survey should be conducted to inform visitor management;
- toilet facilities should be provided on the island.

1 BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION

Inscription history

Skellig Michael (Sceilg Mhichil), County Kerry, was submitted for inscription to the World Heritage Centre in 1995. The justification for inscription by the State Party stated that the property is the most spectacularly situated of all the Early Christian island monastic sites, particularly the hermitage on the South Peak. During the course of conservation and repair works it had been possible to examine the structures in detail and hence work out the chronology of the monastic cells. A clear evolution of drystone masonry techniques was evident, providing unique documentation of the development of this type of architecture and construction.

The Bureau (June 1996) recommended the inscription of the property. This recommendation was accepted by the Committee and the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List at its 20th Session (December 1996).

Criteria and World Heritage values

Skellig Michael was inscribed on the basis of criteria (iii) and (iv), considering the site to be of outstanding universal value as an exceptional, and in many respects unique, example of an early religious settlement deliberately sited on a pyramidal rock in the Atlantic Ocean, preserved because of a remarkable environment. It illustrates, as no other site can, the extremes of a Christian monasticism characterizing much of North Africa, the Near East, and Europe.

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, Skellig Michael is a *group of buildings*. Since the entire island is covered by the nomination, it is also considered to be a *cultural landscape*.

A State of Conservation report prepared in compliance with Article 29 of the World Heritage Convention and dated 30 November 2005 was prepared by the State Party. The report states that, since inscription, the values of the site had changed, because the excavation and conservation works that had been going on since 1995 had revealed more information.

Examination of the State of Conservation by the World Heritage Committee and its Bureau

The state of conservation of the property was considered at the time of inscription, informed by an evaluation report carried out for ICOMOS by Professor Charles Thomas.

It was noted that major conservation works had begun on the main monastic complex in 1978 and were likely to continue into the present millennium. The conservation work was preceded by survey and archaeological excavation. One of the principal objectives was the stabilization, permanent restoration, and consolidation of the drystone retaining walls of the terraces on which the monastery stands. Attention was drawn to the fact that 19th century revetments to the walls of the cells and of material covering paving had been removed. A photograph accompanying the inscription documentation showed a detailed view of the monastery in its post-conservation state. Notwithstanding the scale of these works, the level of authenticity was considered to be very high. The island's isolation had protected the monastery

from alterations and adaptations, apart from the building of two lighthouses in the 19th century.

The 2005 State of Conservation Report noted that at the time of inscription ICOMOS was satisfied with the issue of authenticity and integrity and that all subsequent works had been carried out under the same conservation and preservation principles.

The report also noted that the management of the site was by consensus in relation to access by boat owners, but occasional out-of-season visits by boat owners were identified as an issue requiring resolution.

A management document had been in place since 1995 but was currently under revision by an inter-disciplinary in house group.

Justification of the mission

Although ICOMOS had concluded at the time of inscription that the level of authenticity of both the conserved and the unconserved elements of the property was very high, the earlier and on-going conservation works aroused concern amongst some Irish archaeologists and other commentators.

From 2005 onwards these concerns were addressed formally to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre by Michael Gibbons, an independent Irish archaeologist, by An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland, and by some anonymous commentators. Concerns were primarily raised in connection with the new works on the South Peak. There were also complaints from the local boatmen about the access arrangements which had been put in place following inscription.

The Irish authorities vigorously refuted the complaints and requested that the World Heritage Centre organize a monitoring mission to review the state of conservation of the property, its integrity and authenticity, and whether the current conservation works had any impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the site.

The World Heritage Centre requested ICOMOS to review the complaints and make recommendations. This review was undertaken by Mr Tom Hassall (former President of ICOMOS-UK). A report dated 20 September 2007 was prepared which confirmed that the official Irish views and those of the critics appeared irreconcilable. Accordingly the World Heritage Centre decided to accept the Irish authorities' request. ICOMOS was asked to conduct a mission (Ref. RD/MS/757) in accordance with the *Policy for the implementation of the ICOMOS World Heritage mandate*. The Terms of Reference are attached to this report (Annex 1).

