



KUK EARLY AGRICULTURAL WORLD HERITAGE SITE

CONCISE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mt. Hagen, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea, December 2013



Foreword by the Minister

The Department of Environment and Conservation took up the challenge within the seven (7) year period by establishing the PNG World Heritage Secretariat under its recurrent structure in 2007 and undertook the responsibility with the State Party obligations as the technical operational ‘focal point’ in complying with the World Heritage Operational Guidelines. Such compliance conforms to the State Party’s periodic reporting on the retrospective conservation status of our country’s World Heritage properties and/or sites.

According to the “Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage Convention” every site inscribed on the World Heritage List must have a Management Plan explaining how the outstanding universal values of a site can be preserved. Management Plans are the central planning instrument for the protection, use, conservation and the successful development of World Heritage sites. Kuk Early Agricultural site became inscribed in 2008 without a site Management Plan and accomplishment of a Management Plan (2014) is not the final conclusion to providing effective management obligations rather, the site needs all spheres of management approaches and start undertaking analytical approaches in assessing what works and what’s not and appropriately make necessary amendments as to how applicable the management would be applied.

As a State Party to international agreements, we are obliged to fulfil the special requirements of the World (Natural & Cultural) Heritage Convention. After an area is formally dedicated, the onsite Management Authority takes full responsibility in providing highest standards of practical management with the provisions of effective protection of cultural and natural values of the site that have been declared as universal heritage of mankind. Once a site has been inscribed on the World Heritage List, it becomes increasingly important that the site must have an instrument for effective management. World Heritage sites undergo dynamic development processes that sometimes present greater development challenges to the goal of preservation.

The UNESCO World Heritage List is based on the profound mutual recognition and an exchange between different cultures as equally meaningful parts of a common human history. The great popularity of the World Heritage Convention and its worldwide scope make it one of the most successful vehicles of international dialogue.



Hon John Pundari, MP

Minister for Environment and Conservation

Foreword by the Secretary

The Department of Environment and Conservation will provide effective management advice and guidance to the onsite Landowner Management Committee in every aspect of managing and administering the Kuk World Heritage site.

The Statement of Values, in which Kuk has been enlisted on the UNESCO's World Heritage List, qualifies the following Outstanding Universal Values (OUV) in respect to criteria (iii) and (iv). Similarly, Kuk Early Agricultural Site is also been regarded as a very important national heritage of PNG, especially the people of Western Highlands Province.

The cultural significant values of the site mostly taking the form of archaeological resources, indicates that a full exploration of archaeological excavations of large portion of the values (OUV's) of Kuk still remain buried beneath the surface of the land, (per.com Tim Denham).

The Department of Environment and Conservation has developed interim policy initiatives to periodically review the Statement of Values as contained in the nomination document and to ensure that policies developed will be practical and ongoing and enables any new scientific data coming on board.

Currently, the Kuk site protection is mostly informal. The Department of Environment and Conservation will develop appropriate policy options to seek an effective physical protection consistent with the Values of the site, which will be achieved by a combination of measures including; 1), applying this Management Plan, 2), the possible declaration of Kuk as Conservation Area under the Conservation Areas Act, 3) Application of special legislation, and 4) Taking on-board formal agreements with the landowners to protect the site from avoidable physical disturbance of the heritage values.

The Department of Environment and Conservation has approached this management plan through a long planning process through series of consultative and participatory planning process in order to produce this management plan. Consultations had included key stakeholders including the landowners, local, provincial and national government. Local Landowners Committee of the Kuk site was provided with the opportunity to participate in local planning of the site.



Gunther Joku

Secretary

Department of Environment and Conservation



Introduction

According to the World Heritage Convention's, Operational Guidelines "Each nominated property should have an appropriate management plan or other documented management system which should specify how the outstanding universal value of a property should be preserved, preferably through participatory means." (Para 108, 2).

With a predominantly oral tradition, based on stories it is not customary to have a formal written management plan, but even without written plans the site's integrity has been managed. As such this written document may not be the most appropriate approach, but as with similar heritage sites around the world this written management plan allows mutual understanding across multiple stakeholders. This management plan has been developed through a participatory process and seeks to share the story in such a manner that all stakeholders, are aware of the desired actions and why these are important for heritage management and how the stakeholders can work together toward these. It is important that the document has been kept more concise so as not to daunt stakeholders from the management plan implementation process.

The management planning process was initiated by the Papua New Guinea Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and supported by the Australian aid (DFAT) through the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC) as part of their commitment to build World Heritage Capacity in the Pacific and strengthen the integrity of the World Heritage Convention through the Australian Funds in Trust (AFIT) with UNESCO and assisting Pacific Island Countries to implement the World Heritage Convention. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Environment made a Funding Agreement in relation to Kuk Early Agricultural World Heritage Site in Papua New Guinea with Live & Learn Environmental Education (LLEE): the facilitator of this management plan.

Context

In Papua New Guinea there is a strong sense of pride in the cultural diversity and local heritage. This is reflected in a saying that “for each village there is a different culture”. Papua New Guinea is also recognized as having some of the highest cultural and biological diversity on earth. Within this context of rich cultural and natural heritage, the evidence of early agriculture may help to enhance understanding of the international heritage significance of Papua New Guinea and indeed may provide some further thinking on concepts of civilization and sustainability.

The Kuk Early Agricultural World Heritage Site is located in Wahgi Valley in Western Highlands Province. It covers 116ha of swampland that has been systematically cultivated over the last 9,000 years. It is about 12.5 km northeast of Mt. Hagen City, the provincial capital of Western Highlands Province. Kuk Swamp is located in a large inter-montane valley in the interior of New Guinea at 1560 m above mean sea level. The Wahgi valley is one of the largest of the inter-montane valleys that run along the highland spine of New Guinea. Kuk Swamp is part of the extensive wetlands carpeting the floor of the upper reaches of the Wahgi valley, hereafter called the ‘Upper Wahgi valley’. The Upper Wahgi Valley has a lower montane humid climate with an average annual temperature of 19 °C and annual rainfall of c.2700 mm.

