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Speech by Ms Linda Fabiani MSP, Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture to the HEACS Conference, 25 September 2007

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to be at today's conference, which I am sure will be both enlightening and inspiring. I am sorry I am unable to stay all afternoon.

Before I go on to speak about the impact of climate change on the historic environment, I'd like to take this opportunity to say a little about important developments in the historic environment sector. First, I want to give you some good news about the four reports submitted by the Historic Environment Advisory Council last year.

I am very grateful for all the hard work that the members of the Council put into these reports, and into the first report Council submitted, on the need for a Historic Environment Audit. As many of you will know, Council's recommendation on an Audit was already accepted. Historic Scotland is undertaking the audit on behalf of the sector and will soon be publishing its preliminary report.

Council provided advice on four further subjects in summer 2006, on the need for:

- 1 a review of the heritage protection legislation;
- 2 the role of local authorities in the conservation of the historic environment;
- 3 the availability of traditional materials and professional craft skills; and
lastly
the criteria for taking properties into care.

My predecessor as Minister wrote to the Council late last year, giving some preliminary responses and outlining the further work that needed to be done. Officials in Historic Scotland have been working extremely hard since last year to examine the Council's recommendations. For the two more complex reports - on legislation and local authorities - we have consulted widely.

I am happy to tell you that everything is on course for me to be able to make full and final responses to these four reports this autumn.

HEACS, in its second term, is now working to provide advice on four further issues, I've noticed that things happen in fours with HEACS

- the economic impact of the historic environment;
- the conservation of the ecclesiastical heritage;
- engaging young adults with the historic environment; and
- the infrastructure of the historic environment.

I am particularly interested in the last report, as my early impression is that the sector is a bit fragmented, and there may be scope for looking at how we can work more effectively together to strengthen its voice.

During the last year, work has also continued on the development of Ministerial policy on the historic environment - the Scottish Historic Environment Policy series. I generally try to avoid acronyms but I'll refer to this policy series as SHEPs from now on.

This series emerged from the review of Historic Scotland in 2004 and sets out to publish coherent statements of policy in key areas of work, through a process of public consultation. They should help a wider audience to understand the basis of Ministerial policy on which the sector, and particularly Historic Scotland, operates. The overarching policy on the historic

environment - SHEP 1 - was launched earlier this year, and Historic Scotland now has seven at various stages of development.

Work is almost complete on the policy on Gardens and Designed Landscapes, which was consulted on last year, and my officials are preparing consultation papers on Battlefields and on the Marine Historic Environment.

But we are here today to address climate change - its impact on the historic environment, and how the historic environment can play its part in controlling Scotland's carbon footprint. Climate change is arguably the greatest challenge. The Scottish Government is rising to meet that challenge and I want to say a few things about how we are going to do this.

The framework for how we will deliver our aims will be set out in the Scottish Climate Change Bill. This will tackle specifically Scottish issues. We want Scotland to be a leader in the development of clean energy and low carbon technologies, to be the green energy capital of Europe. We are also working with partners on the UK Climate Change Bill to ensure the two bills are aligned and sensible.

The framework of a Scottish Bill will provide the direction and mechanism to building a sustainable economy through sustainable development and ensure that climate change is at the heart of all economic decision making. In the Bill, we propose the setting of a mandatory target to cut emissions by 80% by 2050, that exceeds the targets set for the UK.

The Scottish Government's programme has two important key objectives which are in line with UK, European and global strategies:

- the reduction of emissions; and
- adapting to the impacts of climate change.

As part of our response we are providing substantial funding to the Carbon Trust in Scotland which helps organisations identify opportunities to reduce their carbon footprint.

So what can the historic environment sector do?

Our awareness and understanding of the effects of our own actions on climate change grow every day. Historic Scotland aims to provide expert advice and information about energy performance and sustainability, particularly about the adaptation of buildings and the measures which may be taken to improve energy efficiency. Many of you here today will already be aware of the specific impacts of climate change on the historic environment from your own area of work. Two of the most significant, the damage to archaeological sites from soil and coastal erosion, will be discussed by speakers later today.

Historic Scotland aims to tackle the impacts strategically and in partnership with others. At present there is a lack of detailed advice on the relative merits of a range of energy efficiency measures in historic buildings.

We aim to ensure that research is targeted to provide this information for building owners. But this isn't a simple matter. It is not about crude and simplistic measures but about optimising energy performance to ensure that historic buildings are treated in a sympathetic way and contribute to the Scottish reduction targets.

Research demonstrates that older buildings can perform very well in energy terms, because they have thick walls, smaller windows, and passive ventilation systems, all of which can contribute to the reduction of emissions. An informative energy performance study has recently been carried out in England on the buildings, such as law courts, operated by the Department for Constitutional Affairs, and built over the last century or more.

