

Open Agenda

Copy No:

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Memorandum for Executive Council

SUBJECT

St Helena World Heritage Status

Memorandum by Chief Secretary

ADVICE SOUGHT

Executive Council is asked to

- 1) Note and consider the findings of the St Helena World Heritage Status Scoping report**
- 2) To consider the recommendations proposed by the Scoping Group and:
 - i) Provide guidance if a full application for World Heritage Status should be explored**
 - ii) Provide guidance if an expert consultant should be engaged to understand the implications if a full status application is submitted**
 - iii) Provide guidance if a community led steering committee should be formed to appraise whether or not St Helena Government should progress to a full World Heritage Status and agree the terms of reference of this committee as attached (Annex A)****

BACKGROUND & CONSIDERATIONS

- 3) In 2019, a Scoping Group was established to review St Helena's current position in relation to the Island's 2012 UK Tentative Listing for World Heritage Status (WHS) with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UK Tentative Listing is the first step to designation of WHS.
- 4) The Group's intention was to collate and synthesize the available information and knowledge. This included consulting experts both on and off-Island to establish St Helena's current potential Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) – the measure which determines whether or not a site meets the WHS requirements, and to identify and stress-test the options now available to the Island.
- 5) The Group did not set out to answer the question of whether or not a full application should be made, but it did set out to create an understanding of the Island's current position.
- 6) The original application was for mixed site status (i.e. meeting

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both natural and cultural criteria). However, the Tentative Listing only recognised the natural criteria, as the UK Independent WHS Expert Panel (Panel) were not convinced by the case for cultural OUV.

- 7) St Helena's bid was successfully nominated for a natural site under criterion (x) contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation. The cultural criterion referenced in the application was (vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.
- 8) In response to St Helena's application, the Panel recommendation was that St Helena had 'Potential OUV under natural criteria only because of the high number of endemic species and genera and the range of habitats, from cloud forest to desert, representing a biome of great age which exists nowhere else on earth. There should be further investigation of the cultural values to see if there is a case for future nomination as a cultural landscape under cultural criteria. Questions of integrity will need to be addressed in the nomination, especially as a previous nomination was withdrawn on that score. Future sustainable management will have to be carefully managed if access to the Island is improved'.
- 9) The Panel's recommendation means that St Helena could make a supplementary case to add cultural criteria to bring it back to a mixed site, if it so chooses. The World Heritage Committee considers that criterion (vi) should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria. In so doing therefore St Helena would need to carry out further investigation of its cultural values to broaden the criteria for full World Heritage Status nomination.
- 10) The Group believes that a stronger case can be made for a mixed site than a natural site alone. In order to pursue this, the Island will need to take advantage of the invitation by the Panel to conduct further investigation of the cultural values to see if there is a case for future nomination as a cultural landscape under cultural criteria.
- 11) Whilst the Group is highlighting the potential OUV as a mixed site, it is NOT recommending that a full application is progressed at this stage. The Group is clear that the most appropriate next step is to develop a full analysis of the implications and costs of WHS designation. Whilst designation is likely to bring additional benefits, the potential costs may also be high. Commitment to a full application should only progress with the full support of the community once there is a clear understanding of any obligations that WHS designation would involve.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12) Funding will be required to support the next steps in the process of developing a full analysis of the implications and obligations. The World Heritage Community Steering Committee should take advice in the first instance on how the feasibility work may be funded (although early indications to the Group have been that World Heritage Status may be an area of interest for the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, as well as the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

13) The economic impacts of World Heritage Site Status for St Helena are uncertain. In an assessment of the socio-economic impacts of World Heritage Site Status, UNESCO found ‘directly attributing socio-economic impacts to the UNESCO World Heritage designation is complex. It has been demonstrated that it is rarely the designation itself which achieves the impacts, but particularly the actions and investments of the local stakeholders.’ The assessment includes examples of both positive and negative impacts of World Heritage designation.

14) The Group considers that specific expertise is needed to assist the World Heritage Community Steering Committee in determining economic impacts of World Heritage Site Status for St Helena.

CONSISTENCY WITH INVESTMENT POLICY PRINCIPLES PUBLIC/SOCIAL IMPACT

15) Not applicable.

16) To be determined by the World Heritage Community Steering Committee with support from specific expertise.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

17) To be determined by the World Heritage Community Steering Committee with support from specific expertise as a minimum this should include opportunities and obligations around preservation, conservation, planning, costs, and environmental benefits, resources needed, any legislative, regulatory or management changes required.

PREVIOUS CONSULTATION/ COMMITTEE INPUT

18) The Group collated and reviewed all available information and knowledge gathered to date by various local stakeholders, and then worked to identify what additional information was needed to make a recommendation on whether to proceed (or not).

19) Specific questions around the criteria for WHS were framed, and posed to individuals with expert knowledge of the Island, both local and international. A meeting was arranged with the expert’s on-Island to gather information, with the focus on fact-finding. Electronic communications facilitated the contact with international experts, and those based on-Island but unable to attend the meeting.

PUBLIC REACTION

20) There is likely to be public interest in understanding the implications and obligations that a World Heritage Status

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designation would involve.

PUBLICITY

21) Executive Council's decision will be covered in the media briefing following the meeting.

SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

22) N/A

LINK TO SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN GOALS

23) While the impacts are uncertain, World Heritage Site Status for St Helena has the potential to support the SEDP goal to 'Attract Visitors and Increase Tourism'.

OPEN/CLOSED AGENDA ITEM

24) Recommended for open session.

Corporate Support
Corporate Services

SOB

14th January 2020

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