

Port Royal to be on UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites

The process involves a series of activities, focusing mainly on the portions of the Sunken City, and adjoining areas over which the town's existing layout was built, culminating with the preparation and submission of the nomination dossier to UNESCO in July 2014.

Port Royal is currently on UNESCO's World Heritage tentative list, having been so placed in February 2009. One of the activities, an assessment of the sites, was conducted over the last week by a team, headed by Professor of the Nautical Archaeology programme, Anthropology Department, Texas A&M University, in the United States, Dr. Donny Hamilton. Speaking at the presentation of the findings, at the Morgan's Harbour Hotel, Port Royal, on May 29, the JNHT's Technical Director in charge of Archaeology, Dorrick Gray, said the week-long exercise entailed visiting and viewing the sunken structures beneath the sea, within the harbour, and under the town's existing buildings and general layout, totaling upwards of 51 acres, the state of which is well preserved. He said the team also undertook identification and defining of the boundaries encompassing the area to be nominated to the World Heritage list. These, he said, entailed the 51-acre core zone, which sank during the 1692 earthquake, and a buffer zone, which has been established to protect the former. Describing the week of activities as "fruitful," Mr. Gray said activities to be undertaken and pursued over the ensuing months would be critical to preparing the nomination dossier for Port Royal. These, he informed, include consultations with all stakeholders in the town, including the residents. Additionally, he said UNESCO, which assisted the JNHT in carrying out the assessment, would be seeking to strengthen the nomination process by staging a number of workshops incorporating the agency. "We have a programme that we have to embark on, as of now. It has been amplified and strengthened and we can't stop until 2014. It's a long way and it's a lot of work. But I am confident that with all the persons who have been a part of the process, we will meet the deadline," Mr. Gray assured. In his remarks, Chairman, JNHT Board of Trustees, Ainsley Henriques, described Port Royal as a "very important aspect" of Jamaica's history, which "tells lots of stories" about the country's heritage. "I charge our (JNHT) Heritage Sites Department to see, along with the citizens of Port Royal, that everybody understands this," Mr. Henriques urged. Source: JIS