

Scottish Strategic Archaeology Committee

Meeting Note	Scottish Strategic Archaeology Committee	
Date: 29 October 2013	Council Area: n/a	
Meeting Location: Gatehouse, Edinburgh Castle	Designation: n/a	
Key External Contact (if applicable): n/a	File Reference: «Insert File Reference Number»	
Present: Stephen Driscoll (SD) (Chair), Mike Elliot (ME) (Mins), Chris Bowles (CB), Lisa Brown (LB), Simon Gilmour (SG), Mark Hall (MH), Peter Hinton (PH), Rebecca Jones (RJ), Susan Kruse (SK), Alan Leslie (AL), Eila Macqueen (EM), Rod McCullagh (RM), Matthew Ritchie (MR), Simon Stronach (SS), Robin Turner (RT), Ian Walford (IW), Luke Wormald (LW). Apologies: Karen Milek (KM)	Purpose: First meeting of the Committee	
Note of Meeting/Discussion	Action Points:	
<p>Chairman's welcome: SD gave brief overview of the challenges facing HS and archaeology in Scotland over the coming years.</p> <p>1. Welcome: IW thanked everyone for participating. The HS Review of Archaeology Function in 2012 gave rise to the formation of SSAC, which was one of the recommendations of the Review. A number of milestones have been reached with more identified over the next couple of years which will have a huge impact on promoting archaeology in Scotland and supporting the Cabinet Secretary's vision. The new Board and the new Body will be behind the SSAC. Archaeology has tremendous potential to tell part of Scotland's story, so this is an exciting opportunity.</p> <p>2. General introductions: General introductions were made round the table.</p> <p>3. Background to the Committee and remit: RJ had sent out an updated remit.</p> <p>RJ outlined the background to the Committee (archaeology forum) which will help with the creation of an Archaeology Strategy for Scotland and ensure the Strategy is kept alive by keeping in line with latest practices. Great interest has been shown in the Committee, with a number of people/organisations happy to be kept involved through regular contact and updates.</p>		

<p>Should minutes be publicly available? SD suggested confidential matters be kept out of public minutes. RJ keen to keep the minutes open. SG offered to host minutes on the ScARF website. Keeping them available keeps all our decisions open – if we make the wrong decision, we make the wrong decision and we should be open about it. Suggested that minutes have a disclaimer at the start that states that opinions stated are personal. Minutes can be circulated around the group before being disseminated for wider circulation.</p>	<p>Action point: disclaimer at the beginning stating that opinions are personal not institutional unless otherwise (ME)</p>
<p>Remit is not about the specifics of funding priorities for the Archaeology Programme, especially as a number of people involved in the committee regularly bid to the programme. Suggested that the SSAC be an advisory group for Historic Scotland (and its successor) and Scottish Ministers and this is something that the group should agree at its next meeting. Suggested that the priority of the SSAC is to develop the Strategy and discussions of funding priorities will follow on from that. Important to remember the role of the voluntary sector and its relationship with SG, and that HS is the conduit for that. It was suggested that a wider question of the remit of SSAC may include explicit reference to architecture within our definition of archaeology, or, at the very least, buildings archaeology, so that the desire to be inclusive is clear.</p>	
<p>IW encouraged all to set out the strategy and take it from there. Its products are very much for the group to determine and it has an independence. It was suggested that a logo be drawn up.</p>	
<p><i>Scotland's archaeology strategy</i></p>	
<p>4. Introduction to the Strategy: RJ introduced the work on the strategy thus far and its connection with the Historic Environment Strategy. She is keen for the Strategy to be short and proposed moving sections, such as the background, into appendices. RJ asked for volunteers to help make changes to the draft Strategy and edit the text down to something shorter.</p>	<p>Action point: ALL to give comments on the strategy to RJ by 18th November.</p>
<p>5. Values and Benefits: RJ suggested we may wish to group sections together. Active participation, popular promotion, tourism, education, development (RJ suggested this could be renamed), community cohesion. AL suggested that we follow the Council of Europe's four pillars for sustainable development: economic, social, cultural and environmental. SK suggested emphasising health and wellbeing. CB: suggested stewardship instead of development.</p>	<p>Action point: RJ to look at Council of Europe website.</p>

RT suggested that the audience for the strategy is the sector but we need to have something accessible at a high-level for ministers and also members of the public. EM highlighted the intrinsic economic value of culture.

SD requested that if anyone has any further thoughts on this they should email RJ.

