



BEFS WORKSHOP REPORT

HISTORIC SCOTLAND'S CORPORATE PLAN 2005-8

This workshop took place on 25 February 2005 and was attended mainly by members of the Built Environment Forum Scotland. A presentation was given by John Graham, Chief Executive of Historic Scotland, and Sheenagh Adams, Director of Heritage Policy at Historic Scotland.

Questions following the presentation covered the following areas:

- Impact of Historic Scotland (HS) policies upon wider Government objectives; the need for greater **strategic engagement with other departments/agencies** which will help add value to HS's own activities. (HS identified the Social Justice Strategy and also its role in the tourism sector as two key areas where its work impacts upon other policy areas).
- The need for HS to take a **broader view of the historic environment** (issues mentioned included: the direct funding of staff posts in City Heritage Trusts and Local Authorities, conservation standards on the Scottish Executive estate as a whole).
- **Approach to funding private owners** (issues mentioned included: providing benefits for the community, meeting other legislative requirements such as DDA, a flexible approach to funding through phased works).
- The need for **greater consistency of decision-making** on applications. (HS confirmed that the aim is to publish up-to-date strategic policies on their website which will provide the context for greater consistency in decision-making. Principal Inspectors are tasked with ensuring consistency, and regional teams share information and discuss cases at casework conferences).
- The separate **review processes** associated with archaeology grants and voluntary heritage sector grants - these being carried out independently from the Review of Historic Environment Repair Grants in 2004.
- The need for **indicators to be used as a tool** in measuring the quality of achievements. (HS confirmed that the intention is to publish an annual report which will measure progress against indicators).

WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

Priorities for Historic Scotland's Corporate Plan

The following priorities were identified:

- The need for a debate in Scotland on the historic environment; how it is viewed, how it is managed, whether practice reflects modern thinking.

- The need for a strategy to address HS's wider, non-statutory role. This wider role (beyond the properties) should be referred to early on in the Corporate Plan.
- The need for greater joined-up working with other areas of Government: particularly in relation to issues that overlap with activity in other departments, agencies and NDPBs, for example cultural landscape issues (including battlefields, historic gardens and designed landscapes), the siting of windfarms, CAP Reform. This could be achieved in part through the development of a statement of joined-up thinking and concordats.
- There should be emphasis placed, within the Corporate Plan, on Historic Scotland's facilitating role in relation to education and local engagement.
- The need for HS to adopt a stronger outward focus – to seek to get involved in issues relevant to the historic environment and to promote its own policies in order to increase understanding and awareness.
- There should be recognition within the Corporate Plan of annual auditing of the historic environment (subject to Ministerial approval of current proposals).
- The need for greater access to Historic Scotland's information resource (eg via the website).
- The need to direct greater focus to improving the quality of statements of significance in relation to the historic environment, in order to improve the basis for decision-making. Conservation area appraisal coverage is patchy. List descriptions are very variable. Appropriately skilled volunteers might assist in such work – as already happens in the field of archaeology through Scotland's Rural Past Scheme.
- The need for HS to secure greater funding in order to support its priorities.

Gaps

The following issues were identified as gaps within the Corporate Plan 2004-7:

- Cultural landscapes – recognition and protection of... and need for greater joined up approach.
- World Heritage Sites – specifically mention and express support and lead in fulfilling the World Heritage Convention requirements through best practice. To recognise and embrace opportunities that inscription can bring.
- The Cultural Strategy – engagement with...
- Marine historic environment.
- Windfarms.
- Climate change – coastal erosion affecting archaeological sites, storm damage to historic properties, interventions to historic properties to increase energy efficiency. The need for presentation of facts at the basic level of facts on improving energy efficiency in sustainable way.
- A policy statement on the Historic Environment (as recommended in the Review of Historic Scotland) which could help develop common understanding on historic environment issues.
- Passed to Future (HS Sustainable Development Strategy) – progress on...and promotion of HS activities within wider Sustainable Development agenda.
- Use of qualitative indicators measuring outcomes not simply outputs (effectiveness of activity rather than simply the activity itself).
- Image – the need to improve...

- The need for a customer-focussed approach on the consent, grant-giving and advisory functions.
- Wider dissemination of research and best practice to parties involved with historic environment.
- Work with the private sector.

KPIs and Indicators

- It was felt that more work is needed on developing sets of indicators that can be used as a tool to measure progress.
- Indicators should measure the qualitative impact of activities rather than the activity itself (outcome rather than output).
- It is important to develop an underlying ethos/intent behind the indicators so that the indicators can measure against clear goals.
- The approach adopted in relation to indicators should be long-term (at least three yearly).
- Indicators should be able to measure HS engagement on all fronts – a 360° appraisal that should include the impact of HS activities outwith the organisation as well as within.
- Indicators can be used to develop buy-in to activities.

POST WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

- HS confirmed that the Corporate Plan will have a two year span, to tie in with the Scottish Executive spending review programme.
- HS confirmed that it is helpful to know where stakeholders see wasted resources.
- BEFS noted that by opening up more detailed aspects of its work, HS could help stakeholders further in putting comments forward.
- It was noted that the Corporate Plan should represent an opportunity to describe the cultural changes being made within HS in response to changing circumstances.
- A key challenge is how take more relaxed view of change whilst at same time preserving what is important...