University of Liverpool Heritage and Culture Strategy 2017-2022

1. Introduction

The University of Liverpool was established over 120 years ago, in a city subsequently described as “the pool of life” by Carl Jung, and “the centre of consciousness of the human universe” by Allen Ginsberg. A truly international University, we continue to find inspiration in the extraordinary heritage and culture of Liverpool, the original global city.

The University’s own pioneering heritage includes: the transmission of the first radio signal (1894), the foundation of the country’s first schools of Architecture (1895) and Archaeology (1904), and the creation of the world’s first Planning School (1909). We are associated with nine Nobel Laureates and are proud to have contributed to the development of world-leading research and teaching across all disciplines, whilst continuing to strive for future impact and academic excellence, including through our developing Heritage institutional research theme.

Our diverse collections testify to the political, economic and cultural importance of the city of Liverpool, and to the vision of the University’s founders and its subsequent benefactors. Our Museums and Galleries are home to pieces from artists such as J. M. W. Turner, Lucian Freud and Barbara Hepworth, a range of popular music materials, and numerous scientific and archaeological objects, with a particular strength in Egyptology. Our Special Collections and Archives are home to a range of rare medieval, Renaissance and modern literary and historical manuscripts, and a number of specific collections, including: early printed books; children’s literature; the archive of the Cunard Line; and Europe’s largest Science Fiction archive. Sir Alfred Waterhouse’s stunning 1892 Victoria Building – the original ‘red-brick university’ – stands alongside examples of a range of architectural styles, from the Georgian houses around Abercromby Square, laid out by John Foster Senior, to the ultra-modern Materials Innovation Factory, and award-winning Central Teaching Laboratory, by way of 1960s brutalism. Also forming part of the University’s estate is Ness Botanic Gardens. We support an outstanding degree in Archives and Records Management. Our partnerships are numerous and growing. They include links to local cultural organisations such as the Liverpool Philharmonic, the Everyman Theatre, St George’s Hall and National Museums Liverpool; to national bodies such as the Tate; and membership of international groups, such as the University Alliance of the Silk Road.

This Strategy sets out how we will build on our current strengths to advance the objectives of University’s Strategy 2026, to create and transmit original knowledge for its own sake, and to benefit our colleagues, alumni and stakeholders and wider communities locally, nationally and internationally.

2. Vision

Liverpool is a world city with a complex history, from the affluence of Empire to economic decline and rebirth. Its regeneration rests on the transformative properties of heritage and culture, and this experience is reflected in our vision:
An awareness of heritage and culture, and the benefits they bring – intellectual, psychological and physical – should inform every aspect of University life.

To this end the University will, by 2022, be:-

- A centre of excellence for research and teaching in disciplines related to heritage and culture;
- Internationally recognised for its inspiring, challenging and stimulating approach to heritage and culture;
- An anchor institution for the city of Liverpool and the North West, actively and positively participating in the region’s cultural life and contributing to the understanding of its heritage, and, by this means, to the regional economy;
- Known for recognising how heritage and culture can provide a physical and intellectual environment supportive of our members’ wellbeing and success.

The success of the University in delivering this vision will be regularly evaluated using the measures described below.

3. Ambitions – what we will do

The University will achieve the vision described above through four related strands of activity:

- Public Engagement;
- Research;
- Education;
- University Environment and Life.

Public Engagement

We will:-

- Increase and enhance public engagement with the University through use of our collections, events and estate. We will use these to attract and engage with new audiences and stakeholder groups, including community groups and schools, as well as enhancing existing relationships;
- Promote public understanding of the University’s work and the impact of this around the world;
- Engage positively and creatively with the regional economy and stakeholder bodies (e.g. Liverpool City Council and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority) to enhance the understanding of the region’s heritage and to contribute to and promote its cultural activity.

