



# Becoming a Whale Heritage Site

There is a five-tiered process: an initial online application, a candidacy review, an optional technical advice, a final application and then, if successful, Whale Heritage Site (WHS) designation.

## THE PROCESS

### 1. Online initial application

This questionnaire ensures there are no fundamental issues that preclude Whale Heritage Site candidacy. This may include situations where the coexistence of humans and cetaceans is considered harmful or compromises animal welfare. This questionnaire also provides us with some detailed information to enable us to better understand the strengths and areas for improvement in the proposed WHS.

### 2. Candidate review

A review of the initial application is carried out by WCA representatives. Those sites that pass the Candidate review are then accepted as a Whale Heritage Site candidate and will receive a Candidate logo licence agreement and a Steering Committee document to complete. It is essential that candidates send the completed Steering Committee document to the WCA at this point. This should include the names of individuals and organisations that would be willing to participate in the committee to take the Whale Heritage Site application forward.

### 3. Optional technical advice

Once the Steering Committee document and the logo licence agreement have been received by the WCA, we offer two opportunities to gain advice to assist with the final application:

1. General advice from the WCA Secretariat to discuss and advise on general areas for improvement and on how to submit an application with the greatest chance of success.
2. Specialist advice from our technical team of experts on a specific criteria that the candidate site believes would be most beneficial.

Candidate Whale Heritage Site status will last for a maximum of three years before it is either revoked or renewed, or the site applies for full certification. During this period the site must submit annual reports summarising progress made towards full Whale Heritage Site status.

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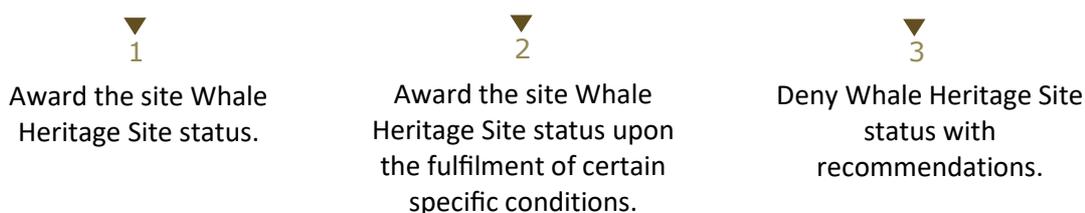
#### 4. Final application

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At this point, the site is invited to submit the following information to the WHS Independent Review Panel (IRP) by receiving a link to enable the completion of a detailed online survey which will include:

- I. Supporting evidence (including statistics relevant to livelihoods, cultural activities, tourists visiting the area, whale-watch tour operators, protected areas, etc.) to enable the IRP to build a picture of the site.
- II. Justification for the geographical delineation of the site.
- III. A detailed explanation of how the site achieves each of the criteria.

This information will be reviewed by the WCA Secretariat. All information will then be presented to the Whale Heritage Site IRP for consideration. The IRP will evaluate the site against the criteria and either:



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#### 5. Site designation

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The site has passed through the IRP and been designated as a Whale Heritage Site. It must then prepare and submit annual reports explaining how criteria are met, and will be subject to IRP review every three years. Designated sites will also receive an on-site audit in the first three-year period, and once every three years after that (see Site Audit Fee General Guidance document). Upon request and submission of evidence that the criteria are no longer being met, the site may be investigated and/or downgraded. Certified Whale Heritage Sites must show continual improvement through annual reporting as a measure of their excellence.