



# Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland and HS and RCAHMS merger

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## Workshop Report

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### **1.0 Introduction**

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss the Joint Consultation on the Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland and the merger of Historic Scotland (HS) and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). The event took place halfway through the consultation period and the workshop, hosted by Built

Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) was attended by nearly sixty participants from a range of mainly voluntary and public organisations, and a few private sector interests. We were delighted to welcome Cabinet Secretary for Culture Fiona Hyslop who gave a speech which is appended at the end of this report. Presentations were also received on the draft Strategy and on the merger, and the format for the remainder of the day was round table discussions on a series of themes. The structure and content of this report reflects these themes; sections 2 – 5 cover discussions on the strategic priorities identified in the draft Strategy, and sections 6 – 10 cover points raised in relation to the merger.

## **2.0 Mainstreaming the Historic Environment**

**2.1** Participants discussed the meaning of mainstreaming which represents a core strand of the Strategy – a range of ideas were put forward as follows:

- Mainstreaming = *initially* an additional activity to get the historic environment ‘out of the box’ and embedded
- Mainstreaming = treating ‘special’ as normal: shift from needing to demonstrate ‘special qualities’ to appreciating these qualities for their contribution to ‘a place’
- Mainstreaming = proportionality in terms of managing change and communicating the meaning of ‘significance’, ‘special qualities’, ‘intrinsic value’ throughout decision-making processes
- Mainstreaming = a holistic place-based approach
- Mainstreaming = achieving a balance between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ approaches – combining compulsion with sharing/collaboration
- Mainstreaming = learning from successes (and failures) elsewhere – (eg the success of the environmental movement – facilitated in part by a strong legislative framework – European Directive and biodiversity duty)
- Mainstreaming = reducing horizontal disconnections - narrowing the gap in decision-making between local communities and government
- Mainstreaming = reducing vertical/silo disconnections - showing the historic environment as a means to achieving ‘other’ ends - social, economic and environmental
- Mainstreaming = educating decision-makers and influencers, and the public, how to value places (appreciating surroundings through new eyes)
- Mainstreaming = communicating through ‘champions’ at all levels and to new audiences the values we attribute to the historic environment
- Mainstreaming = enabling specialist skills to be deployed at the right time in a process (too often heritage specialists are late to the table in strategic discussions on asset management)
- Mainstreaming = understanding the ‘jigsaw’ of relationships
- Mainstreaming = exploring successful initiatives in the private and voluntary sectors - understanding enablers
- Mainstreaming = inspiring and accessible language – tailored and relevant to the audience

- Mainstreaming = ensuring consistency of messages emanating from Government (eg relate to Scottish Futures Trust objectives)
- Mainstreaming = a focus on local contribution ‘part of the scene’ – local expertise, local values, community involvement and supporting volunteers
- Mainstreaming = working towards recognised standards – and celebrating Scotland’s contribution on the world stage through our world heritage sites as the ‘gold standard’

Mainstreaming will result in:

- Informed decision-making!
- Pride and passion for historic environment: ‘firing the national imagination’
- Ambition and confidence!

### 3.0 Informed Decision-making

**3.1 Evidence gaps:** Gaps in evidence fell into four areas: Firstly the need for a more holistic approach, ‘landscape scale’, ‘the town in its setting’, completion of the Historic Land Use Assessment. Secondly the need to capture cumulative changes. Thirdly greater use of ‘suitability surveys’ – quick assessments of historic buildings. Fourthly the need overall for better understanding and communication of value – what is special/important? There are issues relating to consistency and quality of evidence used in informing decision-making. It was suggested that currently the decision-making processes are not fit for purpose. Driven by the National Performance Framework the emphasis is on time not quality and there can be a lack of transparency. A key measure of the success of the Strategy will be the impact of informed decision-making.

