

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORLD HERITAGE STATUS

LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME:

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Prosperous City

Learning City

Attractive and Inclusive City

CORPORATE PRIORITIES:

C1O2 Being 'One Council'

C1O4 Improving partnership working to deliver 'One City'

21 SEPTEMBER 2010

1.0 WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO COMMITTEE?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee on the progress of this complex project prior to the submission of a World Heritage Status Nomination File to DCMS.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Sunderland City Council is a founder member of the Wearmouth-Jarrow Partnership, which is pursuing World Heritage Status for the twin Anglo Saxon Monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow.
- 2.2 This is a complex partnership project involving two local authorities, two Church of England parishes, two independent visitor attractions, one principal (and three ancillary) universities, sub-regional and regional bodies, national NDPBs and UK government. Sunderland City Council's role is pivotal, in that it acts as the employer for project staff funded from a variety of sources, but the Council is one stakeholder in the partnership.
- 2.3 The project has been underway in earnest since 2005; following launch of the Partnership in 2002. Work is currently in hand to finalise the text for the Nomination File to be submitted to English Heritage by 1 October 2010. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is responsible for submitting World Heritage nominations for the UK and is advised by English Heritage and ICOMOS-UK (the International Council on Monuments and Sites (UK) – whose non-UK based inspectors will, ultimately, advise UNESCO on the nomination).

- 2.4 The nomination will be evaluated by UNESCO during 2011-12. A site visit will be scheduled during autumn 2011. A final decision will be made at the World Heritage Committee meeting in summer 2012.
- 2.5 If the Partnership is able to secure inscription, it will bring increased awareness and footfall for the twin-monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow as a focus for tourism, inward investment, study and regeneration.
- 2.6 The main benefit of securing World Heritage Status would be to join a list of the world's most important sites. Sites with World Heritage Status attract tourism, contributing to the profile and the prosperity of their communities. The boost to the profile of Wearmouth-Jarrow would be considerable.
- 2.7 Although WHS status in the UK does not bring any financial awards from the Government or UNESCO, it can attract indirect funding from other sources such as The Lottery and the private sector. Overall, World Heritage Status provides opportunities for better conservation. In the case of Wearmouth-Jarrow, preparing for nomination has already opened some doors to ensure the site is properly conserved which may otherwise have been less available.

3.0 CURRENT POSITION

3.1 WORLD HERITAGE STATUS

- 3.1.1 The core project effort is in preparing a Nomination File for submission to UNESCO in January 2011. This comprises the Nomination Document – which follows a prescribed format and demonstrates definitively why the Property is worth of inscription as a WHS and establishes its Outstanding Universal Value; the Management Plan – which sets out the way in which the property will be preserved, promoted and monitored; and the supporting documents – which set out the legal, academic, historical and governance frameworks for the management of the Property.
- 3.1.2 Drafting group workshops to progress the documents have been held on 18 June 2010 and 9 August 2010. These were attended by English Heritage, ICOMOS UK and officers of Sunderland City Council and South Tyneside Council. Iterations of the Nomination File were distributed ahead of these meetings for comment. Before the Nomination File is submitted to UNESCO it must be approved by English Heritage and ICOMOS UK. The response from English Heritage and ICOMOS UK at these meetings continues to be very supportive and positive. Both parties have advised that the documentation is progressing according to their requirements.
- 3.1.3 The deadline for submitting final draft typescript, images and design samples to English Heritage is 1 October 2010.

- 3.1.4 The submitted draft will be formally reviewed by English Heritage, which is responsible for recommending the Nomination File to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The anticipated timescale for submission will be for consent to proceed and sign-off by the Secretary of State in December 2010, allowing for final printing and submission of the Nomination File to UNESCO in January 2011.
- 3.1.5 Partners have been requested to generate a contemporary endorsement of the submitted Nomination File to support its consideration by the Secretary of State. A co-ordinated draft cabinet report has been prepared for both partner councils and will be considered in Sunderland and South Tyneside on 6 October 2010. Other partners are making similar provision to record their formal endorsement of the Nomination File.

