

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	14 November 2024	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3572
TITLE:	Draft City of Bath and Great Spa Towns of Europe World Heritage Site Management Plan (2024-2030) Public Consultation	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
1. Draft City of Bath and Great Spa Towns of Europe World Heritage Site Management Plan (2024-2030) Public Consultation		
2. Equality Impact Assessment / Equality Analysis		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The draft City of Bath and Great Spa Towns of Europe combined World Heritage Site Management Plan (2024-2030).

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1 Endorse the draft City of Bath and Great Spa Towns of Europe World Heritage Site Management Plan (2024-2030) for formal public engagement.
- 2.2 Agree the approach to public engagement (see Community Engagement)

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 This report relates to the draft City of Bath and Great Spa Towns of Europe World Heritage Site Management Plan (2024-2030) and seeks endorsement of the Management Plan for public consultation. In summary the report outlines the following:

- Background, purpose and scope of the draft Management Plan
- Preparation to date

- Format and content
- Council Corporate Strategy and the draft Management Plan
- Community engagement
- Budgetary considerations

3.2 World Heritage Sites (WHS) are inscribed and overseen by UNESCO. UNESCO Operational Guidelines (2021) require each site to produce a management plan, renewed every six years, describing what the site consists of, why it is of global significance, how it is managed, what challenges it faces and how (through an action plan) these will be addressed. This draft will replace the previous plan covering the period of 2016-2022 and has been drafted to include the second inscription. The two-year delay between the end of the previous Plan and the new draft Plan is due to personnel changes and resourcing issues. UNESCO requested, when inscribing the GSTE in 2021, that a revised, combined management plan was produced. There are therefore external drivers for the programme to review the Management Plan. This is the first time two WHS inscriptions have been combined into one management plan.

3.3 UNESCO WHS inscription remains a highly respected global brand and the highest and most prestigious heritage designation and accolade that can be achieved. Bath is one of only 22 sites out of 1223 worldwide to achieve a double inscription: City of Bath (1987) and Great Spa Towns of Europe (2021). The benefits it brings are substantial, including economic, deriving from the global status and profile for the city, which is significant, and other comparable UK cities that recognise these benefits have attempted to gain this status so far without success.

3.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 recognises World Heritage Sites as designated assets of the highest significance. Associated historic environment guidance states that WHS management plans should inform the Development Plan or Local Plan policies. The WHS Management Plan informs, works alongside and is complementary to the Council's Development Plan. However, it is the Development Plan which guides and influences development proposals, contains planning policies used in the determination of planning applications, and protects land which is valued for a variety of reasons.

3.5 The WHS Management Plan is also endorsed by both the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and UNESCO.

3.6 The draft WHS Management Plan addresses the following:

- why the Bath WHS is of global importance and significance
- what its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and the attributes that convey them are
- how the Site will be protected and managed
- what the issues are impacting upon its OUV

- what the priorities and objectives are for management and the actions proposed to address these
- 3.7 Bath World Heritage (including preparation of the Management Plan) is managed through an Advisory Board, a roundtable bringing together 33 representatives from 21 organisations. The Board is convened and supported by Bath and North East Somerset Council, but chaired independently.
- 3.8 In addition to Council officers and members, representatives from the following organisations sit on the Board: Historic England, National Trust, Bath Preservation Trust, ICOMOS UK, World Heritage UK, University of Bath and Bath Spa University, The Mayor's Guides, Canal and River Trust, Local business community, including Bath Bid and Visit West.
- 3.9 The preparation of the draft WHS Management Plan has been undertaken through a collaboration of these organisations led by the Council and the Chair of the Advisory Board. A steering group was established approximately 12 months ago to review the format of the Management Plan, consider how this could be updated to include the two inscriptions and, in particular, to review in some detail shared views of the issues, challenges and opportunities for the World Heritage Site in order to establish a new set of prioritised objectives and a partnership action plan to address these.
- 3.10 The draft WHS Management Plan is set out in two main sections. The first part explains the aims of the Management Plan and gives details of both inscriptions and how the World Heritage Site is 'managed':
- Introduction - summarises the double inscription, considers the scope, status and in the aims of the Management Plan.
 - Description of the site - is a scene setting overview of the World Heritage Site, including its location, boundary, setting, history (of the inscription) the condition of the site and some key facts.
 - Significance of the site - sets out in full why Bath is considered to be of (OUV), in respect of both inscriptions, and describes the 'attributes' that convey or express the OUV of the site. It also sets out thirdly in the hierarchy the individual 'elements' such as archaeology, buildings and setting. It provides helpful and easy access to this key information.
 - Management of the site - addresses the complexities of 'management' which, as Bath is a living, dynamic urban city, has many facets and is dependent upon factors such as land ownership, legislation, governance systems, resources and how the many stakeholders interact. The number of partners involved and the relationships between them are complex.
- 3.11 The second part of the plan focusses on active management:
- Issues, challenges & opportunities - these have been the significant focus of the partnership work to prepare this new management plan, now and going forward, together with the objectives and actions identified to seek to address them. This has resulted in the identification of number of objectives and from these, 6 priority objectives, focussed on:

- Addressing Climate Change
 - Development
 - Public Realm
 - Traffic, Transport and Mobility
 - Promotion, Interpretation, Inclusion and Presentation
 - Natural Setting and Nature Recovery
- Action plan - setting out actions, ownership across the partners, resource implications as far as can be detailed at this point, planned timescales and monitoring.

