

HISTORIC SCOTLAND BOARD

Minutes of Meeting on 26 October 2006

Fyvie Castle, Grampian

Those Present:

Lucy Blackburn	Director of Policy
Peter Bromley	Director of PIC
Donald Carmichael	Acting Director of Policy
Malcolm Cooper	Chief Inspector
Marc Ellington	Non-Executive Director
John Graham	Chief Executive
Ingval Maxwell	Director of TCRE
David McGibbon	Non-Executive Director
Brian O'Neil	Director Human Resources
Laura Petrie	Director of Finance
Sheila Terry	Non-Executive Director

In attendance:

David Mitchell
Tania Smith

1 Apologies

1.1 There were no apologies. The Chairman welcomed Donald Carmichael, who would be taking over the role of Director of Policy in Lucy Blackburn's absence, to the meeting. The Chairman also welcomed David Mitchell, who would be making a presentation to the Board on behalf of the Agency's Technical Conservation Research and Education (TCRE) Group.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1 The Chairman invited the Board to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on 21 August 2006. The Board indicated that it was content. **The Chairman noted that a date for a site visit to Mavisbank had not yet been arranged and he asked that Lucy Blackburn take the lead in ensuring that such arrangements were made.** It was agreed that a visit in the late morning of 18 December, before the Board meeting, would be appropriate.

3 KPT Quarterly Report to 30 September

3.1 Laura Petrie presented paper HSB 24/06 on Key Performance Targets. Lucy Blackburn noted that the target for SHEPs was currently amber. It was felt that the internal process was running to schedule, and the amber designation was given because of caution surrounding the timescales for Ministerial approval.

3.2 Laura Petrie asked the Board to note that operational targets would be reported on at the Board's December meeting and that this would be repeated every six months.

3.3 Sheila Terry asked for clarification of progress towards Scheduling targets. Malcolm Cooper responded that Scheduling had a new Head and team, and said that the initial allocation of resource had required adjustment. This was now in place and Malcolm Cooper assured the Board that he did not anticipate missing the target for Scheduling.

4 Risk – Quarterly Report

4.1 Laura Petrie updated the Board on the Agency’s Risk assessments, presenting paper HSB 25/06. Each Director had reported on the Action Plan for their area. Laura Petrie drew the Board’s attention to the fact that some Risks would be moving from high to moderate. She cited as an example the Information Systems Unit. This was as a result of the recruitment of two new staff who were able to work across a range of tasks in order to ensure the stable functioning of the Unit. It was anticipated that this Risk would be removed in the next reporting round.

4.2 Laura Petrie explained that some Risks on the register would remain extreme, such as Business Continuity Plans and the Longmore House Disaster Recovery Plan. She welcomed the Board’s feedback on the usefulness of these reports.

4.3 Brian O’Neil noted that the delay which the Agency was experiencing in the Pay Negotiation process could be a potential cause for concern in the context of Risk.

4.4 Sheila Terry inquired about IT Systems in relation to Risk, specifically in the context of e-planning networks, and was informed that a strategy report would be brought to the Board in due course. Malcolm Cooper confirmed that Historic Scotland had been part of the bid to the Scottish Executive and he assured the Board that staff resource was in place to implement the e-planning system. Laura Petrie confirmed that funding from the Efficient Government Fund had been secured and had been set aside in the budget.

5 Finance

5.1 Laura Petrie presented paper HSB 26/06. She drew the Board’s attention to the forecast outturn which showed a prospective overspend of £496,000. However she was confident that this was not a cause for concern. She noted that the Agency would be repaid in the current year £0.5m which had been lent previously to another part of the TCS portfolio. Laura Petrie assured the Board that there was sufficient flexibility in the Major Projects budget to cover any deficit: monies could also be drawn down from the Grants budget for the same reason. She saw no real risk of overspend.

5.2 Laura Petrie noted that the income deficit figure of £630,000 probably underestimated the impact of the September and October figures and she was hopeful that the situation would improve as forecasts were re-profiled.

