

A PERSPECTIVE ON CURRENT CONSERVATION ISSUES IN EUROPE

Dr Simon Thurley

If you will forgive the repetition may I add my words of welcome to those of the Minister and Sir Neil and say how happy I am to see so many friends here in London and to extend a particular welcome to those of you who I only met last night.

This summit was born out of a series of visits I made this time last year to 13 EU countries and consultation with my 3 UK colleagues.



My purpose in making these trips was not only to meet my fellow national heritage chiefs and enjoy their company and hospitality, it was to ask a series of questions.

- What do heritage bodies across Europe share and where do they differ? How does English Heritage compare?
- How is Heritage Protection managed? What can England learn for its current review of Heritage Protection?
- What resources do governments across Europe invest in heritage and are there fiscal instruments the UK could copy?
- Specifically how is archaeology managed and are there lessons we can learn?
- Specifically how are places of worship protected across Europe?
- Are there actions European national heritage agencies could take together to meet our aims.

Our summit was born out of the last question. As wherever I went we agreed that there probably *were* things that we should do together to further our cause and there was a feeling amongst the 17 who I met that an event such as this could potentially be helpful.

But I also got some answers to the other questions and thought that it might be a good way to start our summit if I presented to you the findings of my research. But first I must warn you that everything I say must be taken with caution. It was very difficult to get data that was strictly comparable. We all calculate, define and measure what we do in different ways so getting data that gives a true comparison is very difficult. So with that warning I will tell you what I found.

And I would like to start with how we all fit into government. Well, I have to tell you that English Heritage is the odd body out in not being part of central government; all the 17 national heritage bodies I consulted were part of national culture, education or environment ministries. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Scotland and Northern Ireland have placed their services in departmental agencies. Having said this almost all have separate identities and branding giving them an externally identifiable presence within a ministry.

English Heritage is technically ‘a non-departmental public body’. The British government operates through hundreds of similar bodies to us, which can seem confusing to the outsider.

I’m afraid you have already seen four people who are, for want of a better word ‘in charge’ of heritage in England. We had our Secretary of State, Tessa Jowell, last night who is a cabinet member and is responsible for Culture, Media and Sport, and she has three deputy ministers, you have just heard the one who is responsible for culture and architecture, that is to say heritage, museums and the performing arts. The minister appoints the independent chairmen of all the various non-departmental public Bodies. Sir Neil is the chairman with responsibility for heritage. I am the chief executive of English Heritage, I’m responsible for the money, £170m (or €245m) and the staff (2,000 people) but Sir Neil and his commission of 18 are the governing body appointed by the minister to oversee the running of English heritage.

MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR HERITAGE

Department for Culture, Media and Sport



The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell
Secretary of State for Culture



David Lammy MP
Minister for Culture

NON-DEPARTMENTAL PUBLIC BODY RESPONSIBLE FOR HERITAGE

English Heritage



Sir Neil Cossons OBE
Chairman of Independent Commission



Dr Simon Thurley
Chief Executive

This of course has some advantages, we are freer to criticise government policy if we want to. We are also more likely to be seen as independent in trying to change national policy on various issues. But unlike everyone else here we do not get the benefit of politicians feeling that they own us and own heritage, it is just another of their 849 (2003) sponsored bodies.

Yet despite the fact that you are all part of government all countries, apart from Norway, you have independent advisory committees with varying degrees of power. Many of these are technical panels but several countries including the Czech Republic, Portugal and the Netherlands do reserve the right of confirming designation decisions to their committees.

The degree of centralisation varies considerably across Europe. In Germany the federal constitution specifically reserves all cultural activities to the Lander. Many of these are so large and well developed that in heritage terms they resemble the smaller EU countries such as Estonia or Slovenia. Although there is no German Federal heritage legislation the legislation in each individual state is actually very similar making a more coherent picture legally than might at first appear. At a Federal level there is an association of Lander Heritage agencies to informally share information. The Italian system, while a national one, delegates much autonomy to the forty or so regional soprintendenze. Yet the ministry still retains considerable control over the individual soprintendenza. Germany and Italy are more decentralised than most.

