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Keynote address to the 2nd Caribbean Conference of National Trusts and Preservation Societies

Port of Spain, 21 May 2016

Today I want to share with you some of the experiences of the family of National Trusts around the world that come together under the umbrella of INTO to exchange ideas, to grow the capacity of existing Trusts, to help establish new Trusts where they don't currently exist and to be voice for global heritage issues.



First, I'd like to tell you a story about an amazing lady who was born in 1838 and got her first job aged 14 teaching craft skills in a ragged school. Through her work, she met the art critic John Ruskin who inspired in her a love of the arts and countryside, which was becoming increasingly under threat from Victorian industrialisation, and moved by the appalling living conditions in London.

She borrowed the money from John Ruskin to buy some run-down buildings, did them up and began renting them out. For her it was always about people and place.

Her name was Octavia Hill and she was a passionate campaigner for social justice and the protection of green space in London – to her, they were inseparable and wanted to provide 'outdoor sitting rooms for the poor'. In 1875, she raised £9,000 to buy the Swiss Cottage Fields and save them from being built on.

If anyone knows that part of London you'll know that there are no fields in Swiss Cottage any more. But the failure of this campaign only galvanised her resolve, something I'm sure the ladies at Citizens for Conservation could empathise with?!

And in 1895, together with two other philanthropists, she founded National Trust. An institution that would become a vehicle for holding such places, in perpetuity and for the benefit of the nation.

Later that year, they were given their first property Dinas Oleu by a wonderfully far-sighted and philanthropic lady named Fanny Talbot. Octavia Hill famously said 'We have our first property, I wonder if it will be our last?'



Swiss Cottage Fields in *Map Of London 1868*, By Edward Weller



Well it wasn't and in 1896 the Trust raised the £10 needed to buy Alfriston Clergy House (left).

And over the years since these early acquisitions, the Trust has changed and grown – into the largest voluntary conservation organisation in Europe – and indeed a global National Trust movement, as the model has been replicated around the world.

Growth was slow however. Those early acquisitions were pretty modest and in the first year they had 100 members, each paying

10 shillings in membership fees.

After ten years they had 456 members (still paying 10 shillings). After twenty years, 689 members. After 30 years they were nearing a thousand members (still at the bargain price of 10 shillings ... National Trust membership has always been good value!)

Now they have 4.7 million members and the whole operation – the owning and managing of over 300 historic houses and gardens, vast tracts of countryside and coast – is financed through the generosity and interest of this amazing group of people.

The point of sharing this with you today is that I know some of us sometimes hold our heads in our hands. We wonder ‘what is the point?’ or ‘do I have the energy to go on?’ Well, I urge you to remember Octavia Hill and the Victorian founders of the National Trust, begun as a tiny acorn and now a global movement, which comes together to share experience and expertise under the umbrella of INTO.

Sure, it’s hard to keep motivated at times. We look around ourselves and what do we see? We see heritage under threat all over the world. We have all watched appalled, as crucially important cultural sites like Bamyian, Palmyra or Timbuktu, have been systematically destroyed by extremists.



Many of us stare at our screens despairingly and wonder what we can do. When I’m asked ‘what is INTO going to do about it?’, I usually respond by saying that, we can come together to support those working on the ground with expertise and training; we can work with displaced people and help ensure their cultural heritage lives on; and we can help raise awareness through our networks – which is a little bit like what I’m doing today!



Now I don’t want to take any sort of moral high ground – I am definitely not in a position to do that, here of all places – and I’m always reminded when people talking about ISIS or the Taliban about Henry VIII and the huge quantity of religious art and buildings that were destroyed when he wanted a divorce and decided to set up his own church in the 16th century.

Iconoclasm or “image breaking” is devastating because it involves the deliberate destruction of another culture’s images, icons or monuments with the express purpose of demoralising that cultural group and establish political or religious superiority over it. It is – sadly – not something new. Neither is the desire to rewrite history, as we’ve heard over the last few days.

But the identity, memory and diversity embodied in our shared heritage and showcased by our National Trusts reminds us of who we are and where we come from. I think we saw that very powerfully at Nelson Island yesterday. And today, 21 May, is the UN Day of cultural diversity so we celebrate that here today.

