



# The THE OLD AND NEW TOWNS OF EDINBURGH WORLD HERITAGE SITE

## DRAFT ACTION PLAN 2024 – 2026

This Action Plan sets out how the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site Management Plan will be delivered and should be read in conjunction with the Management Plan.

This Action Plan is a live document which captures key information known at this stage. It is intended to be dynamic, and actions will need to be flexible. It will be reviewed and updated every two years as part of the Management Plan’s monitoring schedule.

### Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring is a responsibility of World Heritage Site inscription. This includes both monitoring the condition of the Site (State of Conservation) and monitoring the implementation of the actions.

#### State of conservation report

UNESCO monitors the state of conservation of each World Heritage Site through its Periodic Reporting process. The [last Periodic Report](#) was completed in 2013, the most recent Periodic Report was completed in 2023 and awaits publishing. These reports are an important tool to gather information that identifies possible changes to the condition of a Site.

### Role of the partners

#### The City of Edinburgh Council

The City of Edinburgh Council is the Planning Authority. It implements the planning system in the city, which is the mechanism for managing World Heritage Sites in the UK. The Council is responsible for providing political leadership and governance for a comprehensive range of services across the city beyond Planning that affects the World Heritage Site.

It is also responsible for the provision of a range of [public services](#) that affect day-to-day life within the World Heritage Site, including strengthening and supporting communities, providing jobs and ensuring its residents are well cared for.

#### Historic Environment Scotland

**Delivery and oversight**

Actions will be delivered by the management partners. The remit and expertise of each partner adds a strength to this process that is greater than the sum of its parts. Monitoring will be carried out on a biennial basis with reports presented to the Steering Group and Planning Committee and/ or other relevant Council Committees.

Governance of the management plan will be further strengthened by the setting up of an oversight group which will meet annually to review its progress. The Oversight Group will pursue issues through its members' own organisational arrangements to ensure that decisions are properly informed.

The Oversight Group will also be responsible for supporting project objectives and key tasks in response to changing circumstances as delivery of the management plan progresses.

**Partnership working**

The Management Plan's success is dependent on people giving up their time to tell us what they think. In return, it is the management partners' responsibility to clearly demonstrate the importance of the impact of this participation. A lead partner has been assigned to each action to ensure collaboration across the partnership.

Historic Environment Scotland is a non-departmental public body. It is the lead public body established to investigate, care for and promote Scotland's historic environment. Its board is appointed by Scottish Ministers.

Historic Environment Scotland offer technical expertise, support and significant funding to the historic environment via in-house experts and various grants schemes, directly employing the highest number of traditional crafts staff in Scotland and actively fostering apprentice development. HES is also a statutory consultee in the planning process.

**Edinburgh World Heritage**

Edinburgh World Heritage is the independent, expert charity dedicated to the proactive conservation of the World Heritage Site. It provides grants and advice to unlock a rolling programme of vital conservation work, engage all communities inclusively with their shared heritage, and works to ensure that heritage can play a key part in the solution to the climate emergency. EWH provides independent, expert advice on balanced historic city management to all, enabling a sense of ownership for the care and conservation of the WHS.

**Co-ordination**

A World Heritage Site coordinator post was created in 2009 to bring a focus to World Heritage issues across the partnership. The post ensures effective liaison and co-ordination of activities between the partners.



### Action Plan Themes

During pre-draft engagement, members of the public were asked to rate the 14 themes of the Place Standard. The action plan seeks to address the issues that scored the lowest on the Place Standard “wheel”.

Those five themes are:

- Awareness, appreciation and activity around World Heritage Site status
- Climate emergency
- Conservation and maintenance of buildings and public spaces
- Control, guidance, and contribution of new development to city centre
- Sustainable visitor experience

Many ideas were gathered in the consultation to support the conservation, improvement and progression of the World Heritage Site. The themes are cross-cutting. For example, tourism is an important activity in the Old and New Towns; it influences developments within the city centre, and it is an important factor that affects the interpretation and understanding of the WHS and it has an impact on the operational management of the city. It is therefore critical that the actions in this plan allow room for this interrelationship.

Objective	Action	Lead delivery partner (s)	Resources	Monitoring
<b>Awareness, appreciation and activity around World Heritage Site status</b>				
<b>To co-ordinate actions to ensure a broad level of understanding of the WHS and to widely transmit its value</b>	Explain the qualities that make the World Heritage Site of Outstanding Universal Value and use as a tool to inform the understanding of the WHS. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing and promoting educational materials to reflect the site as a resource for learning and training for all ages and across all sectors.</li> <li>- Advocating for the WHS across different platforms and workstreams such as through dedicated technical training for decision-making staff in partnership and stakeholder organisations. This should include training for councillors to reflect how the WHS is a baseline consideration beyond just the Planning Committee. We want to do this to engender a sense of pride and ownership in the WHS to ensure that appropriate measures are taken for its protection and conservation for future generations.</li> <li>- Liaising with WHUK, UNESCO UK and other Scottish/UK World Heritage Sites to share knowledge and expertise on common issues.</li> </ul>	ALL	This is a core commitment of the management partnership. Funding will have to be found for individual projects within existing budget streams.	Feedback loop  Collate evaluation from individual projects
	Cross-promote both the tangible and intangible value of the World Heritage Site to ensure that it can be better representative of and meaningfully engaged with	EWH	NLHF project funding	Collate evaluation from