**3.2 Bridging gaps:** Lay and local knowledge is important – local ‘champions’ might be used to help capture and use this knowledge. Information on the historic environment needs to be available at different levels of detail, according to the needs of the user. Access to data can be confusing although overall access is improving thanks to digital developments. Historic environment specialists need to get involved in decision-making processes at the right stage eg those running capital programmes in local authorities. We need to understand the interface between official structures and institutions and voluntary/civil society.

**3.3 Skills to interpret:** Information is not understanding. We need information on what is ‘essential significance’ but need to combine this with expertise – much relies on judgement in interpreting data. Evaluation needs to understand differences in context (eg what works for Wigtown might not work in Edinburgh).

**3.4 Piecemeal to Strategic:** We need to ensure a consistency of information and approach across different levels /players – owners, local planning authority, central government. While welcoming the Strategy, the challenge will be how to enable this shift to a more strategic approach in the context of diminishing resources and capacity.

#### **4.0 Leadership and Collaborative Working at all Levels**

**4.1 Developing connections:** We need generally to strengthen the connections between institutions across the sector. We also need to widen connections – reaching for example into the museums sector, tertiary education, wider civil society and also political linkages. The new [merged] body ought though to recognise that collaboration already goes on. Connection between ‘field’ and ‘centre/policy’ should be strengthened to develop an important feedback loop (a stronger regional framework?). There needs to be more sharing of best practice through use of case studies – practitioners need to be encouraged (incentivised?) to share information. There is much opportunity particularly given the small size of Scotland to develop strong connections. The sector needs to be ‘mapped’ and potential for linkages identified – the onus is on the sector to develop partnerships and events provide good opportunity to establish contacts.

**4.2 Overcoming blockages:** We must overcome blockage of ‘territoriality’ of organisations. It was suggested that the sector ought not to see itself as ‘the heritage sector’ as this places it in a box. We need to de-jargon and get a widespread simple message of ‘pride and passion and purpose’. We need to ignore short-termism and vote-catching: if the public is engaged, votes will follow. The sector needs to be more strongly incentivised.

**4.3 Models of engagement:** A collective approach to leadership was endorsed and it was noted that leadership must be earned, not claimed. A collaborative approach does require strengthened capacity – it may be appropriate to determine a quantifiable ‘measure’ for collaborative working – and possibly build into Single Outcome Agreements. Reference was made to the leadership role Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland (HEACS) undertook in commissioning research. There needs to be greater focus on forward planning.

#### **5.0 Skills and Capacity at all Levels**

**5.1 Meeting the challenge of maintaining and enhancing skills:** There is a diminishing supply of specialist historic environment practitioners working in local authorities. There is a problem of short-termism – local authorities are working in annual budget cycles and are focused on managing risk. We need to shift perceptions around historic environment assets from negative to positive - generator of cash and ‘green’ option.

**5.2 Priorities and solutions:** The ageing profile of the profession needs action as does succession planning. A positive experience was reported from Aberdeen City Council where specialist skills are being spread across practitioners rather resting with one individual. We need to understand better the current gaps in training provision and changes in the courses being provided in colleges and universities. Community groups are increasingly being recognised

as a 'resource' – but these need support; here is opportunity for influence through the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill.

**5.3 A skills, resources and training framework:** What would this look like? A long term perspective needs to be taken. How can a framework be applied at different levels? We need to understand that the sector does not purely comprise 'heritage specialists'. We need to understand what type of workforce we want/need and anticipate future skills requirements given the ambition behind the Strategy. We need to relate skills/training to employability. We need to recognise that a 'public sector' mentality for training development has to be applicable to the private sector and industry for it to work. We need to plug in to the Curriculum for Excellence and improve opportunities in tertiary education. The geography of Scotland does present challenges in delivering training, but these are not insurmountable.