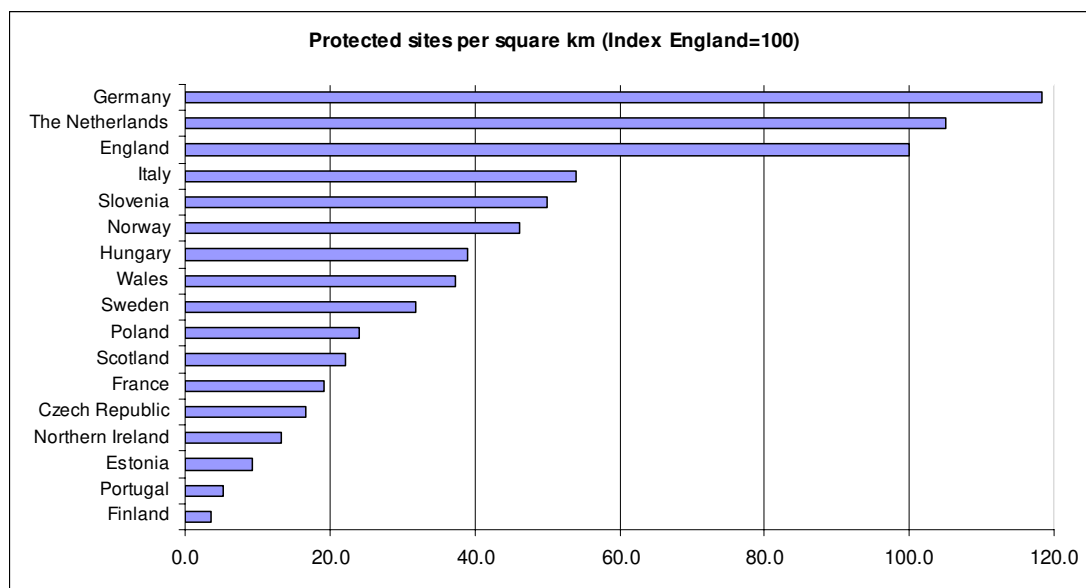
The great majority of countries are organised much like England. That is to say there is a national heritage body which has powers under national heritage legislation, but then there is also planning law that is exercised by the regions, counties and municipalities. As a result, in about half of the countries visited the national bodies had regional offices which provided planning and designation services in alignment with local jurisdiction. Some countries didn't have regional offices because they were simply too small.

Regional and local heritage jurisdiction varies across Europe, as does local heritage expertise. This in turn affects the level of expertise based in the regional offices of the heritage bodies. The English situation is akin to countries such as Portugal which have a centralised government with relatively weak regions. In these states most expertise, whether based regionally or centrally, is located in the national bodies in comparison to countries with stronger regional government where expertise is wider spread through central and local government.

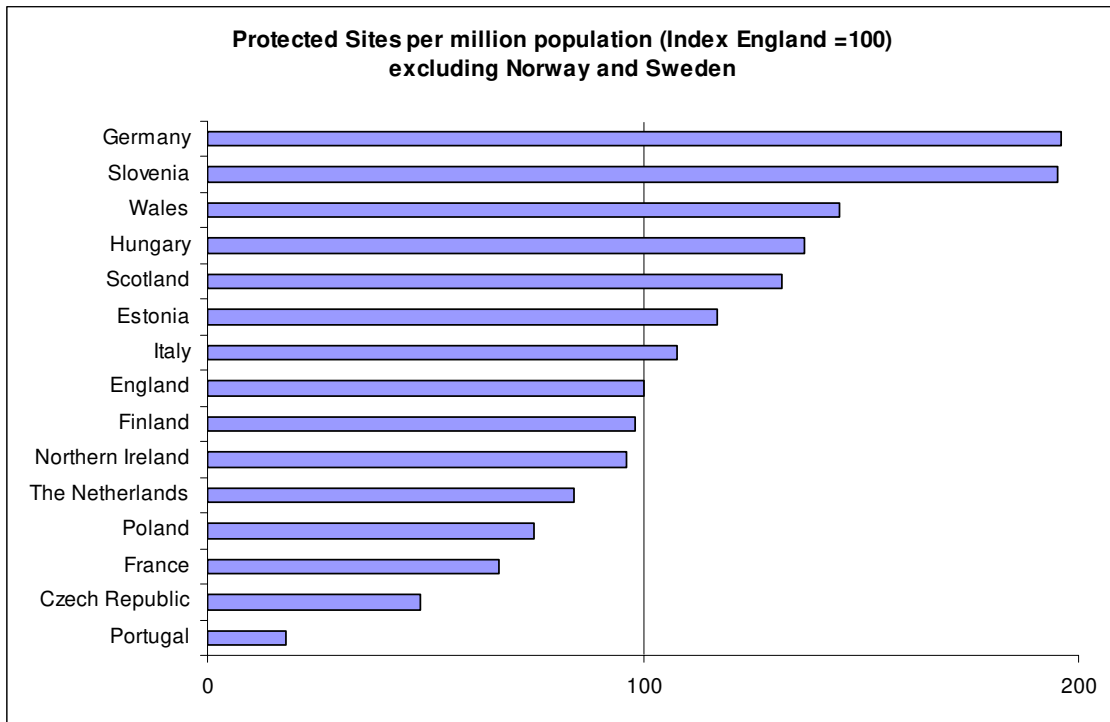
The most visible issue which divides us all in terms of responsibility is whether we have property management functions in addition to our core conservation role. Thirteen out of the seventeen countries I consulted had significant numbers of directly managed historic sites. In some countries the sites are separately badged and marketed. In France the brand is *monum* and Hungary MÁG.. I'm not going to dwell on the details of this except to say that property management responsibilities seem to inform and influence national wider national policies for most countries.

