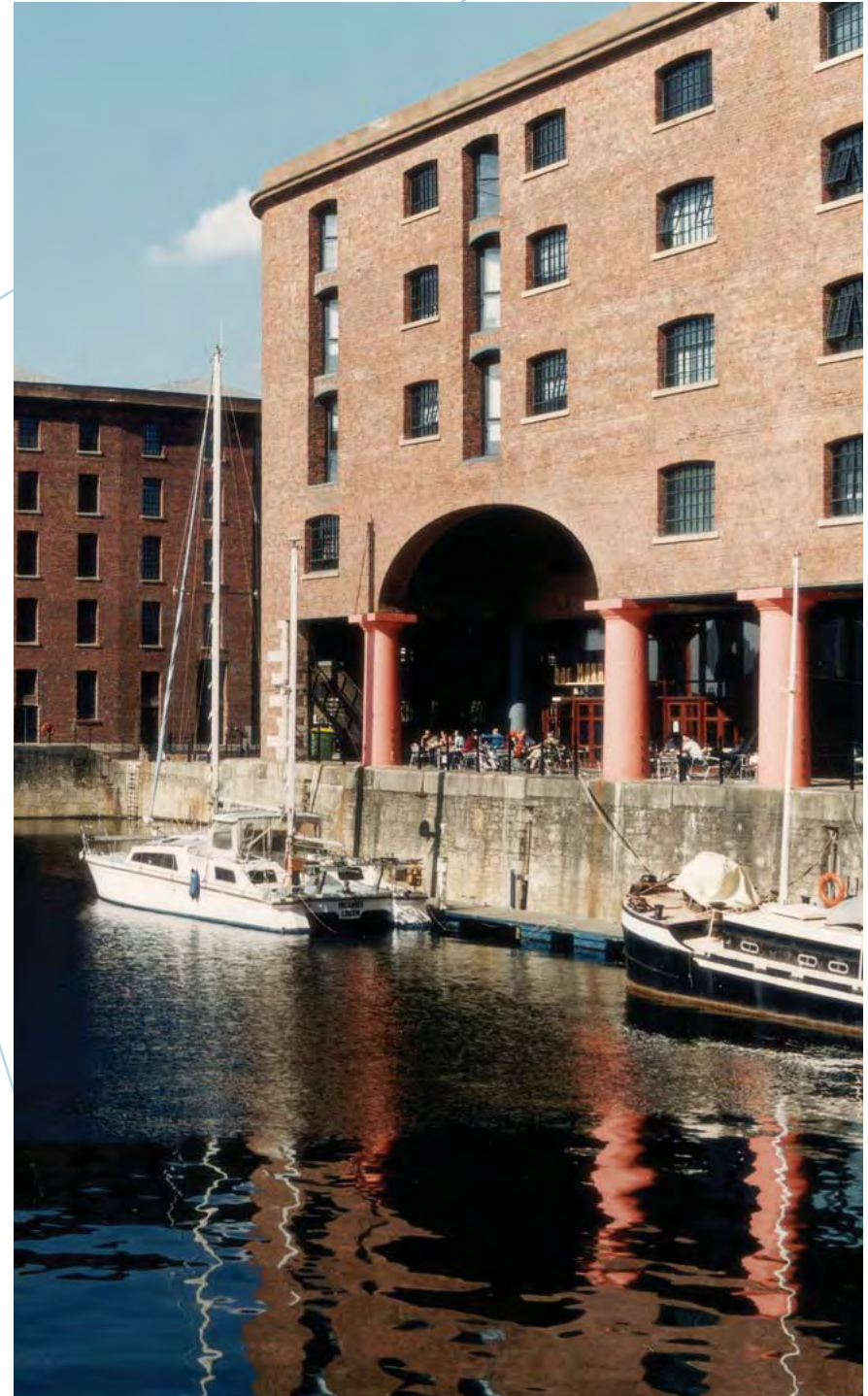


05

THE
CONSERVATION OF
PORT HERITAGE
LESSONS FROM **LIVERPOOL**

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The international significance of the port and city of Liverpool was recognized by UNESCO in 2004, when its historic waterfront and commercial centre were inscribed onto the World Heritage list as “the supreme example of a commercial port at the time of Britain’s greatest global influence.” Verification of this claim was provided by Dr Ray Bondin (ICOMOS Assessor) who confirmed that Liverpool has “The biggest and most complete system of historic docks in the world” (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile WHS and its six areas of distinct townscape character
(© Liverpool City Council)

