



## Historic Houses Association for Scotland

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From: The Secretary & Head of Public Affairs in Scotland  
Stuart Crawford

01 OCT 2004

27<sup>th</sup> September 2004

Karen Watson  
Cultural Commission  
Broughton High School  
Carrington Road  
Edinburgh EH4 1EG

*Dear Ms Watson,*

### **Cultural Commission Consultation – First Phase**

The Historic Houses Association for Scotland (HHA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this phase of the Cultural Commission's public consultation. By way of background, the HHA has approximately 250 member properties in Scotland, comprising mainly castles, historic mansions and their contents, and gardens in private or individual (eg charitable trust) ownership. Collectively they employ some 1,500 people directly and contribute roughly £15 million to the Scottish economy every year.

You have asked for comments on both the remit of the Commission and the concept of Cultural Rights. However, before we do so, we would like to raise one most important issue which we believe needs to be addressed to allow our comments to be placed in context. We would urge you to take proper account of the role of the private owner in guarding the cultural heritage of Scotland. We seek merely to point out that, at a conservative estimate, some two thirds of the built architectural heritage in Scotland is in private hands and the fact needs to be acknowledged. Successive public consultations have demonstrated that many active in the sector assume that it is mainly the preserve of the public and voluntary sectors, but this is clearly not so. We would ask that you note this for future discussions.

### **Remit**

We are generally content with the main thrust of the Commission's remit. In particular we support the emphasis on education, for it is only through a sustained and focussed educational programme that knowledge of the rich tapestry of cultural

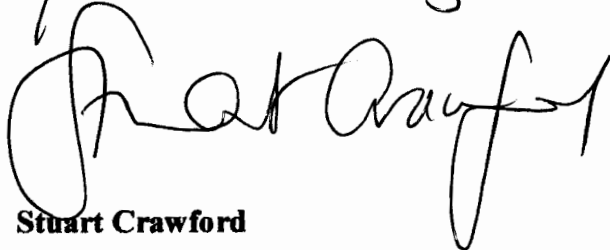
experiences on offer can become accessible to all in Scotland. The HHA would be keen to become involved in some way in this process. We are also well aware of the importance of marketing and promotion. Up to 80% of visitors to HHA member properties in Scotland are from outwith Scotland, and clearly more could be done to inform our indigenous population of what is on offer on its doorstep.

### **Cultural Rights**

We are less sure about cultural rights. The idea of a basic citizen's right or entitlement to culture might be seen by some to carry with it connotations of an agenda being foisted on the unwilling or uninterested. We fully agree that culture and the enjoyment of it should not be a privilege or only available to the few, but we do not support the idea that this situation necessarily pertains in the first place. Certainly there are no socio-economic, religious, racial or any other barriers for those who wish to visit HHA properties which are open to the general public. Perhaps cultural "opportunities" describes what you seek better?

We do agree fully, however, that such "rights" or "entitlements" as may be decided upon must be accompanied by a robust definition of the responsibilities that undoubtedly will go hand in hand with them. In this context, and bearing in mind my comments above on the importance of the private owner, possibly the provision of culture should apply to the private sector as you have it applying to the public sector in paragraph 2.4 of the consultation document.

We hope you find these comments useful.

Yours sincerely,  


**Stuart Crawford**