The mission was originally planned to last from 25 to 28 November 2007 (itinerary and programme: Annex 2). Bad weather delayed the planned visit by helicopter to the island and so the mission was extended to 29 November. The additional day was spent visiting other relevant monuments and sites on the Iveragh peninsula, including conservation works at Ballinskelligs Monastery and Church Island, and meeting the masons working on Skellig itself. The travel and subsistence expenses were met by the Irish authorities. The mission was carried out by Mr Hassall (composition of mission team: Annex 3).

2 NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

Protected area legislation

Skellig Michael is protected by an interlocking series of international and national cultural and natural heritage designations, including its status as a World Heritage site, a National Monument, a Nature Reserve, Special Protection Area under the European Union's Bird Directive (79/409/EEC), and a proposed Natural Heritage Area.

Institutional framework

Since 2003 ownership of the property has been vested in the Irish Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. This department is responsible for heritage policy issues, including liaison with UNESCO and with the National Monuments Service. Management of the monument, including conservation and visitor services, is the responsibility of the National Monuments Service, Office of Public Works (OPW), Department of Finance. The two lighthouses on the island, one operational (Lower Lighthouse) and the other ruined (Upper Lighthouse), are both owned by the Commissioner of Irish Lights. Wildlife issues are the responsibility of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Management structure

The conservation programme has been conducted by a Senior Conservation Architect of the OPW, assisted by a Senior Archaeologist of the National Monuments Service. Access and visitor management issues are the responsibility of a Principal Officer of the OPW. There is no single site manager and the authorities considered in their state of conservation report that none was needed. A contrary view has been expressed by the Heritage Council of Ireland and the Royal Irish Academy in their response to the draft Management Plan.

3 IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ISSUES

State of conservation, integrity, authenticity and impact on the Outstanding Universal Value

The island rises out of the Atlantic 12km off the south-west of County Kerry. The island consists of two peaks separated by a valley known as "Christ's Saddle" (see map and aerial photograph). On the north-east peak lies the main 7th century Christian monastic complex. The South Peak, which lies to the west-south-west, rises 218m above the sea and is the site of a hermitage.

The mission studied evidence relating to both the pre- and the post-inscription conservation works. Since the conservation, integrity, and authenticity of the main monastic complex had been considered at the time of inscription the mission concentrated its enquiries on the most recent conservation works on the South Peak. It is the total conservation of the hermitage structures which

led to the criticism of the Irish Authorities and what follows relates solely to these later works.

The South Peak was surveyed in 1984 and 1985, with the technical assistance of mountaineers. A group of fragmentary structures, virtually invisible from the lower levels and covered by vegetation, was identified and interpreted as a hermitage.

The hermitage consists of three separate terraces (rendering of the man-made terraces and structures). Two of these are adjacent, on the two best natural terraces on the peak, and are connected by two passages, whilst the third is some distance away and extremely difficult of access. The principal remains are those of an oratory, where much of the north and west walls of the building survive. At the western end of this terrace are the remains of a *leacht*, a rectangular stone structure typical of early Irish monastic sites, which probably served as a deposit for relics or an altar. It is these structures that have been conserved.

The critics presented the mission with verbal, written, and photographic evidence to support their concerns. In addition, further criticisms were expressed by others in the submissions in response to the draft Management Plan.

The concerns are many and various and can be summarized and listed as follows:

- a lack of transparency in the decision-making process which led the conservation works;
- a failure to apply best Irish archaeological practice before and during works – i.e. no initial option appraisal was made, the works were not set within a research framework and subject to peer review, leading to the potential loss of archaeological research opportunities, and the failure to involve a wide range of disciplines;
- a concentration on the evidence for the early Christian period leading to potential loss of information on the island's later history as a pilgrimage focus, and also the story of the early lighthouse keepers;
- a perception that works were driven by architectural rather than archaeological imperatives;
- no environmental impact assessment was carried out which would have identified potential impacts by the works on wildlife brought about by the use of a 'zip wire' used to bring equipment to the South Peak and the subsequent dumping of spoil;
- a lack of care during the works and a lack of archaeological supervision;
- publication of the works was very limited and the end product is the creation of a highly visible, hypothetical, and misleading reconstruction which will be mistaken for the original remains and as such contravenes international charters.

