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## **HEACS REPORT: SKILLS AND MATERIALS**

I am writing to provide a final response to the Council's '*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*', submitted in 2006. My predecessor made a preliminary response in December 2006.

The challenge for those involved in the repair and maintenance of traditional buildings is to achieve and sustain high standards of repair where there are known difficulties in obtaining suitable materials and skills. Historic Scotland has been focused on these issues for many years and it continues to be a key activity area where it can demonstrate leadership and vision, but it requires a wider acceptance of the issues by others for real change to be achieved.

I feel that I can respond positively to your report and detailed responses are set out in the Annex to this letter.

Please let me know if there are any issues on which you would like clarification. I have already expressed my thanks to you in person for all the hard work that you and the members of the Council have put into this work. I appreciate it very much.

**LINDA FABIANI**

## **Annex: Traditional materials**

*1. Scottish Ministers must give a commitment to bring about new sources of supply of Scottish slate as a matter of urgency.*

This is largely a matter for the market and the industry but we will continue to offer support and to raise awareness about the importance of using indigenous slate through outreach activities and publications. Historic Scotland has been active in this area through publication and the promotion of Scottish slate. The Agency will continue to promote the use of Scottish slate and will enable others, including the Scottish Stone Liaison Group to quantify demand (through buildings audits similar to the Scottish Stone Liaison Group Glasgow stone project) and work towards building up the case for a credible future supply of indigenous Scottish slate. Success will depend on a broader acceptance of the need, and a consequential commitment on the part of all interested parties.

*2. 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.*

While we agree that reserving existing supplies for listed buildings makes sense, we doubt the value of issuing guidance. Any such guidance would necessarily have to be addressed to the whole of the repair and maintenance sector and would be seeking behaviour which might not be in its commercial interest. We do not see how it could be enforced. Historic Scotland will however help maximise the use of existing indigenous slate through its role in listed building consent.

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

Noted. This is an aspiration and needs to be advanced by the construction industry in conjunction with the quarrying sector, where a more sustainable approach to using all the extracted stone material is adopted, rather than focusing only on producing dressed stone. We will explore how to encourage the development of more environmentally acceptable "snatch" quarrying operations by the quarrying sector. Historic Scotland has commissioned a series of regional reports to identify the location of original sources of stone from the British Geological Survey and publish this information and additional material on the properties of the various stones. In addition, HS will publish follow-up technical guidance on the range of sensitive issues that need to be addressed in the consideration of reopening original quarry locations to supply stone for built heritage needs. This will provide valuable technical information and support the decision-making in the quarrying sector.

*4. 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.*

Agreed. Historic Scotland will reinvigorate the Scottish Traditional Buildings Liaison Group and revise its terms of reference broadly to pursue the HEACS recommendations. The group will be reconvened during 2008 to include the development of an educational role. It will have a broad membership to ensure effective networking across the country. Historic Scotland will continue to support and develop the Scottish Stone Liaison Group and help

develop the emerging Ferrous Metal Liaison Group with a remit to review the historic role that indigenous materials have played in the construction of traditional buildings so that a better understanding of their repair and maintenance needs is achieved. In addition, Historic Scotland will further expand its Scottish Traditional Building Materials Archive Project, involving Scottish Screen, Edinburgh University and others, to develop training resource materials from moving and still archive imagery which will be promoted to Scotland's training and educational establishments.

## **Skills and professional issues**

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

Agreed. Historic Scotland published the Scottish Stone Liaison Group Glasgow Project methodology in December 2007 and will encourage others, such as local authorities and organisations such as ProSkills to carry out similar studies. Resources permitting, Historic Scotland will, in conjunction with partner organisations, consider how the Glasgow Project approach can be rolled out across the six cities. Historic Scotland will develop its links with ProSkills to assist in the emergence and uptake of an appropriate quarry materials skills base.

*6. CITB-Construction Skills 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.*

Agreed. ConstructionSkills is a statutory body funded mainly by the construction industry itself, through a levy. Additional funding is generated through public bodies, for example the Learning and Skills Council, and the European Social Fund, as well as commercial enterprises. Through a formal Minute of Agreement, Historic Scotland works closely with ConstructionSkills and they have drawn your recommendation to their attention. ConstructionSkills, Historic Scotland and others have kept up-to-date with the Scottish Lime Centre Trust approach to training.

I launched a National Progression Award in Stonemasonry Conservation, validated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, in November 2007. The Award provides a much needed additional training route. In conjunction with ConstructionSkills, preliminary thought is now being given to the development of associated conservation National Progression Awards in related craft skill sets, such as plastering and roofing, with the potential of others to follow.

*7. 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 ConstructionSkills Certification Scheme (CSCS) but, should a National Certificate in Traditional Building and Conservation Skills be developed, then this could become the accepted benchmark.*

Disagree. In 2006, the principle of this recommendation, but not the detailed proposal, was accepted. We endorse and welcome the establishment of specialist benchmarks such as the National Progression Awards. These will not, however, be incorporated into grant conditions as there are issues relating to European free movement of trade: as only contractors from the UK will be taking part in the National Progression Award a condition

insisting on it could be taken to be prejudicial to a contractor from any other part of Europe. Also, at the moment, to the best of our knowledge opportunities to obtain this award are very limited and therefore it would therefore be premature to have a grant condition inserted. There is also doubt, shared by industry, that generic national certificates are the best way to tackle specific craft skills. We have nonetheless emphasised that appropriate training is a key strategic objective of the grant schemes and is considered when accepting applications.

