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Your Ref
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1 February 2011

Dear Francesco

**STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE OLD AND NEW TOWNS OF EDINBURGH
UNITED KINGDOM) (C728)**

I refer to the World Heritage Committee's Decision 33 COM 7B.132 following examination of the state of conservation of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage property at its 33rd session (Seville, Spain, 22-30 June, 2009).

In accordance with paragraph 10 of Decision 33 COM 7B.132, I am pleased to submit to the World Heritage Centre a report on the state of conservation the property, using the indicative format, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session in June of this year.

1 Response from the State Party to the World Heritage Committee's Decision, paragraph by paragraph

[Note: this information has to refer to developments over the past year or since the last decision of the Committee for this property]

Decision: 33 COM 7B.132

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-09/33.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decision 32 COM 7B.117, adopted at its 32nd session (Quebec City, 2008),
3. Notes the results of the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to the Edinburgh Old and New Towns World Heritage property of November 2008 and the State Party's response;

Noted.

4. *Urges the State Party to take into account the recommendations by the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission, specifically addressing improvements for the Caltongate and Haymarket development; and requests that the mission's findings on the Haymarket development are made available to the public enquiry;*

As the Committee will know from our response to the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to Edinburgh and from other previous reports (13 March 2009, 24 April 2009), we have fully taken account of the recommendations of the mission in relation to Caltongate and Haymarket developments. The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh is one of the UK's most important World Heritage properties and the Government continues to work closely with the Scottish Government, including Historic Scotland to ensure its ongoing protection and conservation.

Caltongate

We informed the World Heritage Centre, in our letter dated 24 April 2009, that Mountgrange (Edinburgh) Ltd, the lead developer of the Caltongate site, had gone into receivership.

The former bus garage site is now being held by the receivers, Deloitte, on behalf of the Bank of Scotland. We understand that they are in discussions with a confidential party regarding a purchase of their ownership which accounts for the majority of the original Caltongate development. We expect that the potential purchaser will consider utilising the existing planning consent but may look to make some changes to reflect market conditions. We have no further information on this at present but will continue to monitor the situation closely and keep the World Heritage Centre informed of progress. Meanwhile, we will ensure that the findings of the mission are considered in any further discussions.

Subject to the purchase of the Deloitte asset, the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) will engage with the new owner in respect of its own assets and the potential delivery of an appropriate scheme. CEC and Historic Scotland will continue to work to ensure that appropriate solutions to empty sites are found and this will be done within the context of the framework set by the 'City of Edinburgh Local Plan' and the World Heritage property Management Plan.

Haymarket

In our letter to the World Heritage Centre of 13 March 2009 we informed you that the Haymarket development proposal had been called in for consideration by Scottish Ministers due to concerns regarding the potential impact of the development on the World Heritage property. A Public Local Inquiry (PLI) was held in June 2009 following which, Scottish Ministers decided not to grant planning consent because of the impact of the tallest element of the scheme, a 5 star hotel, on the wider city. In accordance with the World Heritage Committee's request under paragraph 4 of Decision **33 COM 7B.132**, the findings of the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS mission were made available to the PLI.

A revised development for this site has been recently granted Planning Permission following radical redesign of the controversial, tall building, element of the earlier scheme. The 17 storey hotel element of the proposals has been redesigned as a 6 storey office building, so the new scheme responds fully to the comments made by the joint UNESCO/ICOMOS mission and those made by the Scottish Government's planning

inspector's report (reference number NA-EDB-026 and available at <http://www.dpea.scotland.gov.uk/CaseDetails.aspx?id=qJ8231>) on the earlier scheme, reducing the height of the development to below the heights deemed to impact on the wider key views and in particular those in and out of the World Heritage property as set out in the CEC Skyline Policy.

The revised scheme, in which key principles of the previous masterplan for the site have been retained, is not considered to be controversial in heritage terms and was granted consent by the Council's Planning Committee on 8 December 2010. Due to the current economic conditions it is expected that a phased development will follow, with a start of ground works and 3 Star hotel in 2011.

5. *Welcomes that the St James Centre project improves the integrity of the property with the demolition of a building block impacting on the values and integrity of the property;*

The major retail led proposal to replace the main shopping centre in the city centre, the St James Centre, has been delayed in the light of the current economic circumstances. Outline planning permission for the replacement of the 1970s structure, St James Centre buildings, was approved in June 2009. Preparation of a detailed planning application is underway, and expected to come forward over the next two years. Historic Scotland are committed to continuing to work with the developers, Henderson Global Investors, and CEC to ensure that the proposals are sensitive to the historic environment and the World Heritage property.

