

Workshop Report

Historic Environment Scotland Draft Corporate Plan

Consultation workshop held 20th January 2016
at the Royal Scots Club, Abercromby Place, Edinburgh

1 Introduction

1.1 The workshop was convened to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss the draft Corporate Plan for Historic Environment Scotland (HES), and inform consultation responses in advance of the consultation deadline of 8th February. The event was attended by 30 representatives of organisations in the historic environment sector (participants are listed at the end of this report). We were also delighted to welcome two HES Board members and the Chief Executive. This report reflects the content of discussions which took place in breakout groups and plenary sessions.

2 Reaction to the draft Corporate Plan

2.1 What do you like about the consultation draft?

In considering what they liked about the draft, participants commented that it is succinct, accessible (to professionals), it says the right things ('what we would expect it to'), it is strategically located in Scotland's strategy for the historic environment *Our Place in Time (OPiT)*, and the language (when it conveys a collaborative approach).

2.2 What do you not like about the consultation draft?

There are a number of areas where the Plan is silent or light. Specifically there is no mention of HES membership; training and skills; and little on HES' regulatory role. There could be more made of the relationship with local authorities and HES' role in engaging communities. There is no recognition of other sectors that HES should have a relationship with, for example the NHS, housing, education, and the impact that the historic environment has across other policy areas.

The tone of the draft can convey an elitist/scholarly standpoint and accordingly as currently drafted risks reaching a narrow readership. This Plan presents an opportunity for HES to reach out to a much wider audience and to convey the value

of the historic environment to society at large. The choice of illustrations could help here.

The drafting would benefit from copyrighting since it shifts from strategic to detailed content. Also the draft sometimes refers to the role of HES in relation to its own property portfolio and at other times to its role in relation to the whole of Scotland's historic environment. The document needs to clearly differentiate between the two.

The proposed key performance indicators are very broad – more detail will be required. It was suggested the Scottish Historic Environment Audit should be published annually. It was also commented that the development of a measurement framework for OPiT (which is currently ongoing) will help flesh out some of the more detailed measures.

It was generally observed that the document does not yet really reflect anything new (see 2.3).

2.3 What improvements would you like to see?

Improvements are summarised as follows:

- The document would benefit considerably from additional context which clearly sets out what is new about this organisation, highlighting the differences between HES and the former Historic Scotland and RCAHMS, and how HES intends to respond to the new opportunities associated with its new status as a non-departmental public body (NDPB). It was commented that the document could do with more 'fizz and oomph'!
- The safeguarding role in particular needs to be conveyed at high level in the Vision.
- Clarity around HES' intended role in leading and enabling with a particular emphasis on collaborative working.
- More information within this strategic document on financial priorities.
- Clear linkage to Scottish Government outcomes and better prioritisation of HES' activities.
- More emphasis throughout the document on how HES will deliver for the public – a focus on the 'everyday' alongside the 'elite' properties.
- More on areas which are currently 'light or absent', specifically - HES' intended role in generating demand for traditional materials and skills; in delivering the climate change agenda and in relation to archives and collections.

3 Key issues affecting Scotland's historic environment

Participants were invited to identify the key issues affecting the historic environment whether the draft Plan responds/addresses these issues. Key issues were identified as being:

- Contracting capacity in local government frontline services due to public sector cuts coupled with the potential weakening of safeguards through increasing permitted development.
- Skills shortages and poor succession planning (particularly the loss of conservation skills within local authority planning departments and also scope to improve awareness of elected members).
- Reaching a more diverse audience through engaging communities and volunteers – especially at a time of contracting public sector.
- Climate change and condition of pre-1919 buildings; the effects of climate change on the historic environment are becoming increasingly apparent. The sector as a whole needs to respond through adaptation and mitigation. This relates directly to the ongoing need to encourage and support ongoing maintenance (it was identified that the market prohibits use of indigenous materials in repair work).
- Campaigning and demonstrating value; demonstrating the contribution of the historic environment right across the policy areas of Government (housing and fuel poverty, education, tourism) and also advocating for improvements to the legislation, for example on the longstanding 'VAT issue'.
- A collaborative rather than competitive environment – the sector is crowded and there is considerable scope for collaboration across key heritage organisations.
- Culture change; encouraging people to consider the historic environment as a shared legacy. Also that the culture of 'protecting' is inhibiting positive re-use of assets.
- In times of tightening resourcing, the need to prioritise investment in the historic environment.

It was generally felt that the Plan needs to set out more clearly the role that HES intends to play in meeting these challenges, within the context of OPiT.

4 Opportunities for Historic Environment Scotland

Participants were invited to identify what are the new opportunities available to HES. These are summarised as follows:

- A stronger voice for sector – as an NDPB HES has more scope to champion and act as a 'critical friend'.

- Engaging more people with renewed purpose – communities, schools and universities, colleagues across Government.
- Culture change that enables improved/genuine collaboration with partners.
- Recognising that this is an opportunity to break the mould- aspiring to Scotland having the best, most innovative historic environment lead body in the world - even that means changing the rules (in a good way!).
- HES is a key player in delivering training at the Engine Shed, but with recognition that there are other training opportunities/providers in Scotland.
- New fundraising opportunities (albeit in already cluttered and competitive sector).
- Policy on acquisitions/rescue.
- Setting its own priorities.

5 Opportunities for the sector

Participants were invited to consider what opportunities are offered to the sector by this new organisation. These are summarised as follows:

- A change of culture and attitude across the sector to ‘Yes we can’.
- Greater opportunities to collaborate with HES and across the sector, forming alliances and working more closely in partnership.
- Potential access to (more) funding.
- Potential for two way secondments.
- More opportunity to be supportive of, and influence, HES.
- Scope to work towards improved accreditation of contractors and professionals.
- More opportunity to engage the new organisation and hold it to account.
- Input to new organisational priorities (including influencing funding priorities).
- Benefit from more capacity in the sector to champion the historic environment and develop stronger messages around value.

6 What changes would you like to see?

Participants were invited to consider what changes need to happen to enable delivery of the Plan. These are summarised as follows:

- Participants reiterated the need to clearly distinguish between HES’ role in relation to the properties, as distinct from the wider historic environment.
- Generate stronger links to other policy areas – specifically housing and health and increased external partnerships.
- Demonstrate relevance of the historic environment to the ‘non-believer’.
- More robust messages regarding safeguarding.

- A stronger message that the historic environment is not seen as something 'separate' but is part of the 'everyday scene'.
- Stronger championing and can do attitude.
- Reward risk takers, be braver.
- Reward stitch in time – rather than rewarding failure (as currently).
- Require long term maintenance after grant.
- Joined up approach to delivering tourism information by geographic area.
- Transparency.
- Continuing the conversation and measuring progress.

7 Participants and acknowledgements

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AOC Archaeology
 Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland
 Association of Preservation Trusts – Scottish Committee
 Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
 COSLA
 Glasgow University
 Institute of Conservation
 Institute of Historic Building Conservation
 National Trust for Scotland
 Royal Society of Arts – Media, Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage Network
 Scotland's Garden and Landscape Heritage
 Scottish Civic Trust
 Scottish Redundant Churches Trust
 Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
 The Heritage Place
 University of St Andrews