At the heart of everyone's purpose was the issue of identifying sites, buildings and monuments of importance that required protection. Our colleagues in Sweden have been doing this since 1666. But today we all, in one way or another, make a list of what requires protection. Generally good data exists about the European lists. Many of us have our national lists on a GIS system and some, notably in Germany, also publish a glossy hard backed book. Just under half of the countries have a local list in addition to the national one. Sometimes, as in the case of Portugal and Sweden, the national body has no influence over local designation, in other countries such as Poland and Slovenia national certification or registration of a local designation is compulsory. In all cases where local listing exists, it is a discretionary activity and its effectiveness is patchy. At best it is regarded as a 'consideration' in a planning application.

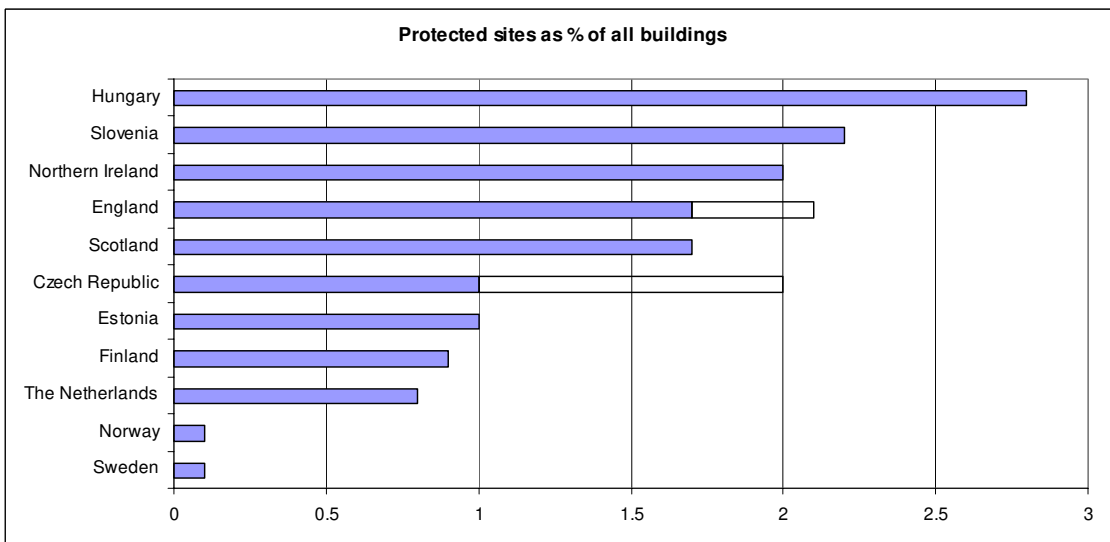
National lists are, almost everywhere, divided into archaeology and buildings. The Czech Republic has a single list (everything defined as a monument), but it is virtually the only country to do so. This sometimes reflects the fact that there is separate legislation dealing with archaeology and buildings.