We heard yesterday that we must protect all types of heritage – and that’s so true. Heritage is the glue that holds communities together but it also differentiates us in a globalising world.

As we’ve seen over the past few days wanton destruction is not just something that happens in war zones. It can happen on our doorsteps too and I’ll come back to that shortly, but war and conflict are the first major threat to heritage and identity that I wanted to highlight to you today and which feature in a recent INTO report that you can download from our website.

The second is natural disasters and climate change in particular. Another global issue which also sometimes leaves us wondering ‘But what can I do?’.

Earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions and other natural disasters impact many heritage sites every year. There are ways of mitigating damage but often in the most susceptible places, the expertise and funding just isn’t available.



INTO members, the Indonesian Heritage Trust have shared their experience with other countries – developing appropriate strategies which can be built into management plans to address these threats. Their Director, Catrini Kubontubuh speaks eloquently about ‘first aid’ for the historic environment and the importance to people’s well-being of mending heritage at the same time as sorting out other services and facilities damaged in an earthquake.

In February 2016, Tropical Storm Winston wrought havoc in Fiji – and the National Trust has been mobilising reconstruction work since then; a positive and upbeat response (Fiji is the 2nd happiest country in

the world apparently – after Columbia!), although you might not think it to look at this guy! This is Dutch INTO volunteer Bart van Aller (they get everywhere these Dutch students ...) sent to Fiji as part of an INTO Small Grant award 3 years ago, who has been leading efforts.

So there are two threats – conflict and natural disaster.

There are many threats to global cultural heritage today, but when we asked INTO members recently to tell us what they were most worried about, the answer was quite surprising – well, given our discussions over the past few days perhaps not that surprising to us!

So, climate change was there as was war. People also mentioned lack of management expertise and unsustainable tourism, which is in fact related to the top three threats, which in turn are all interrelated.

The next is pressure of development and poor planning. Many National Trusts find themselves fighting development pressures when short-term domestic economic gain is set against the global longer-term benefits of a high quality cultural and natural environment. The appeal of modernisation often wins out over that of cultural heritage preservation and even



national level protection – or being on a list – doesn't guarantee that a major cultural asset will survive. Neither, to be fair, does international protection.

A recent report by WWF-UK showed that nearly half of our natural World Heritage Sites are under threat from industrial development or exploitation. (This is the Belize Barrier Reef). Nearly half!? That's 114 out of 229 sites at risk from oil, gas, mining concessions or industrial activity. My God, what on earth are we doing?

Less than 1% of the earth's surface is designated as a World Heritage Site. They are the tip of an amazing, giant iceberg. We designate them as the most special sites in the world but we aren't even confidently able to protect them. What on earth is going to happen to the other 99%???

Well, this is where the National Trusts of the world can come in. Some of us do look after World Heritage Sites – Barbados, Bermuda, Saint Lucia to name but three here in this room.

But mostly we're just out there trying to protect the places where people live and to provide opportunities for the public to connect with their heritage.



At the INTO conference last year we heard urban planner and campaigner Professor Ruan Yisan speak passionately about the destruction of heritage in China.



“Protecting these water towns is not about making a profit from tourism, but maintaining a cultural legacy.”

PROFESSOR RUAN YISAN.
Ruan Yisan Heritage Foundation.

/ RUAN YISAN HERITAGE FOUNDATION, CHINA.
c. INTO Images, 2012.

INTO delegates visited the site of the Global Heritage Fund's conservation and heritage revitalisation project in the Fanjia Jie Historic District of Pingyao with colleagues from the Ruan Yisan Heritage Foundation in 2012.

_ ryshf.org

¹ The Shock of the Old by Tony Perrottet, June 2012.
The Wall Street Journal.
_ bit.ly/tonyperrottet

China's growth as a major world economy has meant that whole towns, many of them deeply historical, have been razed to the ground in favour of new development. Twenty rural villages are destroyed by developers every day.