Outstanding Universal Value

There are 10 criteria for World Heritage Listing and Kuk Early Agricultural Site has been recognized for ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ based on cultural criteria’s three and four. *The World Heritage Committee Citation of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (2008), for the Kuk Early Agricultural World Heritage Site is as follows:*

***“The Kuk Early Agricultural Site, a well-preserved buried archaeological testimony, demonstrates an independent technological leap which transformed plant exploitation to agriculture around 7,000-6,400 years ago, based on vegetative propagation of bananas, taro and yam. It is an excellent example of transformation of agricultural practices over time from mounds on wetland margins around 7,000-6,400 years ago to drainage of the wetlands through digging of ditches with wooden tools from 4,000 BP to the present. The archaeological evidence reveals remarkably persistent but episodic traditional land-use and practices where the genesis of that land-use can be established and changes in practice over time demonstrated from possibly as early as 10,000 BP to the present day.*”**

World Heritage Criterion (iii): to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

Kuk Criterion (iii): The extent of the evidence of early agriculture on the Kuk site can be seen as an exceptional testimony to a type of exploitation of the land which reflects the culture of early man in the region.

World Heritage Criterion (iv): to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

Kuk Criterion (iv): Kuk is one of the few places in the world where archaeological evidence suggests independent agricultural development and changes in agricultural practice over a 7,000 and possibly a 10,000 year time span.

Root-Vision

“The local management structure at Kuk is linked heavily to the Hagen concept of *mae pukl wua*, or ‘ground-root-man’. Groundroot-men are acknowledged as having over-riding power regarding: ‘matters to do with custodial rights over clan land, in granting gardening rights to group members, and in the protection of clan land’ (Ketan and Muke 2001). Consequently the kin-based allocation of Local Heritage Officers reflects the primacy of *mae pukl wua* in matters concerned with land in Hagen society; whereas the place-based membership of the Local Heritage Committee is inclusive and is open to all block-holders, no matter what their kin affiliation.” (Kuk Nomination 2007)

The root-vision for the site is:

The Kuk Early Agricultural site will continue to show outstanding universal and local heritage values of people, place and plants and be a leader in community heritage management at a landscape level.

Mission Statement

To sustainably manage the site based on people, place and plants as a model for customary managed, community oriented, cultural heritage landscape management for PNG and elsewhere.

Objectives

1. To safeguard and promote the historical and living heritage values of the site
2. To effectively support the customary owners as ongoing heritage managers
3. To strengthen heritage management by linking research and theories to appropriate and relevant local actions

Thematic Actions

Customary Management

A management plan that protects the site values and promotes sustainable development and customary management through:

1. Capacity & Coordination – local to international

Action: A management plan endorsed by key stakeholders

Action: Identify capacity needs and training opportunities

Action: A functional organisation chart for stakeholders (transparent, accountable)

2. Legislation – multiple links for strength

Action: Develop formal legislation, which supports and protects heritage values and differentiates uses in the core and buffer zones.

Action: Develop and support legislative heritage management approaches based on customary and ongoing land management

3. Monitoring & evaluation – participatory approaches to keep management on-track

Action: Risk assessment and development of indicators

Action: Prescription monitoring reports

Heritage Understanding

Enhanced Heritage understanding, both locally and internationally through:

4. Heritage Education – to build support for and promote practical actions toward management

Action: Develop local, national and international understanding of the sites significance through displays at festivals and community heritage education.

Action: Develop interpretive centre near the site to share information about the outstanding universal value of the site.

5. Heritage Research – to compliment stakeholder understanding of the site and management needs

Action: Develop policies for heritage research and community visits and identify gap areas for further research

6. GIS Mapping & Databases – to effectively collect and share the understanding

Action: Develop a database of relevant research and GIS Mapping in and around the site: cultural, social (relationships), hydrological, agricultural & ecological

Reciprocity & Benefit Sharing

Positive returns to provide ongoing motivation for the management of the site through:

7. Resources & Funding – proposals and projects for specific heritage management

Action: Proposals for and implementation of relevant donor activities that may support the community and Kuk site management.

8. Collaboration – with a range of partners to support activities linked to management

Action: To promote enhanced communications and a key communication point with the community through the use of the Internet and email.

9. Heritage Livelihoods – to enhance community livelihoods and heritage simultaneously

Action: Tourism opportunities discussed and identified with National & Provincial Tourism section and tourism operators

Action: To conduct a display on Kuk at the Hagen Cultural show and sell heritage products (banana, sugar cane, root crops, billum, digging sticks etc)

Heritage Management

Strengthen management of the heritage values of the site through:

10. Zones & Impact Assessment – to protect the cultural and natural heritage values

Action: To use GIS mapping to identify the highest priority areas for maximum protection and management.

Action: To place demarcation points so as to clearly identify the boundary edges of the core and buffer areas.

11. Cultural Heritage – Monitoring and documenting Archaeology & Anthropology links

Action: To collect and update available data on the cultural heritage of the site including: agricultural stories, taboos and ceremonies.

12. Natural Heritage - Continuing Cultivation and Conservation of the site

Action: To identify and encourage the continuing cultivation of key plant species and traditional agricultural techniques.

Action: To manage the spread of invasive plant species and make a plan to remove all introduced species from the core area.





DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION



Facilitated by Live & Learn Environmental Education for Papua New Guinea Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and supported by the Australian aid (DFAT) through the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC).