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Scottish Executive
Education Department
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
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15 September 2003

Dear Rachel

Review of Historic Scotland

I am pleased to enclose a copy of the first response from the Historic Environment Advisory Group for Scotland to the consultation paper on the Review of Historic Scotland. A second paper, setting out our recommendations on the question of the future status of Historic Scotland, will follow after the Council meeting on 7 October.

At its first meeting on 30 June HEACS appointed a working group to prepare and collate its response to the consultation paper, using as its starting point papers submitted by individual Council members. The working group also had access to a wide range of background documentation and to briefing papers prepared at its request by staff in Historic Scotland. It was also able to take advantage of introductory meetings between HEACS and a number of bodies in the sector to gain additional insight into some current concerns and perceptions. The meetings with yourself and Mike Ewart were also helpful. Successive drafts have been circulated for comment to all Council members.

We have been struck by the level of interest in this Review, which is in part an indicator of the value placed on the historic environment, and of the level of commitment throughout the sector to ensuring its proper protection and promotion. The Review is clearly seen as an opportunity to strengthen the framework through which that will be achieved. I and my colleagues in HEACS look forward to contributing to further stages of the process.

With regards and best wishes

Elizabeth K Burns OBE
Chair, HEACS

HISTORIC SCOTLAND: QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW-FIRST SUBMISSION

Response by Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland (HEACS)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The invitation to comment on Historic Scotland, as a contribution to the current Quinquennial Review of that Agency, is welcomed by the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland (HEACS). HEACS is the newly-constituted Advisory Council on the Historic Environment to the Scottish Executive and has been in existence, formally, from June 1 2003. HEACS is pleased to have this early opportunity to exercise its responsibility as it considers that the review of Historic Scotland is of fundamental importance to the future direction of a range of Government policies and practices within and outwith the heritage sector.

1.1 As the principal advisory group on the historic environment HEACS is pleased to record that the Review Group, which has oversight of the consultative process, will afford HEACS

- (1) The opportunity to discuss and expand upon its submission with the Review Group when responses are being considered.
- (2) Access to internal papers, in which connection HEACS commends the openness of the Review Group in deciding to place internal papers on its website to permit public access.
- (3) Access to the Review Group's draft report, and discussion of that draft, before it is finalised for transmission to the Minister.

1.2 HEACS appreciates the key advisory role and the significant remit for strategic oversight of the historic environment allocated to HEACS by the Scottish Executive and HEACS will wish to discuss its conclusions with the Minister before decisions are taken at political level in regard to the consultation results.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland believes that Historic Scotland has the potential to be truly excellent and a worthy leader in the field. HEACS is in no doubt that Historic Scotland should continue to exist and to discharge its key functions as a nationally recognised centre of excellence. HEACS considers that this desired distinction can be achieved through evolutionary reforms which allow the personnel of Historic Scotland to exercise their powers and responsibilities within a context that is more accountable to stakeholders and more responsive to the changing political and economic circumstances of the times. HEACS judges that a strategic vision for the historic environment is crucial for the future of Historic Scotland and believes that Government has a responsibility firstly to encourage the expression of that vision and secondly to empower and enable Historic Scotland to achieve that vision.

- 2.2 HEACS reserves its final position on the crucial issue of the continuation of Executive Agency status or transition to Non-Departmental Public Body status until it has
- The opportunity to discuss the matter at full Council.
 - Considered submissions from other organisations.
 - Examined the financial implications of change.

2.3 SUMMARY OF KEY PROPOSALS

LEADERSHIP

- Historic Scotland is the key leadership body in the protection and maintenance of the built historic environment and it is essential that Historic Scotland continues in being.

FUNCTIONS

- The primary functions discharged by Historic Scotland are essential to the protection and maintenance of the historic environment and it is vital that Historic Scotland maintains its primary functions.
- Consideration of the outsourcing of any functions or responsibilities should include a careful assessment of the effects of that outsourcing on the overall effectiveness of Historic Scotland as well as an evaluation of the capacity of other bodies to undertake the functions.