BRIEF HISTORY OF LIVERPOOL

Liverpool was founded by King John in 1207, as a port from which to sail to Ireland and Wales, but few noteworthy developments occurred there in the first 500 years! A map of 1577 shows that nearby Chester on the River Dee was busier than Liverpool on the River Mersey. Liverpool’s growth as a port was hampered by the high tidal range of the river and the lack of protected moorings for ships. However, in 1715 the Town Council opened the world’s first commercial enclosed wet dock (which later became known as Old Dock), constructed within an infilled tidal pool, and Liverpool began its rise to become one of the greatest international port cities. By the end of the 18th Century, Liverpool had constructed a further five enclosed docks along the tidal margins. By the end of the 19th century, 150 hectares of enclosed docks had been completed in a continuous line along the east bank of the river (Fig. 2). It was a remarkable achievement of civil engineering and municipal enterprise.

Fig. 2: “The biggest and most complete system of historic docks in the world” (© Liverpool City Council)

THE NEED FOR URBAN REGENERATION

With the increased size of ships during the 20th Century, the historic docks and monumental dockside warehouses close to the city centre became increasingly unsuitable for commercial use and ultimately became wholly redundant during the second half of the 20th Century. Their industrial obsolescence created challenges for their conservation.

Liverpool’s population declined a direct result of decline in job opportunities, the creation of New Towns (Runcorn and Skelmersdale) and planned suburban expansion:

1930 – 855,500

2006 – 436,000

Social problems ensued and civil riots occurred in 1981.

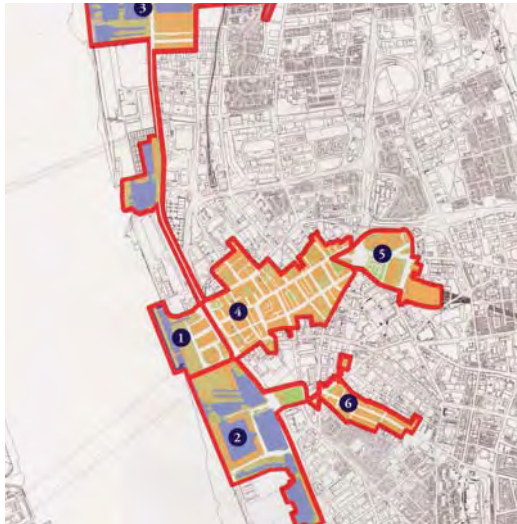


Fig.1



Fig.2



Fig.3

As a response, the Merseyside Development Corporation (1981-1998) was formed and began the regeneration of the historic port, with a range of projects:

- International Garden Festival
- Industrial units in transit sheds Brunswick Docks
- A water-sports centre Queens Dock
- A marina and waterfront housing at Coburg Dock
- New Custom and Excise Building
- Conservation and conversion of Waterloo Warehouse and Wapping Warehouse into apartments.

The flagship project was the conservation and sustainable re-use of Albert Dock Warehouses during 1984-8 for a range of uses which were accessible to the public, using some established conservation principles (Fig.3):

- Retain 1846 Plan
- Retain roof shape and colour
- Restore/replace original windows above ground floor
- Recess ground floor openings
- Clean/repair brickwork
- Retain cast iron-work and artefacts.

Fig.3: Albert Dock – The comprehensively restored Albert Dock warehouses – an icon of heritage-led regeneration (© English Heritage, National Monuments Record)

The work of revitalising Liverpool's port heritage has been continued by the public and private sectors, especially Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Vision since the demise of the MDC, with much success.