5.3 The Chairman asked what the reason was for the fluctuation between heritage capital and operational capital expenditures. Laura Petrie responded that this was because the requested re-profiling had not yet been undertaken by the Scottish Executive. The split of these figures in the budget was artificial.

5.4 Sheila Terry asked for an update on the Agency’s retail strategy. Peter Bromley reported that PIC had almost completed their retail review. The current proposal was to bring

a report to the Board in February to explain the review's findings. Laura Petrie added that a rigorous review of price, product and place had been carried out. David McGibbon asked whether the strategy would have an impact on the three year plan. Peter Bromley confirmed that it would not, since the existing strategic plan included scope for business reviews, the first of which was the retail review currently being carried out.

5.5 David McGibbon asked whether independent consultants had been used as part of the retail review. Peter Bromley explained that independent consultants had been contracted to carry out small pieces of work as part of the general review, but that it had been felt important to address a certain number of questions internally in the first instance.

5.6 Peter Bromley then introduced paper HSB 28/06. He reported that performance against budget had been stronger at the beginning and end of the summer season than had been anticipated. It was not clear that the monthly targets had been correctly profiled. The performance of key sites during core months of the season gave some cause for concern and was being more closely examined. In sum, the commercial review showed that performance was down against the budget, but up on the previous year.

5.7 David McGibbon asked what could be done to improve the performance of Stirling Castle. Peter Bromley confirmed that an executive manager had been recruited who would drive initiatives to raise the profile of the property. Sheila Terry asked whether family admissions were offered. Peter Bromley responded that this was partly addressed through the Family Explorer Pass, but for Edinburgh Castle an admissions strategist had been employed to investigate the various options available.

5.8 Peter Bromley noted that the free weekends at properties in care had been very successful but said that in future strategies for the management of numbers would have to be considered.

6 Presentation from TCRE Group

6.1 Ingval Maxwell emphasised that TCRE had acquired national and increasingly international status for its work and explained that its key strengths were enabling primary research, its publication programme, and provision of technical support, as well as its work with a wide range of industry partners to build capacity in the sector.

6.2 Ingval Maxwell introduced David Mitchell who would give a presentation on the operational aspects of TCRE, focusing on the Historic Scotland Conservation Bureau. Ingval Maxwell said that the Board might wish to visit the TCRE sites at South Gyle and Stenhouse. It was agreed that this visit could take place before the Board's meeting on 26 April 2007.

6.3 David Mitchell in his presentation stressed that TCRE's main focus for its technical publications would now be on education rather than on income generation. The Group was embarking on a project to develop ways of disseminating information electronically, although a survey had shown that there was still strong demand for paper publications. David Mitchell demonstrated a new digital initiative about repair and maintenance which could be used to help building owners.

6.4 An overview of group activities was presented in relation to networking, research and publication outputs, skills and materials activity, highlighting educational activity for school children with PIC Education Team, and outreach activity for building owners.

6.5 Ingval Maxwell summed up the Group's current activities and set out three issues for discussion. These were: first, whether the Board endorsed TCRE's intention to maintain its integrated approach; second, to ask how TCRE could better support other Agency colleagues in the delivery of education and training to those in the outside world and third, whether more resources should be allocated to allow the Group to address the technical knowledge, skills and materials shortage in the sector.

6.6 The Chairman thanked Ingval Maxwell and David Mitchell for their presentation.

6.7 Marc Ellington emphasised that TCRE's work was critical to the future of the built heritage and said that Historic Scotland was the UK leader in this field. He pointed out that although research was clearly vital, this needed to be balanced with actions to implement research findings in the field. David Mitchell said that TCRE had signed an agreement with the Sector Skills Council, CITB Construction Skills, in March of this year to help address this. He explained that the industry was beginning to resource training in conservation techniques but that there was a recognised need to work with Historic Scotland TCRE as leaders in the field. It was acknowledged that Historic Scotland could take a strategic overview and drive the development of the sector, and he agreed that the Agency was not necessarily the best vehicle for providing training.

