

Press release: Slate landscape of North West Wales UK's preferred World Heritage Site Nomination for 2019

Updated: We have added the Welsh translation.

The Slate Landscape of North-West Wales will be the UK's next preferred nomination for UNESCO World Heritage site status, Heritage Minister Michael Ellis announced today.

The area – which runs throughout the county of Gwynedd – is said to have “roofed the 19th century world” as slate from its mines was exported around the globe.

The landscape was assessed for World Heritage Status by a UK panel of experts this summer and it will be formally presented to UNESCO next year.

It will then be considered by the International Council of Sites and Monuments followed by the World Heritage Committee in 2021. Should it be approved, the Slate Landscape will join the likes of Grand Canyon National Park, The Great Barrier Reef and the Lake District as a designated World Heritage Site.

The site was the world's greatest exporter of slate during the mid 19th century, becoming a key part of the social and economic fabric of North Wales. The slate mined from the area also had a significant impact on global architecture with its materials used on a vast range of buildings, from terraces to palaces all around the world.

If inscribed it would be the fourth World Heritage Site in Wales, alongside the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, the Castles and Town Walls of King Edward at Gwynedd and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, said:

Gwynedd's slate landscape is hugely important. Its vast quarries and mines have not only shaped the countryside of the region but also countless buildings across the UK and the world.

This is a crucial milestone on the road to becoming a World Heritage site and the global recognition that brings. While the UNESCO nomination process is very thorough, I believe this unique landscape would be a worthy addition to the list.

UK Government Minister for Wales, Mims Davies said:

It gives me great pleasure to see that the world-renowned slate landscape of Gwynedd has been selected as the UK Government's preferred UNESCO World Heritage Site nomination.

An accolade such as this not only highlights the immense beauty and history that Wales has to offer but also acts as a catalyst to investment and tourism. The status which is globally recognised would help to revive and grow the economy of the slate areas that have had such a significant influence on the communities and heritage of North West Wales.

The UK currently has 31 other World Heritage sites and can nominate one site per calendar year. Jodrell Bank Observatory was nominated in January 2018, and has recently undergone an evaluation mission by UNESCO's expert advisers. A decision on inscription for that site will take place during the annual committee meeting next summer.

A Parliamentary reception on the Slate Landscape, attended by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, will take place this afternoon.

Notes to editors:

- The World Heritage Centre manages over 1000 sites around the world and the UK has 31 World Heritage sites.
- Once a nomination is submitted, UNESCO's expert advisors assess the site, and make a recommendation to the World Heritage Committee.
- The news, which comes after the Slate Landscape passed the UK's rigorous technical evaluation process, signals the Government's support in principle for a nomination to be formally submitted in mid 2019.
- In Wales, there were 1 million visits by overseas tourists in 2017, spending £369 million in the local economy.
- In addition, British residents took 9 million overnight trips to Wales in 2017, spending £1.6 billion.

[News story: Stopping fraud against the](#)

NHS: new plans announced

The government has announced how it will take tougher action on fraud and save hundreds of millions of pounds for the NHS over the next 5 years, increasing the money available for improving patient care.

The plans were announced by Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock.

The new approach will start with a commitment to halve prescription fraud, which costs the NHS £256 million a year.

Prescription exemptions will be digitised, allowing pharmacies to check whether the patient does not have to pay charge before their medication is dispensed. This will be piloted next year, before being rolled out across the NHS.

The focus on prescriptions is one aspect of a wider crackdown on NHS fraud, which will prevent up to £300 million being lost to fraud by April 2020. This is part of the government's commitment to ensuring public finances are managed responsibly and that every penny invested goes towards improving care.

Further measures being introduced to stop fraud include:

- a new partnership between the NHS Counter Fraud Authority (NHSCFA) and the fraud prevention service Cifas, allowing NHS counter-fraud professionals to access Cifas data
- more collaboration and data sharing between the NHS Business Services Authority and NHSCFA to identify the small number of pharmacists and dentists claiming payments for services they have not carried out
- the [introduction of a new counter-fraud profession](#) in central government, bringing together around 10,000 counter-fraud specialists, including 400 focused on fraud in the NHS

NHSCFA will take forward these measures. It will work with its data-sharing partners to analyse large amounts of information and identify anomalies, unusual activity and inconsistencies in the NHS, referring to NHS investigators for further action.

