

## **Background to State of Conservation Reports (SoCR)**

The state of conservation of a World Heritage property refers to its condition (including, but not limited to, physical state, authenticity and integrity), its vulnerabilities, affecting factors and the conservation measures in place to maintain its Outstanding Universal Value after ([UNESCO Guidance and Toolkit 2022](#), Glossary).

[State of Conservation Reports](#) (SoCR) are produced by the State Party as part of the Reactive Monitoring of World Heritage properties that are considered to be under threat. The process is explained in the [Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention](#) (Paragraphs 169-176).

SoCRs are usually requested by the World Heritage Committee when it is made aware of potential concerns regarding a property's state of conservation. In some circumstances the request may come from the World Heritage Centre. SoCRs are usually examined by the World Heritage Committee at its annual meeting.

## **General Guidance for Drafting**

### State Party documents

- SoCRs are drafted from the perspective of the UK Government, aligned with its policies, tone of voice and priorities.
- The SoCR should provide a coherent and persuasive narrative of the State Party's position in relation to any concerns, requests and recommendations from the World Heritage Committee, its Advisory Bodies, and the World Heritage Centre. The report should respond to each issue setting out how it is being or has been addressed at local and/or national level.
- The SoCR will clearly identify any key messages that summarise the State Party position as part of the overarching narrative. These will be agreed by the Historic England International team with DCMS at the start of the process of drafting a SoCR to inform its approach throughout.

### Authorship

- The WHS Coordinator or Coordination Unit will usually be the lead author of the report, responsible for compiling input from the various partners.
- Historic England's Regions and International teams will provide ongoing support and guidance and will provide editorial assistance to ensure the draft has a consistent voice with other State Party SoCRs.
- Individual partners may be asked to take the lead on drafting individual sections of the report for comment by others, depending on the issue that needs to be reported on.
- DCMS will decide on any final edits prior to submission.

### Readability

- Detail should be targeted and relevant. The key audience for a SoCR is the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies. Keeping the level of detail proportionate will help ensure that the readers are able to understand and absorb the key messages.
- Use of subheadings (based on the wording of the Committee Decision or World Heritage Centre correspondence) and bullet points will help support readability.
- Supporting information can be included in annexes (e.g. maps, photographs, plans).
- The international bodies reading the SoCR will also receive a very large number of similar documents (123 in 2024, 248 in 2025). The average length of the UK SoCRs submitted in December 2024 was 20 pages excluding any annexes. This is a reasonable guide to

maximum length. The length will of course, nonetheless, be dependent on the number of issues raised by the World Heritage Committee/Centre and their complexity.

**Format** (Annex 13 of the [Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention](#))

Historic England, in agreement with DCMS, will provide the WHS Coordinator with a skeleton structure for the report in this format.

#### Section 1: Executive Summary

Summary of each of the sections of the SoCR and key messages. Maximum length is 1 page.

#### Section 2

Paragraph by paragraph response to the most recent adopted Decision of the World Heritage Committee for the property, or to the issues raised by the World Heritage Centre.

For each paragraph of the response the skeleton will suggest:

- (a) Key topics to be covered in responding to the points raised;
- (b) An outline of the key messages that State Party will want to relay through those topics summarised in one sentence each;
- (c) Who should take the lead in drafting the section of the response; and
- (d) Any other parties who may need to contribute to or agree the approach.

It will include, as necessary, any comments considered helpful to ensure there is a clear understanding between all parties of what is being requested.

#### Section 3

An opportunity to report on e.g. positive conservation projects, topics associated with community engagement, interpretation, presentation, transmission of OUV that would not require notification under paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*. This section can be used to provide a balanced view of the state of conservation of the property for wider context around any concerns expressed in Section 2.

A list of proposed projects/topics should be shared by the WHS Coordinator for discussion with Historic England, DCMS and other partners.

#### Section 4

Historic England will share a list for inclusion of any notifications under paragraphs 172 or 174 submitted since the last SoCR was issued (if a SoCR was requested previously and if relatively recently). A list of proposals expected to be notified following submission of the SoCR will be compiled in discussion with the WHS coordinator, LPA(s), key landowners etc.

### **Timetable**

DCMS will provide the timetable for production of reports due on either 01 February or 01 December in any given year.

This will include a series of milestones and deadlines for engagement between the Coordinator and Historic England, and for receipt of various iterations of the draft which will be shared with DCMS for comment prior to sign off of the report before submission. The first milestone will always be agreement of a skeleton draft.

The WHS Coordinator will arrange meetings as necessary between the various partners.

Historic England September 2025