STRUCTURE

- Historic Scotland's culture and ethos require reconsideration and the introduction of the necessary changes to ensure the attainment of extended representation, leadership, accountability, performance and openness

PERFORMANCE

- An Audit of the Historic Environment should be undertaken to establish a baseline for the work of Historic Scotland and to provide a foundation on which relevant targets and achievements might be measured.
- An analysis of the financial contribution which the historic environment makes to the Scottish economy is a necessary prerequisite for the implementation of a raft of Government policies and for decisions on the allocation of resources to the historic environment sector.

PLANNING SYSTEM

- The key statutory responsibilities of Historic Scotland in the Planning system should be redefined to ensure a separation of judicial roles and to permit the operation of an effective appeal system.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Infrastructure development is the key requirement of Government action if the overall health of the historic environment is to be addressed. Government should look to the wider voluntary sector and the volunteering sector for models whereby the work undertaken by Historic Scotland can be supported and extended.

CONTEXT

- 3.0 HEACS notes that the Quinquennial Review is one aspect within a range of heritage-related events and processes which are conflated in time-the abolition of the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland and the Ancient Monuments Board of Scotland, the creation of HEACS, the appointment of a new Minister, the Audit Scotland Review of Historic Scotland, and prospective change at senior management level in 2004. HEACS therefore counsels that the cumulative effect of any changes be taken into consideration by the Review Group when reaching conclusions, particularly with a view to the continued stability of Historic Scotland.
- 3.1 HEACS is also strongly of the opinion that ideally the Review of Historic Scotland should have been set within the context of a strategic vision for the historic environment in Scotland, recognising that the historic environment is wider than Historic Scotland. In essence, a 21st century vision for the historic environment is a necessary pre-condition for deciding on the nature, roles and responsibilities of the key organisation needed to fulfil that vision.
- 3.2 The historic environment is crucially important to the quality of life in Scotland. It is the responsibility of Government to ensure the protection and maintenance of the environment for the people of Scotland, not simply in respect of heritage interests but also in connection with its entire portfolio of responsibilities.
- 3.3 It is important therefore that the historic environment achieves a higher profile and stronger champions within and outwith Government than is currently the case in order to influence policy areas across the spectrum of government responsibilities. HEACS recognises that the Scottish Executive, having established HEACS and given it a key role in maintaining a strategic view, has taken an important first step towards enhancing the significance of the historic environment in cross-policy terms.
- 3.4 Championship requires much more forceful promotion of the importance of the historic environment-such as the context in which we live, its educational value, the economic benefits that flow from tourism and construction work, and its potential as a catalyst for change and social inclusion. The organisation charged with delivering Government policies on the historic environment requires to aspire to world-class organisation and performance.

- 3.5 HEACS acknowledges that many aspects of the work of Historic Scotland are excellent and many individuals within Historic Scotland are of the highest quality; nevertheless it is perceived that there has been a marked loss of confidence in Historic Scotland as an organisation in recent years. It is noted that descriptors of Historic Scotland as “restrictive”, “authoritarian”, and “dismissive” would find support in a number of areas, and there are also suspicions about the organisation which arise from seeming patterns of secrecy over which there is no right of appeal other than by a formal challenge. The effectiveness and efficiency of Historic Scotland are areas in which it is judged that there are significant gaps due to lack of meaningful contact with other heritage interests.
- 3.6 HEACS believes that this deterioration is partly due to the internal operations of Historic Scotland which have not been adjusted in line with changing circumstances and partly due to external factors over which Historic Scotland has little control. Any government Agency, operating within governmental rules and regulations, can be perceived as lacking openness, and the emergence of an adversarial ethos when encountering external criticism is not uncommon. An Agency can also be perceived as lacking the necessary independence from the political process, possibly open to compromise through changing government policy, and as prone to adopting the short-term view.
- 3.7 HEACS would suggest that it is important, at this time of taking stock, to engage in creative thinking and to embrace change where effectiveness and efficiency, along with altered external circumstances and influences, may require adjustments in structure and operations. If Historic Scotland is to continue to play the lead role in the protection of the historic environment in the future then it may require to have new organisational freedoms and flexibilities which allow it to function more effectively as the principal leader in the field. HEACS believes that, in discharging its own remit and responsibilities, HEACS may help Government to achieve its objectives for the protection, management and promotion of the historic environment through collaboration with a strengthened Historic Scotland.

