

Executive Summary

Liverpool Mercantile City World Heritage Site was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in July 2004, joining an illustrious list of mercantile cities around the world including Venice, Istanbul, Valparaiso and Naples as well as other iconic heritage sites such as the Taj Mahal, Pyramids of Egypt and the Great Wall of China.

Over the last 25 years or so, public and private sector sources have invested both time and money in preserving and renovating many of the city's important commercial and civic buildings, helping some to continue to fulfil their original role and finding adaptive re-uses for others where their original function is no longer necessary or possible. This investment has supported an emerging sense of community pride in the city's heritage, pride that is evidenced, for instance, by the large number of the city's residents who regularly visit facilities such as Tate Liverpool, located in a former warehouse, or the Conservation Centre which occupies a former railway building.

In order to build on the city's World Heritage Site status, and to support the activities associated with the city's 800th birthday celebrations in 2007 and the award of European Capital of Culture in 2008, a partnership chaired by the Liverpool Culture Company commissioned consultants to prepare a visitor management plan for the World Heritage Site. Such a plan was identified as being necessary in the original Management Plan prepared for the World Heritage Site, reflecting the need to consider how best to stimulate public engagement with what is an exceptionally diverse World Heritage Site.

Moreover, by preparing the visitor management plan at a time when preparations are being put in place for the 2007 and 2008 celebrations, maximum opportunity can be taken of the potential to re-position the city's status as a tourism destination in both the domestic and international markets.

The terms of reference for the study required the consultants to conduct an audit of the World Heritage Site and of Liverpool as a 'heritage' destination; consider the level of market opportunity and prepare recommendations for increasing access (physical, intellectual and emotional) with the World Heritage Site.

A programme of site visits, stakeholder consultations and desk research (including a best practice review of visitor management and tourism marketing at comparable World Heritage Sites around the globe) informed the consultants' assessment of the challenges to be faced and of suitable strategies for tackling these issues.

The final report contains a suite of nearly 40 recommendations that cover a wide range of actions. The action plan that forms the core of the final study report identifies not only the resource implications associated with implementation, but also the relevance of these actions to both local residents and to visitors to the city.

Recommendations for action put forward in the report address a number of key objectives:

- Attracting more visitors to Liverpool
- Increasing engagement and understanding by visitors and local residents
- Improving physical access and linkages around the World Heritage Site
- Providing ancillary visitor services to World Heritage Site visitors
- Managing the impacts of visitor activity
- Monitoring and evaluation

Some of the key recommendations put forward in the visitor management plan are to:

- Establish a World Heritage Academy for Liverpool, that will encourage local businesses and community groups to become more engaged with the World Heritage Site

- Introduce the UNESCO World Heritage Site emblem onto more promotional print, street signs and orientation panels around the city
- Use the strapline "Liverpool – A World Heritage City" on marketing materials targeting cultural and heritage tourists
- Hold an international competition to find a sculptural representation of the World Heritage Site logo, with the winning version to be installed at one of the main entrance points to the World Heritage Site
- Modify the existing website to include more information on events, guided walks and other activities taking place within the World Heritage Site as well as quizzes, competitions and an e-card facility
- Develop a "Wall Walk" that links the Northern Docks with the existing focal point of Albert Dock
- Enhance the existing physical and interpretive linkages between the tourism node of the Albert Dock with the other group of 'must see' buildings in the World Heritage Site, namely St George's Hall, World Museum Liverpool and the other buildings around St George's Plateau
- Extend the existing Heritage Open Days (HODs) scheme into a week-long event with special programmes for local residents
- Run a pilot arts project in partnership with members of some of the city's ethnic minority groups that seeks to establish how they can and do relate to Liverpool's built heritage
- Develop a short-term signage and interpretation initiative that encourages access to parts of the World Heritage Site affected by the major development programmes underway around Paradise Street and King's Dock
- Establish a biennial Architecture Festival that celebrates the city's built heritage and that brings international academic audiences to the city

The full study report indicates the resource implications for implementing both the above recommendations and the many others put forward by the consultants, as well as priorities for action. It identifies where Liverpool Culture Company should take the lead, and where other partners should adopt responsibility for delivery.