



HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
ADVISORY COUNCIL
for SCOTLAND

**Report and recommendations on
the availability of adequate and
appropriate traditional materials
and professional and craft skills to
meet the needs of the built heritage**



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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR SCOTLAND

Report and recommendations on the availability of adequate and appropriate traditional materials and professional and craft skills to meet the needs of the built heritage

Foreword

This report is submitted by HEACS, the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland, which provides Scottish Ministers with strategic advice on issues affecting the historic environment. The report addresses the question of how to ensure the availability of adequate and appropriate traditional materials and professional and craft skills to meet the needs of the built heritage.

In tackling this task HEACS met with a number of expert witnesses, visited several sites or centres of expertise or training, and considered a great deal of written evidence. A range of conferences, seminars and training initiatives were also attended.

HEACS wishes to thank the many individuals and organisations who provided information or assisted with this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 This report covers one of the five priority issues on which the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport asked HEACS for advice. HEACS was asked to consider the question of how to ensure the availability of adequate and appropriate traditional materials and professional and craft skills to meet the needs of the built heritage.

2 The report addresses the needs of the total stock of historic buildings in Scotland, in broad terms, those built before 1919. These account for about 500,000 buildings: a significant proportion of the building stock.

3 The technologies used in traditional and modern buildings cannot effectively be combined. The use of inappropriate imported or modern substitute materials is having a critical impact on the visual appearance, quality and value of historic buildings.

4 Appropriate conservation, repair and maintenance, and the re-use of existing buildings, make an important contribution to the sustainability agenda. Historic buildings make an important contribution to Scotland's cultural identity and attractiveness as a tourist destination.

5 The most critical area in the supply of traditional materials is Scottish slate. No new Scottish slate has been quarried for 50 years. The lack of a supply of new Scottish slate, and a serious shortage of second-hand Scottish slate, have brought about a crisis. The use of foreign slate is becoming increasingly common and a new supply of Scottish slate is an immediate priority. A firm commitment on the part of Scottish Ministers is now required.

6 The other serious issue is the very limited choice of Scottish stone. The use of inappropriate replacement stone for repairs,

can lead to accelerated decay or damage to the fabric. Efforts must continue to be made to open up new sources of Scottish stone and to widen the choice available. The marketing of indigenous materials must be aimed at the new-build sector as well as the repair and maintenance of traditional buildings.

7 The potential environmental impact of any development must be minimised but it is important to take advantage of possible employment opportunities. Essential new sources of dressed stone may require pump-priming assistance to enable them to compete on cost, develop markets and stimulate demand.

8 There is currently a lack of detailed and accurate information on which to make an informed assessment of the supply of and demand for craft skills. However, there is evidence that there are serious shortages of skilled tradespeople for the repair and maintenance of historic buildings, particularly stonemasons, but also traditional plasterers, lead-workers and slaters, and traditionally skilled joiners. It appears that these shortages could escalate into a crisis. The need for such skills to be passed on to future generations is crucial.

9 Trends within the construction industry appear not to favour long-term investment in training. Mainstream training within the construction industry (of which traditional crafts skills are an important subset) concentrates on new-build technologies. In general, college-based training is new-build orientated. The main issue is to ensure that there is appropriate training in traditional skills while at the same time strengthening the relationship between the new build and heritage sectors of the construction industry.

10 Skills shortages are not new, nor are attempts to address them. Over the last 20 years or so there have been a number of positive developments. More recently, momentum has been gathering through the efforts of bodies such as Historic Scotland and CITB-ConstructionSkills. The formation in 2003 of the UK National Heritage Training Group (NHTG) is of particular importance. The Group promises to help meet the undoubted need for greater co-ordination amongst the key stakeholders.

11 Both the Glasgow Project, a materials and skills audit, and the NHTG led Scottish Skills Audit of the traditional building craft skills sector in Scotland will help to provide a much better information base.

12 Other positive developments include the Heritage Lottery Fund Training Bursaries Scheme, and the innovative programme which has been progressed by the Scottish Lime Centre Trust for stonemasonry apprentices and trainees.

13 HEACS commends the development of systems of professional accreditation. However, the number of accredited practitioners remains worryingly small. Government departments and local authorities should set an example for those projects requiring the use of accredited practitioners.

14 HEACS also commends the progress being made to bring about the accreditation of conservator-restorers. Moves to enable and encourage more and more of the workforce to become accredited or otherwise 'recognised' are to be welcomed. The long-term aim should be for the whole 'team' working on repair and maintenance projects to be accredited.

15 A small number of training centres for traditional building and craft skills perform a very important role. However, there is scope for expansion and development through effective strategic planning and increased co-ordination and partnership working. The goal should be for an integrated national network of training providers.

16 In view of the strong linkages, the appropriate care and maintenance of Scotland's built and movable heritage requires to be positively progressed on more than one front at the same time. To undertake appropriate conservation, repair or maintenance work requires integration of knowledge, skills and materials in equal measure. These three elements should not be out of step.

17 It is also essential that attempts to improve the supply of traditional materials and skills should be matched by measures to stimulate demand. There is, for instance, a need for guidance of a less technical nature, which would increase general awareness of the conservation, repair and maintenance process and the problems that the use of the wrong materials and poor repair techniques can often bring. Local authorities can play an enhanced role in increasing awareness and appreciation amongst owners and the general public.

18 Increased awareness is also a key to the issue of property maintenance which has not, as yet, been addressed in an effective way. While there may be scope for pilots to take forward initiatives, these can really only take place within a national maintenance strategy. A National Historic Environment Maintenance and Repairs Loan Fund could be an essential part of such a strategy.

19 Traditional materials and skills raise a number of cross cutting issues which not only impinge on several departments and agencies, but involve many stakeholders and partners. There is welcome evidence of shared objectives and successful partnership working. However, some of the issues are particularly challenging. Their resolution will require increased dialogue, co-ordination and effective partnership at both at national and local levels. There is a need for overall responsibility, focus and leadership to be provided at Ministerial level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Traditional materials

- *Scottish Ministers must give a commitment to bring about new sources of supply of Scottish slate as a matter of urgency.*
- *Scottish Ministers should issue guidance recommending that, until there is a new supply of appropriate Scottish slate, second-hand Scottish slates should be reserved for the repair and maintenance of historic buildings.*
- *The development of the Scottish stone quarrying industry, particularly dressed stone, should be taken forward as a priority.*
- *Historic Scotland be invited to form a study group to investigate the extent to which Scottish vernacular building materials can continue to contribute to regional diversity and a sustainable future.*