SECTION 1: ROLE AND STRATEGY

Functions

- 4.0 Given that safeguarding the built heritage and promoting its understanding and enjoyment are vital in the maintenance of our cultural heritage and identity, and contributory towards an informed insight of our way of life, it is clear that the functions undertaken by Historic Scotland are absolutely essential.
- 4.1 Historic Scotland is **the** significant player in the preservation of the Scottish built heritage and requires to possess, and to exercise, a large range of inter-related functions in order to operate in a coherent and coordinated manner. It is acknowledged that such an organisation, which combines the skills and expertise of specialists involved with the guardianship of the historic environment with the knowledge and expertise of specialists involved in legislative protection of the historic environment, provides a cultural critical mass and technical interaction that are uniquely important and difficult to replicate in other structures.

- 4.2 If the functions undertaken by Historic Scotland are necessary for the protection of the historic environment and provide the basis for coherent policy and action, it follows that the removal of any of its functions can only lead to a diminution of effectiveness. The discontinuation of any or all of its functions in practice would be catastrophic for the historic environment, leading to gaps in the system for protecting the historic environment which other organisations would struggle to address.
- 4.3 HEACS acknowledges that a distinction can be made between statutory responsibilities and other responsibilities, such as commercial activities. Out-sourcing some of Historic Scotland's functions, and transfer of some of its functions, might be considered. These could include the following:
- The extension of the practice of preparing Technical Advice Notes for Historic Scotland by external agencies on a contractual basis.
 - The administration of some Conservation grants by other organisations, utilising Historic Scotland as an advisory consultancy.
 - The further development of the existing system of local responsibility for some sites and monuments, utilising Historic Scotland as an advisory consultancy.
 - The operation of the grant-making system by other organisations.
 - The restructuring of Properties in Care as an independent body and operated on similar lines to other national organisations.
- 4.4 However, HEACS is not persuaded that such transfers of responsibility are in the best interests of a strategic approach to the historic environment and would counsel caution on removing/amending functional responsibilities if the removal of a constituent or integral function might undermine general effectiveness. Historic Scotland's functions allow it to co-ordinate its efforts in line with priorities, to address public policy issues, and to meet targets which have been set for the organisation. Without the ability directly to oversee the coordination of these functions Historic Scotland might run the risk of failing to deliver on government policies.
- 4.5 There is no obvious scope for rationalisation since there are no other bodies in Scotland carrying the range of responsibilities discharged by Historic Scotland. There are a number of Trusts and voluntary bodies that are operative in the heritage field but these bodies are extensions of heritage interests rather than duplicates of Historic Scotland and are constituted and funded on an entirely different basis. Rationalising these organisations would be counter-productive and not conducive to stakeholder involvement.
- 4.6 However HEACS believes that much more could be done by way of active partnerships with other professional organisations which are active in the heritage sector. HEACS is aware of the existence of Historic Scotland partnership "statements of intent" and

“concordats” but is not certain that these intentions are always mirrored in positive practical action or that there are monitoring systems in place to demonstrate action or outcomes. HEACS also notes the importance of the voluntary sector and would counsel closer working relationships with voluntary groups which take a close interest in the heritage sector, and in particular with those bodies which have a coordinating and networking role and are thus key parts of the infrastructure for the historic environment.

- 4.7 The relationship of Historic Scotland with the Scottish Local Authorities is one that HEACS would suggest requires considerable enhancement since the Local Authorities have substantial responsibilities for the historic environment and conservation work. Recognising that Local Authorities are limited in their work by a shortage of qualified staff and financial constraints, there is merit in detailed exploration of the working arrangements not only directly between Historic Scotland and the Local Authorities but also between Historic Scotland and other heritage agencies. This would apply particularly in the fields of conservation management and Sites and Monuments Records where there is a clear case for more proactive leadership.

HEACS would also wish to see Historic Scotland enter into a dialogue with Local Authorities in an effort to improve the quality of local decisions and to build capacity within Scottish communities. In this regard HEACS sees the development of a close relationship between Historic Scotland and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) as being fundamental to progress in the light of the representative role which CoSLA provides for Scottish Local Authorities.

