

HISTORIC SCOTLAND BOARD MEETING

Minutes of Meeting Thursday 30 August 2007

Longmore House, 11.00 – 16.30

Those Present:

Peter Bromley	Director of PiC
Donald Carmichael	Director of Policy
Malcolm Cooper	Chief Inspector
Marc Ellington	Non-Executive Director
John Graham	Chief Executive
John Lennon	Non-Executive Director
Ingval Maxwell	Director of TCRE
David McGibbon	Non-Executive Director
Brian O'Neil	Director Human Resources
Laura Petrie	Director of Finance
Ann-Marie Stannard	Non-Executive Director
Sheila Terry	Non-Executive Director
Raymond Young	Non-Executive Director

In Attendance:

Kari Coghill
Liz Crichton
Tania Smith
Chris Watkins

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and set the Board's morning session in context. He explained that the Agency was developing its longer-term strategy with a view to formulating the next Corporate Plan. The morning discussion presented an opportunity to explore topics which the Agency might wish to include in its next Corporate Plan.
2. There followed a strategy discussion on sustainability, training, awareness-raising and new mechanisms for capacity-building.
3. Ingval Maxwell introduced Paper HSB 19/07 on 'climate change and its impact on the built fabric' and invited questions from the Board. The paper was considered to present a reasonable assessment and analysis of the situation. Ingval Maxwell confirmed that a scoping study was intended to draw existing information together to provide an overview and to identify where opportunities existed for Historic Scotland to contribute to the climate change agenda. The Chairman confirmed that a 'Greener Scotland' was one of the Scottish Government's strategic objectives.
4. The Board noted that it would be important to ensure that the interests of the historic environment were included at an early stage of discussions on climate change. The Board considered that sea and flood damage were key challenges. The Chairman pointed out that the Agency was likely to come under pressure to relax some of its policies on the preservation of the heritage in the interests of reducing carbon emissions.

5. The Board agreed that Historic Scotland had to challenge the assumption that domestic wind turbines and replacement windows were the only means of reducing carbon emissions. It was vital for the Agency to equip itself with sufficient research data to prove the energy saving advantages of historic buildings. The Board felt that the energy efficiency issue could be seen in the context of maintenance and repair of the historic building stock: Historic Scotland had a role in providing maintenance advice to owners of traditionally-built buildings, not just listed buildings. Climate change highlighted the need for more and better repair work and the Agency could use the opportunity this presented to promote recognition that the health of buildings also affected the health of their occupants.

6. Peter Bromley and Kari Coghill made a presentation on the Agency's Properties in Care (PIC) Group's projected income for 2008-11. They explained that visitor numbers to heritage attractions were not expected to increase year on year and that the relationship between visitor numbers and income was less stable across the sector. PIC's ongoing programme of Business Health Checks would refine projections over the coming months.

7. In response to suggestions from the Board, Peter Bromley agreed to examine:

- the feasibility of making Historic Scotland site shops more accessible;
- the cost-effectiveness of existing catering contracts; the provision of speciality coffee and the feasibility of expanding a 'fine dining' experience (which would be assessed as part of the Catering Healthcheck);
- increased benchmarking for retail;
- metered car parking.

8. On the question of admissions policy, the Chairman confirmed that this would be an element in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy series document on Properties in Care and that it would be subject to Ministerial sign-off. The Chairman thanked Kari Coghill for her presentation and the meeting broke for lunch at 13.30.

9. The Chairman re-convened the meeting at 14.00. There were no apologies.

10. Laura Petrie introduced paper HSB (R) 21/07. There followed a discussion on the Spending Review and the financial outlook for the Agency over the next three years.

11. Turning to the minutes of the previous meeting, the Chairman invited the Board to approve them as an accurate record of the discussion. The Chief Inspector suggested four changes to the minutes of the Board's June meeting, to which the Board agreed. The minutes were otherwise approved.

12. On paper HSB 22/07, Laura Petrie explained that the Finance Report showed the original budget and the revised budget forecast. The Finance Department would start formally forecasting after September. In summary, income was matched by expenditure and PIC income was holding to forecast. The Agency's major projects were expected to come in on budget. The business case for the implementation of eRDM [Electronic Records and Data Management] would be brought to the Board in October.

