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Your Ref

Francesco Bandarin
Director
World Heritage Centre
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Our Ref

29 June 2010

Dear Francesco

ICOMOS Review of Statements of Outstanding Universal Value: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew World Heritage Property (1084), United Kingdom

Further to Patricia Alberth's e-mail of 9 June, confirming the revised deadline of 30th June, 2010, for receipt of the United Kingdom's comments on the ICOMOS reviews of five draft Statements of Outstanding Universal Value, I am pleased to submit the draft statement for Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

We have made the following changes to the text proposed by ICOMOS:

1. **Brief Description:** we have made changes to the first paragraph to restore some of the detail in our original draft without significantly adding to the length of the statement.
2. **Integrity:** this section is agreed as revised by ICOMOS.
3. **Authenticity:** apart from the last sentence, we agree this section as revised by ICOMOS. We have amended the last sentence to make it clearer that the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew has already started to display and interpret better the work done by the great landscape architects who have worked there over the last 300 years.
4. **Management and protection:** we have added further detail on the protection mechanisms of the property. We have amended the last paragraph of the text to reflect the fact that the management of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew have taken steps to increase the amount of landscape and historical expertise available to them, as requested by the World Heritage Committee at the time of inscription.

We trust that this final Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew World Heritage property, attached at **Annex A** to this letter, will now be presented to the

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World Heritage Committee for approval at its 34th session in Brasilia, 25th July to 3rd August.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Marsden', written in a cursive style.

Peter Marsden
Head of world Heritage

Cc: H.E. Mr Matthew Sudders, UK Permanent Delegation to UNESCO
UK National Commission for UNESCO
ICOMOS
English Heritage

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV)

Date of Inscription: 2003

Criteria: ii, iii, iv.

Date of SOUV: 2009

Set amongst a series of parks and estates along the River Thames' south-western reaches, this historic landscape garden includes work by internationally renowned landscape architects Bridgeman, Kent, Chambers, Capability Brown and Nesfield illustrating significant periods in garden design from the 18th to the 20th centuries. The gardens house extensive botanic collections (conserved plants, living plants and documents) that have been considerably enriched through the centuries. Since their creation in 1759, the gardens have made a significant and uninterrupted contribution to the study of plant diversity, plant systematics and economic botany.

The landscape design of Kew Botanic Gardens, their buildings and plant collections combine to form a unique testimony to developments in garden art and botanical science that were subsequently diffused around the world. The 18th century English landscape garden concept was adopted in Europe and Kew's influence in horticulture, plant classification and economic botany spread internationally from the time of Joseph Banks' directorship in the 1770s. As the focus of a growing level of botanic activity, the mid 19th century garden, which overlays earlier royal landscape gardens is centred on two large iron framed glasshouses – the Palm House and the Temperate House that became models for conservatories around the world. Elements of the 18th and 19th century layers including the Orangery, Queen Charlotte's Cottage; the folly temples; Rhododendron Dell, boundary ha-ha; garden vistas to William Chambers' pagoda and Syon Park House; iron framed glasshouses; ornamental lakes and ponds; herbarium and plant collections convey the history of the Gardens' development from royal retreat and pleasure garden to national botanical and horticultural garden before becoming a modern institution of conservation ecology in the 20th century.

Criteria

Criterion (ii)

Exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning or landscape design.

Since the 18th century, the Botanic Gardens of Kew have been closely associated with scientific and economic exchanges established throughout the world in the field of botany, and this is reflected in the richness of its collections. The landscape and architectural features of the Gardens reflect considerable artistic influences both with regard to the European continent and to more distant regions;

Criterion (iii)

Bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.

Kew Gardens have largely contributed to advances in many scientific disciplines, particularly

botany and ecology;

Criterion (iv)

Be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.

The landscape gardens and the edifices created by celebrated artists such as Charles Bridgeman, William Kent, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and William Chambers reflect the beginning of movements which were to have international influence;

Integrity and Authenticity

Integrity (2009)

The boundary of the property contains the elements that bear witness to the history of the development of the landscape gardens and Kew Gardens' uninterrupted role as national botanic garden and centre of plant research. These elements, which express the Outstanding Universal Value, remain intact. The Buffer Zone contains the focus of one of the garden vistas on the opposite bank of the Thames River - Syon Park House - together with other parts of the adjacent cultural landscape (Old Deer Park - a royal estate south of Kew Gardens, Syon Park on the opposite bank of the Thames, the river from Isleworth Ferry Gate to Kew Bridge, the historic centre of Kew Green with the adjacent buildings and the church, and then to the east, the built-up sectors of 19th and 20th century houses). Development outside this Buffer Zone may threaten the setting of the property.

Authenticity (2009)

Since their creation in the 18th century Kew Gardens have remained faithful to their initial purpose with botanists continuing to collect specimens and exchange expertise internationally. The collections of living and stored material are used by scholars all over the world.

The 44 listed buildings are monuments of the past, and reflect the stylistic expressions of various periods. They retain their authenticity in terms of design, materials and functions. Only a few buildings are being used for a purpose different from that originally intended (the Orangery now houses a restaurant). Unlike the works of architecture, in each of the landscaped garden areas, the past, present and future are so closely interwoven (except in the case of vestigial gardens created by significant artists, such as the vistas), that it is sometimes difficult to separate the artistic achievements of the past in terms of the landscape design of the different periods. Recent projects such as the Tree Top Walkway (2008) have started to interpret and draw attention to the earlier landscapes created by Capability Brown and Nesfield.

Management and protection (2009)

The property includes the Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew, Kew Palace and Queen Charlotte's Cottage, which are the hereditary property of Queen Elizabeth II and are managed for conservation purposes by the Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew and Historic Royal Palaces.

The property is included in a conservation area designated by the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. Part of the Buffer Zone is protected by a conservation area in the London Borough of Hounslow. Forty four buildings and structures situated on the site have been listed under the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 as buildings of

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special architectural and historical interest. The whole site is Grade I on the English Heritage Register of Park and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England. Permission to carry out works or change functions is subject to the approval of the local authorities, who consult English Heritage in the case of listed buildings and conservation areas.

Protection of the property and the Buffer Zone is provided by development plans in the planning systems of the London Boroughs of Richmond upon Thames and Hounslow and by the London Plan (the Regional Spatial Strategy) and by designation.

Kew Gardens' conservation work has continued at an international level, notably for the cataloguing of species, supporting conservation projects around the world, the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES, 1975) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992).

The property has a World Heritage Site Management Plan, a Property Conservation Plan, and a Master Plan. Implementation of the Management Plan is coordinated by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The World Heritage Site Management Plan is currently being revised alongside a specific landscape master plan.

At the time of inscription, the World Heritage Committee encouraged the State Party to increase the amount of landscape and historical expertise available to the Royal Botanic Gardens so that architectural conservation activities can be coordinated on-site, while noting that these activities need to be balanced with the property's other roles in science, education and public enjoyment. Kew Gardens has appointed consultants to provide this advice.