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To: info

Subject: CULTURAL COMMISSION CONSULTATION PROCESS PHASE 1[Scanned]

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HEACS (the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the deliberations of the Cultural Commission in its formative stages.

HEACS was established in 2003 to provide independent strategic advice to Scottish Ministers on all matters related to the historic environment in Scotland.

It is clear to HEACS that the historic environment is an important part of Scotland's culture. It is an ongoing record in stone, in landscapes, in artefacts, of our changing cultural and industrial history and prehistory. It is an abiding part of our sense of place and identity. It is a treasure-house of art and artistry and design, both great and modest, and is often one of the ways through which people make connection with the worlds of art, music and literature.

We wish, at this stage, to focus upon one matter of important principle.

A vibrant contemporary culture depends and feeds upon the cultural memory of the nation. Our enjoyment and understanding of the works of Sir Walter Scott, Liz Lochhead, James Bridie and Ian Rankin would be significantly diminished if we were ignorant of Scottish history. The past informs the present, and should stimulate the future.

Central to Scotland's cultural memory, and a principal feature of its worldwide identity, is the historic environment within which we live. Just as an understanding of Scottish history is needed to appreciate the resonances of Scottish artistic and material culture, so is an understanding of the historic environment, and of the forces that shaped it, needed to make sense of the physical world in which we grow up - as well as providing a sure platform from which we could plan its evolution in the future.

If the people of Scotland have entitlements relative to the cultural memory, they must be in relation to being enabled or equipped to understand the evolution of the historic environment; and to appreciate the identity, both of the locality in which we live, and of the nation we inhabit. That implies greater knowledge leading to better understanding and better communication. Education and interpretation, therefore, are as essential to the historic environment as they are to all other aspects of Scotland's culture.

HEACS recommends that there should be recognition within the Commission's programme for due recognition of the historic environment as a living part of our culture.

For the objectives of the Commission to be satisfactorily achieved in relation to the cultural memory, HEACS recommends that there has to be:

- a proper acknowledgement of the importance of the local and national cultural memory;
- a national initiative to develop the tools for enabling a better understanding of all aspects of the cultural memory;
- an acceptance of the equality of the importance of the historic environment with other aspects of the nation's culture; and
- a plan for developing the tools for understanding the nature and continuing evolution of the historic environment as a stimulus for the future.

James Boyle's letter of 20 August mentions that the Commission had embarked upon a series of introductory meetings with cultural and heritage bodies. HEACS was therefore disappointed that the seminar planned for the 25 August was cancelled. HEACS would be willing to reconvene that event and submit an additional paper if you felt that this would be helpful.

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