How this will contribute to the University’s success:-

- KPI: League Table Rankings (University KPI 1)
- Contextual Information:
  - Number of visits to University heritage facilities
  - Number of engagements with stakeholder groups
Number of heritage items exhibited in public areas on the University’s estate
Number of University heritage items exhibited off site by other organisations
Membership of regional heritage and cultural bodies
Public engagement impact case studies

Research

We will:-

• Develop and mature our emerging Heritage institutional research theme, so that it sits alongside the other research themes for which we are recognised as world leading;
• Create and co-create with our students and partners new knowledge in relation to Heritage, and also in relation to other heritage and culture related disciplines, as well as those subject areas that can contribute to the interpretation and curation of heritage, with all three Faculties having a role to play. We will draw on our heritage and cultural collections in our research;
• Develop and maintain world-leading collections for use by the global academic community;
• Use related activities such as exhibitions, festivals, conferences and other events to promote the University’s research strengths and their impact.

How this will contribute to the University’s success:-

• KPI: World leading outputs in Heritage theme and cognate areas (University KPI 4)
• Contextual Information:
  Research Grant and Contract income
  Number and quality of impact case studies related to Heritage research theme or making use of Heritage collections and facilities
  Representation on relevant external bodies (e.g. appropriate Research Councils)
  Relevant KE Partnerships

Education

We will:-

• Use our heritage and culture related presence to promote study at all levels at the University of Liverpool, including lifelong learning, and support our work in widening access to and participation with the University;
• Focus our efforts in this aim on particularly relevant programmes and modules, to deepen and enrich the learning and experience of students in this way;
• Use heritage and culture related events to contribute to an environment that is conducive to the retention and success of our students (see Life of Our Members and the University Environment, below). This will include improving the career opportunities for our students through the establishment and exploitation of
professional and organisational networks in relevant fields, and by supporting the city region’s cultural economy with a view to increasing graduate retention;
• Use heritage and culture related collections and events as a means of realising research-connected teaching and otherwise enhancing students’ curricula and extra curricula experience;
• Use our collections to promote lifelong learning and enjoyment of heritage and culture.

How this will contribute to the University’s success:-
• KPI: Student Satisfaction (University KPI 8)
• Contextual Information:
  Relevant work placements
  Graduate employment in relevant industries
  Student attendance at extra curricula activities
  Engagement with schools

The Life of Our Members and the University Environment

We will use our heritage and culture related collections and events to:-
• Create better places for our members to live and work in a way that is consistent with the University’s mission - ‘advancement of learning and ennoblement of life’. In this way, we will attract and welcome staff and their families to the University, and enhance our reputation as an employer of choice;
• Increase opportunities for employee engagement, by encouraging them to understand and contribute to the identity of the University, and to feel a sense of pride and ownership of what we are and what we do through attendance at and active participation in relevant events;
• To support positive wellbeing by enhancing the environment for work and study;
• Increase the engagement of our alumni, particularly those from overseas, in the current life of the University;
• Celebrate and bring to the fore the heritage of our own campuses, seeking to inform the University’s Estates Strategy in this way, and finding innovative ways to interpret and communicate the story of the University and the physical and intellectual space it occupies to our colleagues and students.

How this will contribute to the University’s success:-
• KPI: Staff satisfaction (University KPI 12)
• Contextual Information:
  Conversion of job offers to acceptances
  Number of active alumni
  Contribution to fundraising
  Staff survey question: I feel part of the University
  Staff survey question: I feel proud to work for the University
Staff survey question: to what extent of you agree that the University’s senior management build strong, positive relationship with the local community?

4. Underpinning principles - how we will do it

In pursuit of the above, we will:-

- Communicate to our members and the wider community the University’s cultural and heritage offer;
- Make our collections and events as widely discoverable, accessible and inclusive as possible, including through their creative promotion, and media engagement;
- Care for our collections in line with the highest professional standards;
- Actively seek partnership with appropriate heritage organisations, locally, nationally and internationally;
- Strategically align our activities to benefit from and contribute to the priorities of our partners, the region and cultural and historical timelines;
- Develop a creative approach to borrowing and lending items to achieve maximum impact;
- Actively seek external funding to optimise our activities;
- Achieve or maintain accreditation with appropriate professional bodies;
- Publish an annual report, describing the progress made against this Strategy, and capturing key outcomes, case studies and milestones.