This graph shows that the Netherlands, Germany and England have the highest density of protected sites and monuments in Europe. While this is certainly the case it should be noted that the figures are only a rough guide. The English system relies heavily on individually protected sites while other systems place a greater reliance on area protection. In Germany, for instance, in addition to the 1.3 million listed sites there are more than 250,000 more specific buildings covered by area protection. In Italy it is estimated that 50% by area of the country is protected by heritage legislation.



Another way of getting a comparison is analysing the number of protected sites in terms of population. This only gives a proportional indication in relation to other countries. Norway and Sweden have been excluded from this graph because the disparity between the relatively small populations and large land masses skew the figures.



Possibly the best measure of comparative designation is the percentage of protected structures and sites as a proportion of all buildings. Unfortunately so far we have found it hard to get data as to the total numbers of buildings in all of the countries visited. Depending on how the total number of buildings is calculated England seems to have between 1.7% and 2.1% designated, this seems similar to Scotland, Northern Ireland, Slovenia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, but much more than Norway, Sweden, Finland or the Netherlands, for instance.

Every country has some type of area protection and this is generally designated and regulated on a local, usually a municipal level. In the Netherlands these areas (354 listed townscapes) are designated nationally and the development control rests at the local level with RDMZ acting as an advisor. In Norway there is a particularly interesting and subtle system where a 'cultural environment' can be designated. This cannot include individually protected monuments but captures the relationships (including spaces) between significant structures. Only five of these have been designated so far, and inscription requires a royal decree. At the other end of the scale there is the Portuguese buffer zone which creates a protected zone of 50m round a listed building. This is recognised as a hit-and-miss approach by IPPAR.

So that is where I got to in terms of the lists. Equally important, of course are the various systems of development control. Unravelling the complexities of 17 different regimes is not easy. However as far as heritage is concerned they seem to fall broadly into three classes

1. The first type is the most centralised - a licensing system run by the national heritage body. In Portugal IPPAR simply issue a licence to the applicant directly for all work to listed buildings. The local authority has no role in the process. The same applies to Finland (where disgruntled applicants can appeal to the ministry), to Slovenia, the Netherlands (for archaeology) and to Italy. In the German Lander this is the system too. There is State and 'Higher level' cultural expertise - the equivalent to a national body, but the implementation of protection is dealt with at the 'lower' (local) level.
2. The second type is where the responsibility is shared between local politicians and the national body, usually with advice from the national body as compulsory. This is operated in the UK, Czech Republic, Sweden, the Netherlands (for buildings) and Hungary.
3. The third type is where decisions are made entirely by local officials and their elected bodies as in Norway and Poland. In Estonia the national heritage body Muinas have contracted their role in the planning system to local authorities, but in practice sit by them in a joint committee.

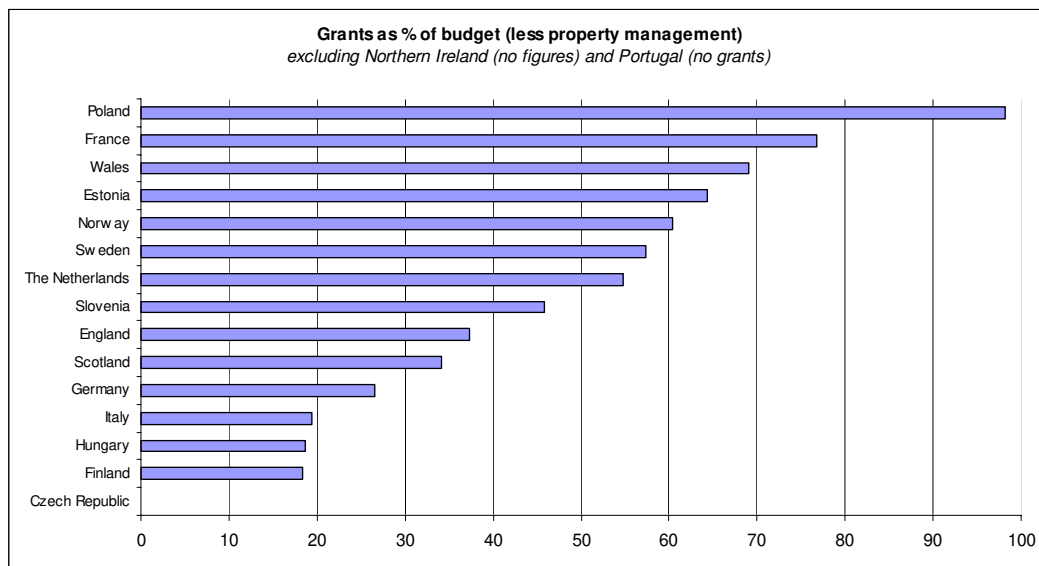
Systems one and two put heavy burdens on the national heritage body. Hungary processes 30,000 applications a year, English Heritage about 16,000, Slovenia sees 3,000, Czech Republic 3,500 and Finland 800.

