

SUMMIT 3 NOVEMBER

MINISTER'S OPENING COMMENTS: FINAL (TRANSCRIPTION)

Thank you Ruth and thank you for all the hard work that you and your team have put in to allow for this event to take place.

It's always an enormous pleasure to be in this particular hall, this jewel of the gothic revival, part of the great Scott family legacy. And of course the product of a wonderful partnership between the third Marquis of Bute and the University. This and Mount Stuart I do believe are two of the most beautiful places in Scotland and I don't say that just because Ninian Stuart has arrived but because I do think that Mount Stuart is the finest house in Scotland and this must be one of the finest public spaces in Scotland.

So it's a great pleasure to be here. My apologies to Jim and Lorna from New Lanark. We were meant to be in New Lanark but unfortunately too many people wanted to come to this so we had to move it to a larger venue. So now you have left me in debt to New Lanark and trying to find something else to take there and those of you who know Jim mean that I won't be let off lightly from that debt.

If administrations have their defining way of doing business, I think our predecessors if you remember correctly David McLetchie once saying that the two previous governments in Scotland had more Tsars than holy mother Russia. Our administration I suppose has more summits than the Himalaya's. But there is a

particular serious purpose in so doing, and especially today. This is the first time since devolution that we have brought together all the key players within the historic environment. And the purpose of so doing is so that we can begin to work constructively together. That doesn't mean to say that you aren't working one to one or organisation to organisation, but I want to harness a new purpose in Scotland, the tremendous commitment and enthusiasm that exists in this room, the tremendous knowledge that exists in this room, and I want to harness that for the greater good of the cause that we all believe in.

I have and you have a passion for the country in which we are and a passion for the surroundings in which we live. It long pre-dates my arrival in this particular job. On the historic environment side I worked for The National Trust as a student in Killean. I think I must have been a very unbidable worker for The National Trust but I do hope my file has been destroyed in the period of time since then. But I have had an interest in and a passion for the historic environment in Scotland since I was at university and before, and then and now I'm hugely impressed by the variety of work and the dedication of those who undertake it.

You represent in this room a rare resource. Those people who are passionate about the work they do and are determined that that work should succeed.

So now together we have to do three things:

- we have to first of all communicate the enthusiasm we feel, in ways that will fully engage the people of Scotland;

- secondly we've got to make the link between the areas in which we work- the historic environment and the bigger contemporary picture;
- and thirdly, we've got to create new and dynamic partnerships to make our resource go further.

So today, we can start that process by having both a broad debate and a much narrower discussion. And in the plenary sessions we will have the opportunity to have that broad debate. In your break out groups you'll have the opportunity to have a much more focussed discussion. But let me start with this bigger and broader picture.

I want to encourage you to look at the historic environment, what I've called before in a contribution to the final conference of HEACS- our patrimony as part of a broader picture.

We're only going to realise the full value of what we have if we place it within the widest context in Scotland. And we need to understand it not about urban Scotland or rural Scotland but Scotland as a totality. And our task is to find sustainable new uses and new futures for traditional rural buildings as well as finding new uses and continuing uses for buildings within the urban setting. And all those things are tasks we can take on and we can achieve.

But we have to see it across the entire environment. You can't look at buildings without looking at their landscape; you can't look at the landscape without looking at the widest environment. If I take for example, rural Argyll, which I know particularly well, anywhere, almost anywhere in Argyll you are looking at a landscape that has been intimately shaped by thousands of years of human occupation and habitation. And you are looking only occasionally at the built environment which has survived that period, but there is a great deal to read into the whole environment.

And I want people in Scotland to understand that totality, and to engage with that totality, and you are the people who can tell Scotland about it.

Some of you will know that when I was in office as Environment Minister I started a project trying to get SNH and The Forestry Commission and others to tell people very simply what was important about the sites that the government took responsibility for.

To be able to tell people graphically even in a single sign why this was important, either important locally or nationally or internationally. And one of the things I wanted at that time and now I think we are going to be able to achieve is to draw Historic Scotland and Arcams into that process and others so that at a glance, at any spot in Scotland which we say, which the collective population of Scotland say is important we can recognise why it is important and the level of its importance and we can begin to develop a visual language in Scotland that allows Scotland to share the view of importance.

Now we can do that because we have a passion to do it, we can also do it because we are developing the tools to do it.

The National Performance Framework which we in government have agreed with local authorities and others takes us away from thinking in narrow compartments which don't reflect the complexities of real life, and in actual fact makes joined up living and government possible. And the National Performance Framework is ground breaking in that regard. And the purpose, the purpose of the framework is even more relevant than when we declared it two years ago. Let me remind you of the central purpose of the Scottish Government. The central purpose of the performance framework was to:

“focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing economic sustainable growth”.

And you're part of that process as much as anybody else is part of it. And that's why in the whole list of items on the National Performance Framework, in National Outcome 12 we said this:

“We value and enjoy our built and natural environment- and we protect it and enhance it for future generations”.

So we have already built in the objective and we've built in the tool for reporting on that objective.

We need to hear from you about how your expertise and your actions is meeting that challenge. HEACS has already given us a strong starting point for this debate, pointing to the economic contribution made by the Historic Environment to Scotland, particularly in tourism and construction. Next week I'm taking the issue of the historic environment to a debate in the Scottish Parliament, focussing upon those issues, but there are many other ways we can do that as well, your contribution today will be invaluable.

Now of course we have to face reality in so doing. There are hard choices to be made at the present moment right across government. Meeting our over-arching Purpose means setting priorities – we can't do it all. And we can't do it all at once.

So in this room we have the key people who can decide how to pool resources and to make these objectives achievable. How to set our priorities for public spending so the work of public bodies funded by the public purse in the tough times

What we need to do is have creative thinking and make sure that we are working together. We've got the over arching purpose, we're simplifying the public service, particularly through the Public Services Reform Bill. What we now need to do is to make sure that we are utilising all the tools to hand.

Now there are many good examples of work already as I said at the start. Lots of interesting things happening and most of you in this room are involved in them. What we now need to do is to make sure that that good practice spreads and grows. And it

becomes not the exception, or not simply the example but the rule. That everybody is in this room from whatever organisation knows that it is better to work together and to pool resources and ambition than to work separately. And by doing that we will build the Scotland of flourishing places that we wish to see. We will be able to hold our heads up and to say that we have done the task which past generations gave to us and which we need to pass onto future generations and that also is a challenge for everyone in this room.

Now I want to conclude with celebration. One of my great privileges of being a Minister is to meet so many enthusiastic people, people who want to do this job and who do it well. I have met many inspiring people over the last two and half years who give freely of their time. In each of my summer tours I've been the length and breadth of Scotland and indeed I don't confine my touring to Scotland, I actually tend to tour most of the year. And in this sector, in this sector alone the work of the volunteers in Scotland is worth around £28 million pounds- a staggering figure.

Of course it's not just done for the financial benefit. It's done for the satisfaction and success that it brings. It's done because people have a passion to make sure that the environment in which they live is improved, is carried on, is passed on to others, is communicated to others. And I am quite sure that that vigorous work will continue. You only have to look round this hall to see what passion can achieve. It was passion that produced the result we see here, a passion for the excellent, a passion for creation and artistry. A passion for providing the utilitarian in something more than a utilitarian manner. That's a challenge that each of us has here at this summit. I think that this summit is important because each of you can contribute to that

overall task and if you do contribute to that overall task then Scotland will be the place it could be. That's why I am in politics and I suppose that is why I have this job. I look forward to working with everyone of you today and hereafter to making it happen. Thank you.