

## **Report of the Lord Mayor's World Heritage Working Group**

### **Summary**

1. The Lord Mayor decided as part of her Mayoralty to examine the question "should York be a World Heritage site?". She invited a range of individuals and representatives of Institutions to form a small Working Group to address this question and explore the benefits and disadvantages of World Heritage status. This report to Executive presents the findings of the Lord Mayor's World Heritage Working Group and asks the Executive to consider the options for action.

### **Background**

2. The World Heritage (WH) Convention (adopted by UNESCO in 1972) was ratified by the United Kingdom (UK) in 1984. The Convention provides for the identification, protection, conservation and presentation of cultural and natural sites of "outstanding universal value", and requires a WH List to be established under the management of an inter-governmental WH Committee.
3. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is responsible for the UK's general compliance with the Convention, and for nominating sites in England.
4. In 1999, the DCMS announced that 25 sites (including three in the UK's Overseas Territories) would form the UK Tentative List of sites from which nominations to UNESCO WH status would be made. Inclusion of a site on a Tentative List is a pre-requisite for formal nomination to UNESCO.
5. The DCMS have confirmed that a review of the 1999 Tentative List will take place in 2007. To inform the Review the UK Government will commission an assessment of the costs and benefits of World Heritage Site status, the balance currently achieved between them, and the implications for the future management, promotion and funding of such sites. It will then produce practical guidance for potential sites on what is involved.
6. The work initiated by the Lord Mayor is therefore timely in that it allows the City to take an informed decision on whether or not it should pursue World Heritage status and seek nomination to the revised Tentative List. It is probable that once this review of the Tentative List has been carried out, there will be no further review of the list until 2017.

7. The Lord Mayor's Working Group met five times (in October and December 2006, and January, February and March 2007). The report of the Working Group is presented here as Annexe One. There is an Executive Summary which presents the main findings and recommendations of the Working Group.
8. The Working Group report summarises the UNESCO World Heritage and UK Tentative List history and procedures. It advises that seeking World Heritage Status is a three stage process: stage 1, Report of the York World Heritage Working Group; stage 2, nomination to the UK revised Tentative List; stage 3, application to UNESCO for World Heritage status.
9. The report concludes that York has a very strong case for designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site. It acknowledges that York will have a difficult, though not impossible, task of achieving a place on the revised UK Tentative List (Stage 2) and being designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO (Stage 3).
10. The report considers that the process of applying for UK Tentative list status will be a valuable contribution to and inform the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP, Without Walls) and Local Development Framework (LDF) processes and to Tourism and Economic Development promotions of the City.
11. It recommends that the boundary of the World Heritage site should be the area contained within the City Walls and St Mary's Abbey Walls, and that a buffer zone should consist of those parts of the Central Historic Core Conservation Area and the central Area of Archaeological Importance which lie outside these walled areas.
12. It presents the results of its matrix analysis of advantages and disadvantages and reports on information received from Edinburgh and from individual discussions members of the Group have had.
13. It advises that the financial cost of Stage 2 is likely to be around £15k. The report identifies that stage 2 funding will be required in 2007/08 and that this funding must come from a broad based public and private partnership within the City and Region led by the City of York Council.
14. It recommends that the model of the York Millennium Bridge Trust could be used as a vehicle which could take a bid forward. It recommends that if York is successful at stage 2 a York World Heritage Trust should be created and that it should be responsible for raising the money to carry out and manage Stage 3.
15. It advises that the costs of a Stage 3 Bid could be in the region of £80k-£100k (at current prices). The very earliest this Stage 3 expenditure would occur would be in 2010/11, but would probably be no later than 2015/16.
16. It recommends that the City Council
  - a) adopts the recommendations of the Working Group and that York should make a bid for UK Tentative List status
  - b) should take the lead in pushing this project forward to Stage 2

17. if successful in achieving UK Tentative List status initiates a formal review of the Stage 3 and creates a York World Heritage Trust to lead the application process to UNESCO for World Heritage status.

## **Consultation**

18. At this stage, no formal external consultation has been carried out by the City Council.

## **Options**

19. Option A: That the City of York Council does not pursue inclusion on the Tentative List.
20. Option B: That the City of York Council accepts the recommendations of the Working Group to pursue World Heritage status.
21. Option C: That the Executive asks the Working Group a) to consult with the Without Walls group and the wider community on this subject, b) to wait for and assess the publication of the DCMS assessment of costs and benefits and practical guidance for potential sites c) to revise their Report accordingly and then for Executive then receives a further report from officers in the light of a) b)and c) on whether or not to pursue World Heritage status and what should be the boundary of the World Heritage site.