The critic Stephen Bayley reported in *The Observer*:

Forget Berlin – never before has so much effort, money and intelligence been committed to urban regeneration (as in Liverpool).

In the course of conserving, managing and regenerating the vast maritime heritage of Liverpool, many lessons have been learnt, which could usefully be studied and possibly replicated by other port cities. These lessons were discussed during the workshop:

LESSON 1

**Be proud of your maritime heritage!
Encourage it to be valued.**

The citizens of Liverpool are traditionally proud of their maritime heritage but years of economic and social problems in the late 20th Century led to the fading of the communal memory of the city's past glories. Liverpool City Council and its partners, notably English Heritage, foresaw that if Liverpool could become a World Heritage Site, this international recognition would lead to a return of civic pride in the city and could be an inspiration for heritage-led regeneration.

LESSON 2

**Celebrate and enjoy
your maritime heritage!**

The City Council capitalizes on and encourages pride in Liverpool's maritime heritage by organizing regular river festivals and events such as the Tall Ships Races. Such events harness local pride but are also generate visitors and contribute to the visitor economy, with hundreds of thousands of visitors (Figs. 4 & 5).



Fig.4

Fig.4: Celebration of Maritime Heritage – The Tall Ships Race 2008
(© Liverpool City Council)



Fig.5

Fig.5: Enjoy your maritime heritage. Use the historic environment as a venue for events. Liverpool: European Capital of Culture 2008
(© Liverpool City Council)

LESSON 3

Understand the historic urban landscape of the wider port city. Undertake detailed studies of the urban fabric and landscape.

In order to properly describe, understand and plan for various areas of the city that have different characteristics of form and function, cities can be divided into city “quarters”. Liverpool’s World Heritage Sites is divided into six Areas of Distinct Townscape Character:

- 1) The Pier Head – the spiritual focal point of the city
- 2) Albert Dock Conservation Area – an ensemble of docks and warehouses south of the Pier Head
- 3) Stanley Dock Conservation Area – an ensemble of docks and warehouses north of the Pier Head

- 4) Castle Street Commercial Centre – the palaces of commerce
- 5) The William Brown Street Cultural Quarter – Liverpool’s historic expression its interest culture
- 6) Lower Duke Street Merchants Quarter – early inland warehouses and merchants’ houses.

LESSON 4

Understand historic and intangible significance. Port heritage is both tangible and intangible. The surviving historic fabric of a port bears witness to its past activities.

UNESCO considers that Liverpool has *Outstanding Universal Value* because Liverpool:

- 1 Played a leading role in the development of dock construction, port management and international trading systems in the 18th and 19th centuries
- 2 The buildings and structures of the port and the city are an exceptional testimony to mercantile culture.

- 3 Liverpool played a major role in influencing globally significant demographic changes in the 18th and 19th centuries, through: a) its involvement in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and b) its involvement as the leading port of mass European emigration to the New World.

Visitors come to Liverpool to trace their *Genealogical Roots* and the *Geographical Routes* of their ancestors!

LESSON 5

Better understanding leads to informed conservation and better planning

English Heritage was the lead partner in the *Historic Environment of Liverpool Project* (HELP) from 2001 (until 2010) which was established to encourage better understanding, management and celebration of the city’s extraordinary cultural heritage.

HELP is an umbrella programme to bring together around 15 interlinked projects, grouped into three key themes:

- 1) Investigation and Characterisation
- 2) Managing the Historic Environment
- 3) Access and Celebration of cultural heritage.

A key output of the project was the publication of a series of popular books on Informed Conservation, which has enhanced knowledge and enabled more informed planning decisions (Fig.6).

Fig.6: English Heritage's Informed Conservation series – improves popular understanding and decision-making (© English Heritage)

LESSON 6
Get statutory protection for historic port structures

The HELP Programme also resulted in the review of listed buildings within the WHS and additional protection for many historic port buildings such as inland warehouses and the early fireproof warehouse at Vulcan Street/ Waterloo Road.

LESSON 7
The public are attracted to mixed uses in historic buildings with a waterside setting.

