

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.