

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	31 October 2018	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3098
TITLE:	The Great Spas of Europe	
WARD:	Bath and surrounding wards	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1: Finance – Membership Costs Appendix 2: Main project benefits Appendix 3: Outstanding Universal Value of the bid		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Great Spas of Europe is a high-level, long term international partnership project. It involves a trans-national bid to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) seeking to inscribe Bath on the World Heritage list for a second time. If successful, this would result in Bath being an extremely rare example of a doubly-inscribed World Heritage Site with consequent significant global tourism marketing opportunities. Due to the significance of the bid, Cabinet endorsement is sought prior to the formal submission to UNESCO in January 2019.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to;

2.1 Endorse the submission of the Great Spas of Europe nomination to UNESCO.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

3.1 No new funding is required.

3.2 Currently, an allocated budget covers an annual membership fee of 14,500 Euro, expert consultant advice and other costs such as travel. Following a successful nomination the membership fee would rise from 2020 (see table 1, Appendix 1) to fund a group secretariat, but this rise would be off-set by savings on expert advice which would no longer be required and all costs would remain contained within existing budgets. If the bid is unsuccessful, the Council would not need to meet the annual membership fee.

- 3.3 The network offered by the project has also allowed the Council to step away (in 2015) from membership of the Organisation of World Heritage Cities, at a saving of \$5,000 USD per year. The Council remains a member of the European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA - annual membership fee of 3,500 Euro) which can be seen to be a 'lower league' spa association. Again this membership can be examined in light of the benefits of the Great Spas bid.
- 3.4 No new staff resource requirement is envisaged. The Council already employs a full-time World Heritage Manager and a 0.5 day per week project assistant, plus it has a (funded) project underway to open a World Heritage Interpretation Centre in 2020. This existing resource and infrastructure will serve the new inscription.
- 3.5 The cost of the project, to nomination in 2019, is estimated at £210,000. The existing project budget has been in place since financial year 2013/14. This comprises of 6 years budget at £33k (= £198k) plus some incremental spend in years 2011-2013. This figure does not include officer time.
- 3.6 For context, a Price Waterhouse Cooper report of 2007, commissioned by the (then) Dept. Culture, Media and Sport, estimated the cost of making a World Heritage nomination to be £400k. At 2018 prices this is likely to be closer to £600k. The English Lake District, which was the last UK inscription in 2017, by their own calculations spent over £1m. The Council therefore has the opportunity to potentially deliver a nomination at around a third of the cost that would normally be expected.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 UNESCO inscription has no statutory basis and is not included in UK primary legislation. It is however a 'material consideration' with regard to planning policy. It is included in the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) and a protective policy is included in the Local Plan. With regard to environmental protection (both natural and cultural), the existing World Heritage inscription focuses predominantly on archaeology and architecture. With evolved thinking, the Great Spas inscription has a higher emphasis on intangible heritage, and how people used the historic spa rather than solely on the building fabric. In practical terms this has benefits for protection. An example is in shale gas ('fracking') exploration which could potentially impact upon the Hot Springs. Given that the UK Government is responsible for, and backs this bid, it would be a strongly contradictory move for them to then sanction any actions which could negatively impact upon the water sources which their bid seeks to protect.

- 4.2 No further statutory impacts are foreseen.

5 THE REPORT

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 UNESCO World Heritage status remains the most prestigious and highly coveted accolade bestowed on any heritage site. It is an accreditation which marks that place as being of global significance. The UNESCO brand is known and respected worldwide and with an ever increasing international tourist market is a powerful marketing tool. The UNESCO application process is both rigorous and

highly selective, and competitor cities to Bath, such as York and Chester, have tried unsuccessfully to achieve this accolade.

5.2 In 2007 the Government of the Czech Republic approached UNESCO with a proposal to inscribe a spa town (Luhacovice) in recognition of the unique nature of spa settlements and the contribution they have made to European culture. This contribution is set out in Appendix 3. UNESCO accepted the idea but asked that a comparative global study of spas be undertaken in order to bring forward the best representative examples of this genre. Consequently, a conference was held in 2010 at which Bath was represented. A study group of 16 European towns emerged, including Bath. That group was reduced to 11 (following UNESCO advice) in 2016 after an independent comparative analysis of the group. Bath was one of the highest ranking spa towns in this analysis, thus demonstrating that it fully merits inclusion in the group.

