

**Edinburgh World Heritage: Deputation/written statement for Transport & Environment Committee 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**Subject: Communal Bin Hubs proposals (Business Bulletin)**

Edinburgh World Heritage was expecting this committee meeting to present and agree the extent to which our advice on impact mitigation measures advised for the communal bin hubs was being taken forward, as well as a forward plan for meaningful community engagement on this basis. As this is not the case today, we wish to be helpfully clear and transparent about our position on this matter. Additional detail on our position can be found on our website, which is being periodically updated.

Edinburgh World Heritage was not consulted on this proposal prior to the original decision being approved at committee in April 2021. We have consistently advised that we have notable concerns regarding the harmful impact of the proposals on the Outstanding Universal Value (the cultural significance of Edinburgh which transcends generations and international boundaries) of the World Heritage Site – in particular, the integrity, legibility and qualities of its historic urban planning. Our professional view on this matter is echoed by significant concern within the local community.

For clarity, our advice to the council from the outset has been that the proposals within the World Heritage Site should take a step back, and explore a wider range of options (beyond communal bin hubs) inclusively with the community. In light of the extant approval at committee, we have secondarily been providing advice on meaningful mitigation measures within the scope of the existing communal bin hubs concept. As part of the overall very strong city partnership between the Council, Edinburgh World Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland, we have provided detailed advice to help the council develop a bespoke approach required to protect the character of our unique World Heritage Site whilst meeting other key city goals. This has included providing detailed advice on a flexible approach across the WHS, treatment on a street-by-street basis and balanced solutions where other public interests (e.g. road safety and accessibility) are at play.

Our approach on this matter has been driven by our duty to support the protection the World Heritage Site for current and future generations, and to pragmatically support the council in its obligation to protect Edinburgh's Outstanding Universal Value in this important and complex city management matter. We acknowledge the many public interests that require careful balancing on this matter, and have invested a significant amount of expert staff time within a period of constrained charity resource to help guide towards a productive and balanced solution.

However, we are concerned on the basis of the Business Bulletin that the balanced mitigation measures advised to the Council by both Edinburgh World Heritage and other heritage partners are not being taken forward. It appears on the basis of the information provided that our advice as long-term city partner is being over-ruled on the basis of other public interests (e.g. road safety and accessibility) without robust evidence, and notably under-valuing the social, economic, wellbeing and environmental benefits of the World Heritage Site.

We want to be helpfully clear as city partner that this is of significant concern. We urge the council to consider carefully their obligation to protect the World Heritage Site in a manner more in keeping with their wider historic city management strengths, and integrate the mitigation measures advised for the World Heritage Site. We fully recognise that this is a complex matter in which there are a number of important public interests at play, and are happy to further discuss ways in which the advised mitigation measures can be improved from a roads safety and accessibility perspective.

We want to be clear and transparent that our position is that the introduction of bin hubs into the WHS without all, or the substantial majority of, the mitigation measures advised by Edinburgh

World Heritage will cause a significant level of harm to the World Heritage Site. By the same token, the adoption of the advised mitigation measures alongside meaningful community engagement will substantially reduce the heritage impact and move towards a positive balance of conservation, city and community needs.