The restoration of the Albert Dock has been an outstanding success and annually attracts over 4 million visitors a year.

LESSON 8
Public authorities should deliver regeneration using any means as necessary:

- Regeneration frameworks
- Planning policies
- Management Plans
- Planning guidance
- Public Funding
- Private Sector

The benefits of establishing a consensual management framework for port heritage is the most important lesson.

- 1 Liverpool's Unitary Development Plan predates the WHS and so contains no policies for protecting the WHS

- 2 English planning law provides no existing statutory protection for WHSs (although some changes have subsequently been made – see Circular 07/09).

- 3 In Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 *Planning and the Historic Environment* (since superseded by PPS5):

- 1) WHS is a material Planning consideration

- 2) Great weight attached to protection of World Heritage values

- 3) Environmental Impact Assessments are required for significant development proposals affecting WHSs

- 4) Comprehensive management plans are a requirement for English WHSs, as recommended in UNESCO's Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

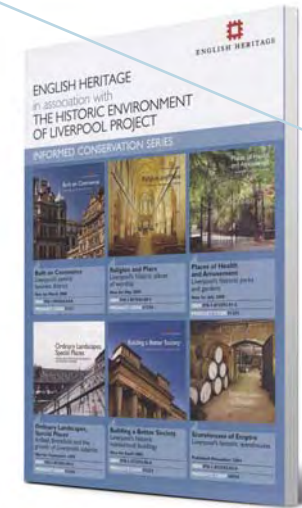


Fig.6



Fig.7

- 4 In accordance with UNESCO's guidance, Liverpool prepared the Liverpool WHS Management Plan (2003), of which the most important components are a) *The Vision for the Future*, b) the objectives and c) actions. *The Vision for the Future* of the WHS includes:

"The organisations and people responsible for the management of the World Heritage Site are committed to ensuring that **Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City will be managed as an exemplary demonstration of sustainable development and heritage-led regeneration**" (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7: The Vision for the future of the WHS from the Management Plan: "... Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City will be managed as an exemplary demonstration of sustainable development and heritage-led regeneration."
(© Liverpool City Council)

The WH Management Plan does not seek to prevent change, it seeks to:

- 1) Achieve a responsible management of change
- 2) Raise standards of urban design in its widest sense
- 3) Increase appreciation, and improve understanding, of the special qualities of the site.

This is in accordance with UNESCO's Budapest Declaration of 2002, which seeks to achieve an appropriate and equitable balance between the needs of conservation, sustainability and development so that the Site can continue to contribute ...to the social and economic development and quality of life of our communities.

Examples of the objectives and actions of the WHS:

Objective 5.1

Continue to ensure that all new developments within the Site and its Buffer Zone are of high design and construction quality.

Objective 5.2

Ensure that new development respects the significance of the Site and is appropriate to its historic, spatial and townscape context.

Action 4.4.2

Prepare Supplementary Planning Guidance on the protection and enhancement of key visual relationships, panoramas and vistas into, out of and across the site.

Action 5.2.2

Prepare, develop and implement a Tall Buildings Policy for the city, with special reference to the Site and its Buffer Zone.

Liverpool's experience in preparing the Management Plan are being shared in the HerO (Heritage as an Opportunity) project, an EU-funded URBACT project (see www.urbact.eu/hero (Fig. 8)).

- 5 The RopeWalks Supplementary Planning Document (2005) already provides guidance for part of the WHS. It has three roles:
- 1) Land use development brief
 - 2) Enhancement statement
 - 3) Urban design guide

- 6 Notwithstanding the approved management plan for Liverpool, whilst inscribing Liverpool onto the World Heritage List in 2004, the World Heritage Committee:

- **“Recommended** that the authorities pay particular attention to monitoring the processes of change in the World Heritage areas and their surroundings in order not to adversely impact the property. This concerns especially changes in use and new construction
- **Requested** that the State Party, in applying its planning procedures rigorously, assure that:-
 - a) the height of any new construction in the World Heritage property not exceed that of structures in the immediate surroundings;
 - b) the character of any new construction respect the qualities of the historic area;
 - c) new construction at the Pier Head should not dominate, but complement the historic Pier Head buildings.”