**5.4** There is considerable potential for greater use of internships, mentoring, more accessible training opportunities (eg SCARF-like 'hub' approach to training and development), understanding how skills might be transferable, recognising the value of experience, skill sharing, bursaries for young entrants (resourcing?), use of accreditation schemes, use of secondments, apprenticeships within the new organisation. A training framework needs to recognise the extent to which the market can absorb/accommodate newly skilled practitioners. Specific training needs were identified as: empowering interests at 'grass roots' in terms of understanding statutory language; skills/knowledge for those involved at any stage of development process (with historic environment focus) – from applicant, to developer, to decision-maker.

## **6.0 Desired Outcomes of the Merger**

**6.1 Do the desired outcomes reflect what the merger should achieve?:** The outcomes of the merger ought to reflect the desired outcomes for the historic environment overall; protection of the historic environment must remain at the heart of the new organisation. The outcomes for the new organisation could usefully highlight a more holistic emphasis around 'living places' - broadening out from a focus on tourism sites/flagship properties to the historic environment as context for everyday life. As currently drafted, the outcomes don't really 'hang together' as a set and they are aspirational, not measurable. The wording of organisational outcomes ought to explicitly state that this is a conservation organisation – the wording 'national cultural institution relating to the historic environment' is rather clunky.

**6.2 Assessing outcomes of the success of merger:** There is little that is new in terms of the outcomes and functions as described, however a key new outcome will be the success of the relationships that the new [merged] body forges with all of its stakeholders. Resilience of the organisation is important, but the resilience of the whole sector is critical. A long term view will be necessary in evaluating impacts/success particularly since there is no current baseline of outcomes to measure against.

- 6.3 Process of change:** The transition should be seamless, not a step change – rather evolution over revolution and a strong emphasis on feedback in order to ensure that what is good is kept, and that the developing organisation is truly a learning organisation. Further clarity is needed on how the functions of the new [merged] body will relate to priorities identified in the Historic Environment Strategy.
- 6.4 Characteristics of new organisation:** A number of characteristics of the new organisation were described in discussing desired outcomes: that the new organisation is enterprising and innovative; that it empowers others; that it is flexible, outward-looking and easy to work in partnership with; that it acts as champion and that improved mechanisms for dialogue to communicate the importance of the historic environment are developed. Overall there needs to be a sense of responsibility to conserve.
- 7.0 Functions of the new organisation**
- 7.1 Balance of functions overall:** As a ‘catch all’ the proposed list of functions is very long and these could be packaged and presented more succinctly (short and pithy!). As currently described the functions are very process oriented. There are essentially two approaches being conveyed – a collaborative ethos alongside the regulatory role. It is imperative that the functions highlight the *statutory role*; that the new [merged] body is a backstop in terms of the regulatory function (there was some question over the role of the new body in granting consent – clarity is sought here). Designation and protection could be conveyed as ‘twin’ functions. Guardianship of the historic environment currently applies to a very small percentage of the whole historic environment. Participants sought a better understanding of the role of the new organisation in respect of the *wider undesignated historic environment*.
- 7.2 What functions need to be more strongly represented?:** There needs to be a stronger emphasis on *enforcement and sanctions* alongside the ‘softer’ mechanisms of engagement. The functions could usefully be expressed in terms of *benefits* for the user – especially the general public. It would be useful to look at the role of the new body in relation to dealing with *Buildings at Risk (BAR)*, especially since a reduction in BAR is the national performance indicator. The organisation’s role in enabling *inclusive access* for those with disability, sensory deprivation etc needs to be recognised and innovative ideas explored. Clarity was also sought on charging and access to photographs, materials etc. The *technical research* role is valued and must be embedded within the new organisation. Developing mechanisms for dialogue and discussion around managing the historic environment should be flagged as a function, which would help *reduce negative perceptions* associated with the system of regulation.
- 7.3 What can be done to ensure the functions of both bodies are sustained?:** A strong commitment to retention and development of expertise through succession planning, staff development and training will help ensure smooth transition.

## **8.0 Heritage Management Functions**

**8.1 Overall:** There must be no watering down of existing protection. It was questioned as to whether the new body would have the same authority as Historic Scotland currently. There needs to be a close association between those who designate and those who manage in order to ensure consistency in assignment and interpreting significance. There remains the potential in future to review the designations system as a whole. The objective must be informed, transparent decision-making and consistency of approach across Scotland.

