

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Economic and Community Development PDS Panel
MEETING DATE:	17 July 2014
TITLE:	Bath World Heritage Site: Update
WARD:	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report: None	

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This is an update report on World Heritage (WH) management in Bath. It concentrates on the forthcoming revision of the WH Site Management Plan, the work of the WH Enhancement Fund grant scheme and progress of the 'Great Spas of Europe' project.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 This is an information item. The panel are asked to note the contents of this report.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Although there are no financial implications as a result of this report, it should be noted that the Council contributes £25k per annum to the World Heritage Enhancement Fund, details of which are included in the main body of the report below. This amount is included within approved budgets.

4 THE REPORT

Introduction

- 4.1 This report follows an earlier submission to this panel in January 2013. The previous report was made on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the inscription of Bath as a WH Site, and laid out the history of WH status in Bath and the benefit which subsequently accrues to the city. This report adds detail by providing an update on progress with management planning, with the Enhancement Fund Grant scheme and with the Great Spas of Europe project.

The Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan

- 4.2 All WH sites are encouraged to have a management plan. This key document describes what the outstanding universal value of the site is and the mechanisms and actions in place to maintain this. Bath was one of the first sites to adopt a

plan in 2003 and this plan was revised in 2010. Work is now underway to provide a third edition by 2016.

- 4.3 WH management in Bath is overseen by a steering group comprised of key stakeholders with an independent chairperson. The Council is the major steward of the site and takes the lead by employing a WH Manager and providing a secretariat to the Steering Group.
- 4.4 Renewal of the management plan starts with a process of assessment of the performance of the previous document. The 2010 plan contains 71 actions and is monitored annually. Progress against this has been solid, with approximately half (49%) of the actions completed mid-way through the plan period. It should be noted that the actions are a mixture of long term aspirations and quick wins and 100% achievement is unlikely within the plan period. It should also be noted that in most cases the Steering Group and WH Manager do not directly undertake the actions, but rather influence or support others.
- 4.5 The new plan will roll forward any actions which remain valid and unachieved, and will undertake work with stakeholders and with the public to identify new issues. As an example of new issues which arise, 'fracking' was nowhere on the agenda in the 2010 plan and has quickly risen to become one of the major potential threats to the values of Bath as a WH Site.
- 4.6 The timetable for the replacement plan is for a stakeholder event to be held in Spring 2015, with full public consultation to follow in the summer and adoption by Full Council in November 2015. Budgets are in place to complete the work and no new funding is sought.

World Heritage Enhancement Fund

- 4.7 The WH Enhancement Fund was established in 2009. It is a small grant scheme, run in partnership between the Council and Bath Preservation Trust. It aims to initiate and organise minor enhancements to Bath's heritage, assist and encourage others to undertake such work, and organise volunteers for the same purpose.
- 4.8 The Council contributes £25,000 per year to the Fund, the Bath Preservation Trust pay £5,000 and other income sources include any unspent expenses of the Steering Group Chairman and private donations. In a review of the Fund in 2012 it was assessed that the fund had completed 21 projects with another 24 earmarked or on-going. Rarely will the Fund meet 100% of costs, and instead it will seek to lever in contribution from others. It had received £120,000 from funding partners by 2012 and turned this into over £400,000 of work.
- 4.9 The Fund will often address schemes which the Council and other agencies cannot. For example, over 50 items of historic street furniture have been cleaned or repaired, including 19 of the 1827 Bath Turnpike boundary markers and 27 historic lamp posts, as well as emblazoning 44 city coats of arms on those lamp posts including gold leaf work. 21 historic incised street names have been restored. At least four projects included restoration of listed structures on the Council's 'at risk' register.
- 4.10 Working at its best, the Fund will facilitate community action, helping people to achieve enhancement works and giving them the ability to unlock further funding.

In 2013 the Fund worked with congregation members at St.Mary's Church, Claverton to restore Ralph Allen's Mausoleum. The Fund contributed £5,000 toward a £20,000 sum raised by the members. This in turn unlocked £47,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and extensive repair was possible. In another example, the Fund supported Bath City College Masonry Students in piecing together damaged statues which were lost from the Corridor, Bath and returning them to that shopping arcade. This action contributed to local education and craft skills, conserved the historic environment and added to the economic vitality of a retail area.

- 4.11 The work of the Fund is widely publicised annually in a newsletter. We piggy-back on the Bath Preservation Trust's annual mailing of its AGM papers ensuring that 1,100 copies are distributed at very low cost. Copies are also sent to Bath Ward Councillors and other important stakeholders.

The Great Spas of Europe

- 4.12 As reported in January 2013, Bath is engaged in a project entitled the 'Great Spas of Europe'. In 2007 the Czech Government approached UNESCO with a proposal to have three of their spa towns inscribed on the WH list for the contribution that spas had made to European culture. UNESCO welcomed the idea, but asked that the very best examples of spas across Europe be identified to demonstrate this cultural contribution. Subsequently a group with the working name 'Great Spas of Europe' was formed and Bath sits (by merit) within that group.
- 4.13 The group numbers 16 spas, from 7 countries, although it is likely that an assessment process will subsequently reduce this number. The project has reached a stage where an initial application form for a trans-national bid is about to be submitted to UNESCO and if all proceeds well this could lead to a second WH inscription for the city by 2017.
- 4.14 It is important to look at why Bath would want to invest time, money and effort in pursuing a second WH nomination. Firstly, this represents the formation of an elite group of spas. Robust assessments already undertaken demonstrate Bath warrants its place at this table and Bath does not want to be viewed as a second class spa destination. Secondly, our existing inscription is predominantly issued on the basis of architecture and archaeology, not on the cultural use of the hot springs. It is highly unlikely we would ever pursue a second nomination on this basis ourselves, but here we can take the opportunity of riding on the coat-tails of a project led by others which potentially achieves those aims.
- 4.15 The benefit of a spa based inscription would mostly be realised through tourism and tourism marketing. Bath already generates an estimated £380m of tourist income per year, but investment in the future is vital. Our unique spa offer as the UK's only hot springs places us at the centre of emerging 'wellness' tourism and the WH inscription validates this offer. Another benefit is that central government will be required to back our bid to UNESCO and if they do so it becomes increasingly difficult for the same government to endorse 'fracking' actions which might subsequently jeopardise the hot springs which may be awarded WH recognition.
- 4.16 Finally, 'side benefits' of this work are already being realised. Our understanding of the historic relationship between healing and the landscape ('therapeutic

landscapes’) and the current potential to capitalise on this has greatly increased. We also have seen examples from partners spa towns of what a ‘spa quarter’ might encompass, should we wish to create such a concept in Bath. Plus we have a ready-made network of partners with whom to work alongside on any European funding streams which might arise.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendation is not considered necessary in this instance.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 This is an information report, which is not considered to contain implications warranting completion of an Equality Impact Assessment.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 No consultation has been undertaken for this information report.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 (No decision is sought).

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report.

Contact person	Tony Crouch, World Heritage Manager. 01225 477584
Background papers	World Heritage Site Management Plan (2010-2016): www.bathnes.gov.uk/worldheritage World Heritage Enhancement Fund newsletter 2012, 2013, 2014: http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/tourism-and-heritage/world-heritage/world-heritage-news
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