

Pursuing World Heritage Nomination as an Integrated Landscape Planning Tool and Regional Development Tool

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Introduction

This paper explores the implications of Rebanks (2010) analysis of 878 World Heritage Site (WHS)s for a proposed WHS nomination of the Mount Lofty Ranges (agri)cultural landscape, which spans the world-renowned Barossa Valley, Adelaide Hills and McLaren Vale food, wine and tourism regions. The landscape encompasses a visually appealing mosaic of cultivated and pastoral areas, timber plantations, and new and old native forests punctuated with colonial settlements linked by historic transport routes (Figures 1 & 2)



Figure 1 – Painting of the Mount Lofty Ranges agricultural landscape by Dorritt Black, *The Olive Plantation*, 1946, (reproduced courtesy of the Art Gallery of South Australia).



Figure 2 – The Mount Lofty Ranges landscape encompasses a visually appealing mosaic of cultivated and pastoral areas, timber plantations, and new and old native forests punctuated with colonial settlements linked by historic transport routes (photograph courtesy of Dragan Radocaj).

The paper draws on the findings of the project’s feasibility study ‘Exploring UNESCO World Heritage Site Listing for the Mount Lofty Ranges Agrarian Landscape’ (Johnston et al 2012).

While the case for Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Mount Lofty Ranges (agri)cultural landscape is based on the historic heritage values associated with a ground-breaking 19th century model of colonisation developed by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham and members of the British-based ‘National Colonization Society’, other values, such as aesthetics, ecology, Aboriginal culture and agricultural production help build the case for nomination.

The potential World Heritage area is yet-to-be-defined but could stretch from the Barossa Valley in the north, to the Fleurieu Peninsula in the south, a distance of around 180 kilometres. The property may eventually encompass one contiguous area, or it may be defined as a series of exemplary cellular sites. In line with the World Heritage Resource Manual (UNESCO 2011), the final nature of the property and its boundaries will be based on the determination of OUV and the selection of the criteria to be addressed.

Context of the proposed Mount Lofty Ranges World Heritage nomination

The high quality (agri)cultural landscapes of the Mount Lofty Ranges are the product of a distinct economic, social, cultural and agricultural system under threat. In a framework of uncertainty and global change (climate change, demographic growth and economic uncertainty) these rural systems are especially vulnerable to physical impacts (drought, rising temperatures and water salination), economic volatility and the pressures of urban expansion. The project feasibility study and related economic impact report (EconSearch 2012) called attention to the diverse contributions agriculture makes to the cultural, social and environmental life of the region, not simply the economy. Evidence suggests that these contributions are not well understood, seldom analysed in the context of the region's development and rarely reflected in local planning and development policy or land management practice.

The Mount Lofty Ranges World Heritage Bid (the 'bid') is using best practice models to pursue WHS listing as (i) an integrated landscape planning tool, and (ii) as a stimulus for socioeconomic development. The proposed nomination aims to develop an enhanced identity for the region and to engender a program of research and actions to fundamentally influence its future economic trajectory.

It might be argued that existing policies, such as the protection of primary production areas in regional planning policy, and the recent introduction of ‘character preservation’ legislation to restrict land division in the region are sufficient mechanisms to turn around the significant ongoing trends of agricultural land loss. It could also be argued that an investment program on its own would produce significant benefit. The feasibility study’s economic impact projections (EconSearch 2012) however demonstrate that even relatively small percentage shifts in the agriculture value chain, or in visitor spending that might be attributed to WHS listing can return significant added value.

Critically, Rebanks suggests that any new WHS will be most effective if it has a very clear strategy that identifies the desired outcomes, and the role and function of pursuing and attaining WHS listing in delivering them. By setting clear socioeconomic and environmental objectives, the Mount Lofty Ranges nomination is putting in place the tools to monitor and evaluate those objectives in the context of a WHS strategic management framework involving local communities.

Implementation of the project plan

Six regional councils are collaborating with a regional development body and cross-disciplinary university research teams to complete Stage One, which is to nominate for National Heritage listing while preparing for World Heritage nomination. The bid’s feasibility study identified two stages in the nomination process, and the project plan for Stage One will be updated and implemented in an iterative process (Figure 3).