The study showed that the regeneration of these historic buildings is both cost-effective and sustainable. The energy usage records showed that the buildings from the 19th and early 20th centuries tended to use much less energy than more recent buildings. The worst in energy terms were those from the middle of the 20th century. It is only in buildings erected in the 21st century that energy performance has significantly exceeded that of these older buildings.

The energy efficiency of 19th- and early 20th-century buildings is due to their inherent design and construction. Most interesting of all, when the buildings were taken back more closely to their original design they performed better than they did with inappropriate 'modernisation' that had been carried out without any understanding of how the buildings worked. Simple measures made big differences - reopening jammed windows, reintroducing blinds and shutters to the windows, removing false ceilings in large spaces, and adapting natural ventilation originally installed in the building.

The lesson here is that older buildings have to be adapted in ways that understand how the traditional materials perform - for example, allowing buildings to 'breathe', not sealing them tight. From my own experience in the improvement of 19th and early 20th century tenements, I have seen the harmful effects of reducing natural ventilation by blocking up chimneys. What is interesting is that the clerk of works thought we were wrong to seal up chimneys and here we are a few decades later. They were right.

There is a need for caution when considering demolition of perfectly sound traditional buildings. Although the new replacement buildings may be energy efficient in use, it is important to take account of the embodied energy and also the materials such as stone, slate and timber in an older building. The English building study tells us a lot about the replacement of older buildings with like-for-like modern structures.

The energy and materials consumed, and often transported, at great energy cost over long distances, when added to the embodied energy and materials lost in the demolition of the older building, did not make for a sustainable solution.

So far I have spoken about the contribution that appropriate adaptation strategies for older buildings can make to reducing energy consumption.

We can expect increased rainfall to impact heavily on building structures through saturated stone, flash flooding, inadequate rainwater gutters and pipes, and ground movement. This will increase pressure to ensure that there is effective buildings maintenance and repair. Historic Scotland is promoting effective maintenance through its Historic Buildings Repair Grant Scheme where applicants are now required to provide annual statements of how they maintain their buildings after grant-aided repairs.

The Agency will be promoting maintenance more vigorously through its outreach activities targeted at building owners. Effective maintenance is the best means of dealing with increased deterioration of building elements due to wetter and stormier weather.

Historic Scotland is funding its own research in partnership with others and is helping to direct research carried out by other groups. One project is on the impact of climate change on weathering in urban environments, which aims to examine how new climates will affect traditional stone and mortar construction. The strategy for Scotland's historic environment is likely to include:

- an understanding of the specific effects on materials and buildings from warmer and wetter weather;

- a strategy to spread climate change information to researchers, the public and owners of historic buildings and monuments; along with guidance on energy management in traditional buildings; and
- an assessment of important buildings at risk from flooding, coupled with disaster response strategies.

Historic Scotland first set out its principles for sustainable management of the historic environment in 2002. These principles were welcomed by the sector and have been incorporated into Ministers' overarching Scottish Historic Environment Policy documents.

The sector should not be shy about talking up the contribution that our historic environment can make to Scotland's efforts to control carbon emissions. Our half-million pre-1919 buildings are the product of a colossal investment of energy and materials - there is a huge amount of embodied energy in these buildings that is squandered if they are demolished unthinkingly.

Earlier this month I opened the newly-restored 18th-century Castlemilk Stables which provide an excellent example of the rescue of a historic building as a catalyst to urban and social regeneration. The stable has been converted to provide offices, a nursery, a meeting space and training facilities and there's been some complementary housing around the site.

The heating system, a ground-source heat-pump which uses recycled heat recovered from underground, provides the lowest possible carbon footprint.

Sustainability is about much more than the energy measured on an electricity meter. We have to think about the energy usage of the whole life of a building and the materials from which it is constructed. We have to make sure that the actions we take to control our carbon emissions are sustainable in the long term. Climate change policies cannot be divorced from the wider health,

wellbeing and regeneration of communities, and here again, the historic environment is one of the strong cards we can play.

Climate change is a reality we can no longer ignore. The Scottish Government is committed to taking action to enforce reductions in carbon emissions, but we are also determined to think creatively about the small changes that can make a big difference. For me, today's conference is not just about valuing our heritage and protecting it from the effects of climate change. It is also about recognising the contribution that our built heritage is already making to energy efficiency and sustainable communities. If, as Al Gore is quoted as saying, we are entering a 'period of consequences', we need to be sure that Scotland has all the benefits of both tradition and innovation to deal effectively with them.

Thank you very much.

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