

Planning Committee

2.00pm, Wednesday, 1 December 2021

Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site Management Plan Review

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive City Centre 15
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Notes the content of this report in the context of ~~the means~~ of protecting the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site (ONTE WHS) through the planning system and the review process for the current Management Plan; and
 - 1.1.2 Agrees the proposed timescale for producing a new Management Plan for 2023.

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Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site Management Plan Review

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 On [11 December 2017](#), the Committee approved the current Management Plan for the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh (ONTE) World Heritage Site (WHS) for 2017-2022. On [19 May 2021](#), the Committee noted a Business Bulletin update on the ONTE WHS Management Plan. This report presents the programme for the revision of the current Plan with a view to producing a new Plan for 2023.

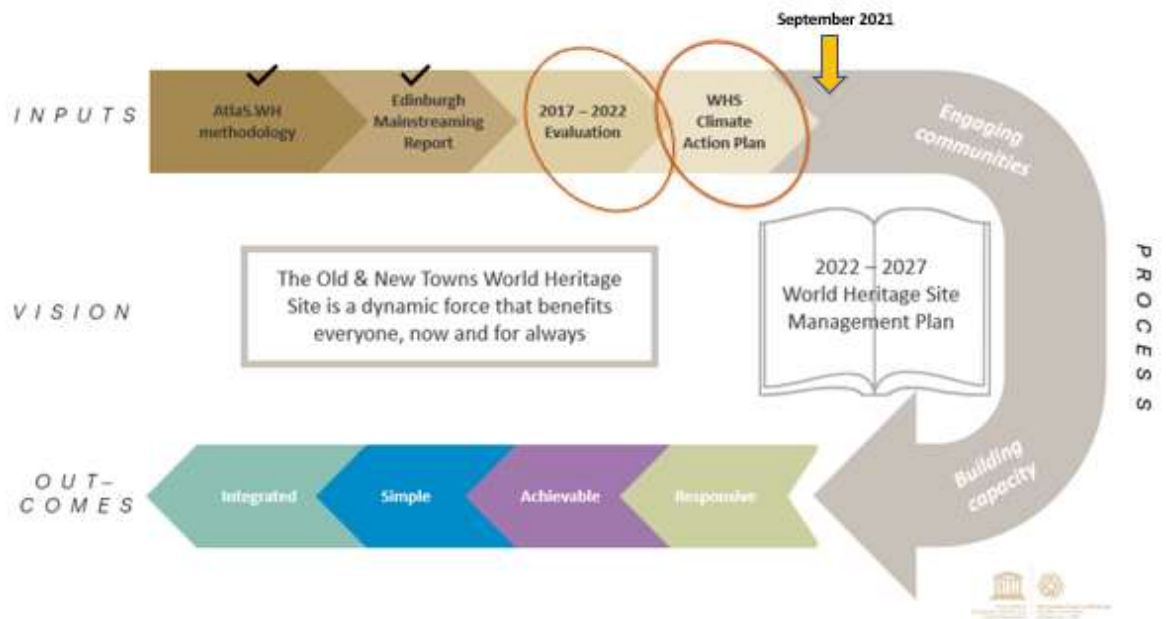
3. Background

- 3.1 The ONTE WHS was inscribed to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO's) list of World Heritage Sites in December 1995. The site is made up of two distinct areas: the Old Town, dominated by Edinburgh Castle, and the neoclassical New Town, whose development from the 18th century onwards had a far-reaching influence on European urban planning. The harmonious juxtaposition of these two contrasting historic areas, each with many important buildings, is what gives the city its unique character.
- 3.2 ONTE WHS covers approximately 4.5 square kilometres of the city centre. It takes in the Old Town Conservation Area and the New Town Conservation Area and includes parts of five others. It encompasses many institutions of national significance including the Scottish Parliament, the courts, the galleries and the University of Edinburgh. It has retained its historic urban form and character to a remarkable extent and contains a wealth of buildings listed for their architectural and historic interest, including the highest concentration of Category A listed buildings in Scotland.
- 3.3 Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community. It is established at the time of inscription in the nomination document and explained in a Statement of OUV (SOUV) (Appendix 1). The SOUV can be supported by an explanation of specific 'attributes', which identify those elements of a site which 'carry' its OUV. These can be physical attributes or intangible attributes.

