

REPORTS ISSUED BY THE HISTORIC ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR SCOTLAND (HEACS)

Purpose

1. This item provides an opportunity for the Board to discuss the recommendations made in the four reports submitted to the Ministers by HEACS in August and September, prior to the submission of advice to the Minister.

Process

2. HEACS has produced four reports, all in response to requests from the Minister. In early August, it circulated reports on: local government; and, the criteria for taking properties into care. In early September, it circulated reports on: the case for a review of existing legislation; and the availability of traditional skills and materials. These reports were circulated to members of the Board at the time of their receipt. The reports were published by HEACS at the same time as they were put to the Minister.

3. HEACS held a conference on 14 September, combined with its annual public meeting, to publicise the reports. The Director of Policy met with the Chair and a small number of other Council members on the same day to explain the process for responding and to explore the background to the recommendations in the reports. We have had a useful subsequent meeting with the Andrew Wright, chair of the sub-group which worked on the legislation report, to tease out further what evidence HEACS particularly relied on in deciding to recommend a review.

4. It will be for the Minister to respond to these reports. Historic Scotland will be putting forward advice to the Minister in November.

Recommendations in the reports

5. The report considering the case for a review of legislation makes a single recommendation, which is that there should be such a review, which should be predicated on substantial overhaul of the legal base via a new Act. The report does however also acknowledge that the range of issues it identifies might alternatively be addressed by a more incremental approach, although ultimately it rejects that approach.

6. The remaining three reports contain larger numbers of specific recommendations, which are attached as an annex for ease of reference. Many of the recommendations would have resource implications, which at this stage are unquantified.

Conclusion

7. The Board is invited to take this opportunity to offer comments on the recommendations in the reports.

**Policy Group
October 2006**

ANNEX**HEACS RECOMMENDATIONS**Criteria For Taking Properties Into Care

1 Scottish Ministers should develop a Properties in Care acquisitions policy which provides a framework within which decisions about whether it is appropriate to take a property into care can be made and substantiated with rigour and consistency. The policy should address the objectives of acquisition as well as guide the assessment process and criteria. The development of the policy should include a process of public consultation.

2 Subject to the development of an acquisitions policy, Scottish Ministers should:

- review periodically the portfolio of Properties in Care with a view to identifying if there are any properties whose long term care would be more appropriately secured outwith state care;
- develop an appropriate disposals policy, if permissible, under current legislation;
- develop a rescue policy for properties at risk; and
- subject the benefit and risks of state care by way of full ownership versus guardianship to strategic consideration.

3 The principal criteria, as defined earlier in this report, used to assess whether a property should be taken into state care should be:

- eligibility,
- suitability,
- feasibility, and
- appropriateness.

4 Whilst the final decision about whether to take a property into care must rest with Scottish Ministers, the assessment process should be open, transparent, inclusive, and publicly validated.

5 In assessing whether to take a property into care, Scottish Ministers should work in partnership with the other individuals and organisations who care for properties of national importance in an exemplary manner.

6 Scottish Ministers should consider carrying out a study of how many properties might be suitable candidates for state care as well as a review of the subsequent fate of properties deemed unsuitable. This study could form an element of the Historic Environment Audit currently being taken forward.

7 Scottish Ministers should consider expanding the resource known as the “National Collections” to include the Properties in Care portfolio.

Role of Local Authorities

Improvements to the historic environment sector

1. Introduce a statutory duty of care for the historic environment for local authorities and other public bodies and agencies.
2. Commission an independent survey of current local authority policies, staffing and resource levels for the historic environment at the earliest opportunity.
3. Reassess the balance of working between Historic Scotland and local authorities to separate those functions that should properly be delivered nationally and those that can and should be delivered at a local level as part of the wider initiative on community involvement and culture change within the planning system.
4. Develop appropriate concordats with individual local authorities to facilitate this transfer of functions between Historic Scotland and local authorities (see also recommendation 20).
5. Encourage the establishment of joint historic environment services for adjoining local authorities in areas not capable of supporting individual specialist staff.