6. Key challenges: These were discussed. Recent report in England on museum storage and curation was noted; discussions have started on a similar initiative in Scotland. Climate change: previous ecological studies may help to shed more light on this – given the prominence of Climate Change in government agendas, we have an opportunity to show how archaeology can contribute to understanding of how people have responded to change in the past.

RJ asked if these were the right areas and wondered if they should all go in or if there were other areas. PH suggested Financial, legislation and political function, regulatory regime, market function aspects to be considered. MH suggested knowledge cycle and storage and curation should go together. MR suggested climate change does not need to go in over casual neglect of the historic environment; suggested it could be changed to threats to the historic environment. LW warned that if we don't acknowledge it then we may not be able to keep up with it and that it is a challenge to be tackled. RM suggested that climate change does encompass casual neglect and that it is important. SD suggested that the four pillars is a good start. Also would aid in attempts to internationalise Scottish archaeology. Using familiar terminology will make it more accessible to an international audience.

SD noted that Scotland has conspicuously few foreign archaeologists working here (if we don't count English and Welsh Universities), this is despite it being easier for foreigners to excavate here than, for example, in Ireland or Turkey. CB suggested that may be part of the knowledge cycle. AL suggested that this should be an opportunity for archaeologists to take a look at ourselves and to challenge attitudes, and to explain why archaeology is important. It's not so much "So what?", but "Why, why, why?".

7. Strategic priorities: RJ gave a brief overview of each section. The first four are in the HE Strategy, and three more have been added following various discussions. RJ is keen for the first four themes to reflect the HES, though would welcome

Action point: RJ to revisit the list and see if it would work re-structured under the four pillars.

<p>wider discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Greater awareness b. Enhancing understanding c. Protection and management d. Championing our past <p>RT agreed that it is correct to marry this up with the HES; this isn't duplication, this is an interpretation. LW suggested this is also a good approach, and gives scope for it to become more specific in certain areas where required. PH suggested that we also look at statutory and non-statutory legislation – this will provide a more holistic approach. CB suggested that “sustaining” is a missing word from this list; not just sustaining the historic environment but also sustaining skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Improving skills: Partly in response to the profiling skills in the sector. RJ noted that archaeology is attempting to cover a broad range in this area, from aiding the voluntary sector and providing access to opportunities for them to develop skills, through to advanced post-excavation post-doctoral skills. RT raised the work of the Archaeology Training Forum on professional training for those who want to become archaeologists without an academic training perhaps via an NVQ. RM suggested that we aspire to raise standards for the benefit of archaeology. SD suggested that one of the things this group may wish to do is suggest a set of standards in the field. PH suggested we may be focussing too much on the technological aspect without remembering what archaeology is for and losing sight of the interpretive aspects. It was agreed to keep in the fifth theme. It was suggested that the theme could highlight Improving skills in the profession and the community. f. Science and innovation: RJ gave the reasons for the proposal of this strategic priority. RM agreed as archaeology is not reaching its full potential. PH suggested that one of the ways archaeology has been more innovative has been through interpretation of policy etc. RJ is working with the ScARF Science Panel on the creation of a Directory of Archaeological Science and Scientists which will provide an evidence base for the sector. MH highlighted the wider underpinning role for science beyond analysis, also on the interpretive and community engagement side. g. Improving the knowledge cycle: RJ advised that her 	<p>Action point: RJ to rename the section “Innovation”.</p>
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current text focused on the backlog and problems in archaeology leading to its creation and that the section needed to be re-worded. RJ showed a draft table / flowchart (a working document not intended to go into the Strategy). Communication throughout the process is an area that needs improving. RT noted that synthesis is a critically important aspect of the knowledge cycle; not only interpreting for the academic community but also for the public. Utilising SCARF would be a useful vehicle. MR suggested that this is best practice.

Action point: RJ to circulate the flowchart around the group.

13:30 Break for lunch and IW left the meeting.

8. HS backlog project: LB gave a brief overview of the current work on the HS backlog. She is building on earlier work undertaken in the 1990s. Definition of “Backlog” is projects that were funded by HS (and its previous bodies) which remain unpublished after ten years since their last season of fieldwork. LB has changed the definition from 7 to 10 years to bring it into line with the IfA. LB has created four classifications for her work: active, inactive, archive only and complete.

Active: a project which is being currently worked on.

Inactive: the state of a project when it is not being currently worked on (to our knowledge).

Archive only: projects where the findings are not necessarily publishable as individual projects.

Current inactive list is at 1500 projects (which also includes archive only).