Professor Ruan's work in and around Shanghai and at the World Heritage town of Pingyao has saved many architectural treasures but as legal protections for heritage are not in place, who knows how long they will stay protected? And they now face a new threat – that of unsustainable tourism development.

It's a similar story in Myanmar where the Yangon Heritage Trust is fighting hard to protect the City's wonderful heritage from rapid urban development. And we all wonder what's going to happen in Cuba?

It's not just developing countries however – planning is an issue for everyone.

I was amazed to hear Natalie Bull, Director of the Canadian National Trust, say that Canadians have lost more than 20% of their heritage places in the last 30 years, and many more continue to be threatened. 20%?!

In the UK we have seen repeated attacks on our planning system and four years ago the National Trust there had to fight off a major threat to deregulate planning. And the threat has not gone away – the Trust is still worried about new government initiatives which threaten to undermine some of the changes won back in 2012.

I'm not using any examples from the Caribbean – I wouldn't dare in such company! But I know planning, the lack of it (or the lack of regulation) is an issue in the region too and I'd love to hear more about your experiences at the end.

But among the bad news there's good.

The National Trust for Jersey has been fighting for years to address coastal blight. Since the 1930s, the coast here at Plémont had been scarred with the development of a series of holiday camps. When such holidays went into decline the site became vulnerable to redevelopment proposals commencing with an application in 1998 for 117 residential units.

So at the start of the millenium, The National Trust for Jersey began campaigning for the site to be "returned to nature".



Eventually the 'Love Plémont' project – after many ups and downs – resulted in the safeguarding of 11.3 acres of coastal headland in 2014 which is now slowly being returned to nature.

And at our conference in 2013, we heard the story of Sdenka Fuertes, a young Bolivian architect who received death threats when trying to save and protect an historic house and garden in Cochabamba but her organisation, now members of INTO, was successfully able to use ICOMOS's 1981 Florence Charter to argue that garden could not be separated from the house and have managed to keep the site intact for future generations. International co-operation and collaboration is vital.

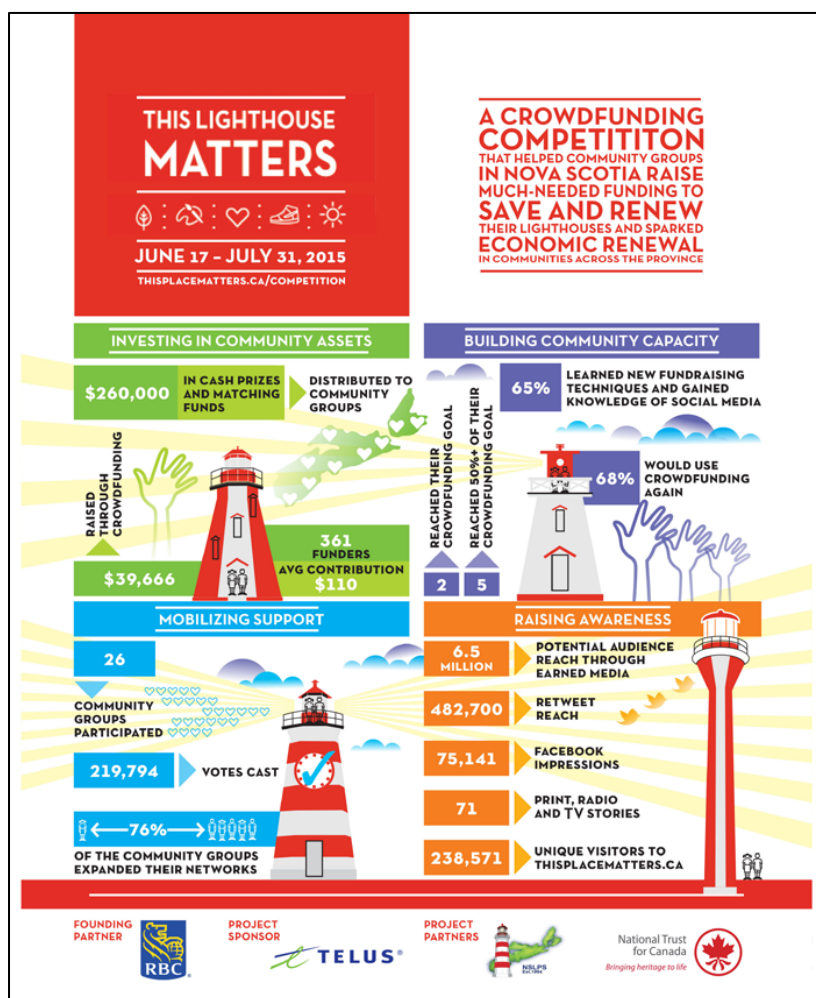


In this age of universal austerity, it is not surprising that lack of funding made the list of threats.