6.8 Sheila Terry asked David Mitchell how awareness could be raised of the work of TCRE in developing electronic learning and support materials. She said that the interactive guide which TCRE was developing had relevance for many related fields, such as planning, and noted that it was a very valuable resource for providing access to advice of all sorts.

6.9 Sheila Terry asked whether a charge was made for the services provided by TCRE. David Mitchell responded that publications retailed at £6, but because income generation did not fit well with the educational remit, back catalogue publications were now being distributed to architects, surveyors and joiners, as well as to students studying historic environment in relevant courses. Ingval Maxwell pointed out that TCRE achieved full cost recovery on heritage projects where they provided a specialist skills service and, overall, the Group had earned half of the funding that it spent on research and producing publications. At an average of a miniscule £31k per project including printing, the research and publication work was being carried out in a very economical manner and relied on a considerable amount of goodwill and free input from TCRE's external partners.

6.10 David McGibbon said that TCRE carried out vital work for the historic environment sector and emphasised that Historic Scotland should take the lead in the technical conservation and research field, as this was part of the Agency's key role. He noted however that it was also important to work with other bodies. He agreed that if possible greater resources should be allocated to TCRE.

6.11 Laura Petrie commented that there could be a Spending Review bid for TCRE's work. Sheila Terry noted that a case could be made for allocating resources to training and qualifications in conservation and traditional construction skills as be a 'spend to save' measure.

6.12 David Mitchell pointed out that TCRE was co-ordinating the development of a masonry qualification and indicated that Historic Scotland could have positive impacts in other specialist trade skills activities, (metals, lime etc) through strategic work with colleges and CITB.

6.13 Malcolm Cooper noted that the discussion points raised by Ingval Maxwell posed a more general question, namely whether the role of the Agency should be that of grant provider or whether the balance should move to capacity-building in the sector. The Chairman noted that with an impending Spending Review, it was valid to consider whether there was an argument for greater funding for traditional skills training and ensuring traditional material supplies. Because of the lack of infrastructure, there was potential that existing funding might not always be employed in the most effective way. More targeted investment could produce benefit in the wider community. There was an issue about Historic Scotland's role in relation to skills: we should be a standard setter, a source of information about needs and an awareness raiser, but it would be a cause of concern if the Agency were to be positioned as the sole funder and provider of traditional skills education and materials sourcing. David Mitchell noted that we could act strategically in some areas, and more directly in other specialist skills areas.

6.14 Lucy Blackburn pointed out that the Scottish Executive's Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department (ELLD) had moved away from a top-down approach to skills training provision; she said that the preferred approach was market-led. Therefore Historic Scotland would have to consider carefully what sort of intervention might be appropriate. Ingval Maxwell responded that the construction industry was already spending £3 billion per year on repairs and maintenance and that this money could be spent more appropriately if practitioners were better informed and better trained. He said that TCRE had achieved a recognised role in setting standards and motivating the industry: there were a number of ways in which the Agency could work with industry leaders to encourage them to adopt such a strategic approach, including developing the various networking and liaison groups which TCRE had set up.

6.15 The Chairman suggested that TCRE could employ the Historic Scotland Board as a mechanism for engaging industry stakeholders. Further, the Minister's attention could be drawn to the issues involved and her support sought.

6.16 The Chairman requested an update from Ingval Maxwell on the issue of slate. Ingval Maxwell responded that there were three points of note: first, a delegation from Ballachulish had made a visit to a redundant slate quarry in France; a return visit from the French was anticipated. Second, discussions had been ongoing with a UK slate company which was interested in establishing dialogue for knowledge dissemination. Third, a meeting had been held with a Spanish slate company which was considering promoting the use of Spanish slate. It had been proposed that the company might consider promoting the use of indigenous material, and those attending had agreed to take the matter back to their Board informing him on their deliberations in due course.

7 SHEP Update

7.1 Lucy Blackburn reported that the responses to SHEP 1 had been analysed and published on the Historic Scotland and Scottish Executive websites. The document was

currently being redrafted and it was anticipated that the final version would be complete by the end of 2006. Four SHEPS would be published for consultation by the end of March 2007. These were Listing, Listed Building Consent, Scheduled Monument Consent and Access to Properties in Care. It was anticipated that drafts would be passed to the Scottish Executive in November. Further SHEPs on Battlefields, World Heritage Sites, and PiC Acquisition Policy were under consideration.

