

# Notes from FoBRA attendees (Jeremy Boss & Caroline Greenwood)

## Bath World Heritage Site Advisory Board – 7 November 2023

These notes are made by the FoBRA attendees and focus on issues likely to be of interest to residents. The formal minutes of the meeting are published by the WHS Advisory Board.

The following significant items were on the agenda:

- Jeremy and Caroline attended to represent FoBRA.
- **Assembly Rooms:** The meeting was hosted by the National Trust in the Assembly Rooms which they have taken re-possession of from BATHNES. We were given a guided tour of the site together with a presentation of the plans for the future of the Assembly rooms. To note:
  - An immersive visitor experience is planned with a focus on the social scene in Georgian Bath
  - The basements will be restored and opened up for the visitor display area before coming upstairs to experience attending a ball at night in the main ground floor rooms
  - High tech and immersive technology will be used to highlight a series of themes including food, health, dance, gambling, deprivation etc.
  - It is also planned to enable modern assemblies in the main ground floor function rooms (concerts, parties, balls, meetings, café etc).
  - Planning permission is likely to be sought in early 2024, work starting in Jan 25 and lasting 18months with a budget of some £17m – a significant project to restore and update the complete site.
- **World Heritage Site Manager** appointed by BATHNES to replace Tony Crouch after a competitive process – Adrian Neilson was introduced - it was his second day in post. He was previously a conservation manager in BATHNES so he has lots of knowledge about the City and its heritage.
- **Chair's update:** the main focus was on the number of major developments planned within the WHS. There was some discussion with one of the key points the urgent need to understand the cumulative effect of all these proposals. We also touched on the recent application for CIL money to fund the WHS Improvement Fund (£80k over four years) the outcome is awaited. There was also discussion of the plans for the combined World Heritage Site Management plan which is likely to go out to formal consultation in Feb/ March 2024 alongside the Local Management Plan. Both will need a response from FoBRA.
- **Rugby Stadium:** there was a discussion on the planning application for the stadium. Although no summary or conclusions were made as this was without the board's terms of reference. Of note is that the combined development proposals are on the radar for UNESCO and ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) have been asked to undertake a technical review (in terms of impact on the WHS) and this must be taken into consideration by the council before making a decision. It was noted that this was a positive step because the review can be taken into account before planning permission is granted with the opportunity for the application to make alterations of the plans to reduce harm as appropriate.

- **Governance:** An updated terms of reference was proposed and agreed subject to the completion of some of the appendices.
- **Main achievements:** An update of progress against the current management plan (five years to 2023) was presented showing significant progress against a number of objectives including the second inscription for the Great Spa Towns of Europe. It was noted that Bath has a third WH inscription under the “Memories of the World” category and for the Roman Curses found in the Baths.
- **World Heritage Fund:** Update report showcasing the significant work done over the last few years. Including some 70 conserved street signs. A vote of thanks was given to Ainslie Ensom, who is retiring next month, who has led the fund with exceptional dedication over many years.
- **Bath Urban Treescape:** An enthusiastic presentation about this initiative which has created four tree trails across Bath. Maps are available showcasing all the special trees encountered on the walks. Maps and tree descriptions at [bathurbantreescape.com](http://bathurbantreescape.com). Well worth a look. More walks to come, maybe in Widcombe and the RUH. We should seek to share these great walks with FoBRA members.
- **Next meeting:** date to be confirmed