Across Europe where type two and type three systems operate the key issue is local standards and expertise. Only three countries are addressing this directly, Poland where a series of events are held at the Voivodeship (regional) level the Czech Republic where there are well established courses in collaboration with the universities and England where there is a training website. In type one countries there is no training. Special training is provided in several countries for churches.

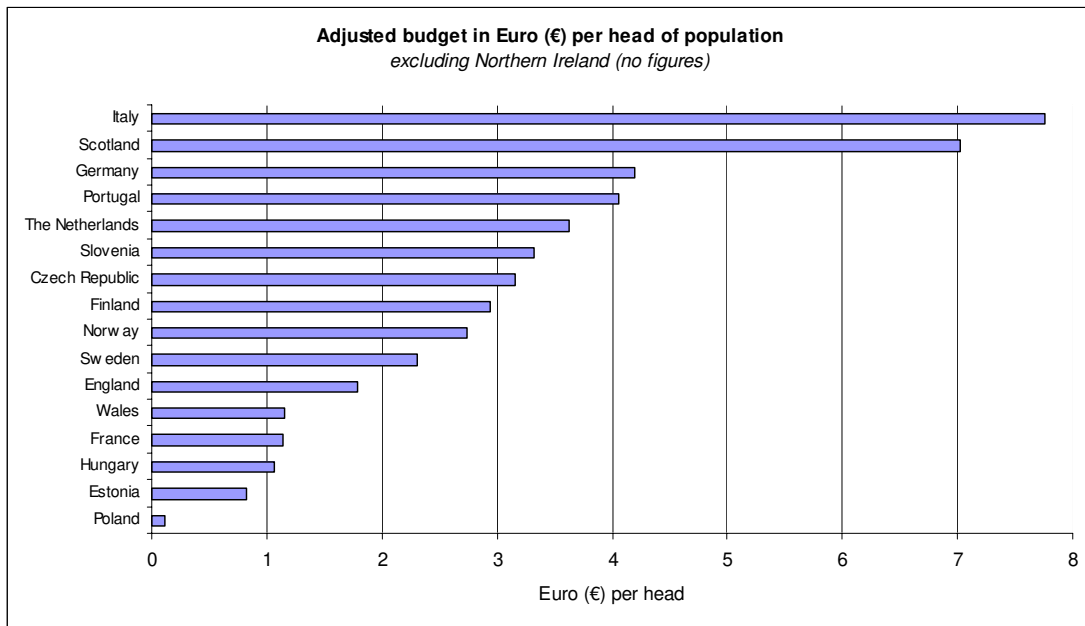
Archaeology, as has already been pointed out, enjoys a different system in many countries with the national body taking full responsibility for regulation. In the majority of countries, regardless of the nature of the protection system, separate lists (and sometimes GIS systems) are held for buildings and archaeological sites.

In most countries the process of standard setting and excavation is shared with the museums and the universities. Additionally many bodies still retain a significant field capability. In Italy, for instance, the Beni Culturali employs 400 field archaeologists, in parallel to a growing commercial sector. In Germany standards are set by the national conservation officers club in a 'bottom-up' process. In France the archaeological department of the Ministry and INRAP are the primary employers of field archaeologists; the state has a monopoly on trial excavation and a near-monopoly on rescue archaeology as there are only 20 privately employed archaeologists in France.

