

THE STONEHENGE ALLIANCE [1]

Media release 21 July 2021

Liverpool's UNESCO designation withdrawn: A wake-up call over Stonehenge?

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee today deleted Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City from the World Heritage List following lengthy debate and an unusual secret ballot. Inappropriate development already built along with new development, such as the Everton football stadium, have led to the loss of the special characteristics that gave the WHS its outstanding universal value.

The Committee's decision, reproduced below, is damning in its criticism of the UK Government for ignoring international concerns and advice on numerous occasions, most notably concerning the impacts of new developments on the unique waterfront buildings and docks and their setting. The Decision also refers to the lack of an effective regulatory system for the legal protection of the WHS.

A Draft Decision on Stonehenge [2] is scheduled for adoption by the Committee this week, without discussion. It refers to the legal challenge to the Transport Secretary's decision to approve the A303 Stonehenge road-widening and tunnel project. If the judgement, still awaited, allows the scheme to proceed, it is proposed that Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites be considered for inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger next year for reasons similar to those cited in relation to Liverpool.

The UK has 32 World Heritage Sites. Liverpool is one of only three out of some 1,100 WHSs worldwide to lose its status. This must be seen internationally as nothing other than a shameful failure by our government to honour its commitments under the World Heritage Convention – and to us all – to protect and conserve its designated cultural heritage and to ensure that effective measures are taken for its protection and conservation.

Are we heading for a similar disaster at Stonehenge? International advisers and archaeological specialists have advised against the road scheme for years; [3] the panel of five planning experts who conducted the public examination of the project advised against it; [4] over 200,000 individuals from 147 countries have asked the government to reconsider it; [5] and more than 3,000 individuals contributed to the costs of the legal challenge. [6] What more does it take?

Let's hope that the Liverpool decision today will be a wake-up call before even more of our internationally famous heritage is vandalized for short-term political gains and permanently lost to future generations.

Notes:

1. The Stonehenge Alliance is supported by Ancient Sacred Landscape Network; Campaign to Protect Rural England; Friends of the Earth; Rescue, The British Archaeological Trust; Transport Action Network and many individuals around the world. <https://stonehengealliance.org.uk/>
2. <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2021/whc21-44com-7B.Add-en.pdf>, Item 61, pp. 62-3.
3. Report to WH Committee <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2021/whc21-44com-7B.Add-en.pdf>, pp. 60-61.
4. [Examining Authority's Recommendation Report](#), January 2020.
5. <https://stonehengealliance.org.uk/our-campaign/petition/>.
6. <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/save-stonehenge-world-heritage-site/>.

Contacts:



DRAFT DECISION: 44 COM 7A.34 (Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site)

Decision Adopted 21 July 2021

“The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/21/44.COM/7A.Add,
2. Recalling Decisions 36 COM 7B.93, 37 COM 7A.35, 38 COM 7A.19, 39 COM 7A.43, 40 COM 7A.31, 41 COM 7A.22, 42 COM 7A.7 and 43 COM 7A.47, adopted at its 36th (Saint Petersburg, 2012), 37th (Phnom Penh, 2013), 38th (Doha, 2014), 39th (Bonn, 2015), 40th (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016), 41st (Krakow, 2017), 42nd (Manama, 2018) and 43rd (Baku, 2019) sessions respectively, and in particular its repeated serious concerns over the impact of the proposed ‘Liverpool Waters’ development in the form presented in the approved Outline Planning Consent (2013-2042) which constitutes an ascertained threat to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, and that the implementation of the development, as planned, would irreversibly damage the attributes and conditions of integrity that warranted inscription;
3. Also recalling its repeated requests to the State Party to:
 - a) Consider all measures that would allow changes to the extent and scope of the proposed ‘Liverpool Waters’ scheme to ensure the continued coherence of the architectural and town-planning attributes, and the continued safeguarding of the OUV of the property, including the conditions of authenticity and integrity,
 - b) Establish substantive commitments to limitation on the quantity, location and size of allowable built form and linking the strategic city development vision to a regulatory planning document, which provides legal guidelines on the protection of the OUV,
 - c) Establish a moratorium for granting of planning permissions which have a negative impact on the OUV of the property,

d) Submit, a Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and corrective measures in a form that might be considered for adoption by the Committee;

4. Further recalling that, according to Article 6.1 of the Convention, the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List constitute the world's heritage, the protection of which is the duty of the international community as a whole, and that it is the duty of the international community to assist and to cooperate with States Parties in their endeavour to conserve such heritage;

5. Recalling furthermore that States Parties have the obligation under the Convention to protect and conserve the cultural and natural heritage situated on their territory, notably to ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection and conservation of such heritage;

6. Notes with deep regret that inadequate governance processes, mechanisms, and regulations for new developments in and around the World Heritage property, have resulted in serious deterioration and irreversible loss of attributes conveying the OUV of the property along with significant loss to its authenticity and integrity, that the process of further deterioration is irreversible, and that the State Party has not fulfilled its obligations defined in the Convention with respect to protecting and conserving the OUV, as inscribed, of the World Heritage property of Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City;

7. Also notes with deep regret that as a result of approved and implemented development projects, the property has deteriorated to the extent that it has lost characteristics, which determined its inclusion in the World Heritage List, in conformity with Paragraph 192(a) of the Operational Guidelines and that the necessary corrective measures have not been taken in conformity with Paragraph 193 of the Operational Guidelines;

8. Regrets that the entreaties of the World Heritage Committee at its 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd and 43rd sessions have not resulted in protection of the property;

9. Also regrets that the process for the implementation of the 'Liverpool Waters' project and other large-scale infrastructure projects in the waterfront and northern dock area of the property and its buffer zone has resulted in serious deterioration and irreversible loss of attributes that convey its OUV, and that further projects, such as the approved new football stadium in Bramley-Moore Dock within the property, add to the ascertained threat of further deterioration and loss of the OUV of the property;

10. Further regrets that the State Party has not complied with the repeated requests of the Committee, and has itself indicated that there are no legal and other means available in the governance of the property that would allow the State Party to comply with all of the Committee's requests so as to ensure the protection of the property and retention of its OUV in the long-term;

11. Decides to delete Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) from the World Heritage List."