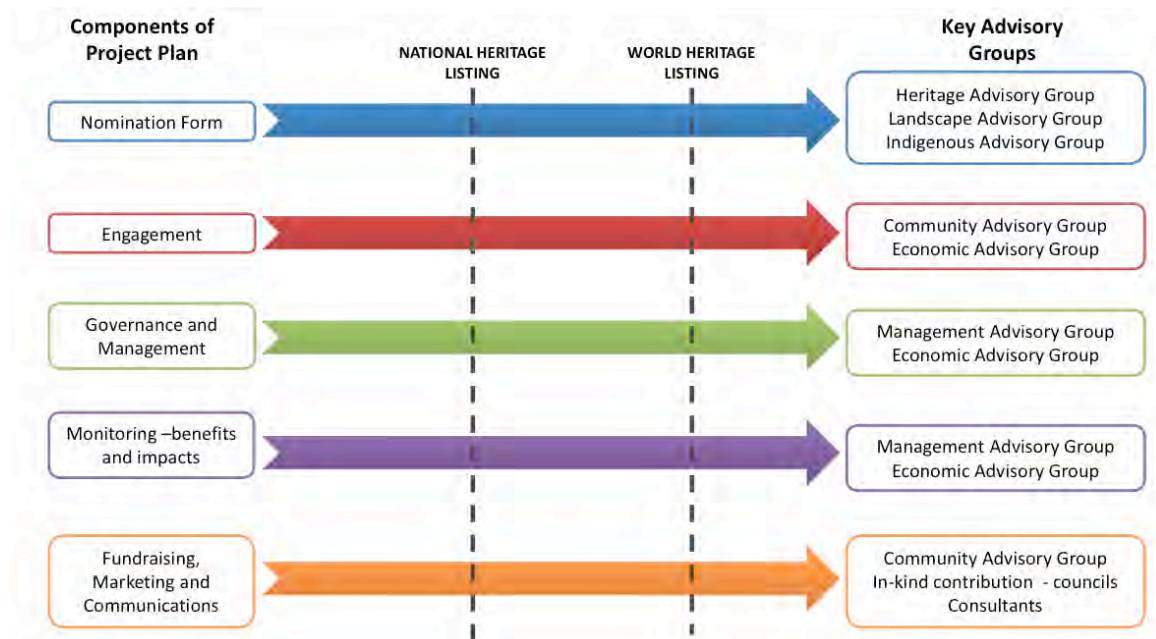


Figure 3 – The Project Plan is being implemented in two stages (Source: Author).

Establishment of the governance structure

The current challenge for those engaging in the nomination process is to (i) identify what kind of WHS (in terms of the definition of values, motive, actions and delivery mechanisms) will be the most desirable and beneficial, and (ii) build the case for National Heritage listing and World Heritage listing around the corresponding sets of criteria.

The partner Councils have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding that provides for a formal governance structure based on the World Heritage Resource Manual guidelines (UNESCO 2011). The governance structure encompasses a Project Steering Group made up of the Chief Executive Officers and Mayors of the partner councils, a Project Management Group made up of stakeholder representatives, and six advisory groups made up of locals and experts who are providing advice on Aboriginal and European cultural heritage, economics, natural

resources and landscape planning, community engagement, and the future site management aspects of the bid and a part-time project manager has been appointed to implement the project plan over Stage One (Figure 4). A cross-disciplinary research team from the University of Adelaide spanning the faculties of agricultural economics, architecture and planning and geography is undergoing supporting research to map the cultural, natural and economic values of the proposed site, The Project Steering Group is also investigating models for the establishment of a legally recognized independent entity that will have the ability to fund, manage and market a future National Heritage and World Heritage site in the long term.



Figure 4 – The governance structure will evolve to accommodate the transition from project management to site management (Source: Author).

Implementation of the engagement strategy

According to Australian government policy, the first step to World Heritage listing is to have the proposed site accepted onto the National Heritage list (Stage One). The purpose of the engagement strategy during this stage is to engage with a diverse group of stakeholders and members of the involved communities in order to identify the common values, potential benefits and challenges of listing the landscape on the National Heritage List, while also engaging to prepare for World Heritage nomination.

Consultation during the feasibility study stage included local, regional and national government agencies, primary producers, food and drink manufacturers, tourism businesses and representative industry bodies. That preliminary consultation identified strong interest and support for the project, although it also identified a number of concerns. The main conclusion of the consultation however, was that seeking World Heritage listing would be a no-lose proposition, whether or not it succeeds.

The Stage One engagement strategy is based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) engagement spectrum, which aims to manage community expectations by identifying and clarifying the level of engagement (which ranges from 'informing' to 'empowering' participants. Based on the high level of complexity of the Mount Lofty Ranges project, the strategy recommends that engagement with communities and stakeholders occurs at a minimum at the 'involve' level of the spectrum. This means working together to understand all needs and concerns, and giving those involved the ability to influence decisions. The strategy also proposes linking the world heritage bid into relevant existing engagement processes such as the annual regional development bodies' 'regional road map' consultation processes. The bid is also seeking involvement through a variety of engagement tools and techniques and will be

informed by University of Adelaide research involving the latest Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

Funding and sponsorship

From its conception, the Mount Lofty Ranges bid has followed a ‘ground up’ approach. Inspired by university research in landscape planning and agricultural economics, and initiated at the community level, the bid is jointly funded by the six local government partners who have committed funding over three years to engage a part-time co-ordinator to manage Stage One of the bid process. Further funds are being sourced to implement ongoing stakeholder and public engagement, communications, and the research and documentation required for National Heritage nomination. Stage One has attracted cash sponsorship from the public, private and university sectors for visiting experts and associated educational and industry lectures and events. Additionally a significant amount of in-kind contribution and expertise is being provided by the bid partners and related advisory groups made up of local stakeholders and interested experts. The funding of the necessary supporting projects and supporting studies will be sourced through an ongoing combination of the public, private and university sectors, as the governance structure evolves to support the necessary fundraising activities. The involvement of stakeholders in these initiatives will in turn complement and enhance the planning and engagement tools already being employed to create a shared vision for the future of the landscape across all sectors.