Many development proposals have come forward in Liverpool since inscription, some of which had the potential to damage the outstanding universal value of the WHS. A UNESCO/ICOMOS Mission therefore came to Liverpool in October 2006 to assess the state of conservation of the WHS.

The conclusions of the Mission were:

- 1 “The overall state of conservation of the World Heritage Site is good as the docks and port area as well as the city’s listed historic buildings, are either restored and well-maintained, or part of a programme of rehabilitation, all carefully planned, documented and executed with great respect for the authenticity of the design and materialization.”
- 2 “The Site’s protected areas with related structures and individual buildings were not under imminent danger of significant modification or degradation, nor would any of the development proposals obstruct views to them in any significant way.”

Even so, the subsequent World Heritage Committee (2007) requested that **stricter planning guidance** should be prepared for the WHS to:

- a) clearly establish and respect prescribed heights
- b) adhere to the townscape characteristics, wider values (building density, urban patterns and materials) and sense of place.”

- 7 Good progress had been made on preparing the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for New Development and Conservation in and around the WHS, with the preparation of an internal draft version. (The SPD was subsequently completed and adopted in October 2009 it is available at www.liverpoolworldheritage.com (Fig.9)).

Fig.8: The HerO (Heritage as Opportunity) Strategy Paper – see www.urbact.eu/hero (©) HerO Network

Fig.9: Supplementary Planning Document for Conservation, Development and Regeneration in the World Heritage Site and Buffer Zone – the most comprehensive in the UK (©) Liverpool City Council

LESSON 8

Carry out a comprehensive townscape analysis to identify key issues

Key Issues in the SPD for the WHS:

- 1 Design Guidance
- 2 Tall Buildings
- 3 The future of Water-spaces.
- 4 Building Heights in the WHS
- 5 Replacement of Existing Buildings
- 6 Re-use of Historic Buildings
- 7 The Dock Wall
- 8 Northshore/Liverpool Waters.

LESSON 9

Identify buildings that make a negative contribution to the historic urban landscape and encourage their removal/replacement

Not all buildings within Liverpool’s historic port are heritage assets or contribute to the outstanding universal

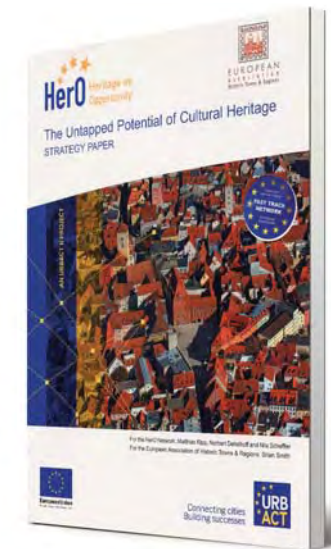


Fig.8



Fig.9



Fig.10

value of the WHS. The City Council has therefore undertaken a study and identified those which make a neutral or negative contribution to the historic urban landscape and confirmed that it would not object in principle to their demolition and replacement. This supports the over-arching aim of the SPD:

“To provide a framework for protecting and enhancing the outstanding universal value of *Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City* World Heritage Site, whilst encouraging investment and development, which secures a healthy economy and supports regeneration” (Figs. 10 & 11).

Fig. 10: Bascule Bridge (2008) – An eyesore at risk of replacement? (© Liverpool City Council)

Fig. 11: Bascule Bridge (2010) – Restored and an integral component of the dockland scene! (© Liverpool City Council)



Fig.11

CONCLUSION

All historic ports and all historic cities are unique, but many have common characteristics and face similar challenges. Liverpool does not claim to have all the answers nor to have achieved perfect solutions, but it is a fascinating case study of the conservation of port heritage in progress. The experiences and lessons learnt in Liverpool provide a communal reservoir of knowledge that others can study and benefit from.

For further information, visit www.liverpoolworldheritage.com or www.urbact.eu or contact john.hinchliffe@liverpool.gov.uk

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