3.12 The draft World Heritage Site Management Plan is included at Annex 1 to this report. The draft is a text document with no images or graphics, intentionally at this stage in order to show that consultation clearly intends to address views given and to avoid duplication of desktop publishing work.

3.13 The draft World Heritage Site Management Plan objectives and process for preparation align well with the Council's Corporate Strategy:

- Tackling the Climate & Ecological Emergencies: 2 of the 6 key priority objectives identified in the Plan relate to these critical issues - Addressing Climate Change; Natural Setting and Nature Recovery, together with actions including research in identifying and understanding the risks posed by climate change, to both the WHS and the community, and the actions and interventions required as a result; also preserving, enhancing and promoting the Green Setting of the WHS, supporting nature recovery initiatives.
- Giving People a Bigger Say: the preparation of the Management Plan through 'participatory means' is a key UNESCO concept and requirement. Public consultation on the Management Plan is therefore an essential stage of its preparation and will provide the opportunity for the local and wider community to have their say and contribute. At the heart of the Management Plan and the World Heritage Site inscriptions is the founding concept of World Heritage Sites being for all, promoting participation, inclusivity, accessibility and equality.
- Delivering for Local residents: the Management Plan recognises that Bath is a living, dynamic city with a local population and community that live within the WHS that, unusually, covers the entire city. It recognises that there are both local community needs as well as those of visitors. Through its priority objectives and associated actions, the Management Plan promotes and supports many initiatives and projects that improve and enhance the quality of life and well-being of the city's residents, including improvements to both the built and surrounding natural environment.
- Preparing for the Future/Focusing on Prevention: the Management Plan focuses on enhancing and improving the WHS and futureproofing,

closely aligning with these two Council priorities and also with Tackling the Climate & Ecological Emergencies.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The preparation, endorsement and publication of the management plan is not a statutory requirement.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The review and preparation of the management plan, including public consultation, has been and will be prepared utilising existing resources within existing budgets.
- 5.2 The management plan identifies actions going forward for the Council and partners. In respect of the Council's actions, many of these will sit within existing budgets, although there will be some that will require the sourcing of additional funding, potentially as part of partnership approaches, and will be reported individually as required and appropriate.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

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

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 Preparation of the draft World Heritage Site Management Plan has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) which ensures that the Council understands the implications for people with protected characteristics

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 Climate Change is one of the Management Plans key priorities, consistent with UNESCO and also with the Council's Climate Emergency and Corporate Priorities. The associated action supports continued research into understanding and identifying the risks associated with climate change to the WHS and the development of mitigation strategies.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 None.

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 In preparing this Report the Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, the Executive Director for Sustainable Development, the S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer have been consulted. It has been cleared for publication by the S151 and Monitoring Officer.
- 10.2 This report seeks approval for the following public consultation plan.
- 10.3 Consultation will take place over an 8-week period from the end of November 2024 to the end of January 2025, consistent with the Council's objective of giving people a greater say. The plan, in particular, is to seek stakeholder's

views on the issues, challenges and opportunities facing the WHS now and going forward and the objectives and actions identified to address them. The consultation is also an opportunity to widen understanding of the reasons for the two World Heritage Site inscriptions and their importance. Similar consultations would normally be for a 6-week period, but this has been extended given the Christmas break.

10.4 The consultation will be aimed at a wide range of stakeholders, from communities / residents to statutory organisations, the voluntary sector, local businesses, developers etc. It will be widely publicised using a range of media/communication channels. The draft Management Plan will be available on the Council's website, in accessible formats, as well as in hard copy format at various locations.

10.5 Views will be encouraged primarily on-line via a clear and easy to use consultation portal guided by prepared questions, but stakeholders will be able to submit comments generally too. A series of drop-in events is also planned, that will be held in Bath with the assistance of representatives of the World Heritage Advisory Board members, Council officers and Council members.

10.6 Concurrent consultation with key advisory bodies, especially Historic England (on behalf of DCMS), UNESCO and GSTE will also take place.

10.7 All views received will be collated within a consultation report to clearly show the comments received and how the World Heritage Site Advisory Board partnership have responded i.e. 'you said, and we did' approach.

10.8 It is proposed that the consultation report outcomes and final version of the draft Management Plan are endorsed by the Council through Single Member Decision.

10.9 The programme of public consultation and subsequent review and update of content and final approval is set out below:

25 Nov 24 to 17 Jan 25	Full 8-week public consultation to allow for Christmas, associated publicity	AN/TC et al
Nov/Jan	Concurrent consultation with key advisory bodies, especially Historic England (on behalf of DCMS), UNESCO and GSTE	AN/TC
Jan (w/c 20 Jan)	Collation and consideration of consultation responses; ongoing through consultation and approximately 2 weeks after close of consultation (may require longer dependent on number received). Followed by production and editing of Consultation Report	AN/TC
Feb	SG and Advisory Board approval of changes, any suggested further changes and final sign-off (2 stage)	SG then Advisory Board

Feb	Produce final draft MP, desktop publish and provide images, diagrams, maps etc to graphic designer (Cleo's Regen Team)	AN/Cleo's Team
Feb	Section 151 (finance) and monitoring officer (legal) and Cabinet endorsement	AN
Feb/March	Dispatch to HE International Team/DCMS who in turn will submit to UNESCO	AN
March	Publish to website	AN/Web Team

Contact person	Adrian Neilson – Principal Officer, World Heritage Tel: 01225 4772020
Background papers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft City of Bath and Great Spa Towns of Europe World Heritage Site Management Plan (2024-2030) Public Consultation 2. Equality Impact Assessment / Equality Analysis
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