

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN COMMENTS TO ICOMOS

THE SLATE LANDSCAPE OF NORTHWEST WALES (UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND)

IUCN provides the following comments to ICOMOS based on a review of the nomination dossier by the IUCN World Heritage Panel and three external desk reviews.

According to the nomination file, six separate component parts covering a total of 3,259.01 ha constitute the nominated property, encompassed by a buffer zone of 250,400 ha. Two protection designations underpin the buffer zone and the component parts: Snowdonia National Park (IUCN Protected Area Category V – Protected Landscape/Seascape) and partly overlapping designations as Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Significance of Wales. IUCN observes that the nominated property, designated under criteria (ii), (iv) and (v), includes two entire component parts (4 and 6) and some areas of component parts (1 and 5) within the national park. Component parts 1, 2, 3 and 5 overlap or are adjacent to other international and national nature protected areas designations (e.g. National Nature Reserves (NNRs)).

IUCN notes that the Traeth Lafan, Conwy Bay Important Bird Area (IBA) is located adjacent to component part 1 and the buffer zone of the nominated property. The IBA is important for wintering and passage of wildfowl and waders, including the Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) which is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. In addition, several of the component parts and/or their buffer zones overlap with other endangered, vulnerable or near threatened species according to the IUCN Red List, such as the Endangered Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*).

The IUCN World Heritage Panel considered the focus of this nomination on the heritage of quarrying and mining, and raises again the question of whether landscapes shaped by extractive industries are conceptually appropriate to consider within the cultural landscape category as defined under the Convention (the wording being: “combined works of nature and of man [people]”), as the interaction that took place between people and nature involved substantial alteration of the environment, resulting in a permanent extraction and loss of natural values. The impacts on the original natural values of the landscape was very significant in the case of this nomination.

IUCN also notes that slate extraction and transport continues to a certain degree as the nomination confirms that some active mineral extraction and processing will continue within the buffer zone in the wider protected area outside the nominated component parts 1, 3 and 5, though not within the Snowdonia National Park. In addition, the nomination file states that component part 1 is subject to limited industrial use, to fishing and leisure activities, including the occasional shipping of slate. Component part 1 being adjacent to above-mentioned IBA, IUCN recommends this matter should be considered further by ICOMOS in its evaluation. IUCN considers that any areas of active modern mining should not be included within the boundaries of the nominated property, and that any secondary impacts, such as transportation of extracted slate, should be managed appropriately in order to reduce any negative impacts on the natural values of overlapping international and national designations, whilst ensuring that there are no indirect impacts on the nominated property.

Lastly, IUCN notes the objective of Snowdonia National Park to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and wildlife of this area. As the national park covers most of the buffer zone, IUCN recommends ICOMOS to assess the conservation objectives of those parts of the buffer zone that are covered by the national park against the conservation objectives of the nominated property, to ascertain whether or not these objectives are compatible with one another.