6. *Also welcomes the skyline study as an important tool in future development and planning of the site to protect important views in compliance with Paragraph 104 of the Operational Guidelines;*

Noted.

7. *Also requests the State Party to establish a declared buffer zone for the Edinburgh Old and New Towns World Heritage property in accordance with Paragraph 103 of the Operational Guidelines, in which height restrictions are established on the basis of key views and vistas from within and from outside across the property;*

The current review of the Management Plan for the World Heritage Site has included consideration of the establishment of a buffer zone. However, work undertaken by Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH) has established that in the case of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh a buffer zone as defined under the terms of the Operational Guidelines would not provide effective protection for the Outstanding Universal Value. EWH are a charitable trust, supported by Historic Scotland and the CEC to assist in the management of the World Heritage property. Together with CEC and Historic Scotland they form the central partnership managing the property.

The UK maintains the view that buffer zones are not necessary in every case, particularly where adequate layers of protection already exist. In the case of Edinburgh, we believe that the implementation of the 'Guidance on the Protection of Key Views' based on the skyline study and which establishes height restrictions on the basis of key views and vistas from within and outside the property will provide better protection. Allied to the existing statutory protections it will provide a subtler and more responsive mechanism to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property which will cover more of the city

surrounding the World Heritage property than any additional definition of a formal buffer zone. A map showing the coverage of the skyline policy is attached at **Annex A** to this letter.

8. *Further requests the State Party to establish clear policies in relation to height controls within the property on the basis of key views and vistas from within and outside the property;*

In line with the Committee's decision, the 'Guidance on the Protection of key Views' was adopted by City of Edinburgh Council in June 2008. It defines key views across the city with the aim of providing planning control that will safeguard those views. The control of tall buildings that have the potential to impact on the city centre provides appropriate protection to the setting of the property, safeguarding its world-renown silhouette as well as views outwards from the property to crucial topographic features such as Arthur's Seat and the Firth of Forth.

The Edinburgh City Local Plan (adopted 28 January 2010) includes a policy on tall buildings. The emphasis of policies generally in the Plan is on a satisfactory and harmonious integration of new development with the existing built environment. The Local Plan establishes a presumption against new buildings that are conspicuously higher than their neighbours. This is necessary to protect some of the city's most striking visual characteristics, the views available from many vantage points within the city and beyond, of landmark buildings, the city's historic skyline, undeveloped hillsides within the urban area and the hills, open countryside and the Firth of Forth, all of which create a uniquely visible landscape setting for the city. In addition, the height of new building may need to be held in check or suppressed where necessary so that the city's topography and valley features such as the Waverley Valley can continue to be reflected in its roofscapes.

Proposals for development that would be conspicuous in wider views of the city will be subject to special scrutiny, to ensure that important views are not impaired. Existing high buildings which are out of keeping with their neighbours and have a detrimental effect on the historic skyline or important views will not set a precedent for the future, and their replacement with more appropriately scaled buildings will be sought if redevelopment is in prospect.

9. *Requests furthermore the State Party to raise awareness among potential developers and stakeholders of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and the meaning of this for development projects within the property and its buffer zone;*

In line with the policy of the World Heritage Committee a draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV), attached at **Annex B** to this letter, has been developed and submitted to the World Heritage Centre. This has been built on within the revision of the Management Plan currently being undertaken by the partners managing the World Heritage property, CEC, EWH and Historic Scotland. The Management Plan will provide further explanation of SOUV and establish objectives for the management of the property over the next 5 years. It will provide the framework for the management of the property and include measures to increase understanding of the OUV and embed the consideration of the World Heritage property within the decision making processes of the city.

A consultation on the Management Plan was held over the summer of 2010 with 2 workshops and written responses being fed in by a range of stakeholders. The partners are currently revising the plan in response to the comments made and aim to have the new

plan in place by February 2010. At the core of this will be the partners' commitment to increasing understanding of the significance of the property in order to ensure its protection.

10. *Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2011, a report on the state of conservation of the property taking into account the recommendations of the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to the property, and on progress with the review of the management plan and establishment of the buffer zone, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session in 2011.*

Noted.