Objectives

4.8 Within the context set by the Education Department Historic Scotland has addressed the themes and values of the Scottish Executive through its planning processes. It is perhaps more a matter for the Department to consider the extent to which there might be a stronger link within the Scottish Executive amongst the Divisions which have an interest in the environment. In many cases the historic environment is also the natural environment and there is a case for ensuring a collaborative approach to enhance the achievement of Government objectives.

- 4.9 It is clear however that the Education Department, given the absence of professional heritage staff employed within the Service, is itself markedly lacking in providing a central support role for the heritage sector. HEACS would urge early consideration of the expansion of central support for the heritage sector within the Executive, along with consideration of the appropriate location of Departmental responsibility.
- 4.10 In order to advance the Scottish Executive’s objectives of “promoting Scotland’s identity” and “safeguarding the environment” HEACS suggests that it is self-evident that Historic Scotland requires to carry out and publish an Audit of the Historic Environment (as has been done, at least at a base-line level, in England’s “State of the Nation”) in order to establish what exactly needs to be safeguarded. It is only if a baseline is established that the work required of Historic Scotland can be accurately assessed, quality targets can be agreed and monitored, and justifiable conclusions on the value of Historic Scotland can be reached. This would have implications for other Government priorities in that the potential links between cultural heritage and a sustainable economy

can be identified more accurately than at present and, more importantly, eco-friendly forms of tourism can be promoted. If Historic Scotland is to avoid compartmentalisation of its efforts then an Audit would provide the foundation upon which the broader Government agenda could be meaningfully integrated. HEACS itself will be examining this issue in detail in response to the Minister's request for advice and will report accordingly.

SECTION 2: PLANNING AND STRUCTURE

- 5.0 HEACS considers that there is little positive to be said for reversing the current political trend and returning Historic Scotland to a Scottish Executive Department or for the establishment of a private sector organisation to take responsibility for public assets.
- 5.1 HEACS is of the view that the realistic options for change are either the continuation of the present Executive Agency arrangements, with necessary reforms in the acknowledged problem areas, or transition to a Non Departmental Public Body, again with changes in specific areas. HEACS views both options as falling within an evolutionary process.

(1) Executive Agency (EA)

- 5.2 HEACS acknowledges that Historic Scotland has functioned effectively in the main for a number of years as an Agency of the Scottish Executive and HEACS recognises that an Executive Agency as an entity has a number of strengths.
- Direct and regular accessibility to Ministers.
 - Direct involvement in budget discussions in the annual round of funding negotiations.
 - Direct negotiation on Corporate Plans with Ministers.
 - Direct advice on policy and practice to Ministers/seamless application of Government policies.
 - Internal access to other Government Departments and a presence as of right within inter-departmental structures.
 - Integrated approach to its remit, influencing cross-departmental policy development.
 - Ability to represent Government nationally and internationally.
- 5.3 Recognising the strengths of that structure, HEACS suggests that the following changes could be implemented to build on the current Executive Agency model and bring about desirable modifications in the existing culture and ethos.

Representation: The Historic Scotland Board could be expanded to include external members through the mechanisms appropriate for public appointments to an Executive Agency. The officials within HS would then have access to a wider range of business and professional expertise than is currently represented within the organisation. This broadening of the Board would also make a significant contribution to a culture of greater openness.

Leadership/Partnership: Historic Scotland could re-prioritise the development of its leadership role through targeted investment of human and financial resources to provide training, capacity building, and grant programmes which take into greater consideration the value and importance of the professional and voluntary groups in the heritage sector and will strengthen the infrastructure for the historic environment

Accountability: Historic Scotland could develop its policy role and the presentation of its policies to the professional and non-professional sectors in a more effective manner, taking into consideration the need for a lead body to explain itself and its activities if it is to secure both informed understanding and vigorous support.

Performance: Historic Scotland could review the basis on which targets for the organisation are set with a view firstly to moving towards qualitative targets that relate more directly to the organisation's mission and secondly to implementing an effective monitoring regime in relation to its formal connections with other bodies.

Openness: Historic Scotland's role and responsibilities within the planning system could be redefined to remove its multiple and conflicting responsibilities and to allow the operation of an appeal system.