Skills and professional issues

- *Skills and materials audits similar to the Glasgow Project should be carried out in different areas, to provide comparative information.*
- *CITB-ConstructionSkills should examine ways in which the approach taken by the Scottish Lime Centre Trust could be developed to provide high-quality apprenticeship training without becoming an economic drain on small businesses.*
- *Historic Scotland should strengthen the conditions of grant-aid so that the use of accredited building craft workers becomes a requirement. Initially this might be by way of 'conservation endorsements' to the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) but, should a National Certificate in Traditional Building and Conservation Skills be developed, then this could become the accepted benchmark.*
- *CITB-ConstructionSkills and the Scottish Qualifications Authority should be asked to consider the creation of a National Certificate in Traditional Building and Building Conservation Skills.*
- *Historic Scotland should invite those involved in running training centres in traditional and building conservation skills to come together to consider how an integrated national network of training providers might be achieved. As a first step, Historic Scotland should consider amalgamating its currently dispersed commitment to training support.*
- *Professional bodies should participate in the continuing development of accreditation schemes and encourage members to become accredited.*
- *Government departments and local authorities should set an example by using accredited practitioners on historic building projects.*
- *Historic Scotland practitioners should be accredited.*
- *Scottish Ministers should maintain their commitment to conservation internship and fellowship programmes.*
- *Opportunities should be made wherever possible to provide training opportunities as part of conservation projects, particularly on Historic Scotland-funded projects or on projects promoted by the NTS.*

Demand for traditional materials and craft skills

- *Local authorities should be encouraged to explore the scope for playing an enhanced role in increasing awareness and appreciation amongst owners and managers of the need for sympathetic repair and maintenance.*
- *Historic Scotland should partner local authorities in providing repair and maintenance grants for listed buildings and unlisted properties within conservation areas.*
- *The major stakeholders should be brought together with a view to formulating a national strategy for maintenance.*
- *A commitment to maintenance should become a condition of Historic Scotland grant-aided projects.*
- *An investigation should be made to determine the benefits of a National Historic Environment Maintenance and Repairs Loan Fund and how it might be operated.*
- *Scottish Ministers should join with their counterparts in the home countries in calling for a government review of the impact of VAT on the repair and maintenance of historic buildings.*

INTRODUCTION

1 In 2003, the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, identified five priority policy areas for HEACS to consider. The Minister requested HEACS

To address how we ensure the availability of adequate and appropriate traditional materials and professional and craft skills to meet the needs of the built heritage: The conservation, repair and maintenance work on any historic building, structure or object is dependent upon the availability, in equal measure, of appropriate knowledge, relevant traditional materials and craft skills. Conservation work can only be carried out effectively if both specifiers and practitioners are able to draw on an up-to-date understanding of traditional material technology, an effective broad skills base, and an awareness of an appropriate conservation philosophy. Without such an integrated combination the built heritage will inevitably suffer. Scotland is facing a crisis in the shortage of both the skills and the materials needed to conserve our historic environment. Advice is needed on how best to address these issues.

Materials and skills

2 In considering the Minister's statement, HEACS has taken the view that the indigenous materials required for the repair and maintenance of the built heritage are those most easily described and understood as 'traditional' and include stone, timber, slate, lime, clay, and thatch. However, they also include other manufactured materials or

products such as concrete, ironwork, and tiles.

3 The skills required are, broadly, those necessary to repair, maintain and conserve a wide range of buildings, historic interiors and artefacts, as well as aspects of the landscape.

4 In discussion of the built heritage, this report is concerned not only with designated structures, listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and unlisted buildings in conservation areas, but with the total stock of historic buildings from churches to croft steadings. For the purpose of this report, HEACS follows recent practice in defining historic buildings as those built before 1919, a definition used by UK Housing Condition Surveys and various reports dealing with the historic environment sector.

5 Whilst this date is useful in providing a date up to which indigenous traditional materials were generally used, it is an arbitrary cut-off point. With new construction techniques being introduced, and existing ones falling out of use, the problem posed by the lack of knowledge or lack of skills to conserve buildings is likely to be an ever-present one. However, the conservation and repair of buildings constructed with reinforced concrete and other manufactured 'new' materials present different problems to those built with traditional building materials. Traditional buildings can generally be easily taken apart to repair them. Twentieth century buildings can often be more complex in their construction and are not easily taken apart to be repaired. While this report deals with historic buildings, it should be acknowledged that the repair of modern buildings can present significant challenges.

Scope of the report

6 This report focuses on the availability of appropriate materials and skills used in the conservation of the built heritage within the historic environment. The report does not give detailed consideration to the undoubted importance of academic and scientific work which has, for instance, provided a good deal of the recent knowledge gained into the qualities of traditional materials, their performance, and contribution to the historic environment. It is essential that such work should continue to be funded and supported.

7 In terms of skills, the report extends from traditional building skills to the specialist skills of the conservator. HEACS, however, is aware of skills shortages in other areas of relevance to the historic environment. For instance, local authority planners and others involved in the design process often have an inadequate knowledge of the historic environment and there are insufficient numbers of conservation officers in post. These, and other related issues, are considered in the HEACS Report on the role and responsibilities of local authorities.

Context

8 This report takes as its immediate context the principles for the conservation of the historic environment as set out in international charters, such as the influential over-arching international *Venice Charter* and its various derivatives such as the Australian *Burra Charter* and, for Scotland, the *Stirling Charter* (2000), which states:

- the conservation, repair and maintenance of the historic environment should use appropriate materials, skills and methods of working;
- that relevant bodies should ensure that suitable knowledge and skills and materials are available; and

- that training and education to enhance the quality of conservation practice are widely available.

9 Good repair practice involves authenticity, like-for-like replacement, and reversibility. The National Heritage Training Group (NHTG) report, *Traditional Building Craft Skills* (2005) states that “working on historic buildings requires great care and understanding of the original materials of construction and the need to retain as much as possible of the original fabric.” In many instances, the technologies used in traditional and modern buildings cannot effectively be combined. The use of more recent techniques and materials to repair older buildings may, in the longer term, do more harm than good and lead to their accelerated decay.

10 Traditional solid wall masonry buildings are an obvious example, where the ability of the masonry walls to ‘breathe’ is essential for the health of the building. The properties of lime mortar allow moisture to evaporate from walls, helping to keep the building dry, whereas modern cement-based mortars trap and contain moisture within the structure.

11 The reason why national and international charters lay such emphasis on conservation principles is also related to centuries-long philosophical debates about what is genuine or not. However, it is accepted that the replacement of features or elements may be necessary, for instance for reasons of structural stability, public safety or design integrity. A benefit is that such interventions, when carefully considered and carried out by outstanding craftspeople, can introduce an element of ‘creativity’ to the historic environment.