2 Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party

[Note: conservation issues which are not mentioned in the Decision of the World Heritage Committee or any information request from the World Heritage Centre]

The current state of the economy has slowed down or stalled many major developments outlined at the time of the 2008 joint reactive monitoring mission. The partners will monitor progress and consider the potential impact on the World Heritage property as part of their standard monitoring of the state of conservation of the property.

Leith Docks development

The masterplan for the Leith Docks always presumed that development would take place over decades, rather than in the short term. This approach appears robust in the current circumstances. Work has not yet started on this development.

South Bridge Fire Site

Planning consents are in place for a mixed use development of this site. The scheme is for a new hotel with cafe, bar and restaurant, and business centre facilities on the vacant part of site.

The new frontages to South Bridge respect the character of the adjacent buildings whilst introducing a contemporary architectural response to the external design. The proposed development will not have any adverse impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site. There is currently no information on when this development will start.

Princes Street

Redevelopment in Princes Street, the main shopping area of the city centre, is guided by the *String of Pearls* Masterplan. In setting out a clear vision for the street, while focusing on individual blocks within it, the masterplan is supported by a heritage framework.

Currently the main redevelopment in Princes Street is 121-123 which has consent and is currently on site. Recent approval for 10-16 Princes Street which involves 2 new storeys on the category C(s) listed building raised issues regarding the setting of Register House and key views. Other Princes Street proposals include 30-31 Princes Street - consent granted for re-use of upper floors (currently vacant) for a hotel. Each of these proposals is in line with the Masterplan and Heritage Framework.

In addition, Gehl architects have been commissioned and have completed analysis of the public space to develop proposals for Princes St, George St and Rose St. and made recommendations for the creation of a well designed pedestrian dominated street environment. This will lead to an Action Plan for the public realm of the city centre.

Edinburgh Trams Project

The tram project is a major piece of infrastructure for the city. It will allow rationalisation of other traffic issues within the World Heritage property, especially in Princes St and George St. The detailed elements of the project are subject to planning consents which have been brought forward over the time of the project. Some outstanding work on this still remains in the form of reaching agreement on details of associated infrastructure.

- 3 In conformity with paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, please describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) within the protected area and its buffer zone and/or corridors that might be envisaged.

Royal High School

Edinburgh City Council has identified a preferred development partner to take on the re-use and development of the building. There are still on-going legal discussions regarding the hand-over of the site. The aim is to have a planning workshop early in 2011 to assess the development potential of the building and the site and to help bring forward proposals. This will involve all key planning stakeholders. We will report progress on this to the World Heritage Centre in due course.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



Peter Marsden
Head of World Heritage

Cc HE Matthew Sudders, UK Permanent Delegate to UNESCO
UK National Commission for UNESCO
ICOMOS, Paris
Historic Scotland

Culture Team

Annex A

MAP SHOWING SKYLINE POLICY

See separate Annex in pdf format.

Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value Edinburgh Old and New Town World Heritage Site UK

Date of inscription	1995
Statement of Significance approved	2008
Date of draft SOUV	2011

Brief Synthesis 2011

The remarkable juxtaposition of two clearly articulated urban planning phenomena. The contrast between the organic medieval Old Town and the planned Georgian New Town provides clarity of urban structure unrivalled in Europe. The juxtaposition of these two distinctive townscapes, each of exceptional historic and architectural interest, which are linked across the landscape divide, the "great arena" of Sir Walter Scott's Waverley Valley, by the urban viaduct, North Bridge, and by the Mound, creates the outstanding urban landscape.

The Old Town stretches along a high ridge from the Castle on its dramatically situated rock down to the Palace of Holyrood. Its form reflects the burgage plots of the Canongate, founded as an "abbatial burgh" dependent on the Abbey of Holyrood, and the national tradition of building tall on the narrow "tofts" or plots separated by lanes or "closes" which created some of the world's tallest buildings of their age, the dramatic, robust, and distinctive tenement buildings. It contains many 16th and 17th century merchants' and nobles' houses such as the early 17th century restored mansion house of Gladstone's Land which rises to six storeys, and important early public buildings such as the Canongate Tolbooth and St Giles Cathedral.

The Old Town is characterized by the survival of the little-altered medieval "fishbone" street pattern of narrow closes, wynds, and courts leading off the spine formed by the High Street, the broadest, longest street in the Old Town, with a sense of enclosed space derived from its width, the height of the buildings lining it, and the small scale of any breaks between them.