**8.2 Relationship with local planning authorities:** The advice/support being provided to local planning authorities is critical to the effective management of the historic environment. It was noted that currently this support is not comprehensive. There is potential to share information (case work outcomes etc) across authorities and with the new body to improve consistency of standards/approach. Clarity was sought over the devolution of responsibilities to local planning authorities – greater transparency is needed here. Further discussion is needed with those with detailed knowledge of how the consent processes work.

**8.3 Managing Properties in Care (PIC):** There is scope for other interests to be involved in caring for properties (eg through Guardianship Agreements) – this accords with the collaborative approach being advocated throughout the consultation. A proper acquisitions and disposal policy needs to be developed. Of those who discussed the three options for consent for managing Properties in Care, option three was favoured. Processes for managing PIC through the local planning authorities must be robust.

**8.4 Managing other assets:** Clarity was sought on the management processes/responsibilities for managing non-designated assets, World Heritage Sites, development in setting etc. Grant powers should be more strategic rather than operational.

## **9.0 Relationship with Ministers**

**9.1 Ministerial direction:** The ability of Ministers to give direction to the new organisation will make it even more important for the sector to develop relationships with Ministers and other parts of Government. It will be important to maintain contact with Historic Scotland's policy team once inside central Government. It will be imperative that decision-making remains independent, particularly in relation to all aspects of managing the collections.

**9.2 Grants:** There is potential to streamline the grants process. It was questioned whether the grants issued by the new body will still be regarded as public money – and typically what the conditions of grant might be.

**9.3 Accountability:** The Ministerial reporting to parliament was recognised as a key element in terms of accountability. Might there be scope for wider stakeholders to play a role here – for example through BEFS?

## **10.0 Charitable Status and Conflicts of Roles**

**10.1 Ministerial direction:** there is a considerable lack of clarity over the potential for Ministerial influence and how this relates to charitable and fiduciary duties. Management of the collections is clearly a charitable objective –however governance above all else will be critical.

**10.2 Benefits:** clarity is sought on the additional benefits to the public associated with charitable status – for example in relation to membership. The behaviour shift especially in terms of public perceptions is significant.

## **11.0 Summary**

**11.1** This report gives a flavour of the content of round table discussions and does not seek to represent a coherent set of responses as such. However there are a number of themes that can be highlighted:

- The need to treat *'special' as normal*; taking the 'heritage sector' out of its box and a focus on *'living places'*.
- The ability to *communicate value* (significance/importance/special qualities) effectively – to turn negative perceptions into positive.
- The need to ensure *consistent, transparent, informed decision-making* across Scotland – the relationship between the new organisation and local planning authorities will be critical, along with a need for closer linkage between designation and management.
- The need for *'specialists'* to support and respect the contribution of lay people including *'local champions'* and for improved succession planning and *workforce development*.
- The need for *greater collaboration* across organisations in delivering the Strategy.
- In respect of the new organisation:
  - *resilience of the whole sector is vital*;
  - *conservation and statutory protection to remain at the heart of the new body*;
  - role in managing the *undesignated historic environment*;
  - the need for *robust controls over Ministerial direction* regarding Collections;
  - scope to *widen management of the Collections*;
  - *the importance of a collaborative approach*.