In view of the cumulative impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value the critics believe that the Irish authorities should have alerted UNESCO before works began.

The Irish authorities also presented oral, documentary, and photographic evidence in support of their rejection of these criticisms. In their view the South

Peak works followed on directly from the works on the main complex, which were endorsed by the ICOMOS evaluation at the time of inscription and made clear to the World Heritage Committee at that time. The authorities accordingly felt that no discussion outside official circles was appropriate and that internal consent procedures provided sufficient safeguards to ensure that the works were carried out in an appropriate manner. In view of the fragility of the surviving structures the official view was that a “do nothing” option was not viable. A combination of the harsh environment and increasing visitor pressure would inevitably lead to the further loss of surviving structures. Once the remains were cleared of vegetation nothing short of full conservation could be undertaken if the structures were to survive. International charters were interpreted as supporting their approach. The conservation works themselves were undertaken by the same experienced team responsible for the earlier works, consisting of a conservation architect, an archaeologist (initially in-house and more recently an archaeological contractor), a structural engineer, in-house masons with expertise in drystone walling, and specialized scaffolding and safety experts.

The mission’s visit to the island allowed a first-hand assessment of the practical issues raised by both sides. It was clear that, given the physical constraints of the narrow terraces, the need for scaffolding to be bolted into the sheer cliff faces, and the employment of safety harnesses, the works were extremely difficult to carry out and costly.

The results of the excavations undertaken at each area before work began were discussed with the excavator. Each section of conserved structure was examined in detail on site. From this examination it was apparent that, once the decision to clear the stonework was taken, the surviving structures would have rapidly lost their remaining stability if repair and reconstruction had not taken place. This action required the tightening of intact *in situ* drystone walling and providing stability by rebuilding lost areas of walling. All the walling required the application of new “sacrificial” top courses. Every intervention and rebuild could be justified on archaeological or engineering grounds.

The cumulative effect is that a series of structures now exist which are totally different in appearance from what had originally survived before conservation. At present areas of old and new work can be distinguished, but in time the appearance of old and new work will be undifferentiated as the stonework weathers and lichens grow on all the surfaces. This conserved walling will require constant inspection and maintenance if it is to survive intact. Annex 7 is a photograph of the Garden Terrace and is provided as a representative example of the conservation works and to illustrate the issues.

Recording

In view of the scale of change the detail and quality of the records made before, during, and after the conservation works are critical. The mission was given a presentation on the site recording, including an examination of a sample of the detailed site records (written descriptions, plans, elevations, and photographs). The mission noted that site sieving and metal detector scanning of spoil, which might have been appropriate in view of the paucity of finds, had not been employed. Individual stones had been recorded in paved areas, walls were recorded in plan, without individual top courses being recorded, but individual stones were recorded in elevations. It is proposed to take photographs of all the conserved external elevations from a helicopter. These

photographs will be annotated so that a permanent record will be made to distinguish the original from the new stonework.

The authorities recognize that full publication, at both a scholarly and at a more popular level, of the archaeological investigations and the conservation works undertaken from 1978 to 2007 is essential. Up to the present time only short descriptive interim publications and annual summary articles have been published, and there has been some additional dissemination of the results through lectures and presentations. A programme for ordering the records of the site stratification is about to commence, and specialists have been identified to contribute to the final report. However at the time of the mission there was no clear costed programme, based on an assessment of the site archive, for the full academic publication and the arrangements for the public access to the site archive.

Involvement of local communities and other stakeholders

The boatmen who take paying passengers out to the property are the stakeholders from the local community who are most affected by the management of the property. Many of the boatmen have a long-standing connection with the island and they view themselves as the natural "Guardians of Skellig." They watch closely over all aspects of the island's management. They feel that they should be consulted over all aspects of the management of the site, but are most concerned over access issues. Visitors have more direct contact with the boatmen on the outward and return trips than they do with the official guides on the island itself.

An attempt was made by the Irish authorities in 1994 to reach an agreement with the boatmen over the regulations controlling access by boat to the island. However, the authorities and the boatmen differ in their perceptions of what was agreed at that time and there are no formal agreed minutes of the discussions that took place. As a result the boatmen have been in dispute with the Irish authorities over landing rights since that time. A delegation of boatmen travelled to Dublin and provided the mission with both written and oral evidence on their grievances.

