

Decision Maker: **Development Control Committee**

Date: **14th October 2010**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

TITLE: DEFERRAL OF WORLD HERITAGE BID

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Ward: Darwin

1. Reason for report

To inform the Committee of the UNESCO decision to defer the Darwin's Landscape Laboratory World Heritage nomination and to guide the way forward for the Darwin Partnership as co-ordinated and led by Bromley Council.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Thank the parties involved in the Darwin Partnership for their significant and excellent contributions both to the World Heritage bid and to the local delivery of projects
- 2.2 Retain the Darwin Partnership in place as being the most effective means of protecting, managing and promoting the area
- 2.3 Support the continuation of Darwin's Landscape Laboratory on the UK's new Tentative List for World heritage status
- 2.4 Continue to apply for external funds for local initiatives and projects
- 2.5 Seek ways to protect the site through the UDP and forthcoming Local Development Framework

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 Darwin's Landscape Laboratory (DLL), the bid selected by the UK government (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) for World Heritage status has been deferred by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC).
- 3.2 The evaluation process consisted of a site visit by 2 assessors from the advisory bodies to UNESCO. Together with desk top assessments, they helped form the recommendation to UNESCO that DLL should not be inscribed. The UK government disagreed with the details of this recommendation and with local partners developed a robust defence consisting of a letter from the UK ambassador to WHC delegates, a list of factual errors in the report was tabled, an information leaflet and preparation to answer questions at the Committee.
- 3.3 At its meeting of July 25th-August 3rd in Brasilia, Brazil the World Heritage Committee (WHC) announced that Darwin's Landscape Laboratory nomination was of the highest standard and was very strong in terms of protection, management and community engagement. Further analysis and work to develop the selection criteria was needed before the site could be considered for World Heritage designation. The DLL bid was the most debated proposal, taking nearly two hours. Whilst a formal record of the debate has yet to be released the following issues were discussed:
- How to recognise the heritage of science
 - Role of associative values
 - Too soon to open up the WH Convention to nominations of this type
 - Operational Guidance (of the WHC) doesn't cover such sites
 - International politics
 - Faith issues
 - Not the place where Darwin did most of his work
 - The nomination should not have had the name of an individual in the title
- 3.4 The Committee requested the World Heritage Centre to organize a meeting for deliberating on sites presenting Outstanding Universal Value, essentially on an associative basis. It is not known when this meeting would meet and report. The WHC also agreed to discuss the Expert Working Group 2008 on the Heritage of Science, at the next WHC in 2011. The recommendations of the working group and the proposed World Heritage Centre meeting could be influential for any future Darwin bid.
- 3.5 The application has not been refused, but in practical terms it means the proposal might be resubmitted within the next 5-10 years subject to work to be undertaken by UNESCO on their criteria and a decision by the Government to resubmit the site subject to Bromley support. A discussion with DCMS is proceeding to see how the nomination can be placed on the new UK Tentative List.

The Way Forward

- 3.6 The protection, presentation and management of the natural and built heritage remain ongoing concerns for the Council and it is suggested that the best way of maintaining an appropriate level of protection and management is to continue with the partnership that had formed to foster the bid for World heritage status. The Darwin Partnership is coordinated by Bromley Council and includes Downe Residents Association, English Heritage, the Wildlife Trusts, the Charles Darwin Trust, local landowners, schools, youth organisations and amenity groups. Successful local project delivery (including signage, Sunday bus service, interpretation, education activities for all Bromley schools, visitor management and parking controls) has been through external sources such as the

Heritage Lottery Fund and TfL and the intention would be to lever in more external funding through partnership working.

- 3.7 It is recognised by all parties involved in the Darwin Partnership that the DLL bid, whilst not resulting in inscription, has brought about a number of successful initiatives and projects. The local area’s protection, management interpretation, education and access should remain as the focus for an ongoing Darwin Partnership. The site could be re-named to distinguish it from the DLL bid and alternative designations and recognition by way of policy in the Borough’s forthcoming Core Strategy can be considered.
- 3.8 Making preparations for a new bid would only be considered if the WHC and its advisors had made clear progress towards changing their operational guidelines and were more receptive. There are advantages, however, in being retained on the UK’s Tentative List; this would be a material consideration when applications for development are made and thus would give some protection to the area over and above existing controls.
- 3.9 Many of the initiatives and projects carried out locally have been funded from external sources; it is expected that bids for external funding (eg HLF, TfL) will continue and that all future work can be kept within existing budgets.
- 3.10 It is recommended therefore that the partnership should continue but with a focus on local needs and requirements rather than preparing another bid. The 2009-14 DLL Management Plan and documents give an effective direction for the work but some of the WHS focussed wording and actions could be now relegated
- 3.11 The UK government’s view (as represented by DCMS) is that Down House and its surroundings are a uniquely valuable site for the World Heritage of science. The properties included are all well looked after by the local residents, English Heritage, the London Borough of Bromley and the Wildlife Trusts responsible, with good access and excellent information for visitors.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The landscape qualities can be recognised in the Bromley Core Strategy as an identified area.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Darwin Partnership has bought in significant external funding over many years including since 2009, £0.5m from Heritage Lottery, Landfill tax and Transport for London. This helped with the delivery of the World Heritage nomination rather than draw on Council funding. New external bids can be made with no impact on existing budgets.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Legal, Personnel
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Nomination Document Management Plan 2009-14