The New Town, constructed between 1767 and 1890 as a collection of seven new towns on the glacial plain to the north of the Old Town, is framed and articulated by an uncommonly high concentration of planned ensembles of ashlar-faced, world-class, neo-classical buildings, associated with renowned architects, including John and Robert Adam, Sir William Chambers, and William Playfair. Contained and integrated with the townscape are gardens, designed to take full advantage of the topography, while forming an extensive system of private and public open spaces. The New Town is integrated with large green spaces. It covers a very large area, is consistent to an unrivalled degree, and survives virtually intact.

Some of the finest public and commercial monuments of the New-classical revival in Europe survive in the city, reflecting its continuing status as the capital of Scotland since 1437, and a major centre of thought and learning in the 18th century Age of Enlightenment, with its close cultural and political links with mainland Europe.

The successive planned extensions from the first New Town, and the high quality of the architecture, set standards for Scotland and beyond, and exerted a major influence on the development of urban architecture and town planning throughout Europe.

The dramatic topography of the Old Town combined with the planned alignments of key buildings in both the Old and the New Town, results in spectacular views and panoramas and an iconic skyline.

The renewal and revival of the Old Town in the late 19th century, and the adaptation of the distinctive Baronial style of building for use in an urban environment, influenced the development of conservation policies for urban environments.

Edinburgh retains most of its significant buildings and spaces in better condition than most other historic cities of comparable value.

Criterion (ii) - *Exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time....on developments in architecture....monumental arts, town planning or landscape design.*

The successive planned extensions of the New Town, and the high quality of its architecture, set standards for Scotland and beyond, and exerted a *major* influence on the development of urban architecture and town planning throughout Europe, in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Criterion (iv) - *Be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural ensemble which illustrates a significant stage in human history.*

The Old and New Towns together form a dramatic reflection of significant changes in European urban planning, from the inward looking, defensive walled medieval city of royal palaces, abbeys and organically developed burgh plots in the Old Town, through the expansive formal Enlightenment planning of the 18th and 19th centuries in the New Town, to the 19th century rediscovery and revival of the Old Town with its *adaptation* of a distinctive Baronial style of *architecture in an urban setting*.

Integrity 2011

The property encompasses significant town-planning components, including layout, buildings, open spaces and views, that demonstrate the distinctiveness between the organic growth of the Old Town and the planned terraces and squares of the New Town with the wide landscaped valley between. Overall the property forms a remarkably consistent and coherent entity which has developed and adapted over time. It has largely preserved its skyline and extensive views in and out of the property, although as with any modern, living city these have altered and developed over time, while preserving the key attributes of OUV within the site. The vulnerability of the skyline and the views in and out of the property have been addressed by the introduction of a Skyline Policy.

Authenticity 2011

The level of authenticity in Edinburgh is high. Individually the high quality buildings of all dates have been conserved to a high standard and the layout of streets and squares maintain their intactness. The property also continues to retain its historic role as the administrative and cultural capital of Scotland, while remaining a vibrant economic centre.

Protection and Management Requirements 2011

World Heritage Sites in Scotland are protected through the following pieces of legislation. The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and The Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 provide a framework for local and regional planning policy and act as the principal pieces of primary legislation guiding planning and development in Scotland. Additionally, individual buildings, monuments and areas of special archaeological or historic interest are designated and protected under The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act. The Old Town, New Town, Dean Village and West End Conservation Areas provide adequate protection by covering the majority of the World Heritage Site, whilst around 75% of buildings within the property are category A, B or C listed buildings.

The Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) is the primary policy guidance on the protection and management of the historic environment in Scotland. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) sits alongside the SHEP and includes the Government's national planning policy on the historic environment. It provides for the protection of World Heritage Sites by considering the impact of development on the Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity and integrity. Local policies specifically protecting the property are contained within The City of Edinburgh Local Plan. A Skyline Policy has also been adopted by City of Edinburgh Council that defines key views across the city with the aim of providing planning control that will safeguard them. This control of tall buildings that might impact on the city centre provides appropriate protection to the setting of the property, safeguarding its world-renown silhouette and views out from the property outwards to such crucial topographic features as Arthur's Seat and the Firth of Forth.

Historic Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council work closely on the management of the property. Edinburgh World Heritage was established in 1999 by the City of Edinburgh Council and Historic Scotland through a merger between the Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee and the Edinburgh Old Town Renewal Trust. Its role includes coordinating the promotion and management of the property and overseeing the implementation of its Management Plan.