Because of the fragility of the site and safety considerations the Irish authorities have decided to limit the number of visitors to the site (see *Visitor access* below). As the legal owners of the island they have introduced a number of measures to achieve this aim: visiting is discouraged except during a defined season when there is a resident guide presence (late May to late September). Fifteen non-transferable permits to land are issued annually to individual passenger boat operators who are authorized to land no more than twelve passengers per day between specified times. The authorities have also given permission to up to three cruise ships per season to land up to 100 passengers at any one time. The authorities accept that unauthorized landings do take place at other times from visiting yachts and dive boats, but point out that this activity is impossible to police.

Although the boatmen have been issued with permits they currently have refused to sign them and to accept their terms. They feel that access should be allowed during the entire tourist season and when weather conditions allow landing (i.e. from Easter until early October); in practice this seems to be what happens. They also feel that the landing permits should be issued for a longer period than annually in order to justify their financial outlay on boats and to enable them to secure bank loans when they purchase new boats. They also feel strongly that the permits should be transferable, particularly to family

members. They assert that in the Killarney National Park the jarvies (horse-drawn-vehicle drivers) are issued with transferable permits to carry passengers. They resent what they consider to be the preferential treatment given to cruise ships and point out that the other unauthorized boats, which land unannounced both in and out of season, are not regulated by the permit or any other procedure.

Protection and management – draft management plan

A management document was produced at the time of inscription and this is in the process of being replaced by a more comprehensive Management Plan. An in-house interdepartmental team with no stakeholder representation began work on this plan in 2006. The draft plan, which reflects its multiple authorship, might have benefited from a single authorship; it might also have drawn upon the experience of management plan exemplars from other countries. A first draft plan was put out to consultation in June 2007.

The mission examined the draft plan, and also the 30 submissions received following the consultation. Many of the representations received relate to the issues of research, conservation, and publication, as well as the boatmen's dispute and the important ecology of the island, which are referred to below.

The Heritage Council of Ireland, the Royal Irish Academy, and the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland all called for more stakeholder participation in the future to draw academic expertise into future research and management (which should also include more involvement with wildlife interests). The Heritage Council and the Royal Irish Academy also called for the appointment of a site manager who could learn from the experience of other World Heritage site and play a coordinating role.

Boundaries

The island is 21.96ha in extent. The World Heritage site boundaries are drawn tightly round the island to reflect the cultural history of the early monastery. The surrounding sea forms a buffer zone.

The boundary is perfectly logical. There would appear to be two options for extension: the inclusion of the site of the Augustinian Monastery of Ballinskelligs on the mainland, which was founded by the monks of Skellig Michael when they transferred there from the island in the 12th or 13th century, or an extension covering a number of other early Christian sites. An alternative approach would be to include the natural history dimension of the property, particularly the seabird life; this could also include geology and marine life. This would involve an extension to the neighbouring island of Little Skellig and the wider feeding grounds of the seabirds.

There is also a marine natural history dimension: the waters around Skellig are apparently rated amongst the top ten diving sites in the world. The mission also noted references to a developing Kerry "Geopark" which will take account of the important geology of Kerry. These are important aspects of the property, but the mission is not aware that they are considered of World Heritage significance.

Visitor access

There is no charge for landing on the island or for the guide services provided during the season. Access to the site is dictated by weather conditions and is restricted to those who are reasonably physically fit. Landing by boat with the Atlantic swell can be difficult and the property itself is steep and rugged.

The average number of visitors during the visitor season is about 11,100, with the daily number of visitors capped at a theoretical 180. The OPW considers this to be a sustainable number in terms of protecting the monument. There has been no detailed analysis of the carrying capacity, including safety considerations and ecological impact. There is apparently sometimes overcrowding in the middle of the day. The numbers visiting the site are largely controlled by the mechanism of the landing permits and the authorization of cruise ship visits. The unofficial visits by passengers from other craft are impossible to control and this is likely to be a growing issue as ownership of private boats and yachts increases. The official guides, when they are in residence, manage the visitor access and provide interpretation at the main monastery complex.