Everywhere there are spending cuts and cost controls. Combine this with a lack of awareness by governments and individuals of the huge contribution heritage can make and we have a perfect storm of underfunding and apathy. The result of which could be devastating to heritage around the world.

So we have to be innovative. We can no longer rely on governments to do everything. We heard on Thursday about the amazing revolving fund in Curacao and I know there are lots of other good ideas being shared.

The US National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program helps communities reinvigorate historic downtown areas by providing a framework for encouraging investment, creating jobs and fostering pride of place. It's now a network of over 2,000 neighbourhoods and the statistics speak for themselves.



A staggering \$61.7 billion has been reinvested in physical improvements from public and private sources. Over 250,000 building rehabilitations; more than half a million new jobs. The reinvestment ratio is calculated at 1:26. That means that for every dollar a community spends to support its main street programme, there are 26 dollars of new investment. Wow. And that's a National Trust programme.

And while we're talking statistics, 90% of trendy bars and restaurants of the five major US cities are in historic buildings (National Trust for Historic Preservation).

Not all funding activities are so huge, however.

The 'This Lighthouse Matters' campaign by the National Trust for Canada is a crowdfunding website and competition, inspired by a programme of the US National Trust which I'll mention later, that allows groups with worthy heritage projects to compete for cash prizes and raise funds. In total, \$300,000 was distributed to community projects and over 200,000 votes were cast.

And INTO is helping in a small way too by providing catalytic Small Grants.

The recently formed Czech National Trust received an INTO Small Grant in the early stage of its development and has gone on to secure its first property – shown below, which will be opened to the public next month.

In fact, it was actually an INTO volunteer team that helped clear the park – people paying to go to the Czech Republic to roll up their sleeves and clear scrubland for a week ... but they look quite happy! INTO works with a number of member organisations to provide working holidays opportunities like this one in France. And they can be a way of getting young people hooked on practical craft skills.



So now I'm poised for the grand reveal! Have you guessed what the number one threat to global heritage is?



The greatest threat identified by our INTO members and which encompasses funding and unsustainable development, is ... lack of awareness and understanding.

A lack of understanding of the holistic value of the world's heritage assets was their number one concern. And they are right. Without strong awareness, a perceived apathy will be

mirrored by the low position of conservation on a government's priorities and consequently lower levels of funding and support.

At international level, the media focusses on individual acts of damage – as described earlier – but there is little reporting of the overall scale and severity of heritage destruction.

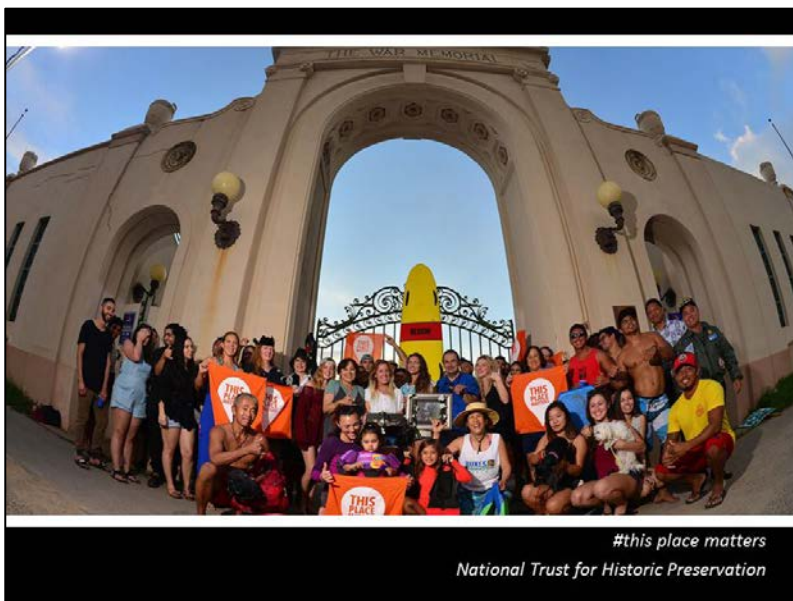
At a national level, people don't understand the threats or value of a country's unique cultural treasures, while at local level projects can be undermined if they are perceived to be getting in the way of meeting the basic needs of communities, and if local people are not offered a stake in a site's long-term preservation and the revenue it can generate.

