

## *“I Know Where I'm Going”*

# Remote Access to World Heritage Sites from St Kilda to Uluru

23-24 November 2011- Edinburgh (UK)

## CALL FOR PAPERS

At a time of economic crisis and environmental threat, countries everywhere are addressing the dual challenge of protecting and preserving their natural and cultural heritage while maximising its economic value. This two-day international conference will focus on the potential of new technologies to create high-quality, remote-access, visitor experiences for World Heritage Sites and other sites of cultural, historical and natural significance where remote access is desirable or necessary.

### The conference has three main aims:

- a- **To showcase the new technologies available:** including the 3D laser scanning of St Kilda WHS as part of the Scottish Ten project to create exceptionally accurate digital models of Scotland's five UNESCO World Heritage Sites and others worldwide, in order to better conserve and manage them (<http://www.scottishten.org/>). Other forms of digital mapping will also be demonstrated.
- b- **To debate the benefits and challenges these new technologies present.** This applies not only to issues of preservation, conservation, interpretation but also to the benefits and pitfalls of virtual access to sensitive sites and the economic benefits of tourism promoted thus.
- c- **To encourage site managers worldwide** - particularly within the UNESCO World Heritage Sites network - to consider the benefits & impact these new technologies could have for their own sites, allowing them to investigate these further and clarify issues of acquisition, installation, costs etc.

The Conference will link into the 40th anniversary of the *1972 World Heritage Convention* (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>). It will be part of the Year of Scottish Islands 2011 and have a special resonance for island sites everywhere. This conference will showcase Scottish expertise in cutting-edge digital technology to a global audience and create new business links with new markets.

## BACKGROUND

Access and interpretation are important areas of discourse for World Heritage and its role in sustainable development. Remoteness is a function of many characteristics, including physical, historic and cultural. Examples of remote sites include islands, underwater and mountain environments and sacred landscapes (such as religious sites, war graves etc.).

### 1- Why use St Kilda as a case study?

The island of St Kilda is the UK's only dual UNESCO World Heritage Site, for both natural and cultural heritage, and one of only 27 sites globally to be awarded mixed World Heritage status. St Kilda has also been identified as having a marine landscape of international importance.

St Kilda is currently the focus of a development project to create a technologically innovative, remote-access interpretation centre based on the west coast of Lewis. The St Kilda Centre has ambitions to create sustainable economic development through a technologically sophisticated cultural venue in a remote location.

As a case study, St Kilda offers the opportunity to focus on issues shared by all interpretation professionals working to create remote access to sensitive sites. The challenges facing the St Kilda project are relevant to other sites of cultural significance in Orkney, Shetland and in the rest world. This Conference presents an opportunity for collaboration and knowledge-sharing between sites, where a balance needs to be found between enabling remote-access and encouraging visitors.

## **2- Benefits and challenges of the new technologies for the World Heritage Community & other sites**

The digital age presents new opportunities to create unique access experiences for visitors who would never be able to physically visit a site, due to issues of access and/or sustainability. Interpreters have an opportunity to harness the best of technological innovation, digital media and the internet to both promote and preserve. However new technologies also present challenges (in terms of ownership of the sites, access, etc) and it is important that this is also debated.

The conference aims to create a network (both physical and remote) of interpretation specialists, curators, conservators and custodians facing the challenge of creating remote access to sensitive, hard-to-access or trans-national sites; a network extending beyond the community of World Heritage sites to those working to preserve other sites of cultural and historical significance. Many African countries particularly have hugely important sites that are inaccessible either because of their remoteness, or fragile environments. Examples are the trade and slaving forts along the West African coast, the painted rock faces in the Saharan countries and mud-built mosques such as those in northern Ghana and Burkino Faso. Many are of great historical and emotional interest to the world, e.g. the coastal forts to people of slave descent in the Americas, and the need to access those remotely is increasing.

## **CALL FOR PAPERS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

This Conference aims to bring together UNESCO (World Heritage Centre), the UK National Commission for UNESCO, ICOMOS-UK/IUCN UK, ICOMOS/IUCN international, World Heritage Sites directors and practitioners in the UK and abroad, Historic Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, English Heritage, Institute of Historic Buildings Conservation, the Association of Heritage Interpreters, museums practitioners, Government representatives, policy makers and others. It will seek to break down conventional sectoral divides between heritage practitioners and technological innovators.

In addition to papers on the central theme of remote-access, we now invite papers and presentations which address key questions, including the following, and particularly welcome empirical contributions grounded in national and regional contexts:

- 1. What are the most relevant trends and recent developments in remote access technology? What are the special considerations for different categories of heritage experiences (from underwater sites to*

*open air museums to historic houses/listed buildings)? What are the benefits and disadvantages of remote viewing, and for whom?*

2. *How can technological innovation both support remote access and contribute to conservation of all aspects of a heritage site, from the historic environment to artefacts? When is remote access less sustainable? Who controls the ability to view heritage sites and materials remote, and the content which is available to view?*
3. *How can a balance be achieved between tourism development and environmental protection at heritage sites? Can the owners/custodians of a site benefit financially from remote viewing? (e.g issues of data ownership, land rights and intellectual property). Will remote viewing encourage physical tourism or diminish it?*
4. *How can remote access and remote access technologies contribute to formal and informal Education about the sites?*
5. *How can storytelling and other arts contribute to remote access heritage interpretation?*

## THE CONFERENCE FORMAT:

The Conference will have a mix of presentations and keynotes and parallel sessions with empirical papers drawing on national and regional contexts. Keynote speakers will include Dr Mechtild Rössler, Chief of section Policy and Statutory Implementation Unit, UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

**If you would like to present a paper addressing the themes of the Conference**, please submit an abstract. Abstracts should be submitted in pdf format and be limited to 2 pages and 1,000 words (including title and author information, but excluding references). The evaluation will be based on the quality of the submission. Submissions and inquiries are through: [rawhsc11@gmail.com](mailto:rawhsc11@gmail.com) . **The deadline for submissions is 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2011.** On submission of an abstract, authors should receive an email confirming receipt of their submission.

## CONTACT:

**Isabelle Uny**

Project Manager

**Email:** [rawhsc11@gmail.com](mailto:rawhsc11@gmail.com)

**Website:** <http://inspace.mediascot.org/beholder/iknowwhereimgoing>

**Mobile:** +44(0) 777 380 8912

## IMPORTANT DATES:

Submission of title and abstract: 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2011

Notification of acceptance: 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2011

Deadline for early-bird registration: 30 June, 2011

Registration deadline: 11 November, 2011

Remote Access to World Heritage Sites Conference: 23 & 24 November, 2011