Setting new standards of performance for local authorities

6. Establish a recommended set of key performance indicators for local authorities dealing with historic environment matters.
7. Develop minimum national standards for a quality local authority historic environment service including professional standards, staffing and resources.
8. Review the allocation of resources to and within Historic Scotland to allow it to expand its involvement and build capacity with the local authorities and the voluntary sector.
9. Reconvene the Local Authority Historic Environment Forum and empower it to deliver an agenda of service delivery improvements.
10. Develop and facilitate a skills training programme and provide financial support for professional historic environment staff linked to national occupational standards.
11. Explore specific grant mechanisms to fund specialist posts within local authorities on the SNH model to support the development of a quality historic environment service.
12. Promote the principle of staff exchange between local authorities and Historic Scotland.
13. Build into Historic Scotland's next Corporate Plan specific performance measurements in relation to developing working relationships with local authorities.

Improving Scottish Executive internal communication

14. Provide clear guidance on the significance of the historic environment to broader Scottish Executive policies on economic development, regeneration and social inclusion.
15. Promote a broader understanding within Scottish Executive departments of the benefits of and impact on the historic environment in respect of their own departmental interests and encourage the allocation of appropriate resources.
16. Provide continued support for the further development of a linked historic environment data base involving local authorities and Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) for use across government.
17. Continue to develop Scottish Historic Environment Policy papers (SHEPs) through partnership working with the historic environment sector.

Community planning and the historic environment

18. Develop a set of qualitative and quantitative performance indicators for including the historic environment in community planning.
19. Establish the recommended concordat with CoSLA to promote an enhanced quality historic environment service.
20. As part of recommendation 4 above, develop appropriate concordats between Historic Scotland and individual local authorities to provide advice and assistance on matters relating to the historic environment either directly or through local authority staff.
21. Explore with CoSLA the establishment of a Scottish version of the Historic Environment Local Management (HELM) initiative that already exists in England, including the promotion of local authority champions of the historic environment.

Skills And Materials

Traditional materials

- Scottish Ministers must give a commitment to bring about new sources of supply of Scottish slate as a matter of urgency.
- Scottish Ministers should issue guidance recommending that, until there is a new supply of appropriate Scottish slate, second-hand Scottish slates should be reserved for the repair and maintenance of historic buildings.
- The development of the Scottish stone quarrying industry, particularly dressed stone, should be taken forward as a priority.
- Historic Scotland be invited to form a study group to investigate the extent to which Scottish vernacular building materials can continue to contribute to regional diversity and a sustainable future.

Skills and professional issues

- Skills and materials audits similar to the Glasgow Project should be carried out in different areas, to provide comparative information.
- CITB-ConstructionSkills should examine ways in which the approach taken by the Scottish Lime Centre Trust could be developed to provide high-quality apprenticeship training without becoming an economic drain on small businesses.
- Historic Scotland should strengthen the conditions of grant-aid so that the use of accredited building craft workers becomes a requirement. Initially this might be by way of 'conservation endorsements' to the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) but, should a National Certificate in Traditional Building and Conservation Skills be developed, then this could become the accepted benchmark.
- CITB-ConstructionSkills and the Scottish Qualifications Authority should be asked to consider the creation of a National Certificate in Traditional Building and Building Conservation Skills.
- Historic Scotland should invite those involved in running training centres in traditional and building conservation skills to come together to consider how an integrated national network of training providers might be achieved. As a first step, Historic Scotland should consider amalgamating its currently dispersed commitment to training support.
- Professional bodies should participate in the continuing development of accreditation schemes and encourage members to become accredited.
- Government departments and local authorities should set an example by using accredited practitioners on historic building projects.
- Historic Scotland practitioners should be accredited.

- Scottish Ministers should maintain their commitment to conservation internship and fellowship programmes.
- Opportunities should be made wherever possible to provide training opportunities as part of conservation projects, particularly on Historic Scotland-funded projects or on projects promoted by the NTS.

Demand for traditional materials and craft skills

- Local authorities should be encouraged to explore the scope for playing an enhanced role in increasing awareness and appreciation amongst owners and managers of the need for sympathetic repair and maintenance.
- Historic Scotland should partner local authorities in providing repair and maintenance grants for listed buildings and unlisted properties within conservation areas.
- The major stakeholders should be brought together with a view to formulating a national strategy for maintenance.
- A commitment to maintenance should become a condition of Historic Scotland grant-aided projects.
- An investigation should be made to determine the benefits of a National Historic Environment Maintenance and Repairs Loan Fund and how it might be operated.
- Scottish Ministers should join with their counterparts in the home countries in calling for a government review of the impact of VAT on the repair and maintenance of historic buildings.