

Patricia Ferguson MSP  
Minister for Tourism Culture and Sport  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh  
EH6 6QQ

December 2005

Dear Minister

## **CULTURAL COMMISSION REPORT**

In my letter of 15 September which accompanied the briefing note from HEACS prior to the debate in Parliament on the Cultural Commission Report, I indicated that in addition to preparing its own detailed response to the Report, HEACS planned to convene a meeting of Historic Environment and Heritage sector interests to consider the Report.

The meeting was held on 14 October in Edinburgh. Twenty-one people attended, from sixteen organisations. The range of interests represented included central and local government bodies, voluntary sector organisations and academics; archaeologists; museums; heritage, civic and preservation trusts; skills and materials; coordinating bodies and funders. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the HEACS response and to identify whether there was a wish for a collective response, which HEACS might formulate.

The attached paper presents the views agreed at the meeting. It has been circulated to those who attended the meeting, and includes a list of the organisations which then subscribed to the paper. The appendix was prepared with the agreement of the meeting as a means of demonstrating the extent of the researched evidence base for including the historic environment and heritage in our concept of culture.

HEACS fully supports the Historic Environment and Heritage sector response and is happy to align itself with the views expressed.

In light of this, and taking into account the robust critique of the report by MSP's during the Parliamentary Debate, HEACS has decided not to submit a further response on its own account, though we wish to re-emphasise all the concerns we have previously expressed both to the Commission and to yourself.

We consider it unfortunate that we find ourselves in the situation where the Report is such a missed opportunity in relation to the Historic Environment/Heritage sector when our expectations from the brief provided to the Commission might have suggested otherwise. It is to our regret that the Commission focussed almost exclusively on the Culture of Activity and ignored the Culture of Place, whose importance was so vividly set out in the English 'Power of Place' report. In this context, the Commission's Report is a report on the Arts and not on Culture.

The Commission's effective dismissal of the historic environment as part of our national culture led HEACS to revisit its view of the historic environment as central to it. We considered the case for ceding the designation of Culture to the Arts and pressing instead for recognition of the Historic Environment and Heritage through a new designation of Culture and Heritage. We have concluded, in line with our original stance and arguments, that such a move would not be in the interests of the sector and would be contrary to the recognition given to the Historic Environment in the National Cultural Strategy which preceded the work of the Commission.

As Chair of HEACS I would draw to your particular attention the suggestion of the creation of a Cultural Forum, to be chaired by yourself, and would urge you to give it positive consideration. HEACS feels that such an arrangement will lead to more efficient and cost effective Government engagement with the Cultural Sector.

The meeting on 14 October showed clearly the degree of dismay within the sector at the Report, and the level of anger felt by the organisations which had put time and effort into responding to the Commission's consultative meetings and documents, all to little effect. A view which was expressed and found general support was that 'the Commission had not only closed the door on the Historic Environment but had locked and barred the door as well.' A positive response towards the establishment of a Cultural Forum would go some way to reducing the negative impact of the Commission's report.

I will be happy to provide more information, and to discuss any of these points with you if that will be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth K Burns CMG OBE  
Chair

## **HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR SCOTLAND**

### **CULTURE COMMISSION REPORT: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT/HERITAGE SECTOR COLLECTIVE RESPONSE**

**Representatives from the Historic Environment/Heritage Sector met in Edinburgh on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2005. The meeting had been arranged by HEACS and accordingly was chaired by Liz Burns, Chair of HEACS. This paper presents the views agreed at the meeting. A list of the organisations which attended and have subscribed to the paper is attached.**

#### **Preliminary Observations**

The Sector does not wish to pursue an analysis of the contents of the Cultural Commission's Report or rehearse its shortcomings since there is so little of relevance to the sector in the report. However, it is important to state that various sector organisations did seek to engage with the Cultural Commission, responded to consultative documents, attended meetings and sought to be articulate advocates for the sector. That engagement was vocal but necessarily fragmented as the sector represents a wide continuum of interests. The fact that the sector was largely ignored raises important questions about the Commission's limited vision of the culture of Scotland and the nature and intent of the consultation processes.

The sector is puzzled by the Commission's obvious departure from the definition of Culture as set out in National Cultural Strategy. Previous Government statements are not normally disregarded in this fashion. The Commission's focus on the Performing Arts, to the exclusion of almost every other issue, has meant the production of Report that lacks both balance and depth. The Sector is aware that Parliament has already recognised the flawed nature of the Report, but regrets that such a significant opportunity to place Culture in its fullest sense at the centre of a modern and dynamic Scotland has been lost.