- 3.4 There are 1,154 sites worldwide with WHS status, 33 in the UK and six in Scotland. The UK Government, as signatory to the World Heritage (WH) Convention, is committed to ensuring the protection and sustainable management of the OUV of its WHSs. For the purposes of the Convention, the UK Government (through the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – DCMS) is the ‘State Party’ but the Scottish Government (Culture and Historic Environment Division – CHED) advises DCMS for Scottish sites/ matters.
- 3.5 Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has specific obligations as the lead body for the historic environment for Scotland plus UNESCO requirements for WH delivered by HES on behalf of the UK State Party at CHED’s behest.
- 3.6 The City of Edinburgh Council takes the lead role in the coordination and management of the ONTE WHS - the coordination is grant funded by HES. HES and Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH) are management partners and support the delivery of the WHS Management Plan and as consultees in the planning process on issues relating to OUV (HES is a statutory consultee).

4. Main report

- 4.1 It is a UNESCO requirement to have an up-to-date management system in place, which usually takes the form of a Management Plan. The production of the ONTE WHS Management Plan is the duty of those responsible for the positive management of the WHS – principally the Council, HES, and EWH. It is overseen by a Steering Group that is made up of these organisations.
- 4.2 The purpose of any management plan is to provide a framework for the preservation and enhancement of the Site’s OUV, as accepted by UNESCO at nomination.
- 4.3 The current ONTE WHS [Management Plan 2017-22](#) sets out what is significant about the WHS as a basis for understanding its important qualities, in order to determine the action necessary to protect and manage it. It includes long-term goals and short-term actions to preserve the Site, advocates existing protective policies, aims to influence day-to-day management issues, provides supporting information on managing the opportunities and threats facing the Site and provides a framework to monitor the condition of the built environment.
- 4.4 The current Management Plan runs until the end of 2022 and its review is currently underway. A series of partnership projects, including one in partnership with four other European World Heritage Cities (Porto, Bordeaux, Florence, Santiago de Compostela), and another looking at how to mainstream WH within the broader management of the Council, are feeding into the review. An evaluation of the current plan and two climate risk assessment projects (Climate Vulnerability Index – CVI, and Climate Change Risk Assessment – CCRA) will also inform the Plan.



Engagement Strategy

- 4.5 National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) funding secured by EWH is supporting the engagement strategy for the Management Plan review. The objective is to deliver a comprehensive and inclusive programme of engagement to support the development of the Plan. A full set of information concerning the threats and opportunities facing the WHS from a representative cross section of residents, businesses, visitors, heritage experts and other stakeholders will be gathered. There is a particular focus on gathering information from a diverse selection of individuals and communities who might not normally participate in heritage activities and public consultations. This will inform the main issues to be taken forward in the draft plan.
- 4.6 Focus groups were held in September 2021 as the start of the engagement strategy (with additional funding support from HES). This will be followed by 'expert' stakeholder workshops, community workshops and an on-line public consultation.
- 4.7 Four focus groups were led by market research consultants, who recruited participants from a diverse audience across the city. Each group had five/six participants.
- 4.8 The aim of the group discussions was to determine what the WHS means to local communities, what they think about the Site and how it is managed, providing insight into residents' views on which elements of the management of the Site work well and which do not, potential areas where heritage could touch their lives and what the new Plan should focus on. The results are yet to be published.

4.9 Old and New Towns of Edinburgh Management Plan 2023-28: Engagement Plan

Tools	Participants	Output	Approx. Timing
1. Professionally recruited Focus Group Discussions (new)	Representative panels of residents across the city	Qualitative information on key threats and opportunities	September
2. Self-selecting on-line consultation	Random, but with efforts to limit to Edinburgh businesses and residents. May include placemaking 'wheel' to foster comparison to 2017/22 plan	Semi-quantitative information on threats and opportunities	December
3. Community workshops (new)	Targeted across Edinburgh's communities from both within and outwith the World Heritage Site	Qualitative evaluation of specific community concerns	November – December
4. Expert workshops	Targeted across key stakeholder groups engaged in different areas of City management (e.g. housing, tourism, transport, climate response etc.)	Expert views from a range of different perspectives on threats and opportunities	November - December
5. Social Media listening exercise (new)	Targeted users of Social Media	Real-time digital expressions of opinion on threats and opportunities	End November
6. Face-to-face discussions at high-footfall Edinburgh events	Targeted communities who participate in these events (e.g. Meadows Festival)	Semi-quantitative information on threats and opportunities	TBC

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Once stakeholder engagement is complete a draft Management Plan will be produced for public consultation.

5. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no immediate financial implications for the Council arising from this report as costs are being covered by third party funding and within existing resources.
- 6.2 The format for the finished Management Plan is not yet agreed. The current Plan can be viewed online, although there is a small stock of printed copies. Demand for printed copies is low, however they remain useful for events and advocacy.

6. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 6.1 The proposed engagement strategy has been designed to capture views on management issues within the World Heritage Site, and to encourage comments that will add depth and insight to the focus of the next Management Plan.

7. Background reading/external references

7.1 [Atlas World Heritage Project](#)

7.2 [Climate Vulnerability Index – implementation in an urban setting: blog](#)

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site: Brief synthesis

The remarkable juxtaposition of two clearly articulated urban planning phenomena. The contrast between the organic medieval Old Town and the planned Georgian New Town of Edinburgh, Scotland, provides a clarity of urban structure unrivalled in Europe. The juxtaposition of these two distinctive townscapes, each of exceptional historic and architectural interest, which are linked across the landscape divide, the "great arena" of Sir Walter Scott's Waverley Valley, by the urban viaduct, North Bridge, and by the Mound, creates the outstanding urban landscape.

The Old Town stretches along a high ridge from the Castle on its dramatically situated rock down to the Palace of Holyrood. Its form reflects the burgh plots of the Canongate, founded as an "abbatial burgh" dependent on the Abbey of Holyrood, and the national tradition of building tall on the narrow "tofts" or plots separated by lanes or "closes" which created some of the world's tallest buildings of their age, the dramatic, robust, and distinctive tenement buildings. It contains many 16th and 17th century merchants' and nobles' houses such as the early 17th century restored mansion house of Gladstone's Land which rises to six storeys and important early public buildings such as the Canongate Tolbooth and St Giles Cathedral. The Old Town is characterized by the survival of the little-altered medieval "fishbone" street pattern of narrow closes, wynds, and courts leading off the spine formed by the High Street, the broadest, longest street in the Old Town, with a sense of enclosed space derived from its width, the height of the buildings lining it, and the small scale of any breaks between them.

The New Town, constructed between 1767 and 1890 as a collection of seven new towns on the glacial plain to the north of the Old Town, is framed and articulated by an uncommonly high concentration of planned ensembles of ashlar-faced, world-class, neo-classical buildings, associated with renowned architects, including John and Robert Adam (1728-92), Sir William Chambers (1723-96), and William Playfair (1790- 1857). Contained and integrated with the townscape are gardens, designed to take full advantage of the topography, while forming an extensive system of private and public open spaces. The New Town is integrated with large green spaces. It covers a very large area of 3,288 ha, is consistent to an unrivalled degree, and survives virtually intact. Some of the finest public and commercial monuments of the New-classical revival in Europe survive in the city, reflecting its continuing status as the capital of Scotland since 1437, and a major centre of thought and learning in the 18th century Age of Enlightenment, with its close cultural and political links with mainland Europe.

The successive planned extensions from the first New Town, and the high quality of the architecture, set standards for Scotland and beyond, and exerted a major influence on the development of urban architecture and town planning throughout Europe. The dramatic topography of the Old Town combined with the planned alignments of key buildings in both the Old and the New Town, results in spectacular

views and panoramas and an iconic skyline. The renewal and revival of the Old Town in the late 19th century, and the adaptation of the distinctive Baronial style of building for use in an urban environment, influenced the development of conservation policies for urban environments.

Criterion (ii): The successive planned extensions of the New Town, and the high quality of its architecture, set standards for Scotland and beyond, and exerted a major influence on the development of urban architecture and town planning throughout Europe, in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Criterion (iv): The Old and New Towns together form a dramatic reflection of significant changes in European urban planning, from the inward looking, defensive walled medieval city of royal palaces, abbeys and organically developed burgh plots in the Old Town, through the expansive formal Enlightenment planning of the 18th and 19th centuries in the New Town, to the 19th century rediscovery and revival of the Old Town with its adaptation of a distinctive Baronial style of architecture in an urban setting.

Integrity

The property encompasses significant town-planning components, including layout, buildings, open spaces and views, that demonstrate the distinctiveness between the organic growth of the Old Town and the planned terraces and squares of the New Town with the wide landscaped valley between. Overall the property forms a remarkably consistent and coherent entity which has developed and adapted over time. It has largely preserved its skyline and extensive views in and out of the property, although as with any modern, living city these have altered and developed over time, while preserving the key attributes of Outstanding Universal Value within the property. The vulnerability of the skyline and the views in and out of the property has been addressed by the introduction of a Skyline Policy.

Authenticity

The level of authenticity in Edinburgh is high. Individually the high-quality buildings of all dates have been conserved to a high standard and the layout of streets and squares maintain their intactness. The property also continues to retain its historic role as the administrative and cultural capital of Scotland, while remaining a vibrant economic centre.