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Giving the Mt Lofty Ranges world heritage status could cause problems

- **by: Lauren Novak**
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CHALLENGE: The view across Piccadilly Valley from Mt. Lofty ... there are both opportunities and impediments with World Heritage listing of the area.

Source: News Limited

THE CASE AGAINST

THE major concern for farmers, tourism operators, landowners and developers is whether World Heritage listing of the Mt Lofty Ranges area will impose extra layers of rules and red tape.

They want to know if they will still be able to change crops, construct new buildings, improve infrastructure or value-add to the land.

The bid for listing is still being developed so final locations or criteria for protection have not been finalised.

The group behind the bid argues it will bring economic and tourism benefits and would not impose new planning regulations and the area would remain under the control of local councils and state laws.



IMPEDIMENTS: Some fear that World Heritage listing of the Mt Lofty ranges area will impose extra layers of rules and red tape.

Source: Supplied

However, planning and heritage experts expect there would have to be some new legislation or amendments to planning codes to ensure the area is protected in line with UNESCO requirements.

The area under consideration is covered by the Alexandrina, Yankalilla, Barossa, Adelaide Hills, Mt Barker and Onkaparinga councils, which all support the bid.

The Clare and Light councils have declined to be involved at this stage.

The Barossa and McLaren Vale regions are also covered by character preservation laws which prevent urban sprawl and protect farmland.

Should the Mt Lofty Ranges be World Heritage listed?

Yes

Unsure

No

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University of Adelaide planning and heritage senior lecturer Paul Leadbeter said it would be likely such legislation would need to be extended to the Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula regions if they were included in the final World Heritage site.

“I don’t think they could say there won’t be any need for any further legislative controls,” he said.

“The existing laws we’ve got would go some way towards it but if it became a World Heritage site they might have to look at stronger planning controls to make it very clear that those areas have to remain as they are.”

Given the heritage bid aims to protect a “working agricultural landscape, Mr Leadbeter said the most likely restrictions would be on developing land for housing.

“There are probably some areas where developers have bought that land up with an expectation that they’re going to be able to develop it in the future,” he said.

“For people who own those lands it might be more restrictive for them but there could be benefits as well.”

Developments in world heritage protected areas must undergo assessment to consider whether they will have a significant impact on the protected values of the site.

In the Mt Lofty Ranges case, these values could be agricultural production, tourism, recreation, cultural or historic values.

Opposition planning spokesman Steven Griffiths said much more information was needed about the implications of heritage listing before the Liberal Party could support the push.

He had particular concerns about any restrictions which could devalue land.

“We’ve got to understand the implications of all these things before we can move forward,” he said.

“There’s benefits but potentially there’s negatives too.”

A spokeswoman for Planning Minister John Rau said the State Government “has yet to consider all the implications” of World Heritage listing given the bid was in “the preliminary stages”.

THE CASE FOR

WHEN a destination is granted World Heritage status, the tourists inevitably follow. Producers from the region are also usually able to raise prices.

These are among the most common benefits of World Heritage listing and could apply to South Australia's Mt Lofty Ranges, according to experts. Support is growing for a bid to have up to 150,000ha of land across the Adelaide Hills, Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale and Fleurieu Peninsula regions listed as a "working agricultural landscape".

Bid project manager Stephanie Johnston said, if successful, the SA bid would be the first time Australian farmland was recognised with World Heritage status.



UNIQUE: Farmer Ken Cobbledick — pictured with his granddaughter Ella — is backing efforts for World Heritage listing for farm lands in the area. Picture: Matt Turner.

Source: News Corp Australia

Ms Johnston said the bid aimed to protect the unique and methodical way agricultural lands were laid out during colonial settlement and the "mosaic" view that the mixture of natural scrub land, vineyards and orchards creates.

"That's one of the things that agriculture does, is create a beautiful landscape," she said.

UK expert James Rebanks, an adviser to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), has studied World Heritage sites around the world and found that they tend to attract so-called cultural tourists, who stay longer in destinations and spend more money.