13. Moving on to the Risk Quarter 1 Report, Laura Petrie reported that the register had been updated. Peter Bromley confirmed that there was an increased level of risk associated with incidents at Properties in Care and this had been reflected in the register under Disaster Planning.

14. On IT systems, Laura Petrie reported that the risk level was reducing as action was in hand to address business recovery mechanisms for key business systems. Donald Carmichael confirmed that negotiations were underway to address the risk associated with the need to provide advice on the historic environment aspects of applications for funding under the Scottish Rural Development Plan.

15. Turning to item 6 on the agenda, the Chairman introduced Liz Crichton, the Agency's Health and Safety Advisor, and invited her to present the annual report on health and safety. Liz Crichton summarised the findings of the report, saying that the reportable accident rate had dropped, while the road traffic and occupational ill-health rates had risen. Liz Crichton noted that it was likely that the introduction of new policies in these areas had led to increased reporting.

16. Liz Crichton reported that the Agency's health and safety performance had improved against benchmarks and that guidance had been produced on the EU's Working at Height Directive. Noise and vibration management assessments were underway as a result of the implementation of the Physical Agents Directive. The Agency was liaising with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) on ways of developing more effective consultation mechanisms in order to get staff more involved and to improve health and safety compliance over the longer term. This work would be driven by a corporate health and safety forum.

17. In response to questions from the Board, Liz Crichton explained that the corporate health and safety forum would comprise representatives from management, trade unions and other Historic Scotland staff. The forum would cascade ideas and encourage managers to carry out direct consultation with staff in smaller, low risk business groups. Brian O'Neil confirmed that health and safety practice would be embedded in the business.

18. In response to questions on how the health and safety process would be audited, Liz Crichton confirmed that assessment of management systems included a sample of tasks, activities and locations.

19. It was suggested that measures taken to reduce sickness absence should be recorded in the health and safety annual report and it was agreed that this would be picked up next year. It was noted that the health and safety policy was embedding a number of mechanisms and that as a result more incidents were being reported and more data was being captured. It was suggested that the statistics on road traffic incidents should take account of the number of person miles travelled per year. The Chairman agreed that these statistics should be captured. The Chairman thanked Liz Crichton for her presentation.

20. Moving to item 7 on the agenda, the Chairman summarised the current position on Properties in Care Group's application for Scheduled Monument Clearance for works at Stirling Castle Palace. He explained that section 4.1 of the June Board minutes had recorded the Board's view that the proposals for Scheduled Monument Clearance for Stirling Castle Palace submitted by Properties in Care had not been entirely consistent with policy on the protection of scheduled monuments. The Board had expressed unease at the proposal to install a lift, and there had been a difference of opinion on the date on which the display of the Lodgings would be based. Since the last meeting, agreement had been reached on this

date and the PIC team had explored other possibilities for accommodating the Stirling Heads, which were explored by Chris Watkins in paper HSB 26/07.

21. The Chairman explained that three possible options lay before the Board:
- PIC's original proposal including a lift with the Stirling Heads displayed upstairs;
 - that the Heads be displayed in the Fort Major's House as a means of displaying them at ground level;
 - that the Heads be displayed upstairs without lift access but with virtual access in the Palace Vaults for those with mobility problems.

22. In response to questioning on how far the different options for lift provision had been explored, Chris Watkins confirmed that the team had explored all possible options and had originally suggested a platform lift, which was the most compact design capable of accommodating a wheelchair user. Such a design was also reversible. The Chief Inspector confirmed that the introduction of a lift was untenable. Chris Watkins explained that PIC's preferred option was to retain the lift design, but as a result of Historic Scotland Inspectorate's views, paper HSB 26/07 had introduced other options for the display of the Heads.

