Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal

World Heritage Site Management Plan Progress Report February 2018
Welcome

We’ve had an incredibly busy couple of years since the launch of our management plan in February 2016.

Conservation of the World Heritage Site remains at the heart of all we do. This review celebrates the work of the National Trust and our partners. It highlights the work we’ve done on the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for projects along the Skell catchment and our conservation programme in the Georgian water garden. In addition to work on site we’ve also been working hard to protect the wider setting of the World Heritage Site through our objection to the planning proposal for new housing development on the western edge of Ripon.

Alongside our conservation work, we have created inspiring experiences like our folly! art programme and welcomed record numbers of visitors. We were delighted to be awarded Large Visitor Attraction of the Year at the Welcome to Yorkshire White Rose Awards in October last year.

We wouldn’t have been able to deliver this work without our partners and local communities and also the staff and volunteers who help care for Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal World Heritage Site.

Sarah France  
World Heritage Site Co-ordinator

Tony Earnshaw  
Chair of the World Heritage Site Steering Group
Who we are

The World Heritage Site is managed with the support and advice of the World Heritage Site Steering Group.

Tony Earnshaw — Assistant Director, Operations (North), National Trust and Chair of the Steering Group

Justin Scully — General Manager, Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal

Deborah Wall — Principal Local Engagement Adviser, Historic England

Mark Douglas — Properties Curator, English Heritage

Kathryn Daly — Head of Planning and Development, Harrogate Borough Council

Liz Small — Heritage Services Manager, North Yorkshire County Council

Peter Goodchild — International Council on Monuments and Sites
A sustainable future

Income generated on the estate is incredibly important to fund vital conservation work across the World Heritage Site. Everyone who pays us a visit, every cup of tea and every purchase in our shop helps us look after this special place. Holiday cottages are an important source of income for the estate and an effective way of conserving vernacular buildings. This year we have added three new cottages to our current collection.

West Gate Lodge was built around 1859 by the Marquess of Ripon and has an enviable location near the abbey, looking south across an orchard of ancient variety fruit trees and to the Kitchen Bank meadow. Whitefields Cottage and boot room is at the other end of the estate, right on the edge of the Studley Royal deer park. All three cottages are proving really popular – the bookings help us not only to look after the cottages but also to protect and restore other buildings across the estate.

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<th>£</th>
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<td>422,000 visitors in 2017</td>
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“...Quite magical. The location was truly spectacular, varied walks and landscapes on the doorstep. The natural surroundings, early mornings and dark night sky provided peace, beauty, and history!”

Visitor, December 2017
Protecting the setting of the World Heritage Site

The Trust feels strongly about the importance of place and the need to work beyond its own boundaries to conserve places like Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal for everyone to enjoy now and in the future.

Back in 2014 Gladman Developments submitted a planning application for 450 homes, later reduced to 430, on a large area of land adjacent to the western boundary of Ripon. The Trust was concerned that the proposed housing development would have an impact on the 18th century viewpoint from Gillet Hill on the eastern edge of the World Heritage Site and the prospect tower at How Hill. Gladman appealed against Harrogate Borough Council's non-determination of the application in December 2016 and submitted a revised application for 390 homes.

The Trust objected to both applications on the grounds of harm to the setting of the World Heritage Site, particularly from Gillet Hill and also some harm to the setting of How Hill Tower, a Grade II* listed building. World Heritage Sites are designated for their Outstanding Universal Value – cultural and/or natural significance, which is so exceptional they are afforded protection for their global value. Designated heritage assets are irreplaceable and government advice explains that any harm to them should have clear and convincing justification.

In July 2017 Harrogate Borough Council’s Planning Committee refused the application and Gladman then submitted an appeal. The Trust presented evidence at an eight day Public Inquiry between 24 October and 4 November 2017. It will now be for the Planning Inspector and Secretary of State to consider whether the public benefits of the scheme outweigh harm to the setting of the World Heritage Site. The Inspector has advised he will submit his report to the Secretary of State with his recommendation no later than 28 February 2018. It will then be for the Secretary of State to consider whether he agrees with his Inspector and issues the decision. We anticipate this may be around May / June 2018.

