Heard about our World Heritage Site?

The Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast WHS meets two selection criteria:

- “It contains superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance” (Criteria vii).
- “It is an outstanding example which represents major stages of earth’s history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features” (Criteria viii).

The Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site occupies a unique place on the World Heritage List. No other site will ever be inscribed for the same Outstanding Universal Value. The Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast’s official Statement of Outstanding Universal Value can be found at: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/souv.pdf

For further information about World Heritage Site status at the Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast contact Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust at:

E. info@ccght.org or Tel. +44 (0) 28 2075 2100

To find out more about the World Heritage Site and details of the day to day management visit: http://www.giantscauseway.ccght.org or scan the QR code.

UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee is responsible for inscribing sites on the World Heritage List. World Heritage Sites can be cultural like the Great Wall of China, natural like the Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast or mixed like Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (Ayers Rock) in Australia.

It is not easy to become a WHS, there is a lot of work, processes, protocols and agencies involved. Sites must first make it onto a ‘tentative list of future nominations’. The World Heritage Committee makes the final decision on the inscription of a Site.

If accepted a unique Statement of Outstanding Universal Value is adopted. This outlines the inscription criteria and an assessment of site’s Integrity or Authenticity, basically the physical condition or originality of the Site.

All World Heritage Sites must be of Outstanding Universal Value and meet at least one of ten selection criteria:

- It contains superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance (Criteria vii).
- It is an outstanding example which represents major stages of earth’s history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features (Criteria viii).

A World Heritage Site is quite simply an irreplaceable treasure of the natural and cultural world. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) define them as:

“Places of natural and/or cultural significance so exceptional that they transcend national boundaries and are of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity”
Managing Northern Ireland’s Only WHS

The Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast is Northern Ireland’s only World Heritage Site and was inscribed in 1986 as a natural site in recognition of its geological and geomorphological values, its history of scientific study and exceptional landscape values.

It is located on the exposed Atlantic Coast in County Antrim and covers 70ha of land, 160ha of sea and spans 3km of coastline. The famous causeway stones, the cliffs, natural processes and the Girona Historic Wreck Site are all part of the official World Heritage Site. It is estimated that there are 40,000 basalt columns, the result of slow cooling of up to three lava flows in what was a water-flooded valley - or then again, maybe it was all made by Finn McCool!

All World Heritage Sites should have a management and action plan. The Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust (CCGHT) and the Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site Steering Group (WHSSG) produce this document for the Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site. It provides an agreed structure for management of the Site. The National Trust owns and cares for a large proportion of the World Heritage Site. The conservation charity has a remit to look after special places and landscapes like the Giant’s Causeway, for ever, for everyone. The Trust is responsible for the day to day operation of the publicly accessible elements of the World Heritage Site and is largely responsible for the delivery of the Management Plan.

The World Heritage Site Steering Group, which is currently chaired by Northern Ireland Environment Agency, represents those with interests in and beyond the WHS boundary. The Management Plan brings organisations together to guarantee the conservation of the Site and make sure the benefits of the WHS designation are realised. The most recent Management Plan and Action Plan can be found at: www.giantscauseway.ccght.org

On the state of conservation of World Heritage Sites under its jurisdiction. A report was submitted in 2013 and it set out the emerging issues and opportunities for the Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site. Any issues are reviewed and incorporated into the new management plan and action plan for the WHS.

Benefits for All!

Over 1 million people visited the Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast WHS between July 2012 and August 2013. At least three quarters of these visitors used the new National Trust facilities. Records show visitors have been welcomed from 178 countries, demonstrating the international appeal of such a dramatic and beautiful site. Throughout the UK as a whole 28 UNESCO World Heritage Sites generate £61 million for the economy annually.

In 2012 4 million overnight trips were taken in Northern Ireland generating £683 million in tourism expenditure. The Causeway Coast and Glens destination accounted for approximately one fifth of all visitor expenditure during these stays. The Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast WHS isn’t only an asset for the County Antrim coast, it benefits everyone.

If in doubt about its significance, have a quick look around and you are sure to see its influence. It is printed on your money and we even have Finn McCool crisps. In addition to its economic and cultural influence, the WHS is a global research destination and a leader in the sustainable management of dynamic natural sites. Cutting edge technology fuels research at the site and guarantees close ties with both Queen’s University Belfast and the University of Ulster.

Education underpins daily management. School children can experience first-hand, what is required to protect their environment. There are few other places in Northern Ireland where one can see such a wealth of habitats, species, geology and tourism activities in a small area.

What can you do for the Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site?

The Giant’s Causeway is so special that it is protected by many designations. This means good management is even more important. Visitor enjoyment must be balanced with health and safety needs; whilst also guaranteeing protection for the Site’s important habitats, species and geology. UNESCO World Heritage status is a wonderful accolade which everyone in Northern Ireland should celebrate, support and promote.

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