12 Whilst specialist skills are required for the conservation of the built and movable heritage, the general repair and maintenance of the built heritage is a major subset of the

Scottish construction industry which being valued at over £3 billion per annum is of considerable importance to the Scottish economy. The Partnership Agreement between the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats includes a commitment on construction which binds the Scottish Executive to building a competitive, vital construction industry and to addressing skills and training. The availability of the necessary skills for repair and maintenance must therefore be seen within the context of the construction industry as a whole. Furthermore, productivity and profitability apply to the built heritage sector as much as the new-build sector. The built heritage sector may also provide opportunities, particularly for young people, for career and personal advancement.

13 Appropriate conservation, repair and maintenance, and the re-use of existing buildings, make an important contribution to the sustainability agenda. Historic buildings represent a huge investment in terms of environmental capital and energy. “Maintaining our existing building stock, including historic buildings, through conservation and repair makes an enormous saving on the use of finite natural material resources for building purposes, avoids unnecessary waste through demolition and

contributes directly to the Government’s Sustainability policy drive.” NHTG *Traditional Building Craft Skills* (2005).

14 The transportation of materials from overseas, particularly stone or slate, involves the use of energy which contributes to Scotland’s global environmental impact or footprint. This is in addition to concealing social and environmental costs which may include the minimal or non-existent provision of health and safety protection for quarry workers, the use of child labour, and damage to the environment through uncontrolled extraction.

15 The historic environment makes a significant contribution to the richness and diversity of Scotland’s landscape and townscapes. The use of inappropriate imported or modern substitute materials is having a critical impact on the visual appearance, quality and value of historic buildings. This impact may undermine the contribution which the historic environment can make to local regeneration and to generating international tourism. It may also undermine the contribution which the historic environment makes to social well-being, and an individual or community’s sense of place and identity.

SUPPLY OF TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

16 The use of local materials, such as the red sandstone of Dumfries, the granite of the City of Aberdeen, or the flagstone of Caithness, is intrinsic to that quality of ‘local distinctiveness’, whether found in a farm building, church or 18th century streetscape. Such use is reflected in the exceptional richness and diversity of Scotland’s historic buildings, and their texture and colour are a key component of Scotland’s historic environment.

17 In considering the issue of whether there is a shortage of traditional indigenous building materials, there are two main issues which must be addressed: the crisis in the supply of Scottish slate and the shortage of Scottish stone. Difficulties surrounding the supply of other traditional materials or products, such as ironwork or glass, are not on the same scale; this section therefore concentrates on the issues of Scottish slate and Scottish stone.

Scottish slate

18 Indigenous roofing materials make a significant contribution to the appearance of the historic environment. This is especially true of Scottish slate, particularly West Highland (Easdale and Ballachulish), but also slate from other areas such as Aberfoyle or North East Scotland. Stone flags or slabs have also been important in a number of areas, including Dumfriesshire, Caithness, and the Northern Isles. Other UK sources of roofing material, including Welsh and Westmorland slate, have been used historically in Scotland.

19 Whilst Welsh and Westmorland slate remain available, Scottish slate has not been produced since the 1950s. Since then, grant-aided and other repairs to historic buildings in Scotland have relied on the sourcing of second-hand Scottish slates and, though re-

dressed slates can last for some 200 years, there can be a loss of up to 60% of material on re-dressing. Supplies of second-hand Scottish slates have dwindled to the point where they are now so scarce that they can no longer be specified by planning authorities.

20 A consequence of this critical shortage is that it has now become acceptable for old Scottish slates to be concentrated on the more conspicuous areas of a roof with different slates used on others. Furthermore, in many areas of rural Scotland the undesirable practice of stripping original slates from vernacular buildings in order to re-use them on new buildings, has become common. Second hand Scottish slates should be restricted to the repair of historic buildings until there is a new supply of appropriate Scottish slate.

21 In recent years the import of foreign slate has increased, but it is contended that imported slate does not have the same characteristics as indigenous Scottish slate as regards appearance or of durability when it comes to withstanding Scotland’s climate.

New supplies of Scottish slate

22 There has been no apparent commercial enthusiasm to open or re-open a Scottish slate quarry and, by default, the task has fallen to Historic Scotland to investigate. The agency commissioned research on Scottish slate and the feasibility of re-opening a slate quarry and this work was published in a TAN, *Scottish Slate Quarries* (2000), which identified significant reserves and led to a series of further research reports.

23 Associated research and investigations are currently being carried out by the Scottish Stone Liaison Group (SSLG), on behalf of Historic Scotland, at Khartoum Quarry at

Ballachulish and the Hill of Foudland Quarry, Aberdeenshire. These were identified as suitable sites and testing is being carried out on samples extracted from each location. The results are awaited.

24 The work to date has provided a useful body of knowledge and has helped identify the challenges ahead. However, progress has not been as sustained as might have been hoped. There must now be a concerted effort to establish new sources of Scottish slate sufficient to provide a significant supply for the foreseeable future.

25 There are environmental issues to be addressed, even though modern extraction techniques will lessen the impact, and all attempts to address the waste and noise pollution problems are to be welcomed. There are also skills issues to be addressed in the winning and dressing of slate, but the potential for employment to be created in rural areas should be borne in mind.

26 Whilst West Highland slates are the more important in terms of addressing the repair and maintenance of existing buildings, other sources of slate in Scotland must continue to be considered. In the longer term, initiatives should not concentrate on just one or two sites.

27 A firm commitment on the part of Scottish Ministers is now required to develop new sources of Scottish slate and to ensure that a properly funded development is embarked upon. It will be necessary to explore different mechanisms for taking this forward and the possibilities include establishing a trust or non profit-making company.

28 There is good evidence that a market for Scottish slate would quickly develop if there was an operational quarry. However, it is essential, in the short-term at least, that Historic Scotland and other funders specify the new Scottish slate for grant-aided work. A demand for new Scottish slate for new buildings can be confidently anticipated.

Recommendations

- *Scottish Ministers must give a commitment to bring about new sources of supply of Scottish slate as a matter of urgency.*
- *Scottish Ministers should issue guidance recommending that, until there is a new supply of appropriate Scottish slate, second-hand Scottish slates should be reserved for the repair and maintenance of historic buildings.*

Stone

29 Stone has made, and continues to make, a major contribution to the character of Scotland's historic environment. Scotland is indeed a land of stone. The country's geological complexity has produced a diversity of building stones that makes an exceptional contribution to local distinctiveness.

30 However, the current lack of fresh supplies of these indigenous materials is now seriously hampering the appropriate repair and maintenance of Scotland's built heritage. At least 1,200 commercial quarries were producing building stone in Scotland 150 years ago; there are only about 20 quarries in operation today. The possibility of obtaining a supply of appropriate, let alone matching, stone for the repair of historic buildings is severely restricted.