5.3 The 11 partners in this bid are as below:

- Bath (UK)
- Bad Ems (Germany)
- Baden Baden (Germany)
- Bad Kissingen (Germany)
- Baden Bei Wien (Austria)
- Frantiskovy Lazne (Czech Republic)
- Karlovy Vary (Czech Republic)
- Marianske Lazne (Czech Republic)
- Montecatini Terme (Italy)
- Spa (Belgium)
- Vichy (France)

5.4 Due to the global nature of UNESCO, that organisation deals directly with governments (or 'state parties') only. In 2014 Bath secured the formal backing of the UK Government to participate in the nomination and was included on the UK Tentative List of sites (the official 'waiting list' of potential nominations). Historic England's Head of International Advice now sits with counterparts from other state parties in one of the project's management groups.

5.5 The bid contains a significant amount of material (approximately 1,000 pages) hence the decision sought to endorse the principle of submission rather than the content of the nomination document itself. The document is now ready for submission. The UNESCO annual timetable allows one opportunity for this per annum, with the next date being 31st January 2019.

5.6 Given the time-span and nature of this project, governance has predominantly been through the direct involvement of the Cabinet Portfolio Holder. The project is directed by a 'Mayor's Steering Group' (MSG), with the European Mayors generally having executive power. There have now been 17 MSG meetings (including 2 in Bath), with a Council cabinet member present at the majority of those meetings. The project was approved by the Strategic Director's Group in 2012, the Economic and Community Development Scrutiny Panel reviewed it in 2013, 14, 15, 16 and 17, and it has consistently featured in World Heritage budgets approved through the democratic process.

FORWARD TIMETABLE AND PROCESS

5.7 The nomination will be made to UNESCO (Paris) by 31 January 2019. UNESCO will then engage their international advisors, the International Commission on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS International) to assess the bid. ICOMOS will do this throughout 2019 (including an inspection visit expected in September) and deliver a report to UNESCO by 31 January 2020. All being well, a positive recommendation will be considered and decided upon by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee at their annual meeting in June. Note that should there be any delay over (for example) calls for further information, this could delay inscription by a year.

IMPLICATIONS

5.8 The focus of this report is largely upon the benefits and costs of the bid. The primary purpose of World Heritage is however to 'protect, conserve, present and transmit' sites to future generations (as defined by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention). First and foremost this inscription is therefore a responsibility. This responsibility is one which Bath has worked with since 1987 and a second inscription would bring no new legislation or other restriction. There would therefore be no expected impact upon economic activities beyond that which has already been worked with for the last 31 years.

5.9 The proposed boundary for the second inscription would match the existing one. Bath would therefore have two over-lying nominations. The reasons for inscription would however be different (see appendix 3).

6 RATIONALE

6.1 This project offers a range of potential benefits, summarised in Appendix 2. It is good for business, reinforces the identity of Bath as a leading international spa destination and centre of heritage excellence, and realises an opportunity to gain a highly coveted and respected international inscription at a fraction of the expected cost.

6.2 Through this bid a 'top table' of elite European Spas has formed which will be officially recognised through a successful nomination. In terms of tourism management, Bath neither wishes or deserves to be outside of this elite circle, and indeed the comparative analysis process has shown that Bath is included by merit.

6.3 This initiative offers potentially powerful tourism marketing opportunities. Double nominated UNESCO World Heritage Sites are extremely rare worldwide and the marketing value of this accolade represents a significant investment in helping to ensure the long-term health of one of the district's primary industries.

6.4 As outlined in 3.4 this is a 'trans-national bid' being spearheaded by the Czech Republic. Bath therefore can reap the benefits of the inscription without incurring the costs or responsibilities of leadership. Bath already has the required management infrastructure in place, allowing realisation of benefits without the considerable costs of 'starting from scratch'.

6.5 Due to the costs associated with the bid, it is considered unlikely that the Council would start from scratch and embark on a similar project in the present economic