	<p>a diverse audience. This is not exhaustive, but through the life of this plan will include the following pipeline projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Newly arrived families</li> <li>- LGBTQ+ communities</li> <li>- Socially under-represented groups outwith the WHS</li> <li>- Collaborating with the emerging Accessibility Commission and its findings and the Feminist City agenda.</li> <li>- Continued collaboration with the work of the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Implementation Group</li> </ul>		(tbc), cross-funded with HES?	individual projects
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead delivery partner</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
	<b>Climate emergency</b>			
<b>To engage with the work undertaken by management partners in response to the climate emergency whilst safeguarding OUV</b>	<p>The Management Partners' duty is to protect the WHS and therefore seek measures to support that commitment. National and council policy is emerging in response to the climate emergency across several areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adaptation</li> <li>- Green/Blue Network</li> <li>- Energy Retrofit</li> <li>- Future Streets Framework</li> </ul> <p>The role of the partnership is to ensure OUV is a baseline consideration within these policies, to ensure harm is prevented, and to help find best practice methods to assist in this process. We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engaging with existing projects in these areas</li> </ul>	CEC (with Scottish Water)	This is a core commitment of the management partnership. Funding will have to be found for individual projects within existing budget streams.	<p>Feedback loop</p> <p>Collate evaluation from individual projects</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As above, technical training for decision-making staff to better embed WHS values into projects from the start</li> <li>- Cross-referencing where we are responsible for actions in Climate Ready Edinburgh</li> </ul>			
	<p>Advise, develop, seek to fund and advocate for appropriate responses to the climate emergency energy retrofit and adaptation in historic buildings via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Climate emergency grant programme</li> <li>- Developing replicable responses from pilot projects dealing with different building typologies</li> <li>- Provide opportunities for advocacy and training on the climate emergency, such as through the emerging Climate Action Plan and Climate Ready Edinburgh</li> <li>- CEC policy work to shape the adaptation and conservation of historic buildings to meet the needs of Net Zero</li> <li>- Ensuring the historic environment is conserved and enhanced as part of these responses</li> </ul>	EWH, CEC	<p>This is a core commitment of EWH, including the use of HES funding. Further funding will have to be found for individual projects within existing budget streams.</p>	<p>Feedback loop</p> <p>Collate evaluation from individual projects.</p> <p>Multiple overlapping CEC workstreams in this area have existing monitoring in place that we will feed into.</p>
	<p>Advise, develop and seek to fund and advocate for appropriate responses to the climate emergency in the public realm and green spaces via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensuring the maintenance of drainage system and green spaces (falling branches, diseases, etc.) across the WHS – as the first step to adaptation</li> <li>- Refining the understanding of flood risks in the Site for the public realm and green spaces</li> </ul>	CEC, EWH	<p>This is a core commitment of Management Partners. Funding will have to be</p>	<p>Feedback loop.</p> <p>Collate evaluation</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing sensitive adaptation interventions for the Site’s public realm and green spaces via pilot projects</li> <li>- Raising awareness and produce guidance for best practice climate change adaptation in the public realm and green spaces</li> <li>- Ensuring the historic environment is conserved and enhanced as part of these responses</li> </ul>		found for individual projects within existing budget streams.	from individual projects.  Multiple overlapping CEC workstreams in this area have existing monitoring in place that we will feed into.
		<b>Lead delivery partner</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
<b>Conservation and maintenance of buildings and public spaces</b>				
<b>To ensure ongoing investment in the conservation of the Site</b>	Continue delivering and promoting the repayable grants programme to ensure ongoing investment in and active conservation of the fabric of the World Heritage Site. This will coincide with promoting maintenance awareness to public and private stakeholders through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collaboration with the Traditional Building Forum’s events</li> <li>• developing maintenance guidance</li> </ul>	EWH	HES funding	Feedback loop  Collate evaluation from each grant awarded