With the completion of the South Peak works this part of the island will be accessible to visitors. In spite of the increased visibility of the conserved structures, numbers of visitors are anticipated to be small because of the limited time visitors normally stay on the island and the physical difficulties of the ascent.

A website is proposed for 2009 which will allow “virtual access” to the property for the disabled. Publication at all levels and website development are essential to allow appreciation of the site out of season, during inclement summer weather, and for those who, for whatever reason, will be unable to visit this remarkable site in person.

Tourism management

The World Heritage site is confined to Skellig Michael, but this island together with Little Skellig form prominent features visible from the mainland. Skellig therefore acts as a magnet for extensive tourism to the Iveragh peninsula. The majority of visitors only see Skellig from the mainland and do not visit the island. The only official information provided on the mainland are general introductory signs, which also provide basic safety information displayed at the embarkation piers.

A visitor centre, the Skellig Experience, has been established to cater for the needs of tourists. It is not an official centre but a private/public partnership. The centre was closed for the winter at the time of the mission. In its submission to the draft Management Plan the Iveragh Tourism Network called for a greater integration of tourism initiatives between the property and the mainland.

There is no site manager as such. On the island itself the resident guides are responsible for day-to-day tourism management, but only during the season.

Site presentation (including signage)

OPW considers its brief to be primarily the conservation of monuments and not their interpretation and display. This interpretation of its role is reflected in a rather narrowly focused Mission Statement for the draft Management Plan.

Site presentation relies almost entirely on the skill of the resident guides. Basic information is provided at the departure piers and on an introductory sign at the island's landing stage. There is a deliberate policy of not cluttering the property with any other interpretive signs. There are also no official publications such as either a "walk round" or a souvenir guide. An information booklet and website are planned. The World Heritage Emblem has not been used in the signage or on the draft Management Plan.

Infrastructure development

Apart from the unmanned operational lighthouse, the only infrastructure on the island is the seasonally occupied accommodation for the resident guides. No facilities, including environmentally acceptable toilets, are provided for visitors. This lack of toilets is seen as a major issue by many of those who responded to the draft Management Plan. The boatmen also wish to see improvements to the landing pier to make landing safer.

Natural heritage

Although the property's World Heritage status is derived from the significance of its cultural heritage, the island has national and European significance because of its seabird population. The interests of the birdlife, of the conservation of the monument, and of visitors are sometimes in conflict. For instance, the nest burrows of puffins and petrels cause damage to the monument, while conservation works and visitors can disturb the seabirds, particularly during the nesting season.

In the draft Management Plan OPW outlined proposals to conserve the natural heritage of the island. However, in its submission on the draft Management Plan Birdwatch Ireland felt that the plan did not adequately represent the natural heritage. Others made similar points and called for the care of the cultural and natural heritage to be more closely integrated, including protocols for waste disposal and the prevention of the introduction of alien species.

4 ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE SITE

The authentic, original structures on the South Peak have been conserved and reconstructed, and as a result they are dramatically different from how they appeared before work started. They now look more like conjectural reconstructions published after the original survey. Without a detailed explanation of the on-site decision-making process that led up to each individual intervention this change in appearance would indeed give cause for concern.

Because the rationale for the works and the actual process was largely discussed in-house, criticisms were inevitable. Since the start of the programme of works in 1978 conservation philosophy in other countries has moved towards a minimum intervention approach. Opportunities were also lost to take advantage of expertise outside the OPW which could have reassured outside observers that best practice was being followed. This situation has been exacerbated by the lack of publication.

The new work is in its own way almost as remarkable as the original work. The process of conservation and reconstruction, including the controversy

surrounding these activities, has now become a part of the history of the property. The monument as now reconstructed will become the popular vision of Skellig. For this reason it is essential that detail of the works should always be made explicit and the new work should be distinguishable from the old in all future publications. Until the works are published at an academic and a popular level the conservation works cannot be said to have been completed.