## **Analysis**

22. Option A, *That the City of York Council does not pursue World Heritage status and inclusion on the revised Tentative List.* The Working Group report makes it clear that there are disadvantages to gaining World Heritage status. The UK government intends to strengthen the protection for World Heritage sites, although this appears to be restricted to increasing call-in powers and revoking certain permitted development rights. There is the possibility of outside scrutiny of decisions taken by the City Council (by UNESCO and its advisors). There are costs associated with both Stage 2 (£15000) and Stage 3 (estimated at £80,000-100,000). There is no guarantee that a bid from York would be successful.
23. Option B, *That the City of York Council accepts the recommendations of the Working Group to pursue World Heritage status.* The Report draws on a Scrutiny Report prepared by the City of Edinburgh Council. Edinburgh has been a World Heritage site since 1995. The Scrutiny Report makes it clear that designation has had positive benefits for the City. It has not been a constraint on major developments, it has promoted better design, and it has been a major factor in tourism initiatives. Recent figures published by the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions show that Edinburgh Castle (with 1,213,907 in 2006, a 2% rise over 2005) is the most popular historic visitor attraction with charges outside London. The Report considers that substantial advantages would accrue to York in the areas of Status and Recognition and Tourism benefits for the City. The costs of pursuing Stage 2 nomination to the Tentative List are, at

£15000 modest, and could be raised from a wide range of sources within the City and beyond. This would pay for a consultant to put together the documentation and prepare, if necessary a presentation to DCMS, on the case for York as a World Heritage site. A financial commitment from the Council would be less than £5000. The more substantial costs for Stage 3 would not be incurred until 2010/11 at the earliest and 2015/16 at the latest. The Working Group recommends establishing a York World Heritage Trust to take on and manage this task.

24. Option C, *That the Executive asks the Working Group a) to consult with the Without Walls group and the wider community on this subject, b) wait for and assess the publication of the DCMS assessment of costs and benefits and practical guidance for potential sites c) revise their Report accordingly and then the Executive then receives a further report from officers in the light of a) b)and c) on whether or not to pursue World Heritage status and what should be the boundary of the World Heritage site.* It is clear from the Working Party Report that there are costs and benefits to applying for and gaining World Heritage status. The Working Group has carried out its own assessment of these. However, the DCMS have stated that it will commission and publish an assessment of the costs and benefits of World Heritage Site status, the balance currently achieved between them, and the implications for the future management, promotion and funding of such sites. It will then produce practical guidance for potential sites on what is involved. It would be appropriate to wait for this information to be made available. It was not part of the remit of the Working Group to carry out public consultation. There appears to be a window of opportunity prior to the publication of the DCMS research to carry out a public consultation exercise. It will also be possible to consult the Without Walls Local Strategic Partnership group. It would be appropriate to receive a further report and make a decision on whether to pursue World Heritage status once this additional information is available.

### **Corporate Priorities**

25. The proposal contained in this report will contribute to the following Corporate Priorities:
26. *Improve the way the council and its partners work together to deliver better services for the people who live in York.* The process of pursuing World Heritage status will involve significant work with partners across the City. If Option C is chosen, the Without Walls will be consulted and will thereafter play a significant role in shaping this initiative.
27. *Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of the city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces.* The process of pursuing World Heritage status will involve production of a management Plan at Stage 3. This would contribute to the process of assessment and improvement of the historic core of the City.

## Implications

28. **Financial** Option A carries no financial implications for the City. Option B means that the City would have to identify and commit a sum of up to £5000 to go towards the £15000 cost of Stage 2. The precise extent of this potential future commitment will not be clear until the results of the fundraising carried out by the Lord Mayor are known. Option C carries no immediate financial cost. It is suggested that the Community Planning team in City Strategy will be able to assist with design and implementation of the Public Consultation exercise. The main financial implications arise only if York is successful at Stage 2. The Report recommends that if York achieves this then a formal review of the costs and potential sources of funding is carried out by the proposed York World Heritage Trust. This would occur in 2010/11 at the earliest.
29. There are no known HR, Equalities, *Legal*, Crime and Disorder, IT, Property or Other implications

## Risk Management

30. There are no known risks associated with this report.

## Recommendations

31. That the Lord Mayor is thanked for the work carried out by her and her York World Heritage Working Group and that Option C is adopted

Reason: It would be appropriate to consult the community and await the publication of guidance from DCMS on this issue and then to receive a further report and make a decision on whether to pursue World Heritage status once this additional information is available

## Contact Details

### Author:

John Oxley  
Archaeologist  
Design Conservation and  
Sustainable Development  
Tel No. 551346

### Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Bill Woolley  
Director City Strategy

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### Financial Implications Officer

Patrick Looker  
Finance Manager  
Tel No. 01904 551633

**Wards Affected:** List wards or tick box to indicate all

**All**



**For further information please contact the author of the report**

## **Background Papers:**

Heritage Protection for the 21st Century - White Paper available at [http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference\\_library/Consultations/2007\\_current\\_consultations/hpr\\_whitepaper07.htm](http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Consultations/2007_current_consultations/hpr_whitepaper07.htm)

## **Annexes**

**Annex A** Report of the York World Heritage Working Group March 2007 plus appendices