



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
MINISTRY FOR SPORTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE & YOUTH
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PRESS RELEASE

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World Heritage Bid Steering Committee gets under way

The first meeting of the Steering Committee, set up to oversee the bid for world heritage status for the Gorham's Cave Complex, was held on Tuesday 10th December. The Steering Committee, chaired by Professor Clive Finlayson, has been set up to bring together stakeholders during the entire process of the nomination. Represented at the meeting were the Gibraltar Museum, the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens, the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Deputy Chief Minister's Office, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Planning and Building Control and the Ministry of Defence. Also present at the meeting were Dr Christopher Young and Ms Sue Davies. Dr Young is Head of International Advice at English Heritage and acts as adviser to the United Kingdom Government on World Heritage Policy. Ms Davies is the Deputy Chair of the UK National Commission for UNESCO. The meeting was preceded by a familiarisation visit to the proposed World Heritage site by Dr Young and Ms Davies.

Tuesday's meeting discussed all aspects of the bid and the process of nomination and also reviewed works being undertaken to prepare the site. With a nomination deadline of 1 February, 2015, the entire process is expected to gather rapid momentum in the following months. One important part of the discussion revolved around the precise identification of the outstanding universal value of the site and its inherent attributes. The committee, after discussion, unanimously agreed that the unique 100-thousand year record of human occupation of the Gorham's Cave Complex was its outstanding value. It gathers further importance when seen in the context of the massive evidence that allows for the unique reconstruction of the landscape, its evolution in response to climate change and tectonic activity and the response of humans to these challenges.

Dr Young and Ms Davies were met by the Chief Minister and other senior members of Cabinet who were briefed on the Steering Committee's deliberations and wholeheartedly supported the bid. Commenting on the

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progress made during the intense days of site visits and discussions, Clive Finlayson said that he was encouraged and excited by the progress which was being made: "we have a unique site that was the home of the earliest people to live here. We now have a wonderful opportunity to conserve it for future generations and to have its global value recognised. We have been doing good science here for twenty five years now, and the secrets which these caves have revealed (and continue to reveal) have put us in pole position. We are ready for the final sprint." For their part Dr Young and Ms Davies said that they had been impressed by the site's values and the efforts which were being made to get the site ready on time for nomination: "we have been very encouraged by HM Government of Gibraltar's support, as emphatically put to us by the Chief Minister and other members of Cabinet, which is critical for the success of this bid." Also critical for its success is public support and a programme of public awareness and involvement is being put together with the aim of starting soon in the New Year.