In spite of the conservation works the nature of drystone walling is such that the remains continue to be fragile and will require continued and regular maintenance. The area of safely accessible site remains very limited. For this reason a limit on visitor numbers will be essential. However, the actual number needs to be confirmed or ascertained by a detailed visitor survey.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The island has very particular management issues brought about by its isolated and exposed position in the Atlantic, the fragility of the remains, and the importance of the sea birdlife. The long and expensive campaign to conserve and reconstruct the monuments has been mirrored by the vigour of criticism. All those who are connected with the island have a strong emotional attachment and commitment to it. Modern visitors are as deeply moved as earlier pilgrims must have been. No one can visit Skellig Michael without being filled with admiration for the faith of the early Christian monks who prayed and worked on this dramatic and inhospitable rock. To the monks the island must have seemed the bridge between Heaven and Earth.

The conservation works on the South Peak have dramatically altered the appearance of the surviving remains. However, the mission takes the same view as the World Heritage Committee, informed by ICOMOS's original evaluation mission at the time of inscription with regard to the works at the main monastery complex. It is the mission's opinion that the Outstanding Universal Values of the site remain intact, so long as the works are reported in a full academic publication.

Recommendations

The Mission makes the following recommendations:

1. With hindsight it would have been sensible if the OPW had initiated a debate amongst archaeologists and other stakeholders before embarking on the South Peak works. These works formed a discrete programme and so that there is no reason why they should not have followed the procedures on the main complex. This would have allowed an open debate as to possible options. Hopefully, all the parties would then have been able to agree upon an appropriate solution.

Now that the works are complete it is the current appearance of the site which will inform the popular vision of the site. It is important that visitors and researchers alike are fully aware of the pre-conservation state of the monuments and the reasons for change. To achieve this aim, **publication of the excavations and a detailed account of the conservation works** is essential at all levels. OPW is already making steps in this direction by

commissioning the ordering of the stratigraphic record and identifying the need for publication in the draft Management Plan.

2. The mission recommends that the ordered records should be subject to a full assessment, leading to a **fully costed publication programme**, to include publication both in hard copy and on the proposed Skellig website as well as a fully accessible public archive. These recommendations are already identified in the draft Management Plan, but the full resources need to be identified as soon as possible, especially the allocation of staff time.
3. An **Academic Advisory Committee** should be appointed by OPW, as suggested by the Heritage Council of Ireland, the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland, and the Royal Irish Academy. This would be an extension of OPW's proposal in the draft Management Plan to establish a forum of community interests. This expert group could draw in wider expertise than is currently available to OPW to advise on the publication programme. The same group could advise on research frameworks in advance of further excavation and conservation on the remaining medieval and lighthouse-related structures on the property. Ideally these works should be set in the context of a formal Archaeological Research Agenda and Strategy which would outline research themes, methods of artefact and environmental recovery, and other aspects of best Irish archaeological practice.
4. A **durable agreement with the passenger boatmen** must be reached through negotiation and compromise. A continued limit on visitor numbers implies that a method of controlling visitor access, including landings from private boats and from commercial boats without permits, will always be required. In principle the commercial boat permit system seems to be a sensible approach to control the majority of visitors. However, the dispute between OPW and the boatmen clearly requires resolution. OPW is prepared to look at the length of the season and the provision of shore-based guides. The boatmen themselves are generally abiding by the terms of the permits, although still disputing their contents. This shows a degree of pragmatism on both sides which could provide a foundation for a future agreement, provided that a constructive dialogue is maintained.
5. As a first step OPW should invite those boatmen to whom the current permits are issued to attend an **annual meeting** at a regular time, outside the tourist season and before the issue of permits. This meeting would be in addition to the forum for community interests already proposed by OPW. The agenda for this annual meeting would include a review of the previous season, provision of information on the forthcoming season, including practical arrangements, such as the duration of a guide presence on the island and the dates on which cruise ships are anticipated, and an outline of any works to be undertaken. Papers should be circulated to non-attenders and a formal minute of the meeting should be taken and circulated.
6. The key matter that is in dispute between the OPW and the boatmen is the issue of non-transferability of the landing permits. It appears unlikely that OPW will give way on this principle. That being the case the OPW should establish and make known the **future criteria for the issue of permits**, once permits become available as present holders cease to operate.
7. The mission supports the suggestion of the Heritage Council and the Royal Irish Academy that there should be a **site manager**. It therefore