The site at West Lane is allocated for housing development in the consultation draft of the Harrogate District Local Plan. This plan is out for public consultation until 9 March 2018 and the Trust will be commenting on the policies in the plan.
Update on the Skell Heritage Lottery Fund Bid

In 2017 we worked closely with Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and many other partners to pull together a £2.6m Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Scheme bid focussed around the River Skell which flows through the World Heritage Site. The Skell Landscape Project sets out to work with landowners and farmers within the river catchment to deliver natural flood management measures such as planting woodlands, creating storage ponds and building woody dams.

It's also about creating better habitats for wildlife, opening up access throughout the catchment and restoring some neglected historic buildings and landscapes. We want to extend links with Ripon and the communities upstream to explore the stories which have shaped this distinctive landscape.

The River Skell was highly modified in the 12th century by the monks as part of plans for the abbey and mill and then again in the 18th century to form the ornamental ponds, canals and cascades in the water garden. The Skell catchment is an area of high flood risk because the ground can't cope with heavy or prolonged periods of rain. This leads to rapid surface run-off which swells the river quickly, leaving a path of destruction in its wake. The last significant flood in 2007 damaged the ruins of Fountains Abbey as well as the historic features of the water garden and downstream at Ripon. Unfortunately floods like these are not one-offs.

In addition to flooding, large amounts of silt are deposited in the ornamental water features each year – impacting on their beauty and biodiversity. The management plan highlights flooding and siltation as the biggest threat to the World Heritage Site.
The flood risk affects the whole of the valley, so working together with the local community has been crucial. In 2017, in partnership with Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, we successfully bid to the Countryside Stewardship Natural Flood Management Facilitation Fund and we now have 20 farmers within the catchment working with us to plan measures to improve soil management and to slow the flow of the river.

Following discussions and meetings with local people, visitors, farmers and landowners both upstream and downstream of Fountains we worked together to develop a whole range of projects across the catchment to make it better for nature, restore heritage sites at risk and improve access and understanding of the landscape.
In June last year we and our partners submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund’s Landscape Partnership Scheme to fund the projects. Our bid was not successful but following a very useful feedback meeting with the grants officers at the Heritage Lottery Fund we have decided to do some more work on the project and resubmit our bid in June this year. Part of that work will involve working more closely with communities living and working upstream and downstream of the World Heritage Site to ensure their ideas are included in the bid. A list of events and opportunities to be involved will be on our website soon – we’d really welcome your input.

Other water projects

**Repairs to Studley Lake Dam**

Following inspection and survey by engineers we replaced the damaged concrete on the top of the dam to prevent water ingress into the structure. This lake is classified as a reservoir under the 1975 Reservoir Act which provides the legal framework for ensuring the safety of reservoirs, emphasising the importance of inspecting and maintaining these structures.

**Dredging the lake**

**Land slippage closes De Greys Walk**

De Greys Walk is an important part of the circular route through the estate for visitors, linking Fountains Abbey with the water gardens. It experiences high levels of surface and sub-surface run-off from the surrounding land, particularly the steep banks to the south of the path. In December 2015 there was substantial slippage and cracking of the path. Repairs had to be carefully designed and implemented to address the underlying causes of the damage and to repair the collapsed river walls and damaged path.

**River walls get a new lease of life**

This summer we completed the second phase of repairs to the river walls on the Abbey East Green. The walls along the whole of the canal at East Green have collapsed over time due to the force of the river.

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Rediscovering Tent Hill

Over the past couple of years we’ve been clearing some of the trees planted here in the 1950s to reveal the lost garden feature ‘Tent Hill’.

This part of the garden lies almost on the original boundary between the Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal estates. As plans for his garden at Studley Royal developed John Aislabie rented the area then known as ‘Round Hill’ from the Messengers of Fountains Hall in 1724. The lease agreement allowed for ‘building a little house on Round Hill’. John’s son William replaced the building with a tent, fashionable at the time, giving it the name Tent Hill.

This painting, by A. Devis in 1770, is the only picture we have of the tent

Tent Hill will be playing host to an exciting new artwork this year as part of our folly! art programme in the water garden. Come to see for yourself what wonderful new creation will sit atop Tent Hill from the 28 April – 4 November 2018.