3.2 2010 WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE MEETING

- 3.2.1 The UK's 2009 nomination for the workplace and home of Charles Darwin to be inscribed was deferred by the World Heritage Committee for further in depth assessment, on 1 August, because the nomination relies heavily on the association of Darwin and his work with the Property.
- 3.2.2 By contrast, the role of Bede and his works within the Wearmouth-Jarrow Nomination is not the sole (or major) criterion on which the nomination rests. The Wearmouth-Jarrow Nomination centres on the core, physical attributes of Outstanding Universal Value in the 7th Century monastic fabric and is not compromised by this decision.

3.3 VISITOR IMPROVEMENTS

- 3.3.1 Two projects to improve visitor access to Wearmouth-Jarrow are progressing; funded from the single programme budget with match funding from Sunderland City Council, South Tyneside Council, English Heritage, Bede's World and the University of Sunderland.
- 3.3.2 The first of these covers way-marking and visitor interpretation in and around both churches, Bede's World and the National Glass Centre. Planning, scheduled monument and ecclesiastical permissions are being sought from August. Installation of interpretation panels is expected to begin by December 2010.
- 3.3.3 The second is the development of a new Wearmouth-Jarrow website. The website infrastructure has been designed and built. Currently the designers are engaging with partners to ensure that all aspects of the Wearmouth-Jarrow story are incorporated into the user managed portions of the website and work effectively with the interactive audio-visual content. User acceptance testing has proceeded during August. The website will go live in September.

3.4 PLANNING

- 3.4.1 The consultation period for the St Peter's and Bonnersfield Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has now ended. Substantive responses from St Peter's parish and English Heritage, amongst others, have been submitted.
- 3.4.2 From the perspective of the Wearmouth-Jarrow project, there are some presentational improvements which are required to reflect the language developed in the Nomination File, which has been taken forwards in parallel. This is important because, in WHS terms, the key function of the SPD is to demonstrate that the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value – on which the twin monastery will be inscribed as a WHS – are protected.
- 3.4.3 Work has progressed satisfactorily between the City Council, its advisors and English Heritage to consolidate a unified views analysis of the St Peter's monastic site to underpin the SPD, WHS Management Plan and WHS Conservation Plan; which have hitherto been developed in parallel.
- 3.4.4 Following the consultation period on the SPD, redrafting is now taking place to demonstrate full alignment between the SPD and the W-J Management Plan and to address the planning issues raised.

3.5 ARCHAEOLOGY

- 3.5.1 The St. Peter's campus of the University falls within the buffer zone to the Wearmouth monastic site. A borehole survey is envisaged, which would establish whether there is an identifiable Anglo Saxon surface layer within the buffer zone to the south of St Peter's. The prospect of additional data on the possible distribution of archaeological remains within the buffer zone to the nominated site around St Peter's church has been identified as potentially useful reinforcement to the WHS Nomination File.

3.6 RESIDUAL RISKS

- 3.6.1 The Nomination relies on presenting a comprehensive vision of the partnership, governance, regulatory and enabling frameworks which underpin the management of the nominated Property. All these elements are subject to a period of significant change in response to changing policy from the UK government and (in particular) the impending autumn spending review. These changes will be kept under review by the Wearmouth-Jarrow Partnership and appropriate action will be taken if required.

3.7 CONCLUSION

- 3.7.1 The development of the Nomination File and the acceptability of its content to English Heritage, ICOMOS-UK and (hence) DCMS is on target.
- 3.7.2 The Single Programme funded visitor improvements will be delivered and are on schedule.
- 3.7.3 Identified project risks and issues are being actively managed.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee is requested to note:
 - a) the contents of this report for information,
 - b) that a report will be presented to Cabinet in October, to formally endorse the Nomination file.