31 Research published by Historic Scotland, *The Performance of Replacement Sandstone in the New Town of Edinburgh* 2004, clearly demonstrates the damage resulting from the use of inappropriate replacement stones. Stone, supposedly compatible on colour and competitive on price, may well have different characteristics from the original material and this can lead to the accelerated decay of original masonry.

32 There is widespread lack of understanding of the complexities of the issues surrounding the performance specification and procurement of stone. To many, if it is the right colour or if the contractor can supply a stone that is cheaper, then that is the stone that is chosen. The detrimental effect of such replacement stones when indented into a building, is not being given sufficient medium, let alone long-term, consideration. Careful stone selection based on proper analysis is essential and should be mandatory for all publicly-funded stone repair projects. It also suggests the need for professional training and education.

33 The critical quality of 'local distinctiveness' is that many historic buildings are made of materials sourced locally, often from less than a mile from where a structure was to be built. However, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the development of railways and other forms of transport allowed materials to be carried economically much greater distances. With the expansion of towns and cities, many local sources of stone have been built over or sterilised.

34 Research undertaken by the SSLG demonstrates that local authorities in Scotland often appear to possess little knowledge or information relating to the identification and sources of indigenous building materials. It is also apparent that certain local authorities have permitted the use of re-constituted stone (effectively coloured concrete) and concrete tiles, as opposed to slate, for repairs to traditional buildings in conservation areas. This apparent lack of appreciation of the use of appropriate materials and the consequent lowering of standards is of particular concern, and points to the need for relevant education and training.

35 In addition to issues of suitability and 'match' with the original stone, the use of imported stone also gives rise to concerns about global environmental impact and other 'hidden' costs mentioned in the introduction to this report.

36 The development in Scotland of new quarries and the reopening of old quarries, making full use of their entire output of rubble and dressed stone, is therefore essential. This will mean careful consideration, especially of the scale of the enterprise, and minimisation of the potential environmental impact. But it is also important to appreciate the opportunities to create jobs and thus contribute to the diversity of local employment.

37 The revival of the Caithness flagstone industry is an example of modern techniques enabling quarrying to be economically viable and make a valuable contribution to the local economy without significant environmental impact. The Local Enterprise Company has provided assistance for a marketing campaign to attract and develop relationships with potential customers.

38 HEACS welcomes the efforts which are being made to raise awareness of stone, particularly amongst practitioners. It is important that the general public is made more aware of the importance of new sources of stone and the wider issues. It should, for instance, be recognised that dressed stone quarries are generally less intrusive than aggregate quarries, and are usually on a smaller scale.

39 Mineral maps and other sources of information deriving from the work of the British Geological Survey may assist, not only in specifying the correct stone, but also in informing planners and conservation officers of the value of the stones resources in their area, preventing sterilisation of existing quarries by infill, and helping to minimise the environmental and social impacts of new developments.

40 The opening, or re-opening, and development of stone quarries may require public investment. New sources of dressed stone may require pump-priming assistance to enable them to compete on cost, develop markets and stimulate demand.

Recommendation

- *The development of the Scottish stone quarrying industry, particularly dressed stone, should be taken forward as a priority.*

SSLG: Scottish Stone Liaison Group

41 Very useful work is being carried out by the SSLG through its three project teams: the Natural Stone Institute (now a separate organisation in its own right); Indigenous Materials; and the Scottish Stone Industry. It is noteworthy that there are moves to set up a Stone Liaison Group in England and a related body in Wales modelled on the SSLG approach.

42 HEACS welcomes the publication of *Building with Scottish Stone* by the Natural Stone Institute in 2005. It contains practical guidance on the procurement and use of natural stone and is largely aimed at the practitioner.

43 HEACS also welcomes the efforts which the SSLG has been making to re-open quarries, for instance, Cullaloe Quarry near Burntisland in Fife and its pioneering work at Khartoum and Foudland slate quarries.

Timber

44 Along with stone and material used for plasters and renders, primarily earth and lime, wood has been self-evidently one of the fundamental building materials in Scotland. There is a long tradition of importing high-

quality timbers for use in Scotland, certainly for many hundreds of years. However, there is a welcome growing awareness that part of the sustainability of Scotland's forestry traditions can involve the production of high-quality timbers used not only in construction but also for joinery, high-quality furniture and for decoration.

Earth, thatch and other materials used for the construction of vernacular buildings

45 A range of other building materials was widely used in the past, including unworked stone, clay, earthen sods, and a considerable range of thatching materials, including heather, broom, bracken, reeds, and straw from wheat, barley and oats. Some remnants of buildings survive which reveal the use of these characteristic materials, and their rarity gives them special significance.

46 The work undertaken by Historic Scotland on buildings in state care and through the Thatched Houses Maintenance Scheme, and at the Highland Folk Museum has done much to ensure the continuing use of vernacular materials. While there are difficulties over the supply of certain materials, for instance, appropriate straw for thatching, the main concern is the small amount of activity. Indeed, it may be suggested that, unless these materials are re-introduced into modern buildings, then the current level of activity may well be insufficient to ensure their continued use as well as the survival of associated skills. These materials must be recognised, as they are elsewhere in Europe, as sustainable and environmentally-friendly products.

Recommendation

- *Historic Scotland be invited to form a study group to investigate the extent to which Scottish vernacular building materials can continue to contribute to regional diversity and a sustainable future.*

TRADITIONAL BUILDING CRAFT SKILLS

Assessment of skills shortages

47 Concern over skills shortages in the construction industry have been expressed for a considerable period. However, a good deal of concern has been based on anecdotal evidence. Despite an accumulating body of knowledge over the past decade, there is currently a lack of detailed and accurate information on which to make an informed assessment of the situation in Scotland. Such an assessment would require an accurate measurement of both supply and demand. In the current state of knowledge it is not possible either to determine trends or to make accurate forecasts for the medium or long-term.

48 There have been a number of reports describing shortages of skilled craftspeople in England or the UK in general. These reports include the Heritage Lottery Fund publication *Sustaining Our Living Heritage* (2000). Both the English heritage sector report, *The Power of Place* (2000), and the Government's statement on the historic environment, *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future* (2001), drew attention to the serious shortage of skills in England. *The State of the Historic Environment Report* (2002), carried out by English Heritage, repeated these concerns.