Before the artwork arrives, we’ll be planting a variety of flowering shrubs and recreating the lawn at the top of the hill. This is part of our longer term vision to restore the 18th century depiction of the garden that can be seen in the painting above by Anthony Devis.

“…crossing a woody vale, we mounted a little hill, with a tent on the summit, in a very picturesque and agreeable situation; for you look down on a fine winding lake which floats the valley, surrounded by a noble bold shore of wood…”

Visitor, 1768
Access for everyone

We have produced a new access statement with help from the North Yorkshire Down Syndrome Association; Spring Hill school, Visits Unlimited, RNIB and Dementia Forward. We’ve already had some very positive feedback from visitors that the information has proved useful for planning their visit.

In 2016 we used National Trust legacy funding to buy 2 off-road mobility scooters at a cost of £12,000, adding to our fleet of 3 Batricar mobility scooters.

We’re creating an audio described tour of the abbey to help visitors who are visually impaired. The tour will bring alive the history of Fountains Abbey and set the scene by describing the surroundings and features of the building in detail. It will encourage visitors to touch the stonework and listen to the sound of the river running through the ruins along with aiding general navigation around the site. The audio tours will be free and available to pick up from admission points from March 2018.
**folly! 2017–18**

The water garden is dotted with follies, fanciful structures designed to catch the eye and entertain 18th century guests in the garden. As tastes and fashions in garden design changed over the centuries, the original follies were transformed and some were lost from the landscape.

Since 2015 *folly!* has celebrated the playful, whimsical style of the water garden, featuring contemporary artworks inside the follies. It will return in 2018, and for the first time the artworks will move outdoors, with four new installations, reimagining the lost follies of Studley Royal, created by internationally recognised artists and architects.

These artists include Charles Holland, who has previously worked with Grayson Perry, Paris based Lucy and Jorge Orta, and architects Fleafolly. A fourth installation has been designed by a local pupil following a county wide competition which saw 50 schools from across the North submitting entries. As part of the competition free architectural workshops were held in local schools, encouraging young people to experiment with design and learn more about architecture as a possible career.
World Heritage Youth Ambassadors Group

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The World Heritage Youth Ambassadors programme has helped a small group of young people to explore their interests in history, conservation and interpretation. The group works on a project basis — meeting in school holidays to plan projects and then organising themselves with our support to deliver a programme of world heritage activities.

Over the last 18 months they have delivered:

- February 2017 — Behind the scenes tours of Fountains Hall for visitors
- May 2017 — World Heritage Day — A Colin Crayfish trail for children, pond dipping and talking to our visitors about natural flood management using the river model
- September 2017 — Heritage Open Day — “The Hidden Abbey” talks in the Lay brothers’ dormitory
- October 2017 — Trip to Durham to meet their Youth Ambassadors group and share experiences

School visits

- We run a huge variety of education visits, from watercolour painting, to pond dipping, den building and the ever popular “Day in the Life of a Monk.”
- We organise a dedicated schools day with medieval re-enactment group Rosa Mundi
- 9 secondary schools will complete their GCSE local history site study on Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal in summer 2018. The students are expected to understand the site’s “local and national significance” and its “changing use over time”, which has given us the opportunity to consider the importance of the site’s World Heritage status.
Looking forward to 2018

Exploring the abbey collection in Fountains Mill

The Fountains Abbey Mill was built around 1140 and is one of the few indoor places we have to put on exhibitions and display items from the archaeological collection cared for by English Heritage at a large store in Helmsley.

We're looking at new ways to present the stories of the abbey in the upper floors of Fountains Mill in 2018 using objects from the abbey’s collection.

There are many fascinating items currently held in storage which will help to paint a fuller picture of the key moments in the abbey’s history, such as the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Telling the story of the Fountains Abbey Settlers Society

A new exhibition will tell the story of the Fountains Abbey Settlers Society (FASS) in Fountains Hall from March 2018. FASS was a charitable trust set up by Commander Clare Vyner in 1934, then owner of the Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal estate, in response to the effects of the Great Depression.

Between 1934 and 1937, a youth training camp was set up at Fountains Abbey for boys from Tyneside and Teesside to help them gain new skills and find employment. Fountains Hall was the registered office of the Settlers Society which also went on to establish a new community at Swarland in Northumberland.