*8. 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.*

Noted. As noted above, ConstructionSkills is a statutory body over which Scottish Ministers have no authority. Historic Scotland works closely with them and has drawn your recommendation to their attention. This issue will also be addressed through the Scottish Conservation Forum in Training and Education, in association with ConstructionSkills Scotland. Discussions will involve training providers and other parties to consider future training needs and how best to recognise these. Historic Scotland will set up a Working Group within the Scottish Conservation Forum in Training and Education to facilitate this. Historic Scotland, in conjunction with the construction industry, training providers and educational establishments will coordinate the uptake of the Stonemasonry National Progression Award as it occurs and report on related new National Progression Award developments to the Scottish Conservation Forum in Training and Education. The Scottish Conservation Forum in Training and Education, Historic Scotland and ConstructionSkills will scope existing qualifications to determine where other National Progression Awards are required and will investigate the relevance of creating an Advanced Craft qualification in conservation skills for validation by Scottish Qualification Authority.

*9. 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.*

Qualified agreement. As at 8 above, the Scottish Conservation Forum in Training and Education will be reinvigorated to provide the means for coordinating an active network of Scottish training and education providers including the Learn Direct and Build initiative. This will help ensure that those involved are working to common national standards through the Scottish Conservation Forum in Training and Education's interface as representative users. The Scottish Conservation Forum in Training and Education will also act as the forum for future debate on the subject. To ensure integration with other UK-wide initiatives the Scottish Conservation Forum in Training and Education will also act as a Scottish network in association with the Conference on Training in Architectural Conservation.

Training within the Agency is already specific and focused, and there is no need for a single delivery mechanism. This is a separate issue from Historic Scotland's support of training as part of third-party conservation projects. Training provision in the Agency is constantly kept under review.

*10. Professional bodies should participate in the continuing development of accreditation schemes and encourage members to become accredited.*

We note that this recommendation was directed at professional bodies rather than Ministers, and the professional bodies will take their own view on their accreditation scheme. Historic Scotland has supported this process through the development of CPD material for the professional bodies.

*11. Government departments and local authorities should set an example by using accredited practitioners on historic building projects*

Agreed. At present Historic Scotland Grant Conditions require that lead members of the project team should normally be accredited. While the management of the accreditation schemes and the policing of such schemes is the responsibility of the professional bodies, Historic Scotland will continue to promote the benefits of accreditation to other potentially relevant parties involved in procurement and grant giving.

*12. Historic Scotland practitioners should be accredited.*

Historic Scotland will ensure that practitioners overseeing grant-assisted projects are led by a professional accredited through the relevant professional bodies.

*13. Scottish Ministers should maintain their commitment to conservation internship and fellowship programmes.*

Agreed. Historic Scotland will continue to fulfil and develop its commitment to this recommendation through the existing conservation Fellows and Interns programmes. In addition it will consider how it can enhance its new Studentship programme in conjunction with other industry, academic and scientific funding partners.

*14. 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.*

Agreed. This is already happening as part of Historic Scotland-funded conservation projects and we have drawn your recommendation to the attention of NTS.

**Demand for traditional materials and craft skills**

*15. 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.*

Qualified agreement. Historic Scotland is working to provide some of the tools that local authorities will need. The Historic Scotland INFORM guides have been very successful in raising awareness and an interactive CD Rom for building owners will be launched in Summer 2008. Historic Scotland is currently running a programme of technical seminars for local authority staff to raise their awareness and understanding. The City Heritage Trust's and Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme ( CARS ) schemes are helpful here.

*16. Historic Scotland should partner local authorities in providing repair and maintenance grants for listed buildings and unlisted properties within conservation areas.*

Agreed. It was noted in 2006 that existing grant schemes already allow for partnership working with local government. Assistance comes through support to establish a *Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme* (CARS) or support for a proposed Heritage Lottery funded *Townscape Heritage Initiative* (THI) supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Up to £8 million has been made available under the CARS over the next five years (2007-08 to 2011-12) to fund 19 projects throughout Scotland. Additional support may be available through other funding streams: such as Historic Scotland's *Building Repair Grants Scheme* and *Repair Grants for Places of Worship Scheme*.

*17. The major stakeholders should be brought together with a view to formulating a national strategy for maintenance.*

Agreed. This is an important recommendation and one which Historic Scotland will take forward as a priority. It will explore the development of a government maintenance strategy/policy with major stakeholders and the Housing and Regeneration Directorate.

Discussions have been initiated with Monumentenwacht colleagues in the Netherlands to investigate how their experiences in this area over the past 30 years could assist.

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

A commitment to maintenance has already been a condition of Historic Scotland grants for some years. Applicants are now required to produce annual statements of maintenance for Historic Scotland. A programme of sample visits is in place to check that grant conditions are complied with.

*19. 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.*

Agreed. Historic Scotland has powers to make loans at the moment but has not used these to date. Edinburgh World Heritage launched in 2006 a repayable grants scheme and Historic Scotland is observing the demand for this type of funding with interest. Grants for maintenance raise issues concerning State Aid which would need to be resolved.

*20. 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.*

Agreed. I will continue to call for a review of the impact of VAT by my colleagues in Westminster, since this a reserved matter. It is noted that NHTG and others are keen that this issue is addressed as a matter of urgency.