

LIVERPOOL CREATES WORLD HERITAGE TASKFORCE

Liverpool has set up a special taskforce to examine how the city can maintain its UNESCO World Heritage Status (WHS).

Mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson, has informed Heritage Minister John Glen, MP, of the establishment of the Liverpool World Heritage Board in a bid to work closer with the DCMS to “reset the relationship with UNESCO”.

The Mayor has appointed Sir David Henshaw, who was the Chief Executive at Liverpool City Council when the city received the status in 2004, to lead a team of experts including Sir Neil Cossons, former chair of English Heritage.

Joining Sir David and Sir Neil on the board – which meets for the first time today - will be: Claire Dove, Chief Executive of Blackburn House Group; Professor Gerald Pillay, Vice Chancellor of Hope University; Professor John Belchem, Emeritus Professor at University of Liverpool; and Professor Michael Parkinson, Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for civic engagement of the University of Liverpool, with more appointments to be made in the coming weeks.

The move follows the annual summit of UNESCO which has recommend that it looks at whether to “delete” Liverpool from its World Heritage list at its next summit in July 2018.

In the letter to the Minister, who recently visited Liverpool to discuss the WHS issue, Mayor Anderson says: “*We greatly value World Heritage Status and recognise that it brings huge benefits in terms of the city’s economy, identity and self-esteem.*”

“With the impact of austerity we have lost focus on communicating the importance of those benefits as effectively as we previously did.”

“I welcome the UNESCO challenge as it will enable us to highlight all the city’s achievements and re-energise the heritage agenda which has been less visible than I would have liked.”

“I have established a Liverpool World Heritage Board to review our position, involve all the city stakeholders and engage directly with UNESCO with objective or reaching agreement on the way forward.”

“With the support and input of the DCMS I am sure this approach can ensure Liverpool’s World Heritage Status is secured.”

The creation of the board comes as the state of conservation within Liverpool’s Maritime Mercantile City WHS is at an all-time high.

A new survey has shown that almost £750m has been invested into historic assets within the UNESCO approved site including the upgrade of 37 listed buildings since 2012, 18 with council financial assistance, such as the Aloft Hotel, the award-winning Central Library and Stanley Dock.

Liverpool City Council's cabinet has also endorsed a new WHS management plan to further enhance conservation efforts and visitor appeal.

The management plan, which was prepared in consultation with Historic England and the public, is one of the corrective measures the City Council has agreed with UNESCO to remove the site from the list of 'World Heritage In Danger'.

The plan, which is based on five key themes includes guidance aimed at developers to explain the attributes of the 'Outstanding Universal Value' of the site and the conservation and management requirements under the World Heritage Convention.

The cabinet report highlighted that the council's "Buildings at Risk" programme continues to be the most successful project of its type in England – with a 75% reduction in 'at risk' buildings in the past decade.

Liverpool has also recently been recognised as a world leader in sustainable heritage regeneration. It is the only city in the UK to have been awarded "Role Model" status and is part of Europe's largest sustainable Heritage project Horizon 2020, which is examining how cities can use heritage as a powerful engine for economic growth.

Sir David Henshaw, who is Chairman of National Museums Liverpool, said: *"Liverpool's track record in preserving its unique heritage is beyond question. What has been unfortunate is that the need for economic growth and job creation has clouded the fact that heritage is actually a key ingredient in achieving those goals.*

"Liverpool has achieved a huge amount since 2004 in investing in its historic assets but has somewhere along the way failed to demonstrate how this is shaping the city's future.

"I'm delighted to have been asked to chair this new board and look forward to working with our partners, both in the city and in Government, to achieve a new understanding with UNESCO and show how the city can address the concerns it has raised. As the Mayor has said, this is a huge opportunity for Liverpool to showcase why its World Heritage Status is an asset and how it is being utilised to engineer new investment and growth."

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NOTE TO PICTURE DESK:

- A free image of Liverpool's World Heritage task force will be available from 4pm this afternoon and can be emailed on request.

NOTES TO EDITOR:

Liverpool's Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site comprises six distinct Character Areas and a Buffer Zone:

Area 1: The Pier Head

Area 2: The Albert Dock Conservation Area

Area 3: The Stanley Dock Conservation Area

Area 4: The Commercial District/Castle Street, Dale Street and Old Hall Street Conservation Area

Area 5: 'The Cultural Quarter' / William Brown Street Conservation Area

Area 6: The Merchants' Quarter/Lower Duke Street Conservation Area

Buffer Zone: The WHS Buffer Zone surrounds the entire WHS and is formed around key visual and townscape relationships between the property and adjoining areas, and areas with historical associations with the WHS.

- **Liverpool's WHS management plan is available at www.liverpool.gov.uk/worldheritage**
- **A debate on Liverpool's World Heritage Status will be held at Liverpool Town Hall on Wednesday, 4 October. The debate is the first in a series hosted by Engage Liverpool: <https://www.engageliverpool.com/events/>**

For more information, please contact Michael Doran at Liverpool City Council Newscentre on 0151 233 0074 or 0780 145 3918.

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