49 The Countryside Agency Report, *Crafts in the English Countryside: Towards a Future* (2004) included a detailed consideration of heritage building crafts, associated skills gaps and training requirements. The NHTG report, *Traditional Building Craft Skills* (2005) presented a skills needs analysis of the built heritage sector in England. The report identified shortages of labour, skills and experience, difficulties of recruiting, and an insufficient up-take of training in built heritage skills.

50 There have been fewer attempts to describe the situation in Scotland. Indeed the lack of comparative documents to *The Power of Place* and *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future* has meant that skills and other related vital issues have not been given an equally high profile. With many of the UK's historic buildings subject to regional variations in the use of traditional materials, it seems reasonable to assume that many of the skills issues will vary geographically and that there is a need for detailed research both for Scotland as a whole and at a regional level.

51 A report on *Preliminary Repair and Maintenance Skills Research – Scotland*, undertaken by CITB, NHTG, Historic Scotland and the SSLG in 2003, came up with a number of key findings:

- there was concern about traditional materials supply and relevant training in colleges;
- only a third of those working as tradespeople were stated to be 'qualified'. This would not appear to necessarily be the same as possessing a nationally recognised qualification;
- for stonemasons, 33% were 'qualified'; 33% were in training, and 33% had no training. No value was set on the worth or extent of training;
- specialist stoneworkers were identified by 47% of those surveyed as being difficult to recruit; and
- lack of relevant knowledge by trainers was identified by 52% of those surveyed as a key college problem.

52 HEACS is also aware of concerns about the nature of the training stonemasons currently receive. Too many are being trained for the mainstream dressed stone industry and lack the breadth and depth of skill to deal with historic buildings. Training programmes concentrate on cutting and dressing for stone building or stone replacement as opposed to concentrating on the use of lime mortars, as well as repairs to, and the conservation of, decaying stonework or harling.

53 In addition to serious shortages of stonemasons, there are also concerns about the availability of plasterers, lead-workers and slaters, and traditionally skilled joiners. There is a small number of businesses producing high quality joinery, often of a specialist nature. There are also businesses producing good quality joinery work, particularly replacement windows. However, it appears that, in practice, it can often be difficult to find craftsmen able to undertake repair or maintenance of windows and doors.

54 The availability of the skills associated with gathering, storing and applying vernacular building materials, particularly thatch, also give rise to concerns. Here the crucial need is to ensure, particularly at the regional level, the handing on of craft skills to a new generation.

55 The evidence currently available suggests there are serious shortages of skills for the repair and maintenance of historic buildings which account for about 500,000 buildings: a significant proportion of the total building stock in Scotland. If not addressed, these shortages could escalate into a crisis.

The question of training

56 The repair and maintenance of buildings accounts for a significant portion of the substantial expenditure on construction in Scotland. Conservatively estimated in value at £6.5 billion per annum, the sub-division of construction industry activities split at £3.52 billion per annum for new works,

against £3.01 billion per annum for repair and maintenance (*Achieving Construction Innovation and Excellence in Scotland*, Modernising Construction Strategic Group, 2003). Conservation may be viewed as a specialist subset of repair and maintenance.

57 Fundamental to the traditional building skills issue is the growing gulf between construction and training in new build and traditional building techniques. Until about the time of the First World War, new buildings were built using the same construction techniques and materials as had been used for centuries. Until about 30 to 40 years ago, much of the repair of historic buildings was therefore undertaken by the main construction industry, as opposed to specialists from the built heritage sector.

58 The last cycle of tradesmen who were trained in traditional building techniques in the 1940s and 1950s have retired and their skills have not been passed on to a new generation. This failure to maintain skills within the workforce is giving rise to particular difficulties. It is not yet established whether the recent influx of migrant workers from the eight eastern European accession states will have a permanent beneficial impact on the situation.

59 The introduction of education and training in new materials and construction techniques has led to a growing gap in the skills and knowledge between the new build and the historic buildings sector. The greater proportion of the industry is now educated and trained in new-build technologies.

60 It could therefore be argued that almost half the industry does not have the knowledge or practical experience of traditional building techniques to match the work it does. Although it has been rightly said that there has never been a golden age in training, a significant and growing proportion of the workforce is ill-prepared for the work it is required to carry out on the existing building stock. Current training provision

is encouraging practices which are entirely inappropriate for the repair and maintenance of historic buildings.

61 Repair and maintenance skills are, similarly, not well provided for by the industry's education and training programmes. These areas tend to be the prerogative of the singleton building contractor but, here, the difference lies in the considerable number of individuals operating this way. The CITB report, *Bridging the Gap* (2002), identified 660 firms (out of 975) in the Highlands and Islands area which employed between them just over 1,000 operatives. This scenario is likely to be typical of the rest of rural Scotland.

62 Remote from training centres and lacking proper recognition by the rest of the construction industry, these companies - 1.6 persons on average – provide the backbone of repair and maintenance work across the country. From the evidence available, many crafts or tradespeople appear to learn their skills 'on the job' and, as they are required to multi-task, they frequently have to tackle a variety of elements within a building. Such practitioners have had little opportunity to obtain formal training. However, there is now some recognition that this issue must be addressed.

63 Considerable efforts and money are being spent by CITB-ConstructionSkills, and others, to encourage young people to consider a career in the construction industry. However, in 2004, although 3,500 young people passed the CITB-ConstructionSkills aptitude test only 2,219 were actually recruited by employers. It appears that the problem lies not so much with the attractiveness of the industry, but with the employers who do not see apprenticeships and training in new skills as economically viable.

Wider context

64 The UK Government seeks to modernise the construction industry and to qualify the workforce. In Scotland the Partnership Agreement commitment on construction binds the Scottish Executive to building a competitive, vital construction industry and to addressing skills and training.

65 The Modernising Construction Strategic Group was established in 2002. Its final strategy paper, *Achieving Construction Innovation and Excellence in Scotland*, was published and presented to Scottish Ministers in 2003. The paper covered four key themes: procurement, workforce development, image and achievement, and best practice. It also recognised the significance and value of the repair and maintenance sector.

66 The Scottish Construction Forum was established in 2004 to provide strategic advice to the industry, the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament. It represents the entire construction industry and seeks to encourage best practice, increase communication, and raise standards across the sector. It is taking forward the recommendations of the Modernising Construction strategy paper. However, it has yet to focus on the needs of the repair and maintenance sector.

67 CITB-ConstructionSkills is the Sector Skills Council for construction and is taking an active role in delivering the UK Skills Strategy. HEACS commends the appointment of a Heritage Training Adviser by CITB-ConstructionSkills. HEACS also welcomes the Sector Skills Agreement that was formalised between Historic Scotland and CITB-ConstructionSkills in March 2006.