(2) Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB)

- 5.4 HEACS acknowledges the changed and increasingly contentious nature of political, economic, and legal approaches to the Historic Environment, including the influence of European legislation on Human Rights, and recognises that changing external circumstances may require internal modifications to existing organisational arrangements.
- 5.5 HEACS recognises that a Non Departmental Public Body as an entity also has a number of strengths.
- Independence and ability to act as the champion for its remit.
 - External Management Board/Council composed of members selected for their expertise and experience, contributing significantly to the culture of greater openness.
 - Organisational "family ties" and equal partnership working with other NDPB's active in relevant sectors.
 - Ability to make views public, even if critical of Government policies and Ministers.
 - Ability to lobby in support of its views.
 - Public accountability of both NDPB and Minister clearly defined.
 - Relationship with Ministers allows links between NDPB strategy and Executive themes and policies to be explicit.
- 5.6 HEACS suggests that it is equally important to build upon the strengths of an NDPB and acknowledges that the creation of an NDPB of itself would encourage the emergence of

a different culture and ethos. However HEACS would counsel that the changes suggested in 4.3 above would equally have their place in an NDPB, in order to strengthen representation, leadership, accountability, performance and openness.

- 5.7 HEACS notes that the transition from Agency to NDPB would not increase the number of government bodies but would have implications for the status and employment of Historic Scotland staff. HEACS understands that the consequence of change might mean additional complexity and time, and indeed that the change might lead to some staff loss.
- 5.8 HEACS recognises that there are organisational and legal implications for Historic Scotland as an NDPB in terms of changed formal legal responsibilities and changed access to resources and would counsel that such a change, would have to be accompanied by the necessary legal and financial guarantees to ensure stability.
- 5.9 HEACS acknowledges that while administrative action to bring about change of status to an NDPB is feasible, it believes that Parliamentary legislation, while having serious timescale implications, may be the more prudent course of action to bring about any change of status.
- 5.10 Whichever of the options-Executive Agency or NDPB-seems to the Review Group to be in the best interests of Historic Scotland and in the best interests of the historic environment, HEACS wishes to emphasise the importance of avoiding changes, radical or otherwise, that may impede or destabilise the good work that Historic Scotland carries out within the heritage sector. HEACS also recognises that change would have consequent implications for many organisations which relate to Historic Scotland and would urge the Review Group to consider the downstream effects of any proposed alterations.

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| <p>5.11 <u>HEACS therefore reserves its final position on the crucial issue of the continuation of Executive Agency status or transition to Non-Departmental Public Body status until it has</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>The opportunity to discuss the matter at full Council.</u>• <u>Considered submissions from other organisations.</u>• <u>Examined the financial implications of change.</u> |
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SECTION 3: PERFORMANCE

- 6.0 With regard to Targets, data supplied in the Consultation document indicate that Historic Scotland has largely met all of its targets in previous years. However the significance of the information is highly debatable. The targets, as financial or physical achievements, are process related rather than linked to achievement of any objectives. It is impossible for an external body to make a judgement about the level of difficulty posed by the targets set and achieved by Historic Scotland since there is no way of judging what opportunity costs may have been involved. The targets in question give a poor picture of Historic Scotland effectiveness in fulfilling the objectives of its mission statement, since the focus is on commercial activities. Targets referring to cultural achievement, levels of

knowledge, or scholarly achievement, which would relate directly to the work of Historic Scotland, are largely missing.

- 6.1 In seeking comparisons, it is inevitable that the heritage situation in England should be considered. HEACS believes that the relationship between English Heritage and its Sponsor Department is more productive than is the case in Scotland. The results of that relationship can be seen in the key areas in which English Heritage is forging ahead and where the targets seem to relate to the real issues. HEACS is aware that the sponsor Department in England is the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and that there is no direct equivalent in Departmental terms in Scotland.