Whilst it's perhaps the greatest threat, it's also a great opportunity for organisations like ours. INTO members are doing some great work to reach out and engage people, like the Canadian example, which also raised money ...

Other success stories include FAI, the Italian National Trust, which has recently had huge success with its Spring Days Programme, opening the doors of sites not normally open to the public. 900 places in 380 towns across Italy visited by 7 million people over one weekend. It also has the highest number of facebook followers of all our INTO member organisations.



The National Trust in the US runs another fantastic outreach programme called 'This place matters'.



A simple idea which has grown into a national campaign. People are invited to download a 'this place matters' sign – or there are now other materials available. They then take a photograph of a place that is meaningful to them and their communities. [This is the war memorial swimming pool in Honolulu, Hawaii.] They upload the photo with the hashtag #thisplacematters along a story about why it matters, why they can't live without this special place and that's it.

Through this simple idea, the US National Trust is encouraging and inspiring an ongoing dialogue about the importance of place and preservation in our lives. Brilliant.

In the UK, the National Trust's latest strategy has a focus on experiences that teach, move and inspire. I've shown this slide before but the Trust's bold decision to recreate the World War I Military Hospital in one of its country houses near Manchester (Downton Abbey, anyone?) really captivated the public and definitely the 'move' element of teach, move and inspire.

In a way it's easier for us. The stats show that in one year, 72% of British adults visit a heritage site at least once. But in another way it shows that there is a growing expectation from that visit. It's no longer possible just to throw open the doors and expect people to come. (We have to constantly find new ways to tell our stories through events, exhibitions and so on).

Smaller scale projects can be really impactful too. This is the Cultural Heritage Project of the Rhodes Nyanga Historical Exhibition, run by the Zimbabwe National Trust, which has helped raise public awareness of the country's cultural heritage, skills and dance through innovative education programming. Some of the children had never been to the Nyanga National Park, despite living only a stone's throw away. And we were thrilled to be able to fund this through our small grants programme.



We've heard a lot about education and waiting for governments to get their acts together and get heritage on the curriculum, for example, but sometimes we need to take a risk and try something ourselves.

This is Ireland, where over 93% of all Irish schools are currently participating part in An Taisce the National Trust for Ireland's Green Schools programme. Admittedly it has a focus on the natural environment, but that's amazing coverage and that's another National Trust initiative.

In India, INTACH, the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage runs heritage clubs across the country through its voluntary chapters. It also provides specialist training to teachers.

And through the INTO network, the idea has now been copied by our members in Uganda.

(Here at INTO we have a saying, 'steal with pride'! And in fact we stole that expression from the Director-General of the National Trust of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Helen Ghosh.)

Lastly, here is Martindale Hall in South Australia, Martindale Hall epitomises many of the threats we've been talking about – planning, funding, public awareness.





It was bequeathed to the nation in 1950 but its future has been in doubt for the past two years as the State government body in whose hands it had been placed has advocated selling it off for private development.