NHSCFA was set up in November 2017 and replaces NHS Protect, which has been working to stop fraud since 2010.

Fraud in the NHS ranges from a few pounds, to hundreds of thousands and occasionally millions.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Those who abuse the NHS and choose to line their own pockets with money that should be spent on patients and frontline care will no longer have anywhere to hide. The new technology and analysis, combined with intel and experience of counter-fraud specialists will form the starting point of this new fight against NHS fraudsters.

We're determined to make sure every penny of the extra funding we are giving the NHS as part of our long-term plan is properly spent. The message is clear: the NHS is no longer an easy target, and if you try to steal from it you will face the consequences.

Sue Frith, interim CEO of the NHS Counter Fraud Authority, said:

I am delighted that the Health and Social Care Secretary is showing such a keen interest in addressing fraud and supporting the NHS Counter Fraud Authority in its vital mission to prevent and detect fraud against the NHS. It is key to our success that we collaborate with others and I am confident that as we work with partners this ambitious target will be achieved.

The more data sets we are able to access from partners such as Cifas and the NHS Business Services Authority, the more fraud we can detect and prevent. NHSCFA are actively engaging with the fintech sector to identify technological solutions that could enhance data examination and exploitation capability.

[News story: Armed forces pay award 2018 – extra payments for personnel that left the armed forces after 1 April 2018](#)



Former service personnel who left service after 1 April 2018 may be entitled to arrears of pay following the 2018 pay increase. To ensure that any arrears of pay are received, bank account and address details must be kept up to date and the JPAC centre informed of any changes on 0800 085 3600.

Background

The Armed Forces' Pay Review Body's (AFPRB) recommendation for 2018 was a 2.9% increase in pay for all personnel up to 1-star level (Commodore, Brigadier and Air Commodore) and the Senior Salaries Review Body's (SSRB) recommendation was for a 2.5% pay increase for all officers of 2-star rank and above.

The first part of the pay increase is 2% pensionable pay which was paid in September salaries backdated to 1 April 2018 for officers up to 1-star level and officers ranked 2-star and above will receive their 2% pensionable pay increase in November salaries.

The second part of the pay increase is the bonus element which is 0.9% for officers up to 1-star level and 0.5% for officers ranked 2-star and above. This element will be delivered in two lump sum payments one in November 2018 and one in March 2019

All personnel who have left the service after 1 April 2018, or will do so before March 2019 will receive pro-rata payments for the period of service that they completed.

It is vital that bank account and address details are kept up to date for these payments to be made

Published 23 October 2018

[News story: Skipton Flood Alleviation Scheme officially opened](#)

A multi-million pound flood defence scheme to reduce the risk of flooding to homes and businesses in Skipton has officially opened today (Thursday 11 October).

Press release: Man who threatened Hertfordshire police officers jailed

A man who pointed a gun at police officers has today been sent to prison after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, referred his sentence to the Court of Appeal for being too low.

Sebastian Alcock, 38, threatened 2 police officers with an imitation firearm. The police officers had received reports of a man behaving suspiciously, and asked Alcock to get out of the car for a drug search. At this point he became aggressive, struggling violently against the officers, and produced a gun, which at the time was assumed to be real. The police officers feared for their lives and escaped, and firearm officers arrested Alcock shortly after.

Alcock was originally sentenced at St Albans Crown Court in August, where he was given 15 months imprisonment suspended for 2 years. Today, after the Solicitor General's referral, the Court of Appeal increased his sentence to 3 years immediate imprisonment.

Commenting on the sentence increase, the Solicitor General said:

"This was a serious violent incident that was made even worse by Alcock's threats using an imitation firearm towards police officers working in the line of duty. The Court of Appeal has recognised this today."