



TOWER OF HERCULES

Declaration

After those initial attempts, the issue was reintroduced by the Xunta de Galicia and the Ministry of Culture in June 2006, when the Tower joined the Spanish World Heritage List. In Cartagena, in September 2007, Spanish Historical Heritage Council decided to request its inclusion in the World Heritage List. The Ministry of Culture submitted the proposal, which was accepted by UNESCO on 11 November 2007.

This acceptance made it possible that the whole machinery of the Ministry of Culture were put to the service of submitting before the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO (Paris) the full report supporting the candidacy before 1 February 2008, the deadline for submissions.

As usual, the Ministry of Culture entrusted the autonomous community, in this case the General Directorate for Heritage of the Department of Culture and Sports of the Xunta de Galicia the writing of this report on the basis of the standard model approved by the Convention of World Heritage for any candidacy submitted after 2 February 2005.

In barely three months, a multidisciplinary team of professionals and technicians led by the Director General of Cultural Heritage Felipe Arias Vila and Subdirector for Protection Federico Garrido Villa wrote an exhaustive and rigorous report documenting the exceptional and unique role of the Tower of Hercules as well as its authenticity and integrity. As starting point for this report, the team used a previous report written by the Instituto Torre de Hércules, which, while it did not conform to the formal requirements demanded by the UNESCO, it did provide a wealth of information.

Throughout this writing process, the Sub-Directorate for Protection of the Spanish Ministry of Culture supervised the evolution of work and made as many suggestions as it deemed suitable so that the result was in compliance with the World Heritage Centre requirements.

The report written and finally submitted in Paris in February 2008 is a new document which analyses the Tower of Hercules as a Heritage Site in accordance with the guidelines set by the World Heritage Committee. Furthermore, and by way of additional information, a comprehensive diagnosis of the building was made, analysing the problems it had and the measures required to repair any potential conservation deficiency that could arise in the immediate future or at medium or long-term.

Similarly, a number of indicators worth studying along with the corresponding correction measures geared to the preservation of the Tower Master Plan, which must be written in the foreseeable future.

In April 2008 the lighthouse passed an initial screening along with 44 sites to be later short listed in a second screening at the 32nd Meeting of the World Heritage Committee held in July in Quebec (Canada).

ICOMOS, in its capacity as the advisory body of the World Heritage Committee, appointed historian Jonathan Coat to assess the Tower of Hercules. The choice of this renowned professor was motivated by his knowledge on Roman lighthouse, particularly the lighthouse at Dover Castle which he had studied exhaustively.

Assessment work took place between 13-15 October 2008 and gave professor Coat the opportunity to visit the monument, familiarise with the problems it faces and take an interest in those aspects which might prove more complex for the members of the World Heritage Committee. Very intense work meetings with all those involved in the management of the site made it possible that he gained insight into the specifics of the monument.

The report written by Coat and submitted before the World Heritage Centre was very positive but, nonetheless, assurances on issues regarding the management of the monument were requested twice.

Everything was ready for the 33rd Meeting of the World Heritage Committee which was held in Seville between 22 - 27 June 2009. The Committee studied 27 candidacies which included cultural and natural sites. Of them, only 11 cultural sites and 2 natural sites joined the list, as well as 3 extensions of sites already in the list. At 1826 hours of Saturday 27th June the candidacy of the Tower of Hercules was no longer a dream to become a site included in the World Heritage List pursuant to Criterion III of operational guidelines, which acknowledges the outstanding nature of the lighthouse as it bears a unique testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation that is living or which has disappeared.

Since that moment, the Tower of Hercules has been the only lighthouse in the World Heritage List.

