

NEWS RELEASE

Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland

REVIEW OF HISTORIC SCOTLAND

The Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland (HEACS) welcomes the publication of the Quinquennial Review of Historic Scotland. HEACS has met with the Minister to discuss the findings in the report and has provided him with advice on the priorities for action.

Liz Burns, chair of HEACS stated that *'We have been struck by the level of interest in this Review, which is an indicator of the value placed on the historic environment, and of the level of commitment throughout the sector to ensuring its proper protection and promotion'*.

She continued by stating that *'HEACS agrees with many of the recommendations that are set out in the report and strongly considers that Historic Scotland is the key leadership body in the protection and maintenance of the built historic environment. It is essential that Historic Scotland continues in being'*.

What the Review does show is the scale of change necessary within the organisation if it is to operate effectively and to gain support and trust from its wide range of stakeholders. It is clear that the status quo is not acceptable and that significant culture change is required, albeit within the existing framework. A first step towards this will be to appoint external members to the management board of Historic Scotland.

In order to provide the necessary foundation for change, however, HEACS judges that a strategic vision for the historic environment is crucial for the future of Historic Scotland and believes that Government has a responsibility firstly to encourage the expression of that vision and secondly to empower and enable Historic Scotland to achieve that vision.

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

Liz Burns also welcomed the recognition given to the role of local authorities, CoSLA and other key players, including the voluntary sector. She concluded by stressing that *'the changes within Historic Scotland need to be part of a wider strategy to strengthen the infrastructure for the Historic Environment at national and local levels, and that the recommendations on closer working with CoSLA and local Government, and on capacity building in the voluntary sector must be a priority'*.

Notes to Editors

1. HEACS, which came into being on 1 June 2003, was established by Scottish Ministers as a new advisory Non-Departmental Public Body to provide informed and independent advice on issues affecting the historic environment, which includes structures and places of historical, archaeological and architectural interest.

Members include: Mr Peter Burman, Mr Neil Galbraith, Mr Mark Hopton, Mr Martin Hulse, Mr Ian Johnson, Mr Finlay Lockie, Ms Eleanor McAllister, Prof. Charles McKean, Mrs Clare Meredith, Mr Ross Noble, Mr Andrew Wright.

2. Their appointments run for the period of 3 years from 1 June 2003 to 31 May 2006. The appointments were made in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies issued by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Members of the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland (HEACS) are not remunerated.

3. The Chair of the Council is Mrs Elizabeth Burns OBE, who was appointed in March 2003. Her career includes extensive experience as a member and chair of numerous committees, boards and working groups at local, national and international levels. She is currently President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Association for Volunteer Effort, a body with members from over 90 countries. She has also been a Board member of Community Learning Scotland and of the Learning and Teaching Scotland Advisory Council. She started her career as a language teacher.

4. Council established a Working Group to prepare the response from HEACS to the consultation on the Review of Historic Scotland. The response was submitted in September, with an additional submission in October. The Working Group is still in place to prepare comments and advice in the next stages of the process.

5. Five Working Groups have been established to address the matters which the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Frank McAveety, has asked for advice on. These are:

- whether there is a need to review heritage protection legislation in Scotland;
- if there is a need for a “heritage audit” in Scotland and, if so, how to take it forward;
- the role of local authorities in conserving the historic environment;
- how we ensure the availability of adequate and appropriate traditional materials and professional and craft skills to meet the needs of the built heritage; and
- the criteria that should be applied for taking historic properties into the care of the Scottish Ministers.

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