8 Discussion of HEACS Reports

8.1 Lucy Blackburn presented paper HSB 27/06. She noted that the recent HEACS conference had been well attended and that it had produced interesting discussion. HEACS had produced four reports and Historic Scotland was now proposing to provide an initial response before reflecting further on its formulation of advice to Ministers.

8.2 In relation to the report on the legislative review, the Board confirmed that it would not wish Historic Scotland to advise Ministers to accept HEACS' recommendation that a comprehensive system of new legislation be introduced. While it was clear that some elements of existing legislation would benefit from review, it was felt that a more incremental approach should be adopted.

8.3 Regarding the report on the role of local authorities, the Board noted that several suggestions might be acceptable in principle, and the feasibility of some were being investigated. Lucy Blackburn noted that the report's recommendation that local authorities have a statutory duty of care to the historic environment was worthy of further debate. Sheila Terry noted that due to the existence of statutory duties of care in other areas, there was a strong argument to establish one for the historic environment in order to ensure that it was appropriately assessed.

8.4 The Board agreed with HEACS that local authorities were in the front line of heritage protection and noted that it was important to build capacity and skills. However, it was acknowledged that the report's proposals had substantial resource implications, and the exiting landscape would have to be reviewed carefully before further conclusions could be drawn.

8.5 The Board agreed in the main with HEACS' analysis in its Skills and Materials report of Historic Scotland's role in the sector. It was noted that there were issues of resource, market intervention and accreditation which would all merit further debate.

8.6 The Board agreed in principle with many of the recommendations made by HEACS in its report on Properties in Care. Some recommendations were however not felt to be appropriate or feasible, such as developing a rescue policy for properties at risk and an assessment process for individual properties. It was agreed that several of the points raised by the report could be incorporated into an appropriate SHEP.

9 Forward Programme: Dates for 2007 Meetings

9.1 The dates for the Board's 2007 meetings were circulated. Sheila Terry would confirm her availability at the next Board meeting.

9.2 Lucy Blackburn would make arrangements for the Board to visit Mavisbank House on the morning of the December Board meeting.

9.3 Ingval Maxwell would make arrangements for the Board to visit the TCRE centres at South Gyle and Stenhouse on the morning of the April 2007 meeting.

10 Current Issues/AOB

10.1 Ingval Maxwell reported on a recent meeting he had attended on the European Construction Technology Platforms Focus Area on Cultural Heritage (ECTP FACH). At the meeting it was noted that the European Science Foundation's Seventh Framework Funding Programme was likely to be offering a fund of €7 billion in their first year of a 7 year programme. FACH activities specifically included materials, training and disaster planning and he would continue to develop these links. The Chairman agreed that it would be desirable to bid for this funding.

10.2 David McGibbon asked for an update on the Maeshowe visitor centre. Peter Bromley responded that an options appraisal was currently under way and that a report would be brought to the Board in due course.

10.3 Peter Bromley reported that the October 'Kids go Free' Campaign had been successful. The Agency had also won two Sandford Awards for its educational work at Edinburgh and Stirling Castles, and had been nominated for a Thistle Award for its activities in marketing and advertising in the tourism industry in Scotland.

11 Forward Look

11.1 The Chairman asked Peter Bromley whether he intended to present an item on Stirling Castle at the December meeting of the Board. Peter Bromley responded that this was still under review. Ingval Maxwell confirmed that he would arrange to present an item on the Scottish Historic Buildings National Fire Database at the meeting. Malcolm Cooper noted that the Inspectorate would most appropriately make its presentation at the April meeting of 2007, since this would tie in with the various reviews and restructuring of the Group.

11.2 The Chairman wished Lucy Blackburn well and noted that the Board would look forward to her return. He then brought the meeting to a close at 1.10.

**HSB Secretariat
October 2006**