Liverpool World Heritage Site:
A Statement from World Heritage UK

World Heritage UK (WHUK) deeply regrets that the UNESCO World Heritage Centre has recommended removing Liverpool from the list of inscribed World Heritage Sites.
Since inscription in 2004 Liverpool has made substantial progress in protecting the fabric of its World Heritage Site and its built heritage. Across the city only 2.5% of listed buildings are now at risk, down from 13% in 2000. This is a remarkable achievement.

Within the World Heritage Site it is important to distinguish between the derelict North Docks and the rest of the World Heritage Site, a much larger area which includes the 'Three Graces', Pier Head, Albert Dock and Waterfront, Ropewalks, the Cultural Quarter, Liverpool One, the Town Hall and the Castle Street areas. In these areas, which have an inheritance of superb 19th century and early 20th century architecture and townscape, high standards of planning and heritage conservation have been upheld.

The derelict North Docks is the main focus of UNESCO's concerns, being the location of a non-implemented outline planning permission for a large speculative development, known as Liverpool Waters, as well as a proposed new football stadium. The proposed towers in the Liverpool Waters outline planning permission, which caused UNESCO very understandable concern, have never materialised.

WHUK has previously written to UNESCO suggesting that, if agreement could not be reached, rather than delete the entire site, it would be preferable to adjust the boundary, thus removing the derelict North Docks, rather than lose long term protection for the entire site. On the basis that so much has been achieved positively in the rest of the World Heritage Site this remains our position.

There will always be tension between development and conservation in a city like Liverpool which needs regeneration, investment, jobs and growth: heritage should be protected, but a living city centre will inevitably evolve. Liverpool has a long history of building and rebuilding on a large scale on its waterfront. Its World Heritage Site is in much better condition now than when designated, with exemplar heritage-led regeneration projects in Stanley Dock, Albert Dock, Liverpool One and elsewhere. There will be many more such achievements in the future and the World Heritage Site needs to continue to play a central role in influencing those new achievements in the future, as it has in the past.

It is a pity that options to redefine the extent of the Site do not appear to have been explored. The proposed deletion would remove a key element of the UK's cultural and natural heritage collection of international significance. It merits greater efforts to find a compromise solution.

World Heritage UK therefore stands ready to assist the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in making a robust case to UNESCO for the retention of Liverpool as a World Heritage Site. We support the call from Liverpool City Council and others for UNESCO committee members to visit Liverpool before final decisions are made.

Note to Editors: For further information contact the World Heritage UK Chair, Tony Crouch at Tony.Crouch@worldheritageuk.org or Chris Mahon, WHUK Operations Manager at chris.mahon@worldheritageuk.org

World Heritage UK (WHUK) is the only organisation exclusively focused on World Heritage in the UK, and the only one led by the World Heritage Sites (WHS) themselves. Founded in 2015 as a development of the Local Authority World Heritage Forum, we have achieved a great deal since then, thanks in large part to the considerable efforts of our volunteers. This approach reflects a community-driven approach that has proven effective at many WHS and which is favoured by UNESCO.

We are an independent organisation representing the 32 UK World Heritage Sites, the majority of which are represented in our membership. World Heritage UK is a membership organisation, formally known as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

For more information visit:
https://worldheritageuk.org/