climate. However, given that benefits primarily accrue from a successful inscription and that the project is now very close to submission, there is little rationale in foregoing the resource already invested at this late stage. Furthermore, successfully gaining the backing of the UK Government (see 5.4) in this process should not be under-estimated, and a withdrawal at this late stage would incur reputational damage with the UK Government, UNESCO and our project partners.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 Withdraw from the bid. Bath already has World Heritage status and does not necessarily need a second inscription. The primary reason to consider this option would be cost, but as outlined in this report the project benefits are considered to represent a sound business investment and the bulk of the cost has already been committed. As outlined above, withdrawing at this late stage would forego the investment already made, would incur reputational damage and be technically difficult. Following UK Government agreement to include the project on the UNESCO Tentative List, the government and UK project leaders and decisions such as this would technically rest with them.
- 7.2 The Council could consider pursuing a bid alone. However, the UK only submits (a maximum of) one nomination annually, and if the UK Government were the lead state party Bath would have to wait in line behind other UK sites awaiting inscription. It is unlikely that Bath would secure Government backing to do this and it could add upwards of a decade to the process.
- 7.3 The Council could consider pursuing a bid in a smaller study group. There is no evidence that this would increase the chances of success. It would negate some benefits accrued by being part of a larger network and increase the proportion of work (and funding) required from Bath.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 An extensive range of public events have been held across the life of the project. No further consultation is considered necessary at this stage.

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.
- 9.2 A favourable acceptance vote from UNESCO on the nomination cannot be guaranteed. However, the extensive project preparation has included many meetings with UNESCO and all signs are positive. The project has the official backing of the UK Government and this would not be the case if they did not feel it would succeed. Furthermore, the involvement of 7 European Governments in this bid means that considerable diplomatic influence will be brought to bear on this process.

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Background papers	None
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APPENDIX 1: Costs of Membership

Future membership costs. Contributions are based on 3 categories of population levels. Sums shown are in Euros:

No.	Spa Town	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1	Bad Ems	6,000	6,750	6,750	7,600	7,600	10,050	12,500
2	Bad Kissingen	6,000	9,000	9,000	10,125	10,125	13,805	17,500
3	Baden-Baden	14,500	16,325	16,325	20,400	20,400	22,700	25,000
4	Baden bei Wien	6,000	9,000	9,000	10,125	10,125	13,805	17,500
5	City of Bath	14,500	16,325	16,325	20,400	20,400	22,700	25,000
6	Františkovy Lázně	6,000	6,750	6,750	7,600	7,600	10,050	12,500
7	Karlovy Vary	14,500	16,325	16,325	20,400	20,400	22,700	25,000
8	Mariánské Lázně	6,000	6,750	6,750	7,600	7,600	10,050	12,500
9	Montecatini Terme	6,000	9,000	9,000	10,125	10,125	13,805	17,500
10	Spa	6,000	6,750	6,750	7,600	7,600	10,050	12,500
11	Vichy	6,000	9,000	9,000	10,125	10,125	13,805	17,500
	Total annual budget	91,500	111,975 +12.5%	111,975	132,100 +12.5%	132,100	163,520 +32%	195,000 +23%

(It should be noted that the above table shows a commitment in principle only and recognises that local councils approve budgets on an annual basis and cannot guarantee future payments).

APPENDIX 2: Principle Benefits of the Project

Tourism Marketing. Tourism is arguably Bath and North East Somerset's biggest industry, employing 10,000 and generating £430,566,000 in total visitor spend (2016). Heritage and the hot springs are the Unique Selling Point. International competition for tourists is strong, but potential from emerging markets is also significant. UNESCO World Heritage (WH) is a global brand known to all nations. Bath would be able to be marketed as doubly-inscribed UNESCO WH Site – a claim that only a very small number of places worldwide can make. This can therefore be seen a future investment - standing still/doing nothing risks slipping down the rankings. Bath Tourism Plus market the City as a 'World Heritage Spa City' and this inscription is entirely complimentary to this.

Visitor Profile. Spa tourism attracts more affluent cultural tourists, likely to stay beyond one night. This matches the Destination Management Plan desire for greater value from tourism, not greater numbers. The network of European Spas offers scope for thematic routes between sites.

Status/Profile/Visibility. Great Spas of Europe membership marks Bath as being a progressive European city. International recognition and comparison with leading European spas boosts civic pride and business confidence, identifying Bath as an attractive, connected place to live, work and study. This complements City Identity work, and is attractive to business investment, especially amongst the creative industries.

Political leverage. Increased status and awareness of spa/spring issues lends weight to the Council's desire to address issues such as 'fracking', and to give greater protection to the water source.

Research. Much of the project research surrounding spa heritage and comparison with European Spas is new, and a largely untold side of Bath's story. This research material can be used for profile, status and tourism ends described above, plus educational work with Universities and schools. Several books have already resulted from this project, plus conferences and lectures.

Networking. The Great Spas Group provides a network of prestigious European partners (Baden Baden for example hosted the G20 economic summit in 2017). This enables the Council to potentially take advantage of any emerging European funding streams which require partners. It also strengthens ties with UNESCO and allows the Council to rationalise other networks.

