

“Liverpool UNESCO World Heritage Site: A status worth fighting for?”

UNESCO World Heritage Site: What’s it all about?

Liverpool 4th October 2017: Isabelle Anatole-Gabriel: World Heritage Centre, Paris

“When we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for present delight nor for our use alone. Let it be such work as our descendants will look upon with praise and thanksgiving in their hearts.”

Lord Mayor of the City of Liverpool,

Representatives of Liverpool City Council

Representatives of Engage Liverpool,

Representatives of the local, national, and international organisations,

Citizens of Liverpool,

Dear friends,

This quote from **John Ruskin**, one of the founding fathers of the modern notion of heritage, encapsulates brightly the ambition and the mission of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

To share this ambition with you is the reason of my presence here.

Let me say at first that I am deeply honoured to be with you tonight, in Liverpool, and inaugurate the Seminar *“Liverpool UNESCO World Heritage Site: A status worth fighting for?”*

On behalf of the Director of the World Heritage Centre, Mechtild Rossler, I wish to express my special thanks to Engage Liverpool for this initiative and for the invitation extended to a UNESCO representative and to international experts, my distinguished colleagues Minja Yang and Mike Turner.

I also acknowledge the presence of all the participants and partners from local, national and international organizations, NGOs, and civil society, and other stakeholders. I thank them for their concern for World Heritage protection.

Indeed, Gerry Proctor, from Engage Liverpool, asked me to discuss with you

What an Inscription on the World Heritage list means? What is entailed with a World Heritage site?

These are legitimate questions.

All the more when the inscription on the World Heritage List has been prepared decades ago and, consequently, when we feel that the symbolic benefits of the international recognition will remain forever.

But each world heritage property is unique. Unique and Universal.

So let me rephrase the subject of our discussion tonight as follows:

What Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City means for Liverpool, the city of the XXIst Century?

John Ruskin once said also: *Architecture is the work of nations.*

You, citizens of Liverpool, are the nation. I am here only to be the voice of UNESCO, an institution whose mandate is to serve all Nations.

Indeed, a couple of years after the **London Conference** where UNESCO was founded, in November 1945, and while all European countries were still faced with the wounds of the war, the nations have wished to work collectively and gather their efforts to protect the most iconic testimonies of their identity and the most important achievements of their culture.

Thus the first decades of the work of UNESCO were dedicated to ensuring that the heritage of nations is protected during armed conflicts and against illicit trafficking and theft: these are the objectives of the 1954 Convention and the 1970 Convention.

But still, this tremendous accomplishment was not enough for the Assembly of Nations.

The world's nations needed tangible and positive signs of their commitment in international cooperation for the safeguarding of their heritage.

A commitment to an ambition ***their descendants will look upon with praise and thanksgiving in their hearts...***

To embody this ambition, State members of UNESCO have adopted in 1972, the Convention concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage.

Therefore, the first objective of the World Heritage Convention is to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity.

And the second objective is, whenever this heritage is at threat, to contribute through international cooperation to save, restore and preserve what has become the heritage of the whole humanity.

Today, the 1972 Convention is still the most groundbreaking and universally ratified instruments to protect and promote the heritage of humanity.

World Heritage Sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List because they have an Outstanding Universal Value.

What does this notion mean exactly?

Outstanding Universal Value means that a site has a significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations.

Three pillars determine the Outstanding Universal Value for Cultural sites. 1) the criteria, 2) integrity and authenticity, and 3) protection and management.

There are six criteria for the cultural properties and four for natural properties. These criteria have been defined by the World Heritage Committee which is the international body in charge of the implementation of the Convention.

In the case of Liverpool, three criteria have demonstrated the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

All of them refer to the architectural legacy of Liverpool city from the 18th to the early 20th centuries. But the architectural legacy is the expression of a much wider system: the international mercantile system built up by the British Empire throughout the British Commonwealth.

Would the destiny of the United Kingdom have been the same without the early development of global trading and cultural connections that Liverpool, the maritime port city, symbolizes today?

Of course not: and this is what the World Heritage status, granted in 2004 to Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City, acknowledged and means.

