



UNESCO sites study group

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Scotland and Northern England's UNESCO sites come to Northumbria to help understand their shared value

Academics from Northumbria University, Newcastle, have received seed funding to measure the economic, environmental and cultural value of UNESCO designation status.

[UNESCO](#) is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. It contributes to peace and security and to the achievement of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). Gaining UNESCO designation, such

as being declared a World Heritage Site, Global Geopark or Biosphere Reserve can bring significant benefits in terms of global recognition, funding, and environmental preservation and protection.

Led by Nikolaos Goumagias, Assistant Professor at Northumbria's Newcastle Business School, the study will work with the UK National Commission for UNESCO to bring together UNESCO site coordinators and stakeholders from Northern England and Scotland and will include a series of workshops. It will look at how UNESCO-designated sites are complex partnerships made up of local authorities, charities, businesses and communities, and will lay the foundations of measuring how they work with partners to protect their outstanding cultural and natural heritage, and further the mission of the United Nations at a local level.

It follows a previous world-leading study by Northumbria and the UK National Commission of UNESCO that helped lead to Scotland's UNESCO Trail. The first of its type, Scotland's UNESCO Trail connects 13 place-based UNESCO designations in Scotland, including World Heritage Sites, Biospheres, Global Geoparks and Creative Cities to form a dedicated digital trail to take visitors on a cultural journey across Scotland.

A [National Value of UNESCO to the UK report](#) in 2020 showed that UK UNESCO designations can help build a greener, more equal and peaceful world, delivering significant economic value. The report shows how UK UNESCO projects create local networks to protect and conserve some of the most important places across the country and generate an estimated £151 million of financial benefit to local communities each year.

Assistant Professor Goumagias said: "While funding and capitalising on the UNESCO status is vital, research shows this is only part of the story. The National Value of UNESCO report also demonstrated how the wider value of the UK's designations lies in their rich and creative contribution to the UK's environment, culture and communities, and potential to assist the UK in meeting the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. There are currently over 1,300 UK organisations tied to the UNESCO network through their partnerships and cooperation with designations in the UK. Furthermore, UNESCO designations offer critical opportunities for local communities and businesses to engage in the United Nations' values locally, nationally and internationally.

“Support from UNESCO will help us bring together site coordinators and stakeholders from the North East and Scotland to help ensure we generate maximum benefit from a designation status. This is crucial because some sites can struggle to reach their potential value, due to a low-profile insufficient funding or overcoming challenges like the Covid pandemic. It is important that opportunities are not lost.”

For more information on Newcastle Business School please visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/nbs

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