recommends that OPW should reconsider its view that such an appointment is not needed. The manager would be able to fulfil an essential coordinating role between the various official and stakeholder interests. The manager would be responsible for driving forward the actions proposed in the Management Plan. The manager would also serve as a focal point for any issues that might arise and could service the proposed OPW stakeholder forum, the Academic Advisory Committee, and the annual meeting with the boatmen recommended above. The manager could prepare an annual Skellig Report as suggested by Kerry Council, which could be a key document in publicizing progress on the Management Plan to stakeholders. This would be an extension of the proposal in the draft Management Plan for periodic updates on the implementation of the plan. The manager could also liaise with local tourist interests, and share experience and best practice with World Heritage site managers in other countries.

8. No changes are required to **the World Heritage site boundary**, but suggests that this matter is kept under review, particularly as the natural heritage management plan is developed.
9. A **detailed visitor study** should be carried out to identify needs and perceptions and vitally to confirm the carrying capacity of the island.
10. A detailed study should be commissioned to identify an environmentally acceptable solution to **the lack of toilet facilities** on the island.

6 ANNEXES

1. Terms of reference
2. Itinerary and programme
3. Composition of mission team and CV of Tom Hassall
4. Map of Skellig Michael
5. Aerial view of Skellig Michael from the south. The hermitage is situated on the South Peak on the left and the monastery on the north-east peak to the right. Photograph: Office of Public Works.
6. Rendering of the man-made terraces and structures on the South Peak, following the original survey. Drawing by Grellan Rourke.
7. Garden Terrace after conservation. The original drystone walling is to the left. New walling is to the right of the black line. Photograph: Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

for the UNESCO – ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to the World Heritage property of Skellig Michael, Ireland (26-28 November 2007)

1. Carry out a UNESCO-ICOMOS mission, to review the state of conservation of the property of Skellig Michael, Ireland, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1996;
2. Review the overall situation of the property of Skellig Michael, with regard to the state of conservation of the site, its integrity and authenticity, and whether the current conservation works have any impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value of the site;
3. Evaluate in detail the conservation works and examine the all information available (records, plans, stratigraphy, photographs, written descriptions) that were made prior to any works undertaken;
4. Discuss with national and local authorities how the restoration and conservation works may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the site;
5. Investigate the involvement of local communities and other stakeholders and review the cooperation process taking place;
6. Discuss with relevant authorities, local institutions and organisations the protection and the management of the property, by reviewing the current draft management plan, and taking into account paragraphs 96-98 of the Operational Guidelines (2005);
7. Take into account the results of the Periodic Reporting (Decisions **30 COM 11 A.1** and **31 COM 11A.1** and **31 COM 11A.2**) and the requirements under the retrospective inventory with regard to the boundaries of the property;
8. Review any other issues which may be relevant for the conservation of the World Heritage property, including visitor access, tourism management, site presentation (including signage) and infrastructure development;
9. Prepare a detailed report by **1 February 2008** at the latest for review by the World Heritage Committee in its 32nd session in Canada in 2008 considering Operational Guidelines paragraphs 172, 178-186 and 192-198. The report shall be submitted to the World Heritage Centre in electronic form (not exceeding 10 pages; according to the enclosed format).

UNESCO Mission: Skellig Michael

26/27/28 November, 2007

Itinerary, Mr Tom Hassall, OBE MA FSA Hon MIFA

Sunday, 25 November, 2007

- 8.35pm** Flight Arrival (Flight Number FR667) from Birmingham
- 9pm** Transfer by taxi to **Merrion Hotel**, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2
Reservation Number: 358714

Monday, 26 November, 2007- Dublin

- 9am** Meeting with **Mr Ian Lumley**, Heritage Officer and **Ms Anja Murray**, Environmental Officer, **An Taisce Pembroke Room**, Merrion Hotel
- 11am** Meeting with **Mr Michael Gibbons**, Archaeologist
Pembroke Room, Merrion Hotel
- 1pm** Lunch at the **Cellar Restaurant, Merrion Hotel** with Mr Dermot Bourke, OPW
- 2.15pm-3pm** Meeting with **Mr Dermot Burke and colleague**, Office of Public Works
Pembroke Room, Merrion Hotel
- 3pm-5pm** Meeting with Skellig Michael **local boatmen and OPW officials**
Pembroke Room, Merrion Hotel
- 8pm** Dinner with **ICOMOS Ireland** (Peter Cox, Prof. Loughlin Kealy Rae, Mona O'Rourke), Dermot Burke (OPW), Anne Marie Caulfield, Finian Matthews (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOEHLG))
- La Mere Zou**, 22 St. Stephens Green, Dublin 2

