

UNESCO, the international organisation which recognises the global significance of heritage across the world, has agreed that Liverpool should retain its status as a World Heritage Site for another year at least. This is good news.

Liverpool should be, and is, proud of its heritage. The World Heritage Site 'badge' means that people across the world recognise the city's global contribution to trade, dock engineering and architecture...and come to visit the city. The World Heritage Site not only covers the docks but also extends up into the city to include the Town Hall, St. George's Hall, the museums and ropewalks area. The docks themselves tell the story of Liverpool's influence on the slave trade, immigration and emigration, and the transportation of goods around the world via a highly innovative system of waterways and docks. Liverpool is a world class city and I love it.

We need to change the conversation around the proposed redevelopment of the docks and UNESCO'S concerns, some of which we at Historic England share. The line being used by some people, including the Mayor of Liverpool Joe Anderson, is broadly that if UNESCO doesn't want us to develop the docks then they'll stay derelict and cut off from the people of the city for years. It's not true and it's not helpful.

It's not a straight choice between keeping Liverpool's world heritage status or redeveloping the docks – both are possible. UNESCO's and others' concerns are not about the principle of redevelopment, but about how we do it. It's not about if it's all about how. So please let's talk about how important these sites are for Liverpool and the world. Let's talk about why they matter to the people of Liverpool. Let's talk about how they can be redeveloped to make the most of the heritage: to help to tell the story of the docks whilst still creating a new 'place'; new homes, businesses and facilities for local people and visitors to enjoy and to grow Liverpool's economy. We need to talk about how we can retain the heritage AND develop the area. It's not an 'either/or'.

Liverpool's world heritage status recognises the outstanding universal value of the docks to humankind, so let's work to keep that recognition and, in all our plans for how we want this fantastic city to develop and grow, let's aim for the very best.