## 12.0 Acknowledgements and participants

12.1 The event was organised by Built Environment Forum Scotland with support from Historic Scotland. Thanks go to everyone who participated in the workshop, and in particular to Cabinet Secretary for Culture Fiona Hyslop, Luke Wormald (Historic Scotland) and Noel Fojut (Historic Scotland) for the presentations; Simon Gilmour (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and Vice-Chair of BEFS) and John Pelan (BEFS) for chairing; Cabinet Secretary Fiona Hyslop, Diana Murray (RCAHMS) and Simon Gilmour (BEFS) for taking part in a question and answer session; Ian Baxter (University Campus Suffolk), Simon Gilmour (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland), John Pelan (BEFS), Jo Robertson (BEFS), Jeff Sanders (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland), Adam Wilkinson (Edinburgh World Heritage) Jonathan Wordsworth (Archaeology Scotland) for facilitating; Lorna Aird, Hannah Eamer, David Fleetwood, Noel Fojut, Bill McQueen, Jennie Marshall, Donna Stewart, Luke Wormald (Historic Scotland) for note-taking; and Jo Robertson and Anne Wilkinson (BEFS) for administration of the event. Individuals from the following organisations participated in the event:

Aberdeen City Council  
Archaeology Scotland  
Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland  
Argyll and Bute Museums and Heritage Forum  
Association of Preservation Trusts - Scottish Committee  
Built Environment Forum Scotland  
East Lothian Council (ALGAO Scotland)  
Edinburgh World Heritage  
Europa Nostra  
Fife Council  
GUARD Archaeology Ltd  
Historic Scotland  
Institute for Archaeologists  
Institute of Historic Building Conservation - Scottish Branch  
Land Use Consultants  
National Trust for Scotland  
New Lanark Trust  
Nick Allan and Associates Ltd  
North Lanarkshire Council  
Orkney Islands Council  
RCAHMS  
RCAHMS/HS  
Royal Society of Arts - MCICH Network  
Scottish Borders Council  
Scottish Church Heritage Research  
Scottish Civic Trust  
Scottish Historic Buildings Trust  
Scottish Redundant Churches Trust  
Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

SPICe  
Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust  
The Institution of Civil Engineers  
Tod & Taylor Architects  
University Campus Suffolk  
West Lothian Council  
West of Scotland Archaeology Service (ALGAO Scotland)

## 13.0 Appendix 1

### **Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS): Historic Environment Strategy and HS/RCAHMS Merger Workshop**

**Date: 13 June 2013**

**Speech given by: Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs**

Thank you, John for your kind introduction.

I am very happy indeed to be able to join you today and I look forward to hearing your comments on the Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland and the merger of Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.

Before moving on to say a few words about the Strategy and the merger I would like to thank John and the team at BEFS for organising today's event. I would also like to thank you all for contributing to the process of shaping the future of our how we care for our rich historic environment.

I would also like to thank all of those individuals and organisations – many of whom are represented here today – who contributed to the work of the policy review in 2012 and to those who contributed to the ongoing discussions and debate about the merger proposals. Your knowledge, skills and expertise informed those ongoing discussions and were an invaluable part of the process of developing the Strategy and the merger proposals.

What has come through clearly during both processes is your enthusiasm and passion for Scotland's rich past and the evidence of that past that is still with us today. I can assure you that the Scottish Government shares that passion.

I would now like to build on my speech at the Talbot Rice Art Centre last week where I outlined the value that this Government places on culture in its widest sense including our rich and deeply rewarding historic environment. I want to stress again the Government's view, because this provides the context for, and underpins our approach both to the Strategy and the proposed merger. This Government places a huge value on culture and heritage in and of themselves, because they bind and connect our past and our future and tell the stories about where we've come from, who we are and who we could be. The historic environment in particular roots us to a place and helps to empower, enrich and shape our communities.

The case has often, quite rightly, been made about the many ways that the historic environment contributes to a flourishing Scotland – and it does. However, as I mentioned last week the Scottish Government also recognises that culture and heritage have a value

in and of themselves. The heritage sector does not need to make a new economic case to justify public support for its work. I know the sector can deliver because I see it in action. For this Government – the case has been made.

Our rich culture and diverse historic environment are unique assets which are not only valuable in their own right, but which generate wider social and economic benefits. That is why I directed Historic Scotland to undertake a fundamental review of historic environment policy in 2012 to ensure that we have the right framework in place to enable our historic environment to face the significant challenges that lie ahead including dwindling resources and climate change.