Complete: all projects which have produced their final product.

Following completion of the HS list, LB will contact local authorities, commercial units, museums, universities etc to find out what other backlogs exist across Scotland. We also need to have wider discussions on why the backlog occurs and how to tackle it. RJ wants HS to take bold decisions on which backlog projects should be completed first, and which ones should be guillotined and destined for archive only to enable accessibility but not pursued for publication. AL wondered who “owns” the backlog and who has responsibility for it and, once that has been identified, how to go about getting them published. LB agreed that communication is key. AL advised that professionals may have an issue if HS were to approach universities / bodies without speaking to the archaeologists directly concerned if there had been a change of employment as this may have a negative impact on reputations. RJ clarified that HS would speak to both the (former) employer as well as the lead researcher / excavator in order to find the ways forward for various projects. RJ stressed that HS’s primary

Action point: LB to draw up her list of her priorities before the May meeting.

concern is the dissemination of knowledge, this is why LB has been changing the vocabulary and, ultimately, aiming to change the mentality of backlog and why it happens. MR suggested a moratorium on not funding institutions that have significant backlog for a period of time. PH suggested that there are a number of theoretical ways, including better contracts, though it depends on whether they are enforced by local authorities and / or funders. SD suggested that it might be worth exploring completion insurance for projects. SG suggested that HS would not have the resources to complete all the backlog projects, and noted that part of the archaeology strategy will have to enable decisions on funding priorities and which not to fund to be made.

It was proposed that the SSAC meet three times per year and could have a meeting in 2014 to discuss the selection criteria for tackling the backlog. The backlog is a small part of the strategy, but RJ is keen to move it forward in order for the Archaeology Programme to spend its funds more strategically.

14:45 LW left the meeting.

Developing and delivering the vision

9. Irish national strategic archaeological research (INSTAR) programme: SD, RJ and RM visited the Irish Heritage Council in July and were impressed with its INSTAR programme. The remit of INSTAR is to stimulate research on the major discoveries from development-led archaeology. This brings together research partnerships from across academic and private sectors and encouraged north-south and international dimensions to the study of Ireland's archaeological heritage. INSTAR has had a number of cross-boundary themes and projects that reflect a strategic need. One of the major risks of Scotland at the moment is that it can be seen as inward-looking; European funding tends to go towards more cross-border projects. MR suggested a communication strategy is important; we need to decide who this is for and who this will be communicated to. SK had concerns that cross-border projects like INSTAR would miss out on community archaeology. PH warned that the braver we are the harder it will be to draw up a strategy. AL advised that it is important that we look at ourselves and our entrenched attitudes, especially if we are to be as high-reaching as we would like to be. RJ agreed: would like us to be bold and creative. This is an opportunity for us and we have an element of blank canvass here. If there are things people fundamentally disagree with the strategy, it would be good to have these conversations.

Action point: SD to send RJ a paragraph on internationalisation.

<p>Point of order: SD suggested discussing provisional dates for future meetings. RJ is keen to get the strategy started sooner rather than later and also to get a document out as early as possible. RJ suggested a meeting in February to define the vision. LB will also be in a better position to define a method for tackling the backlog. SG suggested that we bear in mind that there will be a period when the Scot Gov is in purdah in the run up to the Referendum next year. SD suggested that the third meeting be in the autumn next year.</p> <p><i>15:11 CB and RT left the meeting.</i></p> <p>10. Learning from Ireland's Discovery programme: SD suggested that this be discussed at the next meeting.</p> <p>11. Timetable and next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Timetable for Strategyb. 2015 Dig It! and EAA: SG and SD will circulate any relevant comments around the Committee. <p><i>15:40 PH left the meeting</i></p> <p>RJ requested that if anyone has notes on the parts of the text to please forward them on to her by 18 November.</p> <p>12. AOCB</p> <p>MR argued for a logo, saying that it will encourage people to engage with the strategy and provide an identity. Allowing other people to use our logo would let them show that they are signing up to our set of standards. It was suggested holding off deciding on a logo until a vision and strategy had been decided on. MR volunteered himself to write a communication statement on behalf of the Committee.</p> <p>SD thanked everyone for their contributions and closed the meeting.</p> <p><i>Meeting closed: 15:44.</i></p>	<p>Action point: ME to circulate doodle poll and set date for next meeting.</p> <p>AP: MR to write a communication statement for the Committee.</p>
<p>Mike Elliot Archaeology Strategy Team</p>	<p>13 November 2013 8811</p>

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