When a property is inscribed on the World Heritage List, the World Heritage Committee adopts a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value that explains how the values of the site are embodied in physical elements.

In the case of Liverpool, the innovative techniques and types of dock, dock facilities, water basins and warehouse constructions are crucial physical elements transmitting the values of the World Heritage property.

This statement is the key reference for the effective protection of the authenticity and integrity of the property.

The statement also provides details such as the national framework of legal protection and management system, and specific long-term expectations.

Hence, an essential part of a World Heritage status is how the site has been protected through time and how it will continue to be protected for the benefits of future generations.

As you see, because it has complex and important consequences, the demonstration of the Outstanding Universal Value is the result of a thoughtful process. The process involves local and regional administrative bodies, political authorities at local and national levels, together with national experts and international experts of ICOMOS, the Advisory Body to the Convention for cultural properties.

So why is it so difficult to identify the Outstanding Universal Value of a site?

It is difficult because the World Heritage List **is not** a list of monuments and landscapes.

The World Heritage status is about telling to the world that one specific historic city, one specific landscape, one site of thousands km or just a few square meters is a jewel because it embodies one part of the history of humanity.

The status is about telling that this history speaks to humanity as a whole, with its goods and its wrongs, with its glory and its sorrows.

When a site has been granted the World Heritage status, its legacy of glory and sorrows has become an integral part of the world history.

This is the reason why, as the Convention states, the State Party and the international community have the collective responsibility to pass it on to future generations, and to pass it on in its full authenticity and integrity.

The mechanisms foreseen by the Convention to ensure that World Heritage is passed on to future generations are the legal protection and the management system of a site.

Management goes hand-in-hand with a strong and unequivocal legal protection.

The highest level of legal protection must apply to the core zone of the site – in the case of Liverpool there are 6 main components that constitute the core zone.

However, the buffer zone, the area surrounding the boundaries of the site, must also provide a second level of protection to the site, mainly to contribute to the maintenance of the specific historic townscape of the Maritime City.

In the United Kingdom, on a national level, Planning Policy Statements in place relating directly to the protection and the management of World Heritage Property, state that “townscapes and landscapes with international designations should receive the highest level of protection.”

To the question *what is entailed with a World Heritage Site?* I hope that I succeeded in making clear that the absolute protection of its universal values is the most crucial investment for the future of the nation it represents.

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Liverpool authorities have made major and exemplary achievements in heritage rehabilitation that sustain fully all the values of the Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City.

The Museum of Liverpool and Mann Island are recent examples of the investment made in the past for the future. These projects have brought new architectural assets while contributing to the renovation and redevelopment of an important space in the core zone of the property.

On behalf of UNESCO, I wish to commend the Liverpool City Council and its partners for the scale and the quality of these projects, which combined new contemporary urban patterns with the historic docklands landscape.

The regeneration of the Stanley Dock warehouses will also contribute once fully achieved to the conservation of major historic buildings of the historical assets of the world historic site.

“Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of an intelligent effort”: I quote Ruskin again....

The decision to place *Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City* at the heart of *Liverpool, the city of the XXIst Century* was not an accident.

Conversely, the Liverpool Waters development project will change an **authentic dockland landscape into a new landscape; the historical assets of the port industrial structures will disappear behind a new urban grid.**

The analysis of these different projects for Liverpool - Maritime Mercantile City is the result of a specific mechanism at the core of the Convention: the monitoring of the State of Conservation of properties.

SOC process

To help State Parties to keep the Outstanding Universal Value of the property while ensuring that heritage is fully integrated in a project for the future is the objective of the monitoring of the State of Conservation of World Heritage Properties.

The State of Conservation of World Heritage sites is monitored by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies (ICOMOS, ICCROM and IUCN) in close collaboration with the State Party concerned.

The State of Conservation addresses potential damages to properties from an increasing amount of potential threats, including major developments and urbanization.

State Parties provide information on any projects which could potentially affect the Outstanding Universal Value of a site. Information is then reviewed together with the Advisory Bodies ICOMOS and ICCROM in the case of cultural sites, and a report is submitted to the World Heritage Committee for decision.