Skills and knowledge. Both staff and politicians benefit from experience gained from working with European partners, developing skills needed to exploit opportunities regardless of language and cultural boundaries. Other authorities may be less experienced in such matters.

Heritage Excellence. Bath is home to leading heritage experts and this work reinforces perceptions of Bath as a centre of excellence in heritage protection.

Protection of our position. Bath fully merits inclusion in any group called Great Spas of Europe. If left outside, the perception may be of Bath as a second class resort.

APPENDIX 3: Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the Great Spas of Europe nomination

The Great Spas of Europe is a transnational serial property of eleven spa towns located in seven European countries: Baden bei Wien (Austria); Spa (Belgium); the 'Bohemian Spa Triangle' of Karlovy Vary, Františkovy Lázně and Mariánské Lázně (Czech Republic); Vichy (France); Bad Ems, Baden-Baden and Bad Kissingen (Germany); Montecatini Terme (Italy); and City of Bath (United Kingdom).

The Great Spas of Europe provide exceptional testimony to the European spa phenomenon, a complex urban, social and cultural phenomenon that has its roots in antiquity but gained its highest expression from 1700 to the 1930s. These fashionable resorts of health, leisure and sociability were the only European settlement type to compete culturally with the great metropolises. They originated a new urban typology with a specific form, function and architecture that has no earlier parallel, gaining a distinguished place in the architectural and social history of urbanism, as well as in pioneering nascent modern tourism.

A serial nomination is necessary to capture the geographical distribution of the wide cultural diffusion of this network of water cure towns, its far-reaching territorial and historical geopolitical scale, and the diversity of spa history and style that represents the complete development of the range of both tangible and intangible 'spa' attributes, through time, that convey its overall significance. Each spa town developed around natural 'curative' geothermal and mineral springs which, depending on their variable qualities, targeted specific conditions or clusters of ailments. The springs were the catalyst for an innovative urban plan, a model of spatial organisation, built features and open spaces that exemplified process. This model was designed for a cultural practice characterised by a distinctive arrangement and itinerary that served many curative, therapeutic and social functions.

Ensembles include architectural prototypes, such as the pump rooms, drinking halls, medical treatment facilities, and colonnades and galleries designed to harness the natural mineral water resource and to allow its practical and sustainable use for bathing *and* drinking. 'Taking the waters', externally and internally, was complemented firstly by related representative meeting and assembly rooms, together with entertainment and touristic facilities such as casinos (gambling was commonly regarded as essential to prosperity), theatres, hotels and villas. Secondly all are integrated into an overall urban context that includes a carefully composed recreational environment of parks, gardens, promenades, sports facilities, woodland walks and rides. These buildings connect visually and physically with their designed picturesque setting of idealised nature.

The Great Spas of Europe mark the revival and greatest developments in the traditional medical uses of mineral spring water by Enlightenment physicians across the continent. They represent the largest, most dynamic and economically successful urban resorts, with a lavish and internationally oriented dimension. They radically changed spa treatment and made significant progress in developing scientific principles of balneology, hydrotherapy, crenotherapy and other advances in diagnostic medicine. This had a profound impact on development of the towns and their popularity and economy as well as advances in a wider personal health and wellness phenomenon.

As elite places in terms of scientific, political, social and cultural achievements, they initiated the transformation of European society through the reduction of the gap between the elite and a growing middle class. Their contribution to the development of a civil European democratic polite society is further characterised by distinctive intangible

heritage as places of major political events and of a special creative atmosphere that inspired works of high-art in music, literature and painting that are of outstanding universal significance.

The Great Spas of Europe has succeeded to maintain their original purpose and enduring atmosphere. Their management, economic and/or medical success has mitigated uncontrolled growth and environmentally damaging sprawl. They continue their sustainable function as dependable curative venues for body, mind and spirit that ensure their continued contribution to European culture, behaviour and customs.

UNESCO Criterion (ii). ***“To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning or landscape design”***

The Great Spas of Europe is testimony to innovative ideas from spa towns that influenced development of modern European towns from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, and to the exchange of ideas and values in the development of balneology, medicine, arts and leisure activities. All this directly influenced the popularity and development of spa towns and balneology in other parts of the world.

