

***Common threads, different patterns: A case study of cross-border heritage collaboration by Catherine Leonard, Head of the INTO Secretariat***

We live in uncertain times.

All around the world, conflict, disaster (natural and man-made) neglect, insufficient resources, poor planning and ignorance threaten many of the things we love – not least our built, natural and cultural environments.

But against this background is a growing awareness of the value of collaborative action, both at national and international levels.



*Batang Arau, 2009 (Indonesian Heritage Trust)*

The very recent establishment of a ‘National Trust’ organisation in South Africa by a coalition of regional heritage groups, and discussions about similar processes in Hong Kong, Syria, Taiwan, as well as here in Central Europe, show that the ‘National Trust’ approach, built on community engagement and sustainability, is viewed by many as an important model.



*INTO members visit a ‘Green School’ in Dublin*

Of course, it’s not the ‘be all and end all’ as we say in Britain. The concept does not translate into every country exactly and each place has to find its own solution. The Indian National Trust, INTACH, whom I know you know, focus on facilitating conservation projects and education rather than protection through ownership, for example. Our colleagues in the US, while they have around 30 historic sites that they open to the public, tend to support local preservation groups with national advocacy and fundraising, leveraging millions into conservation projects.

So for what they are worth, these are the basic characteristics of a classic ‘National Trust’: generally non-governmental (although may be chartered by government and/or receive some state funding); often classified as a charity or foundation; help people and communities protect irreplaceable heritage; have a broad constituency or membership; they have at least some role in heritage site stewardship or management; they raise the profile of heritage issues and provide a view independent of government; they run educational programmes and promote the enjoyment of heritage; and are an expression of civic engagement - through membership, donation or volunteering.

The English National Trust is a big business with nearly 4m members and a turnover of £400m – other INTO members are run on a shoestring by enthusiastic volunteers.

On an international level, I have no doubt that we all here in this room understand that conservation – or indeed heritage – is not something that can be neatly parcelled up into discrete national packages. And I suspect you also feel a sense of moral responsibility to share with others the experience, knowledge and skill we have amassed over the years.



*Cross-border collaboration: Study visit to the UK*

And this has very much been what INTO, a family of heritage ngos around the world, has been about – bringing people together to exchange information, develop and promote best practice, and to help our members in the achievement of their objectives.

And an example of this is our recent Cross-Border Heritage Conservation Collaboration programme.

The National Trust in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is fortunate to have the Prince of Wales as its Patron and as an outcome of His Royal Highness's visit to Central Europe last year, INTO brought together heritage practitioners from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia with partners in the UK to explore different approaches to finding a viable future for historic buildings – and perhaps more importantly – to exchange ideas and experiences between themselves.

The three keys to success which came out of the study visit, and which I hope will inform our discussion today, were:

- a) Community engagement (creating more opportunities for deeper connection with local people, listening harder to our supporters and engaging them more in the organisation's work)
- b) The development of essential conservation and craft skills
- c) Securing funding and/or investment, including heritage-led local economic development

Firstly, community engagement. It can be difficult for populations, particularly those suffering from one or several of the threats I outlined previously, to believe that heritage matters. I am always encouraged by the work of our INTO member organisation in Uganda with community museums; initiatives often undertaken by individuals or small groups in extremely difficult circumstances and with very little funding but which demonstrate great enthusiasm for passing on – and learning from – the past.



*A school group visits the Kasubi Royal Tombs, Uganda*

The study programme spent most of their time at Seaton Delaval Hall in the North East of England, near Newcastle, owned by the National Trust, and at Dumfries House, a property in Scotland which the Prince of Wales helped save for the nation a few years ago.

Local communities are central to both these projects.



*Seaton Delaval Hall, Northumberland*

To foster that crucial sense of belonging, the participants learned that it is essential to change our mindset – from owning places for people, to owning places with them. Local people were the backbone of the English National Trust's campaign to save 18<sup>th</sup> century Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland which raised £3m, following a huge public consultation and the public are continuing to play a central role in shaping plans for the Hall's future. (And our participants too contributed to the current debate – car parking and where to site the café.

The National Trust's latest strategy document, called '*Going Local*', focuses in on the need to strengthen that sense of belonging and connection. Over time, vital links have become frayed, for instance between a largely urban nation and its countryside – and, worryingly in some cases, between properties and the communities which surround them. Participants took away ideas of how to rebuild these relationships and foster a greater sense of shared pride and ownership.