The World Heritage Committee has a number of options:

It may decide that the property has not seriously deteriorated and that no further action should be taken;

It may decide that the property be maintained on the List, provided that the State Party takes the necessary measures to restore the property within a reasonable period of time;

It may decide that technical cooperation be provided under the World Heritage Fund for restoration of the Property;

It may inscribe the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger;

Finally, it may delete the property from the List.

What is the situation for Liverpool?

The State of Conservation of the World Heritage site has been closely monitored from the first years following its inscription on the World Heritage List, in particular in regards to the assessment of impacts related to new developments inside the property and its surrounding buffer zone.

A first Mission (WHC-ICOMOS) was carried out in 2006 to assess the impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Pier Head Constructions including the new Museum.

Furthermore, in 2010, the United Kingdom notified UNESCO of the Liverpool Waters development scheme.

Therefore, in 2011 a second Mission visited the property. The mission noted English Heritage's objection to the large scale proposed development and also emphasized the negative impact to the visual and historic values of the city which would be lost in case the scheme was to be developed.

In the following year, in 2012, the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session inscribed Liverpool on the List of World Heritage in Danger **with the possibility of deletion, should the Liverpool Waters project be approved.**

During 2013, the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS transmitted to the United Kingdom the first draft of an important document: the **Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR).**

However, with great regret, the Liverpool Waters outline planning application was granted by the city in 2013, and was not called in by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Serious concerns over the potential threat of the development scheme to the Outstanding Universal Value of the site have been since then repeated every year by the World Heritage Committee.

Moreover, and over recent years, concern has been raised on the need to finalize a **Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger** and to adopt corrective measures in agreement with all concerned parties. This document has been the subject of discussion during several previous Committee sessions.

Last year, in 2016, the Committee requested the State Party United Kingdom to ensure that no project receive approval **until the completion of the DSOCR.** This was followed with granting permission of the **Moda Tower at Princes Dock (within the Buffer Zone)** in September 2016 and new information in May and July 2017 regarding further developments in the same area.

At the last session of the World Heritage Committee this year in July, the Liverpool State of Conservation was opened for discussion with the rationale to leave room for further dialogue with the State Party and especially to address elements of major concern which are, the finalization of the DSOCR and corrective measures, the decision-making mechanisms, and the potential negative impact of recently approved high rise buildings within the area of the large development project Liverpool Waters.

The gap between the obligations of the State Party in safeguarding the Outstanding Universal Value and the Liverpool City Council in addressing appropriate planning

mechanisms for Liverpool Waters development project and, more generally, in managing future large scale developments, **has yet to be addressed**.

What are the next steps?

After the last Committee session in Krakow, the UK State Party is expected to address a series of important requests that are in line with all previous recommendations by the Committee including

1) commitment to reverse course and stop granting planning permissions that impact or will impact negatively on the Outstanding Universal Value, and

2) link strategic development vision to a regulatory planning document.

As it is in the spirit of the Convention and in the mandate of UNESCO, the World Heritage Centre together with the Advisory Body ICOMOS will continue to be committed to promote collaboration and to engage in open dialogue with the State Party and all stakeholders.

It is therefore with great pleasure that we have learnt two days ago, through the media, of Mayor Joe Anderson's initiative to create a special taskforce, **the Liverpool World Heritage Board**, to ensure Liverpool- Maritime Mercantile City keeps its World Heritage Status.

We are convinced that this Task Force will work proactively to respond as soon as possible to the World Heritage Committee decisions in the coming weeks and months.

PAUSE

Lord Mayor,

Dear citizens of Liverpool,

My presence here is not only to explain the World Heritage spirit and process.

My presence here is to tell you that we, at UNESCO, **care for Liverpool**.

We want to keep Liverpool on the World Heritage List, together with the Pyramids of Egypt, the Angkor Temples in Cambodia and the Taj Mahal in India.

And we need you to keep Liverpool - Maritime Mercantile City on the World Heritage List.

Thank you for your attention.