

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Planning, Housing and Economic Development PDS Panel
MEETING DATE:	Tuesday 24 November 2015
TITLE:	Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan: Update
WARD:	Bath and surrounding wards
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report: None	

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This is an update report on World Heritage Site (WHS) management in Bath. It concentrates on the current revision of the WHS Management Plan, progress of the 'Great Spas of Europe' project and the Archway project to deliver a World Heritage Interpretation Centre.

2 RECOMMENDATION

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

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report. Approved budgets relating to the emerging draft replacement WHS Management Plan and the Great Spas project are in place and as described in 5.13 the WHS Interpretation Centre is partially subject to fundraising and grants from external bodies. Costs associated with stakeholder engagement will be managed from within these existing budgets.
- 3.2 With regard to property, the buildings which will house the new learning centre and WH Interpretation Centre are within the Council's ownership. The capital project proposals will be progressed through the usual Council capital approval process.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 There are no statutory requirements associated with WH inscription but UNESCO, as the body which inscribes and monitors sites, has operational guidelines which state parties and sites are expected to abide by. A link to these is provided at the end of this report.

5 THE REPORT

Introduction

- 5.1 This report follows earlier submissions to this panel in January 2013/July 2014.

- 5.2 UNESCO WHS status is the highest heritage accolade available to any cultural or natural place. The inscription is very difficult to obtain and the brand is recognised and respected world-wide. The fact that Bath and Venice are the only complete cities in Europe to be inscribed in their entirety validates our cultural offer and heritage significance, drives our tourist industry, creates an image of quality, enhances our global profile and bolsters civic pride. The financial benefit is difficult to accurately quantify but it can safely be said to be worth millions of pounds.

The City of Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan

- 5.3 As noted in section 4.1 UNESCO guidelines stipulate that all sites should have an up to date management plan in place. UNESCO can be compared to a standards agency in that they identify the most significant places on the planet and then work to ensure that they are then well managed. A management plan should describe what the site comprises of, explain why it is of global importance, outline the management systems in place to protect it and contain an action plan of necessary measures.
- 5.4 The first Bath WHS Management Plan (2003-9) concentrated on establishing systems of management and ensuring appropriate policies and guidelines were in place. The second plan (2010-16) applied these systems in the face of significant development pressure and sought to apply the lessons learnt from the UNESCO Mission of 2008. Much was achieved during both plan periods and the current state of conservation in Bath is very good. The city can be described as prosperous and there are few examples of derelict or abandoned buildings. The key challenge to be addressed in the forthcoming plan (2016-22) is to deliver a further phase of considerable growth and change whilst sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value for which the site was inscribed. This plan is currently under production. It is an optimistic and ambitious plan, it seeks to 'raise the bar' and ensure that Bath is viewed as an exemplar of urban heritage management.
- 5.5 The management plan is overseen by the WHS Steering Group, which comprises of key local and national 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 the secretariat to the Steering Group. The 5 draft priorities of the emerging replacement plan are managing development, transport, the public realm, interpretation and education and environmental resilience.
- 5.6 The timetable for progressing the emerging plan is as follows. A 'stakeholder event' with 130 invitees was held in April 2015 and the feedback from this, together with issues rolled forward from the previous plan, enabled draft issues and actions to be captured. Events throughout the year, such as WH Day and talks to interest groups have also contributed to this. A full draft will be issued for public consultation in April 2016 and presented to full council for adoption in June 2016. The approved plan will subsequently be sent, via Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), to UNESCO in Paris.

The Great Spas of Europe

- 5.7 As previously reported to this panel, Bath is engaged in a project entitled the 'Great Spas of Europe'. In 2007 the Czech Government approached UNESCO with a proposal to have 3 of their spa towns inscribed on the WH list for the contribution that they had made to European culture. UNESCO welcomed the idea, but asked that the best examples of spas across Europe be identified to demonstrate this cultural contribution. Subsequently a group of leading European spas was formed and Bath sits within that group.
- 5.8 This long-term project currently includes 16 spas, from 7 countries. It has progressed significantly, with all 16 spas now officially recognised as candidates by their respective state parties and included on the tentative lists (of potential WH nominations) of each country. On face value it is a model of European co-operation, with all 16 mayors (or civic leaders) actively engaged in meetings, fees all being paid and broad agreement over the way forward. This co-operation may be tested in early 2016 when the numbers in the group are expected to be reduced in an inter-governmental meeting with the decisions based on comprehensive analysis of the contribution each spa makes to the value of the nomination. Bath is confident in progressing (on merit) through this selection process.
- 5.9 At the same time as the Great Spas is being assessed collectively the Bath nomination is also being assessed by the UK Government. DCMS are conducting a 'technical evaluation' of UK tentative WH bids and Bath was tested on the 3rd November 2015. A report from the evaluation panel will be sent to the relevant minister (Tracey Crouch MP) and feedback should be shared with Bath before Christmas this year.
- 5.10 Assuming the above hurdles are successfully cleared, the group will progress with developing a common management plan and other necessary documentation in advance of a formal nomination to UNESCO in 2018. A successful nomination would lead to a second (over-laying) WH inscription for the city and make it the only such site in the UK.

The World Heritage Interpretation Centre

- 5.11 The Roman Baths is engaged in a project to deliver a new learning centre within grade II listed Victorian former laundry buildings immediately south of the Great Bath (off York Street and Swallow Street). As part of this 'Archway' project, the current retail unit on York Street (a former jeans shop and currently a 'pop-up' bookshop) will become a World Heritage Interpretation Centre.
- 5.12 This centre will seek to explain to local people and visitors alike why the City of Bath is of global heritage importance. It will be designed to act as a hub, greeting people, explaining to them and enthusing them about our widespread heritage offer, and sending them out to explore. Such a centre reflects best practice emerging elsewhere and follows recommendations made by UNESCO. It is one of the key deliverables included in the emerging WHS Management Plan and the challenge will be how to interpret so much in one space.

5.13 The Heritage Services led Archway project has received stage 1 Heritage Lottery Funding and will submit the full stage 2 application in June 2016. There is an element of match funding also required and this is currently underway, led by the recently formed Roman Baths Foundation.

6 CONSULTATION

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

6.2 No further consultation has been undertaken for this information report.

7 RISK MANAGEMENT

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

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Background papers	<p>The World Heritage Site Management Plan (2010-2016) and the Steering Group composition can be seen at: www.bathnes.gov.uk/worldheritage</p> <p>Previous reports on this subject to the panel can be seen at:</p> <p>24 Jan 2013: http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=458&MID=3309</p> <p>17 Jul 2013: http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=458&MID=3899</p> <p>UNESCO Operating Guidelines (2015): http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/</p>
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