



Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland

Minute of the Plenary Meeting held at John Sinclair House at 10am on Friday 2 July 2010.

Present:

Professor J Hume (Chairman), Mr T Dawson, Dr K Byrne, Mr M Hopton, Dr J Huggett, Professor J Hunter, Mr Paul Jardine, Dr S Nenadic, Ms Jude Quartson-Mochrie, Ms E Reid, Mrs D Murray (Secretary), Ms R Bailey, Mrs L Ferguson, Mr J Stevenson, Dr A Jackson (minutes).

Apologies:

Dr G Masterton, Ms J McCoy, Mr D Mackie

1. Reserved Business

2. Minutes and matters arising from the Plenary meeting of 4 December 2009

The minutes were approved with no further matters arising.

3. Secretary's Report

Mrs Murray highlighted the Minister's visit to RCAHMS who was particularly interested in RCAHMS' education work, the Scotland's Rural Past project and the Aerial Collections. Discussion of the secretary's report focussed on the Skills for the Future Project, Scotland's Places and Freedom of Information requests during the period.

4. Financial Report

Dr Jackson gave a brief presentation on RCAHMS finances for 2009/10 and 2010/11 highlighting the reduction in Scottish Government funding in 2010/11 and the reduction in operational expenditure required to achieve a balanced position at the year end.

Mrs Murray reported that no further reductions were expected to the Scottish Government grant for 2010/11; however funding cuts are anticipated in 2011/12 onwards. The next Spending Review is scheduled to take place in Autumn 2010, as part of this exercise RCAHMS will seek to have the One Scotland Mapping (Ordnance Survey data) Agreement and Scran funding included in its baseline.

RCAHMS has focused considerable effort on streamlining activities and identifying efficiencies and on income generation, however it is likely that the anticipated public sector funding cuts will lead to both the Scottish Government implementing a pay freeze and to a reduction in staffing numbers (e.g. through a recruitment freeze). In September, RCAHMS will be looking at the Operational Plans for 2011-12 and will focus on high impact, high visibility and highly efficient work.

5. Risk Audit Committee Report

Professor Hunter reported on the Risk Audit Committee. Key actions are as follows:

1. RCAHMS consolidated accounts for the 2009/10 financial year will be presented at the December Plenary. **Dr Jackson**
2. Mr Turnbull identified a number of low and medium risks with trading and associated activities and the actions required to be taken to reduce risks. The actions are to be implemented and the risks are to be added to the Risk register. **Mr Turnbull / Dr Jackson**
3. Storage was identified as an area of high risk. RCAHMS staff are to develop new Storage and accommodation strategy **Mrs Murray / Mrs Ferguson**
4. The risks associated with reduction in income are considerable. RCAHMS staff are to undertake detailed scenario planning for the impact of anticipated reductions in funding. **Mr Mackie**

The committee also discussed the change in RCAHMS sponsorship arrangements into government.

6. Draft Business Plan

Mrs Murray reported that the draft Business Plan as tabled will change in format to reflect the framework provided by RCAHMS Management Statement and *Future RCAHMS*. The Business Plan requires a review of the preceding year and key performance targets, a concise operational plan, spending review proposals and best/worst case scenarios. The revised Business Plan will be presented to Commissioners at the September meeting.

Mrs Murray

7. Accommodation Update

Mr Hopton reported that at the last Building and Estates Committee meeting there was a clear vision to move the contents of the Baileyfield store to Murrayburn in association with Edinburgh Council, purchase an archive building at Sighthill and move offices to Waverleygate. Mrs Ferguson then reported that the situation had since changed with the storage solution at Sighthill no longer being available. The absence of a storage solution impacts on the contingent plan to move offices from John Sinclair House.

The Baileyfield archive will move to Murrayburn with the potential option to extend the current 5 year agreement to 10 years. The Wincanton storage is funded to March 2011 and the possibility of extending this arrangement will be investigated further. RCAHMS will also explore possibility of upgrading and modifying John Sinclair House as part of its negotiations with the landlord to extend the lease beyond 2016. Mrs Ferguson highlighted the threats to the collection brought about by sub standard temporary stores. Mrs Murray reported that, as Chief Executive of RCAHMS sponsor agency, Ruth Parsons could help us with leadership on the storage issue.

The Chairman thanked staff for their work.

8. Programme Committees

This item was deferred.

9. Future RCAHMS – Achieving the vision and delivering the outcomes

This item was deferred.

10. Change in Sponsorship

Ruth Parsons, Chief Executive of Historic Scotland, joined the meeting and gave a presentation that focused on the immediate challenges facing the Scottish public sector and Historic Scotland's role as sponsor. Ruth Parsons stated that she sees that her sponsorship role is to engage with Scottish Government to ensure that they have a greater understanding of our organisation's and the value that they bring. On the challenge role, Ruth Parsons focussed on the Scottish Government's forward budget projections, on public sector pay and pensions, on changing demographics, and on the inexorable rise in fixed costs and their impact on organisations. RCAHMS and Historic Scotland's priority is to look at how we can manage our way through it. Ruth Parsons also identified problems with shared services which have been hampered by cultural and practical issues.

Professor Hume asked whether Ruth Parsons would take the argument to government about the commercial and economic impact of our activities (e.g. on tourism). Ruth Parsons responded that these arguments can be taken to government but that the Scottish Government is placing an expectation on organisations that they factor this thinking into their planning anyway. Discussion focused on the need to ensure that RCAHMS is fully engaged in consultation on the historic environment and that cultural and heritage elements are included in the work of Visit Scotland.

Mr Hopton requested that Ruth Parsons provide leadership on the RCAHMS accommodation issue to which she agreed.

Mr Jardine asked Ruth Parsons to explain further how she would ensure good governance between RCAHMS and Historic Scotland as the main interface with the Scottish Government. She responded that, as Chief Executive of Historic Scotland, she has been working to raise the Scottish Government's knowledge and appreciation of her organisation and – as sponsor – she will do the same for RCAHMS.

Professor Hunter asked Ruth Parsons to shed more light on the future relationship between Historic Scotland and RCAHMS. She identified two distinct areas: the sponsor role and the shared working with each other and other organisations across public sector.

Ms Byrne highlighted the key issue of collections and accessibility and the need to invest in new technological developments to maximise public access and ensure our organisations are fit for the future.

11. AOCB

Mrs Murray reported that the Field Meeting will involve hill walking and a boat trip so Commissioners were reminded that they would need appropriate protective gear.

ACTION POINTS
Plenary Meeting of Friday 2 July 2010.

	ACTION POINTS	Action By	Action Status
1.	Item 5: RCAHMS consolidated accounts for the 2009/10 financial year will be presented at the December Plenary.	Mr Mackie / Dr Jackson	Pending
2.	Item 5: Trading and associated risks be added to the Risk register and the actions required to be taken to reduce risks.	Mr Turnbull / Dr Jackson	Completed
3.	Item 5: RCAHMS staff are to develop new Storage and accommodation strategy	Mrs Murray / Mrs Ferguson	In progress
4.	Item 5: RCAHMS staff are to undertake detailed scenario planning for the impact of anticipated reductions in funding.	Mr Mackie	In progress
5.	Item 6: The revised Business Plan will be presented to Commissioners at the September meeting.	Mrs Murray	Pending