



## PRESS RELEASE

### ENSURING INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

In his recent statement on simplifying Scotland's public services, the First Minister outlined a number of significant proposals that will have implications for improving the quality of our built environment. As a forum with cross cutting interest, BEFS wishes to learn more about the Government's proposal for a new Built Environment Directorate within Government. BEFS Chair, Robin Burley MBE, has stated that 'our Manifesto sought integration of the built environment into policy areas across government, and we look forward to engaging with the Government in pursuing this more integrated approach'.

Also proposed is the abolition of the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland (HEACS) – a non-departmental public body which was formed in 2003. In recent years, HEACS has played an important role in providing *independent* strategic advice to Ministers on matters affecting Scotland's historic environment. In late 2002, when the former Historic Buildings Council for Scotland and Ancient Monuments Board were abolished, Parliament decided that continued independent scrutiny of the historic environment was necessary, and HEACS was created.

Convener of the BEFS' Historic Environment Working Group Dr Simon Gilmour has highlighted that 'there is a continuing need for external scrutiny of matters relating to our built heritage, fully independent of Government or Agency. We will be seeking reassurance from the Culture Minister on the arrangements that will be put in place to fill this gap.'

ENDS

31/01/08

#### Notes to editors:

In a statement published on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2008, the First Minister Alex Salmond set out plans to abolish or merge 52 bodies reducing the number of national public organisations in Scotland to 121 within the lifetime of this Parliament - the lowest number since before devolution. The decrease encompasses a reduction of 35

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bodies already announced by this government, and a further 17 as a consequence of yesterday's statement. The key extract from the statement relating to the built environment sector is:

'As part of a more integrated approach to national policy on planning, design, architecture and building standards, we will integrate the Building Standards Agency into Scottish Government bringing it together with architecture and planning policy in a new Built Environment Directorate. We will abolish the organisations set up for building standards and historic environment specialist advice.'

Full details can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/PublicServiceReform/simplifyingpublicservices>

The Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) is a forum<sup>i</sup> of non-governmental organisations that work within the built environment sector in Scotland. Performing an intermediary role, BEFS exists to support its members by raising awareness of, and facilitating joint working on, strategic issues of common interest.

Our strategic outcomes – what we want to achieve for the built environment in Scotland – are as follows:

1. Better outcomes for Scotland's places by understanding and promoting the principles that are collectively held by the members of BEFS.
2. The sustainability of Scotland's places by securing improvements in effective policy development and good practice.
3. A built environment sector in Scotland which is well structured and effectively resourced.
4. A built environment which is understood and valued by the people who use it.

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<sup>i</sup> Members: Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland (AHSS), Association of Preservation Trusts - Scottish Committee (SAPT), Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS), Council for Scottish Archaeology (CSA), Garden History Society in Scotland (GHS), Historic Houses Association for Scotland (HHA), Institute of Field Archaeologists – Scottish Group (SGIFA), Institute of Historic Building Conservation – Scottish Branch (IHBC), Landscape Institute in Scotland (LI), National Trust for Scotland (NTS), Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS), Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland (RICS), Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland (RTPI), Saltire Society (Saltire), SCAPE Trust (SCAPE), Scottish Ecological Design Association (SEDA), Scottish Civic Trust (SCT), Scottish Stone Liaison Group (SSLG), Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (SAS)

Subscribers: Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers in Scotland (ALGAO), Central Scotland Forest Trust (CSFT), Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH), Glasgow Caledonian University – Heritage Futures (GCAL), Homes for Scotland (HfS), Natural Stone Institute (NSI), Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust Ltd (SUAT), Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in Scotland (SPABis)

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