Other benefits include greater international media attention, boosted visitor spending and more sustainability for businesses and industry in the region.

Mr Rebanks said major international companies were often keen to be associated with the World Heritage brand and often form partnerships with authorities in listed areas.

Securing World Heritage status also provides an opportunity to rebrand an area, its produce and experiences.

Quality seals can give South Australian products an edge in overseas markets, particularly in Asia, and reinforce the “clean, green” image of our food.

Those behind the bid will have to lobby the Federal Government to pursue listing with UNESCO. National heritage status is needed before it can progress to world status, which could take 10 years to achieve.

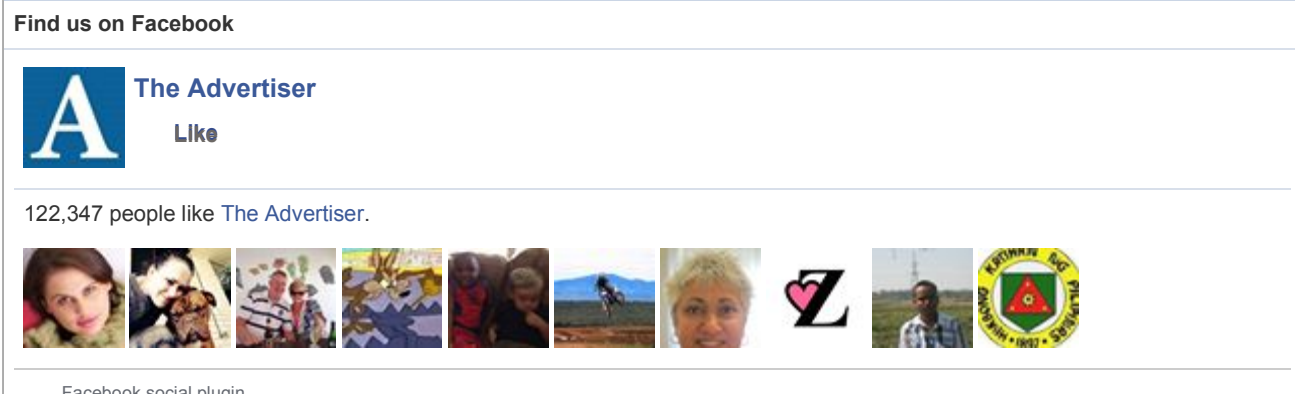
Once listed on the national register, the area comes under federal laws which impose protection obligations but also make available grants and financial support from the Federal Government. State Tourism Minister Leon Bignell has said world recognition could be “an important addition to our food and wine branding”.

Opposition tourism spokesman David Ridgway said “anything that makes the area unique is positive and something tourism operators can market”.

However, he questioned whether world heritage protection would add “another layer of regulation”.

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David

Jun 13, 2014

In a 100 years our future generations will look back and say what unusual foresight to get it listed. Only have to look at the incredible stupidity of housing and short term profits taking over valuable viticulture and other high value intensive farming. Worth assessing and considering.

1 Like Reply



Brad

Jun 13, 2014

Another stupid idea by the powers that be. Makes about as much sense as the bus and bike lanes in the CBD.

2 Like Reply



Greg

Jun 13, 2014

Our 'working agricultural landscape' was and should be the Adelaide plains. The Adelaide Hills, though nice enough in parts, are nothing special at all compared to anyone else's hills just about anywhere else. A really stupid idea - unless it means cyclists will be banned from them.

Like Reply



Jim

Jun 13, 2014

I like how they say "develop" an area. Funny.

1 Like Reply



John T

Jun 12, 2014

Not before time, I have seen property owners do ridiculous things like chopping trees down and land filling on the hills face when they shouldn't. Don't even bother to ask the local council.

Like Reply



Gustav

Jun 12, 2014

This should make it much more attractive to Foreign buyers.

1 Like Reply



Sam

Jun 12, 2014

Go for it

1 Like Reply

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