At Dumfries House, high quality and scholarly conservation and craft work on the one hand combines with local knowledge and the wisdom of nearby communities, who also volunteer their time, on the other. Every place is distinctive and must respond to local circumstances, thus at Dumfries House an arrangement has been made with a national supermarket chain to farm the surrounding 700 acre estate, which will become a centre of excellence for farming research and bring significant economic benefits to the local area.



*Dumfries House, Ayrshire, Scotland*

Our participants shared their experiences with similar projects including a programme



*Sarny Castle, Lower Silesia, Poland*

involving volunteers reviving traditional building techniques at Uhrovec Castle in Slovakia and an ambitious initiative to rescue and reuse ruined 16<sup>th</sup> Century Sarny Castle in Lower Silesia. This project aims to create an economically self-sustainable model (a mixed use approach with accommodation for sale or rent as holiday lets, but also to local people; a gallery and workshops) that

would – in contrast to a typical business venture – put strong emphasis on village regeneration and that could be applied to save other architectural groups of similar type. (The is the “laboratory” idea we discussed yesterday and I hope will be the venue for the next stage of this collaboration.)

The second major theme was the development of conservation skills.



*Culzean Castle, Ayrshire*

Twenty years ago, the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) opened its masonry workshop at Culzean Castle with three main areas of responsibility – firstly stonemasonry repairs to buildings on the Culzean estate, secondly the production and use of lime mortars and lastly training apprentice stone masons.

The Masonry Workshops have recently expanded their remit by taking on projects outside Culzean, both for other NTS properties and private clients.

At Dumfries House, an ambitious mixed use sustainable development – called Knockroom – will hopefully serve as a model new community for Scotland. (5-600 residential units to recoup £20m investment.)



It is believed that this development will also create employment and help bring prosperity to the area, and in the longer-term generate profits for donation to charitable causes, once loans associated with the development have been repaid.

Over a hundred local boys and girls tried their hands at slating, stonemasonry, joinery, rendering and bricklaying recently. The project seeks to attract young people into the construction industry, with a bias towards traditional skills aided by new technology.

And lastly, how to make our heritage assets ‘sweat’, that is to say, make money.

The way everyone (visitors, local communities and donors) connect with historic places is changing and heritage organisations are finding new ways to leverage financial resources, engage supporters and attract investors.

Innovative investment schemes, such as the development at Knockroom, need funders who can see the long term benefits that lie beyond the immediate risks.

Not all the money-making ideas the study visit participants explored were so highly staked – the



*Auchinleck House, Ayrshire, Scotland*

group learned about the Landmark Trust which rescues historic buildings at risk and gives them a new lease of life as places to stay in and experience. We saw private house-owners who had opened their doors to wedding parties and TV crews. We learned of the importance of giving visitors what they want – even if that means ‘loosening’ up our protectiveness. In some houses, visitors can indulge their urge to touch, play or read. In others they can cook, play the piano or have a game of snooker. And the all important adventure playground ... (or mini tractors – the new garden here at Alnwick attracted 800,000 visitors last year and has injected an estimated additional £50m a year into the local economy.)



*Alnwick Garden, Northumberland*

The key insights from the project?

Our participants took away with them hundreds of impressions, far too many to number – and perhaps many which they are not yet even properly aware of?

Putting aside obvious significant differences such as levels of public support, legal frameworks, sources of support, cultural discontinuity, our participants reflected particularly on the need to create more

opportunities for volunteers; the capacity of heritage to generate employment; different methods of interpretation; how to increase visitor numbers and how to persuade the ‘experts’ that commercial and more ‘mass appeal’ activities can still respect historic values.

So, as that particular part of the project came to an end with a party at the Prince of Wales’s home in London, we’re now busily preparing a report, which will be presented at the 14<sup>th</sup> International Conference of National Trusts in Canada this October, and the next steps – a workshop in Poland, perhaps?

And what is INTO doing next? Well INTO is embarking on the next stage of its development by focussing on three things:

Firstly, the establishment of a fund, called the INTO Foundation, to support the important conservation projects of our member organisations around the world.

Secondly, the development of INTO’s membership services – its programme delivery arm – through the biennial INTO Conference (taking place in Victoria as I mentioned and entitled ‘Connecting People, Places and Stories: New strategies for conservation in a changing world’) and by running more ‘INTO’ programmes such as the Central European Project.

And lastly, by becoming more active in advocating what is unique and special about the National Trust approach on a global stage.



*CEP dinner with participants and guests*