The National Heritage Training Group (NHTG)

68 The National Heritage Training Group, established in 2003 in response to concerns about training in the traditional building crafts sector, covers the UK and involves CITB-ConstructionSkills, English Heritage, Historic Scotland and other partners. It includes contractors, leading heritage bodies, trade unions, and training providers, working together to develop a coherent system for training and skills provision in the traditional building crafts sector. The Group's priorities, set out in its Business Plan, *Building on the Past: Training for the Future*, comprise: working to integrate key stakeholders; identifying and filling information gaps; and developing a 5-year traditional building crafts skills training plan.

69 The formation of the NHTG fulfils, at least on a day-to-day basis, the undoubted need for greater co-ordination of training and for an umbrella body to represent all interests. HEACS commends the establishment of the Group and the approach it is taking.

The Scottish Skills Audit

70 With a view to providing a more comprehensive analysis of the current situation in Scotland, a joint initiative between Historic Scotland and CITB-ConstructionSkills and led by the NHTG will provide an audit of the traditional building craft skills sector in Scotland. The Scottish Skills Audit will quantify and analyse traditional building craft skills, identify the training needs, and create a plan for further action. The report, expected to be published in September after a consultation period, will make recommendations for improving the delivery of training and sustaining a skilled building conservation workforce to meet the demands of the sector. It will thus support the NHTG's delivery of its Business Plan in Scotland.

71 It is to be hoped that the report will enable a benchmark to be set, contribute to the production of national and regional training strategies, and support the engagement of the various stakeholders, including Enterprise Company networks, local authorities and further education colleges. The report will also combine with the results of the already published English skills audit and related work in Wales and Northern Ireland to give a comprehensive overview of the sector's needs in the UK.

The Glasgow Project

72 Valuable information on training needs will also come from the work in Glasgow being undertaken through the SSLG by the British Geological Survey and CITB-ConstructionSkills. The project will assess the 'health' of the city's historic buildings and how the range of building stones used have performed over the years, and estimate the number of stonemasons required to ensure the appropriate maintenance of the City's built heritage in the future. HEACS welcomes the role of the SSLG and the support of Scottish Enterprise – Glasgow, City of Glasgow Council, NHTG and CITB-ConstructionSkills.

73 Similar materials and skills audits carried out in different parts of Scotland, urban and rural, would provide useful comparative information. Such audits could assess different skills, particularly for trades that attract lower numbers of trainees. A partnership of Historic Scotland, NTS and the Historic Houses Association in Scotland, working with SSLG and CITB-ConstructionSkills, would be well placed to help to provide a rural comparison.

Recommendation

- *Skills and materials audits similar to the Glasgow Project should be carried out in different areas, to provide comparative information.*

TRAINING ISSUES

74 There are a number of issues relating to the provision of training. For instance, not every Scottish college makes available construction industry courses in every skill. For example, prior to the opening of a facility for slating and tiling training in Alness, the college furthest north providing such training was in Arbroath.

75 The development of the Historic Scotland stone masonry training workshop at Elgin, previously only available in Edinburgh and Glasgow, clearly demonstrates that when a local training facility is available, employers do respond to the opportunity.

76 Currently, for stone masonry, there are only two major employers providing the bulk of trainees for the two colleges in the Central Belt (Glasgow and Edinburgh) but, if there was a change of policy by one or the other or both, then it is likely that one or both of the Central Belt colleges could cease to provide the stonemasonry training facilities.

Heritage Lottery Fund Training Bursaries Scheme

77 The UK-wide Heritage Lottery Fund Training Bursaries Scheme, whereby £7m has been committed over the course of four years to fund a range of practical training placements across the heritage sector is a welcome recent initiative. The bursaries will help plug the gap between the declining numbers of specialists and craftspeople and the growing needs of the sector. It is also intended that the bursaries will help the sector develop innovative models of delivering training.

Training options

78 Small to medium employers invariably do not train individuals and the reasons normally offered are that they either cannot cover the costs of a trainee in the initial period (the first two years) or guarantee the trainee's employment for the four-year training period. Generally, it is only in the third and fourth year that the trainee can actually make a positive contribution to the business.

79 An innovative programme has been progressed by the Scottish Lime Centre Trust (SLCT) that enables it to employ stonemasonry apprentices and trainees for their first two years (during which time they are not normally financially productive) prior to their returning to their initial employer. By providing a facility for the trainees both to attend college and also to receive specialist training 'on the job' during this critical time, the SLCT scheme addresses the primary concerns of the smaller stonemasonry employer. HEACS welcomes the fact that in 2005 Scottish Enterprise agreed to award the Centre £707,000 towards this work-based training programme (with an estimated total value of £2.2 million in the first phase). The model of a masonry training squad could serve as a pilot in terms of providing quality training in repair and maintenance skills, without being an economic drain to small firms.

80 The project also involves the development of new training awards, recognising the achievement of a high standard of traditional skills and understanding, which will stand alongside the current modern apprenticeships.

81 HEACS is of the view that such innovative initiatives should be meaningfully explored and that funding be provided to enable the better of these initiatives to be developed. Such initiatives are particularly important to the provision of training for a number of trades that attract fewer trainee numbers, or to facilitate training within small businesses.

Recommendation

- *CITB-ConstructionSkills should examine ways in which the approach taken by the Scottish Lime Centre Trust could be developed to provide high-quality apprenticeship training without becoming an economic drain on small businesses.*

Accreditation of crafts or tradespeople

82 An accreditation system for contractors undertaking repair and maintenance of historic buildings would help both to encourage best practice and also to afford protection and re-assurance to the customer. Historic Scotland requires that the lead professional on a grant-aided project, for example, the architect or surveyor, must now be accredited. This condition should be strengthened incrementally, say at 3 or 5 year intervals, to ensure that more and more of the workforce becomes accredited or otherwise 'recognised' as having appropriate skills in repair and maintenance of historic structures, including interiors, gardens and designed landscapes. The introduction of 'conservation endorsements' to the CITB Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) could provide an adequate benchmark. The long-term aim should be for teams working on repair projects to be accredited.

Recommendation

- *Historic Scotland should strengthen the conditions of grant-aid so that the use of accredited building craft workers becomes a requirement. Initially this might be by way of 'conservation endorsements' to the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) but, should a National Certificate in Traditional Building and Conservation Skills be developed, then this could become the accepted benchmark.*

Edinburgh Construction Academy

83 The City of Edinburgh Council's work with historic buildings has identified a shortage of masons, both skilled and unskilled, and has led to the establishment of the Edinburgh Construction Academy, a virtual organisation to encourage staff development and training and the co-ordination of the activities of stakeholders within the sector. It is noteworthy that most training takes place within family-orientated businesses and that the Council maintains a close relationship with those small traditional businesses which have the required skills.

