



GREAT SPA TOWNS *of Europe*

Media Release

7th November 2022

Great Spa Towns of Europe announce the appointment of Chiara Ronchini as new Secretary General

The Great Spa Towns of Europe Association is delighted to announce that it has appointed **Chiara Ronchini** as the new Secretary General, to take over the post from Paul Simons, the current Secretary General. She will start in post on 13th February 2023. Chiara joins the Great Spa Towns of Europe from Historic Environment Scotland where she has worked since 2014, most recently, since 2020 as their Policy Manager. Chiara brings a wealth of experience in World Heritage matters, both practical and academic to this post as well as enthusiasm and inspiration – something which impressed the interview panel of all eleven Mayors of the towns which comprise the Great Spa Towns of Europe.

Speaking from Baden bei Wien, Mayor Stefan Szirucsek, the Chair of the Great Spa Towns of Europe Association said:

“On behalf of the Board, I am delighted to welcome Chiara as the new Secretary General of the Great Spa Towns of Europe Association in February. She was an outstanding candidate at interview, in a very strong field of applications. We are looking forward to working with her, and tapping into her expertise in the many areas which are essential to the future management of the site – from local capacity building and interaction with citizens to attracting funding, and from World Heritage Site management to team leadership, these are qualities that we will be drawing on as our World Heritage Site develops. I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who applied for this role – it was a challenge to shortlist candidates from such a diverse, impressive and global field. We are all looking forward to working with Chiara and wish her all the best in her future role.”

Paul Simons the current Secretary General said:

“It has been an honour and a privilege to work on this incredible project since its inception in 2010. In recent years, as Secretary General I have worked with many distinguished politicians and experts at local, national and European levels. I sincerely thank them for placing their trust in me and it is an experience that I will not forget in a hurry! My task has varied considerably over the years, developing the project from an idea to writing the nomination documents and achieving the successful inscription. I now feel confident to hand over the reins to Chiara, to manage this complex, unusual and unique world heritage site into the future. In this, the 50th anniversary year of the World Heritage Convention, I am looking forward to new challenges and will stay in touch with the many friends and colleagues that I have worked with on this very special project.”

Chiara Ronchini said:

“Joining the Great Spa Towns of Europe at this time is a great honour. I’m very excited to get to know all eleven spa towns and the teams that work there – it’s going to be an amazing challenge and an adventure too!

I look forward to working with all the partners and state parties to build on the fantastic work to date. The GSTE are an incredible UNESCO World Heritage site, not just for their unique architecture and urban planning, but also for the social, medical and artistic ideas that originated there and that were exported all over the world.

This uniqueness creates so many opportunities to bring the GSTE and European Spa Culture to the fore in Europe and beyond. I’m really looking forward to harnessing these opportunities in collaboration with colleagues, partners, and our local and global communities.”

- ENDS -

Chiara Ronchini Bio:

Chiara Ronchini has worked in the cultural heritage sector for 14 years, focusing on World Heritage, climate change, responsible tourism and participatory approaches in management, policy and strategy.

An Urbanist at heart, Chiara is a British Architect and qualified Project Manager. She is an elected member of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Energy and Sustainability, and the Responsible Tourism Institute Scientific Council, and is also a Trustee for BuildAid, a charity providing emergency aid and supporting community projects internationally.

Chiara currently works for Historic Environment Scotland as Policy Manager, leading on the development of Futures Thinking approaches and managing the creation of a new heritage strategy for Scotland. Previously at Historic Environment Scotland, she led a £2.1m community heritage programme, working with under-represented groups across all Scottish towns and cities. Prior to this, Chiara worked with Edinburgh World Heritage to mainstream climate action in the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh’s World Heritage Site, and as a consultant for UNESCO on World Heritage management in Egypt, Croatia and Italy.

Chiara studied Architecture and Urban Planning in Italy and the Czech Republic, with shorter stints in Finland and the Netherlands. She obtained a master’s degree specialising in the management of World Heritage Cities by working with UNESCO on the Management Plan for Bukhara, Uzbekistan. Her thesis focused on the regeneration of places connected with water, especially historic hammams and *hauz* pools, reflecting her keen interest in how the urban fabric has been shaped by water and its traditional uses – an interest she is looking forward to nurturing and celebrating by working with the Great Spa Towns of Europe.



Connect with Chiara on LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/in/chiaronchini and Twitter [@ChiaraRonc](https://twitter.com/ChiaraRonc)

Contact the Great Spa Towns of Europe:

Contact: Paul Simons, Secretary General

Email: paul@simonsassociates.co.uk

Tel: +44 7785 506 338

Catherine Lloyd, Communications

Email: cl@simonsassociates.co.uk

Tel: +44 7875 275059

www.greatspatownsofeurope.eu

Notes to Editors :

1. The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* is a 'Transnational Serial' World Heritage Site, comprising 11 famous historic thermal spa towns and cities in seven countries. The site was inscribed on the World Heritage List at the 44th World Heritage Committee meeting in on 24th July 2021.
2. The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom represent a unique cultural phenomenon which reached its height in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as a particular urban type and form which deserves global recognition as a phenomenon which helped to shape Europe.
3. Inscription on the World Heritage List is the highest international recognition for global cultural and natural heritage sites. It is managed by UNESCO (the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) on behalf of the United Nations from its headquarters in Paris.
4. There are over 400 working spa towns across Europe and those selected are the *crème de la crème* of Europe's best. The eleven *Great Spa Towns of Europe* possess architectural ensembles, parks, gardens and landscapes which are maintained to the highest standards. They also maintain a wide range of outstanding cultural activities, welcome an international clientele and provide a continuing living tradition of leisure, health and well-being.
5. All of the *Great Spa Towns of Europe* are easily accessible, often by rail, and offer a wide range of quality accommodation. Cultural activities and heritage attractions compliment the health and leisure treatments traditionally associated with spa towns. Local gastronomy and wine present a distinctive feature of each spa town along with more contemporary well-being programmes. Rural pursuits, walking, hiking and cycling in the surrounding therapeutic spa landscape are available for all visitors.