The spa towns, centred on curative natural mineral springs, grew with targeted investment, some directly by State engagement and others by private enterprise. Spas were promoted regularly, aimed at a specific targeted clientele, and spa infrastructure was adjusted to respond to developments in medical science and advice, changing socio-economics, an increase in leisure time, and to satisfy the demand of visitors for cure and relaxation. *The Great Spas of Europe* became centres for experiment, thereby contributing to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and introduced radical change to the then prevailing attitude towards science, medicine, nature and art. This influenced the creation and design of new cosmopolitan spaces and buildings for meeting and communicating, and innovation of international importance. Buildings were also designed by some of the best national and international architects. The towns were designed to respect and intermingle with nature, offering places to stay and relax with health treatments available according to visitors' means and preferences. The spa culture and the pursuit of wellbeing further extend the influence of *The Great Spas of Europe* to the early development of coastal or sea-bathing, climatic and gambling resorts throughout the world.

UNESCO Criterion (iii). ***“To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared”***

The Great Spas of Europe bears exceptional testimony to the conscious care for human health which was developed around natural mineral springs in Europe, and to the specific cosmopolitan spa culture created by a remarkable cultural and social phenomenon which flourished from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century; and which continues to thrive today as a living tradition. The spa towns encouraged, and became the reference for, new customs and the business of hospitality.

The defining characteristic of European spa culture centres on the regime of 'taking the cure', a combination of medical aspects (bathing, drinking, inhaling) and leisure, including entertainment and social activities (including gambling, music, dancing) as well as taking physical exercise and sport within an outdoor spa landscape. By the eighteenth century balneology had become established as a medical discipline, and *The Great Spas of Europe* were at the forefront of the development of the spa vacation with its focus on taking the waters, entertainment, leisure and recreation, at a place where the landscape

merged naturally with the picture of the town. These were resort destinations that targeted first the aristocracy, and then the growing ambitious middle classes of a group of industrialising and increasingly wealthy European nations. They were managed to provide a safe and pleasurable climate and the towns were promoted to attract visitors. They are prototypes of a nascent European tourist industry and became world-class cultural attractions. At the same time, *The Great Spas of Europe* provides important testimony to advances in medicine brought forward by spa doctors, chemists and balneologists. From the eighteenth century onwards, the spas variously pioneered the discipline of diagnoses and prescribing new kinds of cures, modern healthy diets and physical exercise.

UNESCO Criterion (iv). ***“To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history”***

The Great Spas of Europe is an outstanding example of a specific urban settlement centred on natural mineral springs and devoted to health and leisure. Unlike any other type of settlement from the eighteenth century, these towns have combined architecture, progressive town planning and landscape design into the built environment both functionally, visually and economically. These spa towns, with their spa quarters and suburbs, are integrated with their surrounding landscapes, and these were managed to aid health and are still being used for exercise as part of the cure and enjoyment. Particular spa buildings of great quality determine the character of the towns, and distinguished architects designed many. These buildings served as exemplars for similar spa buildings in Europe and the world. The principal spa architecture includes ‘kurhaus’, pump rooms and drinking halls, colonnades and galleries, meeting and assembly rooms, bathing and treatment facilities, hospitals, sanatoria, casinos, concert, theatre and opera houses, shops, hotels and villas, and churches of various denominations which are set within a green environment of parks, gardens, pleasure grounds, promenades, rides and woodland walks.

UNESCO Criterion (vi).

“To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.”

The tangible attributes of *The Great Spas of Europe* are associated with, and directly linked to, social, political, scientific and cultural ideas and achievements that helped to shape European democratic traditions and ideals from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. As international meeting places and centres the towns frequently hosted gatherings of great intellects in science, the arts and humanities, and provided venues of soft diplomacy for meetings of European rulers, politicians and diplomats, national elites and international high society. They represent places of European diplomacy where many important decisions were made.

The towns abandoned existing barriers to religious and spiritual tolerance and this is demonstrated by numerous churches of different religions in all towns of the series. *The Great Spas of Europe* played the role of the “salons and summer capitals of Europe”, where the former barriers between class and gender were relaxed and a common freedom and equality characterised their progressive social climate.

These destination resorts were sources of inspiration for artistic and literary works, host to many original works conceived, performed or exhibited for the first time by composers and musicians, writers and poets, painters, sculptors and architects. *The Great Spas of Europe* initiated a transformation of society that contributed to the reduction of the gap between

the elite and a growing middle class and in a significant way contributed to the development of a civil and multi-cultural European polite society that we recognise today. Apart from the most elite of European capital cities, no other form of urban settlement provided such a range of global cultural interchange during this period.