TRAINING CENTRES IN TRADITIONAL CRAFT SKILLS

84 There are a number of centres in Scotland currently involved in the provision of training in traditional building and craft skills. They include:

- Scottish Lime Centre Trust, Charlestown, Fife;
- St Mary's Workshop, St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh (part funded by Historic Scotland);
- Historic Scotland's training workshop, Elgin, Morayshire;
- NTS stone masonry and lime production facility, Culzean Castle, Ayrshire;
- NTS School of Heritage Garden Skills, Threave, Dumfriesshire; and the
- Scottish Traditional Skills Training Centre at Fyvie Castle, Aberdeenshire.

85 Given current levels of supply and demand, a good deal of training in traditional skills is not economically viable. There is, at present, a clear need for continuing public investment and HEACS welcomes the support of bodies such as Historic Scotland and the NTS for these training centres. However, there is scope for expansion and development through effective strategic planning and increased co-ordination.

86 The commitment to training shown by individual centres, particularly by those in the voluntary sector, is to be applauded. However, there is significant opportunity for the various centres to communicate and exchange information with one another and, where appropriate, to engage in partnership

working. There is the tangible possibility that a national provision could be created out of the various centres that have been, or are being, developed. This might take the form of an integrated yet dispersed campus.

87 Such an organisation would be able to deliver a unified National Certificate in Traditional Building and Building Conservation Skills. Scottish Vocational Qualifications in Scottish Thatching Techniques and in Traditional Building Skills already exist. There are also modules within other construction skills SVQs which address the issue of traditional practices in stone masonry and joinery. These could be developed by CITB-ConstructionSkills and the Scottish Qualifications Authority into a National Certificate. It would then become possible for dispersed training providers to deliver the same qualification.

Recommendations

- *CITB-ConstructionSkills and the Scottish Qualifications Authority should be asked to consider the creation of a National Certificate in Traditional Building and Building Conservation Skills.*
- *Historic Scotland should invite those involved in running training centres in traditional and building conservation skills to come together to consider how an integrated national network of training providers might be achieved. As a first step, Historic Scotland should consider amalgamating its currently dispersed commitment to training support.*

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

Qualifications and training

88 Professionals play a crucial role in the conservation of the historic environment and the training and professional qualifications of practitioners are key factors in ensuring that work meets required standards. Accreditation schemes are valuable from the viewpoint of the client or employer who may establish that an accredited architect, surveyor or conservator is appropriately qualified and has relevant experience for the job or project in hand.

Building professionals

89 HEACS commends moves made in recent years to produce a common standard and approach to the various professional bodies' building conservation accreditation schemes across the UK.

90 HEACS also welcomes the fact that, from 2004, Historic Scotland made it a condition of grant that projects should be undertaken by an accredited lead professional. The number of accredited building professionals, however, remains low and HEACS recognises that there are time commitment difficulties, particularly in smaller practices, for individuals to become accredited.

91 Relevant professional bodies should continue to encourage their members to seek accreditation, and in doing so ensure that the systems are accessible, and flexible. In this context, HEACS welcomes moves by Historic Scotland to produce Continuing Professional Development (CPD) support material to assist individual practitioners determine how their abilities and competence might be best illustrated in their application for accredited status.

92 Government departments and local authorities should set an example for those projects requiring the use of accredited practitioners, even where the conservation programme may form a relatively small part of a larger project. In the first instance, Historic Scotland practitioners should be accredited.

Recommendations

- *Professional bodies should participate in the continuing development of accreditation schemes and encourage members to become accredited.*
- *Government departments and local authorities should set an example by using accredited practitioners on historic building projects.*
- *Historic Scotland practitioners should be accredited.*

Conservators

93 PACR, the Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers, is the lead scheme for the accreditation of conservators in the UK. It is owned and managed by the Institute of Conservation (Icon) and knowledge, practical skills and professional judgement are assessed to ensure that accredited conservators are mature professionals with appropriate qualifications and experience. It also recognises the maintenance and enhancement of professional capacity through CPD. Accreditation is a requirement for inclusion in the Conservation Register of conservator-restorers in the UK and Ireland. HEACS commends the scheme and recommends that practitioners be given every encouragement to become accredited.

Training for conservators

94 The specialist skills of the conservator are essential for the conservation of movable, as well as built, heritage. Primary training for conservators is offered in England and Wales; courses are undergraduate or postgraduate and include such areas as the conservation of textiles, easel paintings, works on paper, wall paintings and archaeological artefacts.

95 The need has long been identified for recently-qualified conservators to receive further training through internships or funded placements prior to becoming employed, and the HLF Training Bursaries are a recent and welcome initiative. Scotland has however led the way through the steady development of Historic Scotland's post-graduate conservation internship and building conservation fellowship programme. This scheme, unique to Scotland and recognised and admired internationally, has seen, since 1992, over 54 interns completing a 12-month conservation internship and 9 fellows completing a 2-year building conservation

fellowship. The considerable majority continue to work in Scotland in either the public or the private sectors and these conservators are a significant factor in contributing to the pool of professional skills in Scotland. Elsewhere in the UK, and indeed internationally, such training schemes have been eroded through lack of commitment and funding. It is to Historic Scotland's credit that this scheme has been developed and maintained.

Recommendations

- *Scottish Ministers should maintain their commitment to the conservation internship and fellowship programmes.*
- *Opportunities should be made wherever possible to provide training opportunities as part of conservation projects, particularly on Historic Scotland-funded projects or on projects promoted by the NTS.*

DEMAND FOR TRADITIONAL MATERIALS AND CRAFT SKILLS

96 HEACS believes that the evidence which it has gathered indicates that there are enough training initiatives, either up and running or being considered, to meet the short-term needs of training craftsmen to work on the maintenance of Scotland's historic building stock. However, unless there is an increased demand for appropriate repair and maintenance by the owners of such property, there will remain a lack of incentive for employers in the construction industry to invest in relevant training for their workforce. The difficulty is that, in many respects, the market has not developed to give consistency of work or to encourage investment in new sources of traditional materials.

97 Demand has too often been assumed as equivalent to the numbers of historic buildings but this is potential demand which is not the same as effective demand. Indeed, insufficient attention has been paid to the client, particularly the private owner or property manager, and the reluctance of many of them to invest in appropriate repair and maintenance. Effective demand will depend to a great deal on whether procurement standards will be raised.

98 It is suggested, therefore, that as well as efforts to tackle supply issues in the short-term there is a need to increase awareness of the desirability and indeed advantages in using appropriate materials and skills, and thus raise procurement standards. This, in turn, would lead to an industry-led demand for a workforce skilled in traditional methods and techniques, thus stimulating in turn the demand for skills-based training.

