

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	10 September 2014	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2691
TITLE:	UNESCO World Heritage Site update	
WARD:	City of Bath and surrounding wards	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: UNESCO Information Dossier 2014		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 UNESCO, the body which oversees World Heritage Sites (WHS), made comments on the Bath WHS Management Plan in 2011. A full response to these comments is to be made, together with information on potential major developments in Bath. This clears the way for the production of a revised management plan in 2016 and ensures that UNESCO are briefed on developments which may be of future interest to them.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Cabinet is asked to endorse the submission of the dossier to UNESCO.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 The resource implications here are predominantly indirect. The UNESCO WH brand is an important factor in attracting tourism and economic development to the city and surrounding area, and is a source of civic identity and pride. A good working relationship with UNESCO and maintaining our WH status is therefore important both financially and otherwise.
- 3.2 It should be noted that the Council contributes £25k per annum to the World Heritage Enhancement Fund. This amount is included within approved budgets.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 There are no direct statutory considerations connected with this proposal.

5 THE REPORT

Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan

- 5.1 In 2008 UNESCO sent a 'mission' to Bath to investigate the impact of new developments on the city's World Heritage Site status. One request included in the mission report was for a revised WHS Management Plan. This was duly compiled and submitted to UNESCO by the agreed date of 1 February 2011.
- 5.2 UNESCO (or rather their advisors ICOMOS International) made comments on the submitted management plan. Where possible, these comments were immediately addressed and incorporated into management practices where appropriate. However, there were several comments which related to areas of work which the UK was not in a position to respond to at that time. Chief amongst these was a request for the identification of 'attributes' (key characteristics) of Bath WHS and for a revised 'Statement of Outstanding Universal Value'. Both issues were being addressed in a UK wide exercise involving all 28 UK sites lead by English Heritage and were not fully completed until 2013.
- 5.3 The above situation led to a position whereby there were actions outstanding with UNESCO and questions were raised as to whether the WHS Management Plan was adopted by UNESCO. It has since been clarified that UNESCO do not formally adopt plans and so the Bath WHS Management Plan (as endorsed by full Council and the WHS Steering Group) is complete. However, we are now in a position to fully address all the points raised by UNESCO and as we are embarking on the production of a further revision of the management plan for 2016, it is considered to be good management practice to tie off all loose ends relating to the current plan and 2008 mission.

Future development proposals

- 5.4 Any correspondence between a WHS and UNESCO must be conducted via the 'state party' or, more specifically in the case of the UK, via the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Consequently, opportunities to correspond directly with UNESCO are infrequent. It is considered prudent to use this opportunity to offer UNESCO an update with regard to forthcoming major developments in Bath which have the potential to impact upon the 'outstanding universal value' for which the Site was inscribed.

5.5 It is good management practice to ensure that bodies such as UNESCO are aware of future development proposals. This gives confidence that development is being responsibly planned and managed, and gives UNESCO an opportunity to comment should they so wish. It is also known through experience that, whilst protocol dictates that the Council should correspond via DCMS, such restrictions do not apply to groups or individual citizens who may choose to write directly to UNESCO to comment on development proposals. It is considered prudent therefore that accurate factual information is supplied by the Council pre-empting any comments which might reach them by other means and removing any 'future shock'.

Submission timetable

5.6 The information included in the dossier takes time to collate and can rapidly become outdated. It is therefore proposed to submit the dossier to DCMS as soon as possible following the Cabinet endorsement process. English Heritage (see 8.1) may suggest minor alterations, but consultation with this body has already taken place and these are not therefore expected to be substantial.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 The rationale for submitting this dossier is covered in section 5 above.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 With regard to the submission of an information dossier to UNESCO, the main alternative option would be to do nothing. To do nothing would leave areas of ambiguity unaddressed which is not considered to be conducive to a positive working relationship between Bath WHS and UNESCO. To not take this opportunity to inform UNESCO of future developments would increase the risk of that body hearing of developments through third parties, most likely in negative terms. In the worst case scenario this could lead to a further mission to Bath with associated potential reputational damage and questions over the City's WHS status.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 English Heritage, as the government's adviser on the historic environment, has been consulted with regarding the submission of this dossier. A copy of the final draft will be shared with their Head of International Advice before final submission to DCMS.

8.2 The submission of this dossier and reporting to UNESCO has been on the agenda of the last two WHS Steering Group meetings and that body is fully aware and supportive of this action. Steering Group minutes are posted on the Council's public website.

8.3 The reports contained within the dossier have been written by senior council officers directly involved with/responsible for the developments in question. Their divisional directors have been involved in the requests for this input and the dossier has been discussed at Senior Management Team. As such there is widespread corporate awareness of this document and report.

8.4 Some of the dossier items, including the 'Attributes' and the 'Revised Statement of Outstanding Universal Value' have been in the public domain (through the

website) for around six months. Details of proposed developments are also in the public domain. Any items which have not previously been available will be so through this cabinet approval process. Bespoke public consultation is not therefore considered necessary.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

Contact person	Tony Crouch, City of Bath World Heritage Site Manager 01225 477584
Background papers	The 2010-2016 Bath WHS Management Plan, which includes (at Appendix 7) the UNESCO/ICOMOS mission and subsequent WH Committee decision, can be viewed at: http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/tourism-and-heritage/world-heritage/world-heritage-document-availability
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	