

HISTORIC SCOTLAND BOARD 21 AUGUST 2008

PLANNING MODERNISATION AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS

Background

The Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 will radically re-shape the planning system in Scotland to support the Government's key objective of delivering sustainable economic growth. This will mean more emphasis on increased efficiency and speedier decision making at all levels.

As Historic Scotland is a statutory consultee within the planning system these changes will have significant impacts on the work of the Inspectorate in dealing with such consultations. This paper explains how the Inspectorate is responding to ensure it contributes fully to supporting the Government's objectives in this area.

Business Improvements within HSI

In order to improve the service provided by the Inspectorate a number of initiatives are currently in development. Each of these will support the modernisation of the planning system in Scotland and ensure that the work of the Inspectorate is focussed and efficient.

Joint Working Agreement

The Inspectorate is working with local authorities to establish a joint working agreement setting out the respective responsibilities of each partner. The agreement deals with designations, development planning, development management and a range of strategic issues and explains who leads on each of these. The agreement will be subject to consultation via CoSLA before it is finalised for the start of 2009/10.

Delegation of Casework

In parallel with the joint working agreement, the Inspectorate is currently developing a pilot with Glasgow, Edinburgh and Perth & Kinross to explore how effectively casework can be dealt with at the local level. This pilot will enable the three authorities to determine a range of cases without the need to notify Historic Scotland when they have done so. Work is ongoing to establish the scope of the pilot, the process by which it will operate and the means by which we will measure its success. The pilot will run through October, November and December with a report being compiled by the end of 2008/09.

e-Planning

The Inspectorate piloted e-planning with Edinburgh and Scottish Borders in the autumn of 2007. Following the success of this pilot we are about to purchase the necessary hardware to enable all of our casework teams to be ready to receive and handle e-consultations. It is intended to have all this in place by the end of December, a little ahead of the national programme.

Casework Management System

The Inspectorate hopes to commence procurement of a new integrated casework management system shortly with a view to being operational in the summer of 2009. This will support the e-planning system and allow more effective and efficient use of resources in managing casework and related requests for information. The new system will replace a series of life expired systems and capture information not currently recorded.

Memorandum of Guidance (MoG)

The current version of the MoG is ten years old and it has been decided to republish it as a series of e-leaflets. A budget has been secured to achieve this and working with consultants, the Inspectorate plan to issue the new e-leaflets by the end of 2008/09. The new format will allow updates and new topics to be introduced much more quickly and cost effectively than previously.

Statutory Consultees

The issues faced by Historic Scotland in adapting to the modernisation of planning in Scotland are shared by other statutory consultees. Working with SEPA, SNH, Scottish Water, Transport Scotland and others, we have developed an understanding of common issues which will enable us to share best practice and develop new ways of joint working. A working group is established to take this forward in partnership with the Built Environment Directorate lead by Jim Mackinnon, the Chief Planner.

Conclusion

These initiatives will significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of the historic environment through our casework function. If successful they will also enable HS to assume a more strategic role in partnership with local authorities and others.