The boys all lived together in huts built on the field area opposite Swanley Grange and worked under the supervision of estate staff in the garden, wider parkland and within Studley Royal House.

We've been researching the boys who came to train here, delving into the archives to discover where they came from, what jobs they went on to do, and how they found life in rural North Yorkshire. We'll be displaying some of these items revealing their personal histories alongside clothing and materials from the Settlement.
World Heritage boundary review

Each management plan and state of conservation report about the World Heritage Site has raised the issue of the inadequacy of the current boundaries. The boundaries of the site were drawn up by an ICOMOS committee in 1986 and for ease followed the land owned by the National Trust at that time and included the enclaves of privately-owned land within the National Trust boundary, St Mary’s Church, the Studley Royal Stables and the group of buildings at the Pheasantries.

Ever since the site was inscribed as a World Heritage Site there has been recognition among a range of organisations, including ICOMOS, that there were other areas outside the boundary, most notably How Hill, Chinese Woods and Spa Gill, which were part of the 18th century Studley Royal water garden and should be included within the World Heritage Site at a later time. These areas now lie within the World Heritage Site buffer zone. Over the next year we plan to meet with local landowners to discuss the boundary review. If there is support locally the World Heritage Site Steering Group will put together a proposal to submit to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee for approval.

Defining the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value

All World Heritage Sites have a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value which sets out the significance of the site, its integrity and authenticity and measures for its management and protection. Ours is available to view both on our website and in the management plan.

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We’re currently working with our partners at Historic England and Harrogate Borough Council to define the attributes of outstanding universal value to help with management of the site. They will assist with the assessment of the impact of any proposed changes to the site or in its setting. We’ll be consulting on these attributes in spring this year so keep a look out on our website.

“How Hill Tower was an early 18th century eye-catcher and lies a couple of miles to the south-west of the World Heritage Site”

“Situated in North Yorkshire, the 18th century designed landscape of Studley Royal water garden and pleasure grounds, including the ruins of Fountains Abbey, is one harmonious whole of buildings, gardens and landscapes. This landscape of exceptional merit and beauty represents over 800 years of human ambition, design and achievement.”

Excerpt from the Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal Statement of Outstanding Universal Value
The main objectives for the project are to:

- Improve the presentation of the Studley Royal entrance, reflecting its historic significance as the main entrance to the water gardens in the 18th century
- Create a welcome experience that lives up to our world heritage status
- Improve the customer service at the Studley Royal visitor area
- Remove the unsightly temporary buildings and extensions, creating a building and garden that enhances the entrance to the World Heritage Site.

In the coming year, will will be working closely with partners to develop these plans with a view to completing the project in early 2020.

Enhancing the Studley Lake entrance to the gardens

The eastern entrance to the Studley Royal water garden has provided a formal welcome to visitors since the early 18th century. As visitors approached by carriage and horse, colonnades of trees (where the Victorian tea room now stands) reflected the architectural regularity of the cascade, balustrade and fishing tabernacles and gave glimpses into the formal water garden beyond.

In the 1860s, as visitor numbers grew and their expectations developed, the first Marquis of Ripon replaced a small 18th century lodge to form what is today the Studley Tea Room.

The tea room, designed for the 19th century tourists, today needs to cater for the 21st century visitor. To accommodate for changed requirements, and increased visitor numbers, several ad hoc additions have been added to the tea room and its close surroundings, including a temporary retail shed and a number of extensions housing the ticket office, kitchens and an ice-cream kiosk. These additions detract from the beautiful setting of the tea room and there is a need to re-imagine the area to reflect its significance to the World Heritage Site. This will be a substantial project costing over £1.5 million.

Immaculately designed views and vistas using the landscape both within and beyond the boundaries of the garden.
We hope you enjoyed this report about our work. If you'd like to find out more information then please visit our website: nationaltrust.org.uk/fountainsabbeywhs

If you'd like to be involved in any work listed please contact Sarah France, Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal World Heritage Site Co-ordinator on whsplan@nationaltrust.org.uk

Front cover image: In 2016, the statues in the water garden were painted white to restore their 18th century finish

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