#### **Recommendations**

The Sector considers that it is important that there should be formal Government recognition that the Historic Environment and Heritage are integral parts of the culture of Scotland. The acceptance of the Culture of Activity which is represented by the Arts must be paralleled by acceptance of the Culture of Place which is represented by the Historic Environment and of Heritage as represented in the collection in museums, libraries and archives, all the repositories of knowledge and learning. Culture, if it is to be authentic and genuine, cannot be the subject of narrow and non-inclusive interpretations.

The Sector considers that formal recognition should be enshrined in a stated policy for Culture which envisages and accepts the Arts and the Historic Environment and Heritage as sides of the same Cultural coin. While the Sector acknowledges wide

variations of interests within the Historic Environment/ Heritage area, the elements have their place within a continuum rather than as discrete elements.

The Sector considers that it is important to recognise in policy terms the four-dimensional framework within which the Historic Environment/Heritage operates. The sector is firstly of National relevance since elements of Place contribute to national identity and national cohesiveness. The sector is similarly of Local importance in contributing on the sub-national scale to identification of communities of interest and to regional relationships through association with Place. The Historic Environment/Heritage area is of considerable intrinsic interest in that aspects of the sector figure extensively within the landscape of human experience and enjoyment while extrinsically the sector contributes to a range of other Government policies, namely Sustainability, Tourism Lifelong Learning, the Economy, Inclusivity and the Empowerment of communities.

The Sector considers that it is important to challenge the perception that the Historic Environment/Heritage is a block to development and to modernity. The sector considers that progress and development can only spring from existing bases and the environment created by our predecessors provides a backdrop which must be fully appreciated and valued if change is to be relevant and appropriate. The protection and defence of the Historic Environment/Heritage are key features in ensuring the control of unrestricted change of which the cumulative effect may be ultimately destructive of the environment. The Sector considers that there is no conflict between heritage and development when strategic environmental assessments are carried out and mitigation factors introduced.

The Sector is encouraged by the Minister's decision that an Audit of the Historic Environment should be introduced as it considers that the establishment of an evidence base is a necessary first step towards creating the foundation for public awareness of the contribution of the Historic Environment/Heritage to the life of Scotland. The Sector believes that the audit should proceed as quickly as possible, understands that representatives have been appointed to the Audit Committee and would encourage Historic Scotland to accelerate the existing programme.

The Sector is convinced that investment in the Historic Environment/Heritage could provide substantial returns as the sector is the primary object of tourism. The Sector welcomes the current work by HEACS on the Economic Significance of the Historic Environment and expresses the wish that the Minister will give the Report serious consideration when it is completed. Again the Sector would encourage HEACS to accelerate the production of the Report.

The Sector would suggest the creation of a Cultural Forum to be chaired by the Minister and with strong representation from the Historic Environment/Heritage sector. The Sector considers that such a Forum would bring together the various bodies that function within the Cultural Sector and would avoid the over-bureaucratisation of the process of networking and consultation. Useful precedents include an initiative of this kind in Northern Ireland, designed to facilitate joined-up thinking; also the Regional Cultural Consortia in England.

Consistent with the establishment of a Cultural Forum the Sector considers that a Cultural infrastructure requires to be set up whereby the Voluntary sector might be more meaningfully and readily engaged in determining the parameters of cultural developments. The Historic Environment/Heritage Sector would remind the Minister of the existence of the Scottish Executive Compact with the Voluntary Sector and would encourage the Minister to utilise this compact to underpin on-going dialogue and working relationships with the sector.

**HEACS**  
**December 2005**

**The following organisations have subscribed to this paper:**

**Association of Preservation Trusts Scotland**  
**Built Environment Forum Scotland**  
**Council for Scottish Archaeology**  
**Edinburgh World Heritage Trust**  
**HEACS**  
**Heritage Futures, Caledonian University**  
**Heritage Lottery Fund**  
**National Museums of Scotland**  
**RCAHMS**  
**Scottish Church Heritage Research**  
**Scottish Civic Trust**  
**Scottish Group Institute of Field Archaeologists**  
**Scottish Stone Liaison Group**  
**Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group**  
**Society of Antiquaries of Scotland**

## APPENDIX

There is now a well established canon of literature concerning the value and significance of heritage/historic environment within society, produced at consultancy, policy development and peer reviewed level. The following bibliography highlights some of the recent work highlighting this role. Note: this does not necessarily include the array of Scottish Executive publications which both implicitly and explicitly recognise the role of heritage within our wider physical and social environment (for example via statutory and advisory consideration in Planning Policy documentation, or through Social Research studies). Most of the items listed were not identified within the literature review undertaken by the Cultural Commission, and many contain additional lists of references to material supporting the appraisal of heritage/historic environment value.

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