

Annex to BEFS Letter to Lucy Blackburn dated 16/03/2009

BEFS Membership: Our members represent the key non-government bodies that are active in the historic environment. Between them and their own members (both organisations and individuals) we broadly represent the sector which the HEACS Report addresses. We've held two consultation meetings with members and received written comments from a number. The first meeting in particular was well-attended with sixteen organisations participating. The second was also attended by HEACS and Historic Scotland and provided an opportunity for the Chair of HEACS to exchange views with members. There has been a remarkable consistency of view across the membership.

Historic Environment Intermediary: Members of BEFS welcome the attention that HEACS has placed on the capacity of the historic environment sector, and the need to strengthen intermediary functions. BEFS already provides the main intermediary functions identified by the HEACS report, albeit to a more restricted degree than the HEACS Report indicates is needed due to our limited resources. It has been our own assessment, which supports the HEACS analysis of need, that further resources are required to support the sector and this has been included in our last two applications for historic environment funding.

HEACS' recommendation: Our consultation confirms that the organisations that comprise the historic environment sector wish to see bespoke intermediary services being delivered via BEFS and concur with HEACS that these should be considerably enhanced. This in part recognises that it is sensible to develop the resource that already exists. It also recognises that an important part of the intermediary role that the historic environment sector values in BEFS is brought about because we carry out our remit in the context of the whole built environment. We agree that there are areas of the historic environment sector that HEACS has identified as being in need of crucial support, which we have been unable to address to date. Equally, with the departure of HEACS there will be further gaps that will need to be filled. With additional resources and a relevant business plan, BEFS would be able to support these areas within its existing constitutional framework and allied with its members' activities.

Historic Environment Champion: HEACS argues the case for the intermediary body to champion the historic environment on behalf of a number of interests. BEFS has established its Historic Environment Working Group with the purpose of bringing these interests together to present a concerted voice on historic environment matters. The group was established last year as a standing forum within the BEFS structure and we believe that the development and resourcing of this group can meet the champion role identified by HEACS.

Delivery options: The need now is to relate typical characteristics of successful intermediaries more clearly to the actual and potential operations of bodies within the historic environment sector. At the most strategic level, BEFS is already undertaking a range of intermediary functions, with very limited resources. Members of BEFS want to maintain and develop the capacity of the Forum so that it can provide a greater range of support functions to a larger range of organisations. With additional funds directed through a new business plan this is achievable.

Strengths of BEFS: Members are strongly supportive of the current remit of BEFS, which uniquely enables historic environment issues to be addressed within the context of other policy drivers impacting on the built environment. The remit enables historic environment specialists to engage with practitioners involved in maintaining, adapting and developing the historic environment. In this way, BEFS provides the platform for historic environment priorities to be addressed within other policy agendas and current particular strengths include facilitating networking activity, disseminating information and providing crucial contextual information around, and responding to, government consultations. At this stage in the development of BEFS, these types of activity have value because they help enable better understanding across disciplines. This is a first step to building consensus and strengthening key messages – a necessary precursor to undertaking a more proactive advocacy role in promoting historic environment interests more widely.

Addressing needs: The historic environment sector has support needs that the HEACS Report, and our members, have identified which we would wish to give particular attention to. Whilst a narrowly focused intermediary for the historic environment is not thought by BEFS members to be the way forward, we do recognise that the level of resources recommended in the HEACS Report would require BEFS putting in place structures and services to support these needs. Through our consultation with members and through direct discussion with HEACS members, we have identified a number of needs, described below which should be included in the development of the business plan brief:

- Better resourced internal structures for addressing issues: The need for support to help organisations, often with very limited capacity, to develop their own structures for engaging with the strategic objectives established by the Scottish Government. A variety of mechanisms would be necessary to ensure effective involvement from a wide variety of interests, reaching beyond ‘usual suspects’.
- Cross-sector engagement: The need to engage with policy topics in a joined-up way, rather than from operational silos.
- Structured priorities: The need for more structured priorities, to help stakeholders relate their immediate corporate objectives to more overarching policy objectives.
- Extend influence: The need to identify how stakeholders can collectively raise the profile of the historic environment, and gain influence to ensure that messages put forward by stakeholders are heard by decision-makers.
- Good practice, learning and awareness: The need to identify opportunities for stakeholders to share information with each other, on good practice and on their own activities and priorities.
- Promote successes: The need to identify how stakeholders can become more effective at promoting the successes of the sector to a wider audience and to convey the public enthusiasm and commitment to Scotland’s historic environment.

Building Capacity: It will be important to clarify how to build capacity through BEFS without undermining other historic environment activities and interests. The business plan needs to take account of intermediary functions provided by some members, recognising that there are benefits in a pluralistic approach. Delivery options could include the development of capacity building initiatives by BEFS; a possible strengthening of focus on historic environment issues at BEFS level; and more effective support for the representation of historic environment interests in the intermediary roles of higher level bodies such as SCVO.

The key challenge is in drawing these functions together, to ensure added value and ultimately better outcomes for Scotland's historic environment.

Business Plan: With the support of BEFS' membership, BEFS proposes that, through a business plan developed and agreed with Historic Scotland, our membership and across the historic environment sector, BEFS be charged with providing appropriate infrastructure support of the sort described by HEACS, in tandem with oversight and guidance on how government can most efficiently direct support to infrastructure activities within the historic environment sector. Among other things, this plan would address:

- How BEFS can best carry out its intermediary role in support of the sector
- How the gaps left by the demise of HEACS can be most effectively filled
- How other sector-specific bodies can be best enabled to carry out their existing roles as service providers and intermediaries.

Way forward: BEFS wishes to work in close partnership with Historic Scotland to develop the support infrastructure required by the historic environment sector. We have enjoyed a close relationship with Historic Scotland during BEFS first six years. We believe it is the right time to develop a more ambitious programme of support to the historic environment sector that will help it cohere and operate efficiently, whilst recognising its diversity of interests, activities and enthusiasms.