

PRESS RELEASE

From the Chair of Merseyside Civic Society

OUR WORLD HERITAGE SITE

We love our Liverpool home, our songs tell it worldwide. We are very proud of our World Heritage Site - it cements our international significance.

Liverpool is an on-going story of global connections, massive inward and outward migration. Through our mercantile maritime connections we changed the world's understanding of global relationships. Jesse Hartley, the great nineteenth century engineer, may have had the vision and capacity to build the Albert Dock and the Stanley Dock, but even he could not have imagined their roles today or the debates about their future.

The city's history of population growth, mix and shrinkage is extraordinary. In 1801 Liverpool's population was 77,000, had expanded to reach a population peak in 1931 of 846,000; but by 2004, we were a tiny 460,000 - too small to maintain our services, infrastructure and historic buildings. The reasons for these changes lie in the city's exceptional mercantile maritime economy and society.

From 1960 Liverpool had to cope with unprecedented changes in technology: containerization for much its freight traffic and long-distance jet aircraft for passenger travel. These changing shipping practices resulted in industrial obsolescence and swathes of unusable docklands. War-time bombing had already blasted massive gaps in the docks system and adjacent areas of the city's urban fabric. Much of the older docklands and adjacent commercial areas were regarded as derelict, decayed and to be disregarded in terms of their heritage and its future.

Thus while the complexity of our World Heritage Site in Liverpool is unique, it has to be seen alongside a desperate continuing need to repair our urban, social and economic fabric.

Liverpool was among the first cities to have a social consciousness - to invest in public and social health, to promote aspects of education and provide municipal housing. Among many innovations the city's designers and industries pioneered the tall building technology of cast iron frames, steel frames and concrete frames and paternoster lifts. The Liver Building at Pier Head was the tallest office building in England for decades. Tall buildings are thus part of our DNA, our USP and our OUV. They should not expand in an uncontrolled fashion, but they are a longstanding, characteristic and essential part of our World Heritage Site and its adjacent areas.

Today, Liverpool has revalued the historic waterfront and its related commercial and cultural areas and embraced its international designation as a World Heritage Site. The city has welcomed the next new communication revolutions of

high speed transport and the virtual communications essential to service our world today, along with millions of tourists, restored buildings and water spaces, and, a new award winning commercial area at “Liverpool 1”.

Today while Liverpool’s historic waterfront is cherished, the working docks on both sides of the Mersey are still evolving - with the world’s largest hydraulic crane at Garston and the deep-water berths at Seaforth’s “Liverpool 2”, with its massive cranes from China. In between, the cultural heritage of our historic dockland is being maintained, enhanced and regenerated, including the Albert Dock, Pier Head and Stanley Dock, but more still needs to be done to complete the process.

- *We are nestling our World Heritage Site in the palm of what is now a global hand reaching out from our trans-atlantic, trans-oceanic early self. We are keeping our heritage well, secure and in a good state of living regeneration.*
- *We, the citizens of Liverpool, seek an appropriate and equitable balance between conservation and development. We ask UNESCO to review its thoughts on our successes and our future and to maintain a dialogue which will enable us to retain our precious status.*

Jean Grant 30.6.17

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