Education and awareness-raising for owners and managers

99 The level of potential demand generated by domestic owners is significantly greater than that generated by the public/commercial market and yet the domestic owner is less likely to appreciate the need for sympathetic repair and maintenance. The historic building protection legislation can encourage the use of appropriate materials and skills, particularly where grant assistance is available. A much greater challenge is posed by the 'grey' area of unprotected historic buildings.

100 The issue centres on how to persuade owners to use appropriate materials and to employ professionals and craftspeople with the associated skills. Historic Scotland provides valuable technical advice but a great deal of it is aimed at the professional and comparatively well-informed practitioner. HEACS feels that there is a real need for advice of a less technical nature, including information on how traditional buildings were constructed, how they perform, and why they deteriorate. Indeed, there is a need for a more imaginative approach which would increase general awareness of the conservation, repair and maintenance process. The recent publication of INFORM leaflets by Historic Scotland, that aim to make building owners more aware of a variety of construction issues is a welcome initiative. It is hoped that the series will continue to be developed and widely circulated in tandem with more technical material.

101 There is considerable scope for local authorities to play an enhanced role in increasing awareness and appreciation amongst owners and the general public. This could be through the development plan system, published guidance, or character appraisals. Local authorities could also maintain directories of craftspeople, provide grant aid, or lead by example when carrying out repair contracts to their own historic buildings. They could also act to protect historic buildings of local significance, especially vernacular buildings.

Maintenance

102 The issue of property maintenance is of key importance. It appears that recent efforts to persuade owners regularly to maintain and repair their property in the UK have not been as effective as had been hoped. In the Netherlands, however, it has taken 30 years to achieve a strategic, integrated and successful approach.

103 A recent report concluded that “There has only ever been a policy of passive endorsement of maintenance, not the pro-active encouragement and support it needs... we believe the time is ripe for a wholesale change in policy and practice – in Government, the construction industry, the professions, local authorities and owners – to promote the maintenance of historic buildings.” *Maintain our Heritage* (2004).

104 The concept of preventive maintenance requires considerable marketing and promotion. The establishment by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings of a ‘National Maintenance Week’ is to be welcomed.

105 The idea of a Monument Watch scheme being introduced to the UK has been explored for many years without any firm proposals being formulated. The Monumentenwacht scheme founded in the Netherlands in the 1970s has been instrumental in moving

the Dutch government’s policy away from subsidising repairs towards regular systematic maintenance by owners. The scheme involves teams of inspectors covering the country annually inspecting and providing prioritised reports to owners. The teams also carry out minor and urgent maintenance work during inspections. The development of pilot schemes for conservation areas might be a useful first step. City Heritage Trusts would seem to be appropriate vehicles to take such an initiative forward.

106 Local authorities are well-placed to determine the needs of local conservation areas and should be encouraged to provide grants towards the maintenance of listed buildings as well as unlisted properties within conservation areas. Resources need to be made available.

107 However, these and other initiatives will only succeed in the context of a national maintenance strategy that promotes maintenance for all buildings as a long-term, sustainable approach. This will require a major change in policy and practice, involving a wide range of stakeholders.

Recommendations

- *Local authorities should be encouraged to explore the scope for playing an enhanced role in increasing awareness and appreciation amongst owners and managers of the need for sympathetic repair and maintenance.*
- *Historic Scotland should partner local authorities in providing repair and maintenance grants for listed buildings and unlisted properties within conservation areas.*
- *The major stakeholders should be brought together with a view to formulating a national strategy for maintenance.*

Grant-aided projects

108 Historic Scotland and other funders have had a significant impact on upholding and enhancing conservation standards. Historic Scotland has provided £140m. of building repair grants in the course of the last 15 years. It is essential that grant-aided projects include elements of learning and training wherever appropriate and whenever possible. Council notes that Historic Scotland's new Historic Environment Grant scheme includes reference to training opportunities in assessing applications. The grant scheme would also provide an opportunity of setting standards for maintenance as part of a national maintenance strategy.

Recommendation

- *A commitment to maintenance should become a condition of Historic Scotland grant-aided projects.*

National Historic Environment Maintenance and Repairs Loan Fund

109 Historic Scotland-funding can only meet the repair needs of a very small proportion of the historic building stock and is only made available for those buildings considered to be outstanding. Given these limitations, serious consideration should be given to the establishment of a National Historic Environment Maintenance and Repairs Loan Fund. This should be a revolving loan fund with low interest charges. The National Restoration Fund in the Netherlands has been so successful that it may replace grants as the major source of government support for the conservation of historic properties.

Recommendation

- *An investigation should be made to determine the benefits of a National Historic Environment Maintenance and Repairs Loan Fund and how it might be operated.*

City of Edinburgh Council

110 The City of Edinburgh Council has been making sterling efforts to create a culture of maintenance amongst property owners. The 1991 Confirmation Act gives unique powers to the Council to serve Statutory Notices for building defects with the work mainly undertaken on behalf of owners by the Council. To assist the public, the Council has compiled a list of quality-checked contractors. Under the Edinburgh Safe Buildings Initiative the Council has also been taking action on the issue of falling masonry which has underlined the need for owners to take responsibility and to be constantly reminded of their responsibilities. The issue, in general, raises the need for: regular property inspections; the use of appropriate materials; and the employment of properly skilled contractors.

Housing (Scotland) Act 2006

111 HEACS welcomes the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 in promoting better repair and maintenance of the housing stock. It is hoped that, in the implementation of the Act, local authorities and owners of traditionally built housing stock will use appropriate materials and skills in repair and maintenance work and seek to provide relevant training opportunities.

VAT

112 The VAT regime, whereby 17.5% VAT is payable on maintenance and repairs to historic buildings, but not on alterations, or new build, has long been regarded as a particular disincentive to property owners to carry out basic repair and maintenance. It is asserted that the current arrangements effectively encourage attempts at VAT evasion and the use of non-VAT registered firms that may not have the necessary skills. Such businesses invariably do not offer training opportunities.

113 The Government has accepted the case for and has been negotiating for a reduced VAT rate for repairs to listed places of worship. As an interim measure, there has been since 2001 a grant scheme for Listed Places of Worship that now effectively reduces the rate of VAT on repairs to 0%.

114 The current VAT arrangements for historic buildings as a whole are considered to be illogical and directly contrary to Government policies on the historic environment and urban regeneration. The impact of VAT on the repair and maintenance of historic buildings should be the subject of a government review.

Recommendation

- *Scottish Ministers should join with their counterparts in the home countries in calling for a government review of the impact of VAT on the repair and maintenance of historic buildings.*

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