SECTION 4: PARTNERSHIPS AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 7.0 There are limits to what HEACS as a Council can say at this stage in response to the questions posed concerning Partnerships and Stakeholders since HEACS, as a very recently constituted entity, has no collective experience as an organisation on which to found significant comments. Given the present situation of the provision of financing and secretariat of HEACS by Historic Scotland there are few organisations within the heritage sector which can have a closer relationship with Historic Scotland. In terms of policy and planning, HEACS cannot function without detailed knowledge of Historic Scotland's corporate plans and Government intentions for the historic environment.
- 7.1 HEACS is aware from its own involvement in meetings with a substantial number of bodies which have heritage or historic environment interests that there are weaknesses in relationships with Historic Scotland. These weaknesses would appear to arise in relation to the perceived nature of Historic Scotland as a major powerbase and the relatively limited capacities and strengths of other bodies. The situation is exacerbated by the fragility of the Local Authority sector and the voluntary sector, the end result being a distortion of the position, where it is all too easy to hold Historic Scotland responsible for problems rather than recognising the difficulties created by the political and organisational matrix in which Historic Scotland operates. The effect can be seen in Historic Scotland's outreach-the concept of partnership is not likely to be regarded as a working arrangement of equals while the concept of stakeholding is both restricted and muted in practice, except in cases of disagreement when outside bodies feel the need to take a stand on the principle that their voices should be heard. That, of itself, can create an adversarial situation for both parties. There is obviously a requirement for more effort on the part of Historic Scotland to raise the concepts of Partnership and Stakeholding to a level where outside bodies feel that there is real meaning in the theories of inclusion and involvement in the heritage sector. Equally there is a requirement on the part of other organisations to recognise that Historic Scotland is not the only player in the field and that improvements in the strength of the infrastructure are as important as changes within Historic Scotland.

7.2 There are two important points that HEACS would wish to raise in the context of the Review-

- (1) HEACS is the successor in time to the Ancient Monuments Board and to the Historic Buildings Council and HEACS therefore notes with interest the final comments made by the outgoing AMB and the 15 points listed in its summary of recommendations.
- (2) The relationship of Historic Scotland with HEACS is one that may be considered by the Review Group, notwithstanding its very recent creation as an Advisory Council. HEACS is tasked with providing independent advice to Ministers and Historic Scotland provides the secretariat and finance for HEACS' operations. The Review Group may wish to comment on the appropriateness of the current arrangements for the longer term and on the possibility that HEACS may be compromised by them, either in actuality or in public perception. HEACS itself will monitor the situation over the course of its work and will recommend a more formal review of the arrangements at the appropriate time.

SECTION 5: RELATED ASPECTS

Corporate Strategy

- 8.0 HEACS acknowledges that all organisations require to consider and adopt a long-term strategy and would commend Historic Scotland on its intention to set its development processes within the context of a 10 Year Plan. However HEACS would express some concern about the internalised focus of the Plan and also about the current round of consultations being undertaken with Stakeholders on behalf of Historic Scotland. HEACS is concerned that the consultation, coinciding as it does with the Quinquennial Review, may be untimely and could have the potential to skew responses, both positively and negatively.

Planning System

- 8.1 HEACS is aware that considerable criticism attaches to Historic Scotland in the area of Listing and Scheduling and the charge that Historic Scotland acts as judge and jury on a number of occasions is a commonplace. The power of individuals to take decisions and the lack of what is regarded as an effective appeal system contribute to a view that Historic Scotland operates without effective scrutiny. The consequence has been a widespread disenchantment with Historic Scotland's decisions. HEACS believes that the Planning System itself is at the root of many problems and that some criticism of Historic Scotland in carrying out its designated role and duties is based on a misconception about its role and responsibilities within the existing legislative framework.
- 8.2 HEACS considers that the existing Planning System is both outmoded and outdated and in practice allows continuing damage to be done to the historic environment through the

absence of effective protective measures or through the ability of planners and developers simply to ignore the advice from Historic Scotland. The lack of consistency in the application of conservation measures across Scotland arises from the opaque nature of the rules and regulations. HEACS acknowledges that the same problems exist in England and notes that the Department (DCMS) has recognised the need for action in its consultation document “Making the System Work Better”.

- 8.3 HEACS suggests that a reform of the Planning System and a realignment of the role and responsibilities of Historic Scotland would contribute to a more open system and one in which Historic Scotland was not placed automatically in contentious positions. It may be, for example, that there is a role for the Royal Commission in advising Ministers on listing buildings and thereby separating Historic Scotland from exercising all responsibility. Equally, it is important that vital adjustments are made to the Planning System to bring current levels of destruction of the historic environment to a halt and to ensure that conservation becomes a central part of planning decisions which affect the historic environment.
- 8.4 HEACS believes that the application of European legislation to Planning practices require relevant organisations to ensure that their operations are consistent with the observation of the Convention on Human Rights and would encourage the Scottish Executive Departments and Historic Scotland to review their practices in the light of European legislative requirements.

Public Image

- 8.5 In relation to Media and Communications, HEACS judges that Historic Scotland is not good at promoting its own image. HEACS recognises that the agency nature of Historic Scotland imposes restrictions on its ability to promote its own image and, understandably, Historic Scotland promotes its role as guardian of properties in care rather than itself. In terms of communications HEACS considers that Historic Scotland, unlike its English counterpart, has not yet shed a stuffy image in its publications and believes that its website is not keeping pace with the times, failing thereby to promote its significance and its achievements. HEACS believes that Historic Scotland’s public profile needs to be raised as the leading proponent of the historic environment and believes that there is considerable scope for the further expansion of modern technology to enhance both its image as an organisation and its ability to interact with other heritage interests and the public in general
- 8.6 It is not apparent to the Scottish population that Historic Scotland is the largest operator of tourist attractions in Scotland and thereby a major contributor to the Scottish identity and economy. HEACS suggests that a strengthening of the public relations outreach should be considered, particularly emphasising the contribution which Historic Scotland makes to the themes and values of the Scottish Executive. HEACS is convinced that “Historic Scotland” is a name and brand that has resonance both inside and furth of Scotland and that it should be protected.

Areas for enhanced work

- 9.0 Areas in which Historic Scotland might consider raising its profile are Education and Site Interpretation. HEACS believes that there is considerable scope for the expansion of Historic Scotland's educational activities through collaboration with Learning and Teaching Scotland. HEACS believes that Site Interpretation is capable of considerable enhancement through specific investment.
- 9.1 The economic impact of the heritage sector on other areas of the Scottish economy is not well understood. The protection and conservation of the historic environment are frequently viewed as a burden rather than as an asset which requires substantial investment of resources to ensure a continued return. Sustainability lies at the heart of heritage interests and HEACS suggests that this area of economic impact is one justifying research and would urge its consideration as a contributor to the strategic vision of the historic environment.
- 9.2 The role of the voluntary sector and volunteers at all levels of historic environment activity is important and is one that would justify research into the range, scope and value of the voluntary contribution with a view to identifying the part that Historic Scotland might play in ensuring both the recognition of that voluntary effort and the utilisation of its input. It appears to HEACS that the activities of volunteers within the formal heritage sector, as well as the performance of the voluntary sector itself are both under-appreciated and under-utilised through the lack of connections and communications with lead organisations. There would appear to be considerable scope for upgrading networking and capacity building.
- 9.3 The work of Historic Scotland would be much better understood and more instantly available to a broader audience if emerging IT, Website, and Geographical Information technology were used to present the locations of the buildings of architectural and historic significance, scheduled ancient monuments and other locations of historic importance. It may be appropriate to create a heritage portal, for example, to bring forward for discussion significant topics for debate. HEACS believes that this would create a more open environment in which decisions were taken and could provide a first line of basic information for both owners and communities. Although careful consideration would need to be given to both the National Monument Record and Local Sites and Monuments Records it would seem that there is a pressing need to address immediately the issue of how IT could improve the total value of the product offered by Historic Scotland.

CONCLUSION

- 10.0 The Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland believes that Historic Scotland has the potential to be truly excellent and a worthy leader in the field. HEACS is in no doubt that Historic Scotland should continue to exist and to discharge its key functions as a nationally recognised centre of excellence. HEACS considers that this desired distinction can be achieved through evolutionary reforms which allow the personnel of Historic Scotland to exercise their powers and responsibilities within a context that is

more accountable to stakeholders and more responsive to the changing political and economic circumstances of the times. HEACS judges that a strategic vision for the historic environment is crucial for the future of Historic Scotland and believes that Government has a responsibility firstly to encourage the expression of that vision and secondly to empower and enable Historic Scotland to achieve that vision.

**Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland
September 2003**

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