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>working with external partners to provide training and awareness-raising events</li> </ul>			and project undertaken
<p><b>To work in collaboration with stakeholders to sustain the “state of conservation” of the Site</b></p> <p><b>To ensure the World Heritage Site is a baseline consideration for all Council plans and strategies within its boundary that include alterations to the historic built environment</b></p>	<p>Ensuring OUV is conserved and enhanced during a significant period of change to the city centre through public realm projects. We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>engaging with strategies such as City Centre Transformation, City Mobility Plan, Active Travel Plan and the Future Streets Framework</li> <li>Advocating for the use of high quality, appropriate interventions to sustain the authenticity and integrity of the Site</li> <li>Signposting the potential negative impact of small scale, cumulative change on OUV</li> </ul>	CEC, EWH	HES funding	<p>Feedback loop</p> <p>Collate evaluation from each grant awarded and project undertaken</p>
	<p>Define a protocol for engagement in streetscape and public realm improvements. We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>member of EWH staff seconded to CEC for two days a week</li> <li>defining partners’ role in projects that impact on the public realm through a series of workshops with the relevant stakeholders</li> <li>support the delivery of heritage statements and impact assessments for public realm projects in the Site.</li> </ul>	CEC, EWH	Staff time	Buy-in from stakeholders
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead delivery partner</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
Control, guidance and contribution of new development to the city centre				

<p><b>To improve tools to sustain Outstanding Universal Value</b></p> <p><b>To sustain effective partnerships that support the management of the WHS</b></p>	<p>Ensure that all new CEC policy, plans and strategies safeguard the OUV of the WHS, with expert advice from EWH. Including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste and Recycling Strategy</li> <li>• Active Travel</li> <li>• Tourism Strategy</li> <li>• Climate Ready Edinburgh</li> <li>• Edinburgh Street Design Guidance</li> </ul>	CEC	Staff time	<p>Stakeholder buy-in</p> <p>Evaluation of influence</p>
<p><b>To ensure that development embraces the context of the WHS and is of the highest quality in terms of architecture, design and materials</b></p>	<p>Engage with development proposals in the WHS to ensure that the OUV is safeguarded, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early engagement in public realm changes (Placemaking and Mobility)</li> <li>• Maintain positives around early engagement in development management (Planning)</li> <li>• Signposting the potential negative impact of small scale, cumulative change on OUV from all development proposals.</li> <li>• Ensure heritage is robustly conserved in planning and public realm decision-making to sustain its vital economic, cultural, social and environmental role</li> </ul>	ALL	Staff time	<p>Stakeholder buy-in</p> <p>Evaluation of influence</p>
	<p>Proactively seek to build relationships and opportunities, including funding, to work across departments to ensure World Heritage becomes a baseline consideration in future plans and strategies in the city centre.</p>	ALL	<b>Staff time</b>	<p>Stakeholder buy-in</p> <p>Evaluation of influence</p>

Objective	Action	Lead delivery partner	Resources	Monitoring
<b>Sustainable visitor experience</b>				
<p><b>To improve understanding of the value of WHS status to tourism within the WHS and the city</b></p> <p><b>To sustain effective partnerships to advocate for and secure sustainable tourism within the WHS and the city to safeguard OUV</b></p>	<p>To work with partners to influence decision-making on enhancing the experience of both visitors and residents to mitigate the risk tourism poses to WHS, as identified by UNESCO in their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary convention. We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presenting the wider benefits to the city of having a well-managed and maintained historic environment</li> <li>- Continuing to engage with Edinburgh Tourism Action Group and wider tourism stakeholders</li> <li>- Collaboratively develop and seek to secure at least one 'virtuous cycle' system with a responsible tourism/hospitality operator that secures sectoral investment and support for conservation (EWH)</li> </ul>	CEC, EWH	Staff time	<p>Stakeholder buy-in</p> <p>Evaluation of influence</p>
	<p>To advocate for securing sufficient allocation for the inclusion of conservation and maintenance of the WHS in the spending bid for the proposed Transient Visitor Levy. We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing balanced, expert advice and signposting good practice from other WH cities or urban conservation sites which utilise a TVL, especially in how this can feed back to benefit residents (EWH)</li> <li>- Ensure CEC processes actively promote the need for TVL funding to be fed back into the historic environment</li> </ul>	CEC	Staff time	<p>Stakeholder buy-in</p> <p>Evaluation of influence</p>
	<p>To advocate for the consideration of the WHS in the operational management of the city and influence decision-making (e.g. the impact street cleanliness and road maintenance has on the perception of the quality and integrity of the WHS).</p>	EWH	Staff time	Stakeholder buy-in

				Evaluation of influence
Objective	Action	Lead delivery partner	Resources	Monitoring
	<b>Research pipeline</b>			
	<p>The research pipeline (Section 4.5 in the Management Plan) will play a key role in refining the management partners' understanding of the risks and impacts on the Site and the various aspects of the OUV and its vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Monitoring the state of conservation of the Site will also be critical in providing evidence to support the various themes of the Management Plan; refining this monitoring process will help increase the adaptative capacity of the management partners and their ability to preserve the Site and its OUV.</p> <p>We will do this by establishing a Research Development Working Group to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better engage with Edinburgh's educational institutions to manage the development of the research pipeline</li> <li>- Target priorities in areas of research</li> </ul>	ALL	Funding will have to be found for individual research projects in collaboration with the universities.	<p>Feedback loop.</p> <p>Collate evaluation from individual projects to ensure criteria from research guidelines is met.</p>