Tuesday, 27 November, 2007- Dublin

- 9am** **Meeting with DOEHLG and OPW Staff**
Offices of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, **Dun Sceine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2**
- 1pm** Lunch (being delivered to Dun Sceine)
- 2pm** Taxi Transfer to Heuston Station
- 3pm** Train to Mallow, switch train continue to Killarney
- 6.30pm** Hire car pickup at train station and transfer to B&B, **Old Cable House, Waterville, Co. Kerry**
- 8pm** Arrive B&B, Dinner

Wednesday, 28 November, 2007- Skelligs

- 9.30am** Pick up of party at Con O'Sheas field, West Valentia (2 shifts)
- 10am** Arrive Skelligs (10am-2pm Site Visit)
- 1pm** Lunch (Packed lunch arranged with B&B)
- 2.15pm** Transfer to Farranfore airport, Kerry by car (Journey time 1.5 hours)
- 3.45pm** Check-in to Flight 702 (latest check-in 5.05pm)
- 5.45pm** Flight Departs to London

Contact Details:

Accommodation:

The Merrion Hotel, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2.
Tel. 01-6030600
<http://www.merrionhotel.com/>

Mrs Brown, Old Cable House Bed and Breakfast, Waterville, Co. Kerry
Tel. 066-9474233

Car Hire:

Dooley Car Rentals Ireland Tel. 062-53103 (Ref Number: 2219045)

Ian Lumley 087 22 88 127.

Re: Boatmen Issues:

Mr Dermot Burke, Director, National Monuments, Office of Public Works
Tel. 01-8883205

Ms Fionnuala Parnell, National Monuments, Office of Public Works
Tel. 01-6476914

Re: Archaeological/Conservation Issues:

Dr Ann Lynch, National Monuments, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Tel. 01-8883169 (work) Mobile (087-6675290)

Mr Grellan Rourke, National Monuments, Office of Public Works
Tel. 01-6476303 Mobile (087-2521730)

Re: Other issues:

Ms Anne Marie Caulfield, Heritage Policy and Architectural Protection, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Tel. 01-8883102 Mobile (087-9170867)

Ms Suzanne Nally, Heritage Policy, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Tel. 01-8883036 Mobile (086-8799107)

IT Issues:

Mr Sean Rocks, IT Dept, Tel. 01-8883218

Practicalities:

Suggested to pack:

Hiking boots

Warm layers

Small light rucksack

Jacket

Fleece

Waterproofs

Hat & Gloves

Tom Hassall OBE MA FSA Hon MIFA

Tom Hassall was the President of ICOMOS-UK 1998-2002. He was also the Chairman of both the ICOMOS-UK Research and Recording and World Heritage Committees. He has been an archaeological consultant in private practice since 1999. His current and recent portfolio includes sites in Bath and Liverpool (World Heritage sites) and also Manchester (UK Tentative List site). He was the Secretary and Chief Executive of the former Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, 1986-1999; the founding director of the Oxford Archaeological Unit (now known as Oxford Archaeology), 1973-1985; and the Director of the Oxford Archaeological Excavation Committee, 1967-1973. He also has an interest in maritime archaeology and he has been Chairman of the UK's Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites since 2002. He is a member of the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Heritage Protection Review Steering Committee. He was Chairman of the Society of Antiquaries of London's Kelmscott Manor Management Committee, 2000-2005 and was responsible for the research and recent publication of the Society's Kelmscott Landscape Project. He was the President of the Council for British Archaeology, 1983-1986. He has been a Fellow of St. Cross College, Oxford, since 1973.

UNESCO designated World Heritage Site, Skellig Michael, Ireland