Pursuing World Heritage nomination as an integrated landscape planning tool

The bid is bringing together numerous partners, agencies and community groups that are already involved in landscape planning and landscape management throughout the Mount Lofty Ranges food, wine and tourism regions who are facing similar challenges in terms of integrating regional development with primary production, tourism, recreation and environmental policy.

In this context the bid is exploring the function of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and geo-based software as tools to manage and organize a collaborative and holistic approach to the identification, future management and promotion of the natural and cultural assets and values of the (agri)cultural landscape and proposed World Heritage site.

Contemporary theory puts community ownership and responsibility at the centre of natural resource management. It also advocates taking a ‘landscape approach’ which transcends land and water boundaries, and which integrates the management of agricultural production with environmental conservation (Council of Europe 2000). The Mount Lofty Ranges Bid is reinforcing these policy directions across government agencies and other bodies, while involving the community in their formation. In this way, the pursuit of the bid is seen as a ‘no regrets’ policy, as the mere prospect of nomination is already influencing the way site is managed and protected.

Pursuing World Heritage nomination as a regional development tool

The bid’s feasibility study concluded that WHS designation could stimulate higher economic growth in the region by boosting producers’ global competitiveness (e.g., branding opportunities), supporting continued development of high-value primary production, and attracting investment. Extensive analysis of direct benefits-to-costs in the study’s economic impact report showed strong potential returns for low-, medium- and high-growth scenarios if WHS listing is achieved (taking note of uncertainties in generating such estimates), and real benefits even if it is not. By placing high value on character- and heritage-conserving innovation, the process of mounting the bid could help create a more resilient development path for the Mount Lofty Ranges region, and help reverse trends of agricultural land loss. The study confirmed that existing zoning and

legislation would not ensure the economic viability necessary to retain the region's rural character and valued (agri)cultural landscapes in the long term.

A key role of the Economic Advisory Group (EAG) is to create a framework for quantitative measurement of economic impact based on the understanding that developing and maintaining a comprehensive set of quantitative economic data could be useful for the bid's capacity to deliver economic outcomes. According to Rebanks (2010:36):

...those sites that go through a detailed process of consultation and strategy development looking at what WHS status will mean for their communities and economy tend to be the sites that go onto to deliver these impacts.

The EAG has identified the need for baseline data to track the performance of the economies of (i) the individual local government areas (LGA)s; (ii) the Mount Lofty Ranges region as a whole; and (iii) the rest of South Australia (reflecting, for the most part, the economy of the Adelaide Central Business District). The aim is to generate indicators (jobs, unemployment, visitor expenditure) and update them over time using data from a range of mainly published sources such the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Australian Tax Office and Tourism Research Australia. As well as published data, the EAG has determined to monitor businesses in the region likely to benefit from WHS designation and visitor centres. This type of primary data collection requires early identification of the businesses and visitor centres and identification of the data related to visitor numbers and expenditure, along with questionnaire design and the development of a process to collect, collate and record the data.

Acknowledging that WHS designation rarely delivers the impacts by itself, and that it is difficult to tease out the degree of impact that WHS status has achieved, the EAG is establishing a

detailed and agreed baseline of the economic performance of the region. This will facilitate the task of using the data and teasing out the WHS impact and enable the quantitative economic data collection to make a positive contribution to the bid outcomes.

Additionally the EAG is using the list of twelve potential opportunities for benefit identified by Rebanks as the reference point for tracking other socio-economic benefits that might arise from WHS inscription (Figure 5).



Figure 5 – Contributing framework for measuring socioeconomic benefit of World Heritage Site designation (Source: Rebanks 2010).

The final framework for measuring the socio-economic impact of (i) pursuing WHS listing and (ii) successfully attaining listing is still being developed and will likely include the tracking of other potential benefits including business innovation, the attraction of talent to the region and the generation of global partnerships and collaborative research in areas such as agriculture, tourism and community wellbeing.

Conclusion

The Mount Lofty Ranges bid is identifying and using best practice models to pursue WHS listing as a landscape planning tool for the region, and as a stimulus for regional development. The pursuit of WHS designation based on South Australia's unique planning history and agricultural heritage aims to develop an enhanced identity for the region that will influence its economic, cultural and environmental trajectories regardless of the outcome of the nomination. While listing is not a guaranteed panacea to all the challenges facing the region, it does offer the potential of being a 'rising tide that lifts all boats'. The choices being made are quite profound, and have the potential to build on 175 years of colonisation history, and some 40,000 years of Aboriginal heritage, to shape the landscape for generations to come.

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