I am excited by the new Strategy, the first Scotland has ever had for the historic environment. As I noted in the forward to the document, this work is the result of a collective approach, which sought input from across the sector and beyond. Until now we have lacked an overarching strategy and vision to define our collective ambition and direction for the historic environment.

The Strategy reflects the huge value which the historic environment has in its own right. Not only as evidence of past creativity and ingenuity, but also in terms of other values, through its contribution to social fabric, community cohesion and economic wellbeing.

When I made the annual lecture to the friends of the Talbot Rice Gallery, I noted that Scotland is more than a nation bound by a border and oceans, it is a nation of ideas and that our innovation and creativity was an intrinsic part of our increasingly global lives. In that context I was very pleased to learn that the process of developing the Strategy and the use of outcome based frameworks within the historic environment has been one of the subjects for a professional exchange with officials from Hordaland Fylkeskommune (County Council) in Norway. Senior members of the culture department within the council were hosted on a two week programme in Historic Scotland, followed by a visit from a delegation of elected politicians at regional and state level, which included the opportunity to engage with the development of the Strategy.

As a result of dialogue, and a return visit, officials in Hordaland remain very supportive of the approach taken in Scotland and hope to implement a similar outcomes based framework to support their own role in relation to the historic environment. Colleagues in both organisations are exploring whether this type of collaborative approach could provide a foundation for a longer lasting strategic partnership between the two organisations which will support the continued development and implementation of the Strategy as well as the exchange of professional skills between Scotland and Norway.

I would now like to touch briefly on two critical aspects of the Strategy. Firstly, this is not the Government's strategy it is your strategy. It must be collectively owned and in that context I would encourage all of you here today to continue to help shape the document over the coming months and to contribute to the delivery of our new shared vision for the historic environment. Delivering the vision will require the range of bodies, groups and individuals with an interest in or responsibility for aspects of the historic environment to work together towards the common purpose, making effective use of the skills, experience and resources of all parties to realise the benefits and values of our historic environment.

Scotland's historic environment needs your knowledge, expertise and leadership.

Of course the Scottish Government will play its role in partnership with other players in the sector such as the National Trust for Scotland, the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, BEFS and the new merged body.

The merger has been the focus some of your discussions today and while I look forward to fielding any queries that you may have about the merger I would like to touch on a couple of issues now. Firstly, I would like to say that since appointed to the culture portfolio I have been hugely impressed by the professionalism and enthusiasm of the staff at both organisations and the quality of the work they carry out on behalf of the people of Scotland. I believe that the functions of both organisations are hugely important in helping us to care for, protect and manage our rich historic environment. Indeed the value that the Scottish Government places on the functions of both organisations underpins our approach to the merger.

Indeed, I believe that merger is necessary now in order to ensure that the functions of both Historic Scotland and RCAHMS can be preserved and sustained for the future. The remit for the business case was to focus on sustainability, not savings. I have been explicit about not wishing to seek further savings from the two bodies, but I will expect them to be able to deliver more as a single organisation than they can with the same resources as two separate bodies. Not to be merging now would place some question over the long term sustainability for some functions and risk the loss of skills and expertise. The two organisations have already identified areas where they can operate more efficiently as a single organisation that they could separately and have set out aspirations for the future of what could be achieved as a single body.

Merger will ensure the long term sustainability of the functions of both organisations, drawing on the significant strengths of both RCAHMS and Historic Scotland to create a body that is well equipped to lead and support the delivery of Scotland's Historic Environment Strategy.

The Historic Environment Strategy and the merger of Historic Scotland and RCAHMS demonstrates this Government's huge commitment to the historic environment – collectively these initiatives provide a clear sense of shared direction underpinned by the capacity to support and enable its delivery.

Despite the challenges ahead we have a fair wind behind us – we have a people, a sector and a government who care passionately about Scotland's historic environment. But we need to work together to secure a bright future for our past and in so doing help to create a flourishing future for ourselves and future generations.