

UNITED KINGDOM

City of Bath

Brief description

Founded by the Romans as a thermal spa, Bath became an important centre of the wool industry in the Middle Ages. In the 18th century, under George III, it developed into an elegant town with neoclassical Palladian buildings, which blend harmoniously with the Roman baths.

1. Introduction

Year of Inscription 1987

Agency responsible for site management

- Bath and North East Somerset Council/Bath World Heritage Site Steering Group
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (i), (ii), (iv)

Justification as provided by the State Party

Bath is a city of international importance for its contribution to the art of urban design, for its architectural quality, its Roman remains, its Georgian town centre and its historic associations.

Thanks to the genius of John Wood Senior, Georgian Bath can be described by Nikolaus Pevsner as 'a piece of town planning unique in England and indeed in Europe'. Thanks to John his son and their contemporaries, the buildings that filled out the plan were collectively and individually worthy of its conception - on the one hand the Circus and the Royal Crescent, on the other the Assembly Rooms, the Pump Room and the Pulteney Bridge. But the architectural quality of Bath lies above all in the excellence of the facades and the urban and landscape spaces that they enclose.

At the heart of the City are the Roman baths marking the site of the healing springs which have attracted visitors for some 2,000 years. These have been the object of intermittent excavation for the last two centuries and are, with the exception of Hadrian's Wall, the best-preserved, most famous

and most impressive architectural monuments of the Roman era to be found in Britain, and indeed among the most remarkable remains of this kind to be found north of the Alps. Yet, paradoxically, it is the adjacent Tudor abbey church which is the fitting centrepiece for the city as a whole.

Historically Georgian Bath is important, not for events of momentous importance, but as a setting for social history. The residents and visitors to this national health resort form a roll-call of the aristocracy, the gentry and their attendants on the one hand and of the artists, authors and dramatists they patronised on the other. Last but not least, in spite of all the changes imposed upon it by the 20th century, Bath remains a beautiful city, set in a hollow amongst the hills and as architecturally exciting as it was in its Georgian heyday.

UNESCO Criteria: i, ii, iii, iv and v.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

ICOMOS, considering the exceptional value of the historic and monumental ensemble of Bath, expresses an opinion in favor of the principle of including this property on the World Heritage List. However, it would be necessary to know the general protection situation of the 4,900 classified or listed monuments of Bath. In spite of many preliminary reports (cf. Bath. A Study in Conservation, 1968; Yesterday's Tomorrow. Conservation in Bath, 1975; Saving Bath, 1978), the management plan drafted in 1984 under the name Draft City Plan has not been approved. In a city of over 80,000 inhabitants, the safeguarding of a major and discontinuous monumental heritage (there is an historic centre, but Prior Park, with its landscapes by Ralph Allen and Capability Brown, is 1.5 km from the centre) poses serious problems which cannot be avoided.

Committee Decision

Bureau (1987): the Bureau recommended inscription of this site on condition that confirmation is received, before the meeting of the Committee, that the Draft City Plan, which is already being implemented, has been officially approved.

- Statement of outstanding universal value of the site has been developed as part of the management plan and will be submitted to the Committee for approval
- Proposal for text will be made by State Party

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- No buffer zone has been defined

- Change to buffer zone will be reviewed by State Party as part of the management plan work programme

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- No evaluation of authenticity made by Advisory Body
- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Specific policy protecting the World Heritage site in the local development plan
- Conservation Area; listed historic buildings; scheduled monuments; much of immediate surrounding designated as Green Belt; Cotswold Area of outstanding natural beauty; specific buildings and monuments protected by designation
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Supplementary planning guidance for the World Heritage policy in the local development plan is part of the management plan's work programme
- The need for a buffer zone to protect the setting of the city will be considered in 2005 during the boundary review
- 2004-2007

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Urban centre

Management/Administrative Body

- Steering group set up in 2000
- Site manager on short-term basis
- Consensual management
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; local
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Longer term secure resources for a coordinator and core funding are being investigated

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: October 2004
- Effective

- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Bath World Heritage site steering group and World Heritage coordinator

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Specific WH core funding
Subdivided in: local authority's World Heritage budget for core management plan work (administration, projects); other World Heritage activities; coordinator costs
- Additional funding from grants from English Heritage for coordinator's salary
- Insufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 1 full-time
- Staffing considered inadequate
- Additional regular volunteers (some members of the Steering Group)

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, education, management, visitor management
- Average: interpretation, promotion

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Training courses will be available to staff across many different relevant organisations
- Training for education staff in integrating heritage into the curriculum: the management plan work programme 2004-7 includes producing guidance
- Training for stakeholders available

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 6,094,000 (South West Tourism), 2002
- Visitor facilities: tourist Information centre in centre of city with online services; pedestrian direction signs in the city centre and some boards showing locations; museums; walking tours
- Visitor needs: upgrading of direction signs and boards; on-street interpretation

- Visitor management plan: tourism strategy (2001) for Bath & North East Somerset district now out of date, as prepared prior to the creation of the new tourism organisation Bath Tourism Plus

10. Scientific Studies

- No agreed research framework
- Condition surveys, archaeological surveys, visitor management, transport studies
- Studies used for management of site

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Inadequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem not used on publications
- Poor awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- Need for awareness raising programme
- Special events (photo competition, OWHC education project, school twinning with other WH sites)
- Web site available: www.bathnes.gov.uk;
- Local participation to be encouraged through awareness raising programme (part of Management Plan).

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Various conservation works on historic buildings (especially private homes), including repair and stone cleaning; Conservation on major structures such as the Roman Baths is ongoing work; Some archaeological excavations in the course of development activity, the largest being for the new Bath Spa building (1998)
- Present state of conservation: good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure, environmental pressure, natural disasters, volume of traffic
- Development pressure due to restricted amount of development land; potential threat from flooding at a number of points along the river; lack of detailed knowledge or monitoring of the

state of the site; lack of capital investment in maintaining and enhancing the historic public realm causing deterioration in fabric, quality of modern interventions and presentation; heavy local and through traffic

- Risk assessment carried out in 2005/06

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme to be developed as part of the management plan work programme 2004-7 (also includes identifying key indicators)

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social, economic, management, cooperation of different management areas highlighting relevance of historic environment
- Strengths: protection through the policy in the local development plan; Integration of World Heritage into other policy and strategy documents; management plan developed in consultation with the local community; first education project currently running
- Weaknesses: World Heritage needs to be further integrated into people's work across the city to meet the vast complexity and scale of the challenge of conserving and maintaining the site; insufficient resources and staff capacity; difficult coordination of stakeholders' action; funding for the coordinator not secure beyond March 2006 and there is very little core funding to use as seed money for project work

Future actions:

- Management plan work programme 2004-7 includes assessment of the current capacity of the city to attend to its conservation needs and options for improving the situation. Secure ongoing funding for a coordinator to work with stakeholders and spearhead work is being sought
- No WH Funding sought