23. The view was expressed that the cultural significance of the Stirling Heads was very great and that it was imperative that the Heads be viewed in their original context. The Heads were works of art in their own right and it was therefore very positive that reproductions could also be viewed close-up on the ground floor. The tactile quality of the Heads meant that the reproductions could be valuable components of a virtual tour for those with visual impairment or other additional needs. It would be important to ensure that the virtual tour was of equivalent quality and close discussion with disabled groups would be needed. However, there was agreement that the installation of a lift was not favoured.

24. The Chief Inspector confirmed the arguments against the installation of a lift. He explained that the Lodgings were simple but highly unusual spaces and that it was important to understand the group as a whole. There were no back spaces where a lift could be installed without changing the character of the space and our appreciation of it. The visual impact would have been significant on our understanding of the reconstruction of the ground floor as it might have been in 1554.

25. The Board gave its unanimous support to option 3, namely that the Heads be displayed upstairs without lift access with virtual access in the Palace Vaults for those with mobility problems. Further consultation should be carried out with disabled groups on the format of the virtual tour. PIC would now work up a new proposal without a lift and resubmit the application for Scheduled Monument Clearance. The application and all supporting information would be published on Historic Scotland's website. Any technical drawings should highlight the unique character of the space.

26. Turning to item 5, Laura Petrie reported that progress for all Key Performance Targets was on track for the first quarter. The Chairman invited Non-Executive Directors to reflect on the existing targets and consider whether the current suite were the most appropriate measures of performance. This would be reviewed as part of the process of finalising the Corporate Plan. It was suggested that climate change and the Agency's future strategy be reflected in the targets.

27. Under Any Other Business, the Chief Inspector reported that two publications had been produced on the built heritage within the two National Parks. This was seen as part of the strategy to improve the recognition of listing and to make it a more transparent process. The National Park Authorities were distributing these publications widely among staff and visitors. Copies would be sent to MSPs and Board members of National Park Authorities initially and would be distributed as part of the public awareness raising agenda. The publications were enthusiastically endorsed and it was suggested that they should be available to the general public to purchase. The Chief Inspector agreed to pursue this with Historic Scotland's Communications Team.

28. The Chief Inspector reported on an ongoing case with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and undertook to circulate a report to the Board once the SPSO had published its report.

29. The Chief Inspector explained that an edition of the television programme 'Landward' which had been broadcast on 17 August had given a false impression of Historic Scotland's point of view and had set comments in a false context. The matter would be pursued further with the BBC.

30. The Chief Inspector confirmed that an application for Scheduled Monument Consent for works to Rowallan Castle would go to public inquiry in the next calendar year. Correspondence was continuing with the owners of Castle Tioram regarding the possible submission of an application for Scheduled Monument Consent.

31. The Director of Properties in Care reported that work was being carried out in conjunction with Technical Conservation Research and Education (TCRE) group on methods for removing graffiti from Skara Brae. He also notified the Board that Historic Scotland had been nominated for two Scottish Thistle Awards, one in the People Development category and one for PR Excellence.

32. The Director of TCRE noted that seven new Inform Guides had been published, bringing the total to 19. These guides were being distributed through City Heritage Trusts and had been very well received. The Inform Guides were intended to be a core back-up to the Inform House, which was being developed at the Glasgow Metropolitan College. He suggested that the Board visit the college to see the work currently underway on electronic learning initiatives. The Board agreed that the Inform Guides were very useful and it was suggested that the guides be distributed in Sunday newspapers in conjunction with relevant articles on historic environment topics. This was considered to be of community benefit and a useful awareness-raising exercise for Historic Scotland. The Director of TCRE confirmed that negotiations were progressing with Historic Scotland Communications Team and newspaper publications.

33. The Director of TCRE reported that two DVDs had been published in conjunction with the Mansfield Traquair Trust. One focused on the murals in the church while the other was a companion to the conservation case studies carried out by Historic Scotland interns. These DVDs represented the Agency's first venture in the DVD learning market.

34. Brian O'Neil noted that a Project Board had been set up to drive the shared services project on Human Resources and Finance. Proposals would be brought to the Board in April 2008.

35. The Board noted the Forward Look.
36. The Chairman brought the meeting to a close at 16.30.