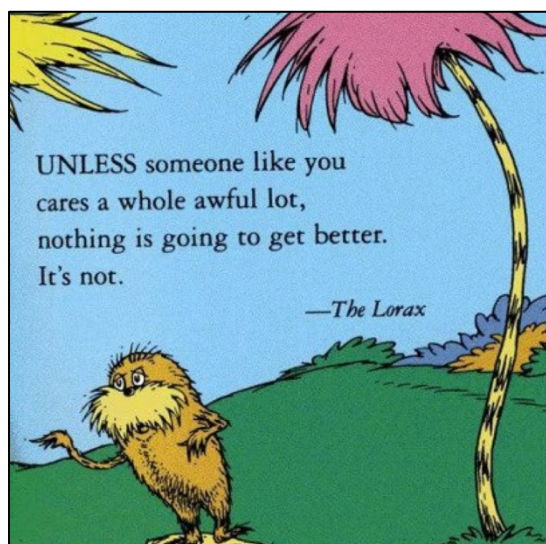
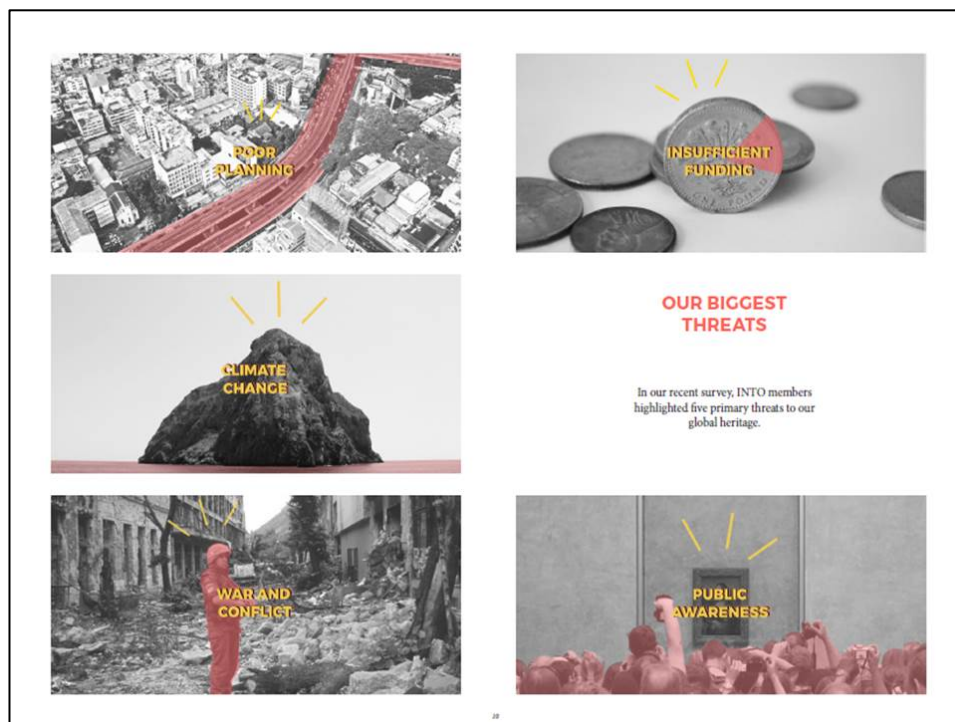
Following their attendance at the INTO Conference last year and a visit to National Trust's magnificent Wimpole Hall (a historic house, landscape park and farm), the team from the South Australia National Trust have decided to try and persuade the government to let them run the property and keep it for the people, for all time.

I am delighted that we can bring the global National Trust community together to support their proposal because this is what it means to be part of the INTO family.

So the way to combat all these threats – even climate change as we have an important role to play in changing people's behaviours – that's the inspire part of teach, move and inspire – is engagement and outreach.

As we've heard many times, people need to know what the problems are and their involvement in solving them. To quote the British naturalist and TV legend, David Attenborough "People won't care to save something they don't know anything about."

But I'm going to flip that slightly as I think it's important that we here in this room keep caring, keep fighting. Remember Octavia Hill.



I don't want to hear about ISIS or climate change or Donald Trump (!) – there are dreams within us that we are not living out and that's the biggest threat to global heritage.

As the Lorax says 'Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot. Nothing is going to get better. It's not.'

So in a final quote from the philosopher E F Schumacher, What can I do to save the world? I am so small. Ladies and gentlemen, everything starts very very small and often in a very dark place. I don't know about you but I am not going to give up. Thank you.