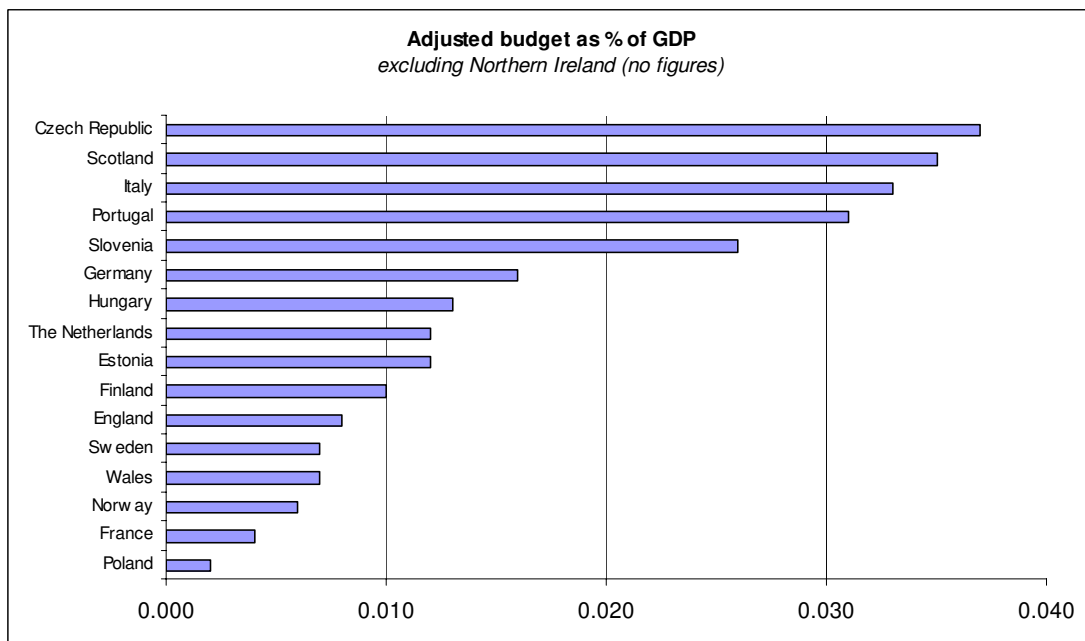
Almost everywhere, particularly in countries with developer funded archaeology, there is a problem with the conservation and storage of finds. Finland has an enviable system where there is a 15% allowance set aside by developers to cover conservation and storage costs. In Hungary this is 0.09% of the total development cost. But these are unusual. Mostly, as in England, museums are left to deal with the long-term consequences of excavation.



In terms of grants for the conservation of historic sites to third parties the EU picture is patchy. Poland's budgets are distorted by the Nordic help fund, and so the figure is best ignored. But elsewhere in northern Europe, heritage organisations are spending 55-60% of their budget in grants apart from England with 37%.



Looked at in terms of euros spent per head of population Italy, and rather oddly Scotland are at the top of the league with over 7 Euros a head. Poland is at the bottom. Most countries are spending between 2 and 4 Euros, England and France less.



In terms of spend as a percentage of GDP the Czech Republic comes out on top followed by Scotland and Italy with Portugal and Slovenia following hard behind. Italy has such an intense heritage landscape that it is not perhaps surprising that it comes out on top, It is interesting that England and France come out relatively low. I must say we in England look enviously to Scotland, at their place at the top of the European funding tree.

Taxation regimes across Europe are surprisingly responsive to the needs of heritage. It is common to be able to offset income from a historic building against tax and to be able to gain tax concessions for opening major historic sites to the public. VAT remains a big issue for some countries, like the UK. But there are dozens of variations some of which we will be able to hear about tomorrow.

This is a pretty superficial snapshot of 17 national heritage bodies. It shows a considerable amount of diversity, especially in the balance between regional, national and local mechanisms, in the balance of tax breaks and direct funding, in the precise mechanisms of designation. However it also shows that we all have more in common than not. Our core functions are almost identical, many of the problems we face are similar and we all exist under the umbrella of the EU. The purpose of this summit is to concentrate on areas where we face similar problems and might be able to forge similar solutions.

This afternoon I propose that we attempt to speak for our own countries and identify what the priorities are for us and see where we all agree.

European Heritage Summit, 27 April 2006