

Liverpool WHS

Key themes of a successful World Heritage Site bid

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The historic environment of this newly inscribed WHS will serve as a foundation for regeneration.

On 2 July 2004, the UK's bid for world heritage status for Liverpool was accepted by UNESCO. This exciting outcome was the culmination of three years' intensive work on the city's historic environment, led by Liverpool City Council with the close support of English Heritage and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. A wide range of other organisations gave their wider support to the bid, but it is the city's World Heritage Site Officer, John Hinchliffe, who must take the lion's share of the credit for this great success.

The city has had a long history, with its first charter granted in 1207. The World Heritage Site bid, however, focused on the 18th century through to the early 20th century, when Liverpool became a major maritime mercantile city, with international renown and influence. The city is now recognised as the supreme example of a commercial port at the time of Britain's greatest global influence.

Four main themes were drawn out in the bid. The first of these was the city's role in world history, focusing on world trade and the development of the British Empire. The city also had a crucial role in the Industrial Revolution, when increasingly large volumes of raw materials and finished goods passed through its port. The import of raw cotton for the Lancashire textile industry, for example, increased 50 times between 1700 and 1790. The city's role in the movement of people, both to Europe and in particular to the New World, was also of particular significance.

The second theme was the city's tradition of innovative development. Perhaps most well known was the development of its dock technology. The city boasted the world's first commercial enclosed wet dock, opened in 1715. Of the subsequent massive developments in dock infrastructure, the work of Dock Engineer

Jesse Hartley in the mid 19th century is of particular importance. The surviving Albert Dock, begun by Hartley in 1841 and opened in 1846, is of particular importance, with its secure warehouses of fireproof construction. The city's innovative development also included the wider transport infrastructure – canals, railways and a spectacular late-19th-century overhead railway.

The third theme for the bid was Liverpool's historical and cultural collections. The city's rapid growth led to the wider development of its cultural activities, with benefactors creating and then donating materials to a series of cultural institutions. Of these, the Walker Art Gallery and the Liverpool Museum were founded in the late 19th century, and the Merseyside Maritime Museum in the early 20th century. The city also boasts a wide range of public sculpture, both freestanding and as architectural embellishments.

The fourth theme was the city's remarkable surviving urban historic landscape, which informed the boundaries of the world heritage site itself. The first element is a north-south strip of the waterfront based around Stanley Dock to the north, the Pier Head in the centre and the Albert Dock to the south. The historic dock infrastructure survives particularly well here, together with significant waterfront commercial buildings including the 'three graces' (the Port of Liverpool Building, the Cunard Building and the Royal Liver Building).

As the bid process developed, it became clear that the boundaries of the proposed world heritage site should be expanded eastwards to take in other elements of the city. Two further areas were eventually included. The Ropewalks area of the city, based around Lower Duke Street, lies close to the site of the Old Dock and contains a range of historic buildings and a notable historic urban grain. The second



Aerial view of the Pier Head with the 'three graces' (the Port of Liverpool Building, the Cunard Building and the Royal Liver Building).

NMR 1777/16 © English Heritage, NMR

additional area runs eastwards from the Pier Head along Dale Street and contains a wide range of the city's historic commercial buildings. It terminates with the cultural buildings on William Brown Street, with St George's Hall – one of the finest neo-classical buildings in Europe – at its centre.

In addition to the detailed nomination document, which set out the case for the city's outstanding universal significance, a management plan was produced for the bid by Chris Blandford Associates. This was funded by the North West Development Agency, clearly indicating a wider perception that the bid was important for the regeneration not just of the city but also of the wider region.

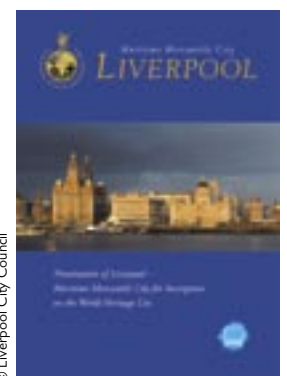
In parallel with the World Heritage Site bid, Liverpool City Council and English Heritage have been working closely with other partners, including the North West Development Agency, in the Historic Environment of Liverpool Project. This highly successful project was designed to identify how regeneration and the

historic environment might be brought together in a creative way. The project has enabled a range of initiatives to be taken forward to better understand the city's historic environment, help ensure its long-term management and open it to a wider audience.

In 2007, the city celebrates the 800th anniversary of its charter. The following year, Liverpool will be the European Capital of Culture. However, Liverpool's Chief Executive, Sir David Henshaw, has gone on record to say that it is its World Heritage status especially that will ensure the city's long-term success. Such commitment and strong belief is particularly good news for the wider role of our historic environment in regeneration.

For further information about the Liverpool World Heritage Site, please contact the WHS Project Officer, John Hinchliffe (john.hinchliffe@liverpool.gov.uk); for more information on the Historic Environment of Liverpool Project, see www.historic-liverpool.co.uk.

The WHS Nomination Document.



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