



Joseph Johnson MP
Minister of State for Universities and Science
Department for Business Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

17th December 2015

Dear Minister

Capital investment in science and research: Heritage Science

I am writing to you in my role as Chairman of the National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) the UK's leading voice for heritage science that represents 20 leading HEIs, IROs and other agencies engaged in heritage science. The purpose of heritage science is to further the understanding of cultural heritage and in so doing overcome inequality of access to, and inequality of protection for, cultural heritage. The National Heritage Science Forum is actively facilitating collaboration among the heritage science research community within HEIs and non-HEIs by operating an online database that lists scientific and analytical equipment used in heritage science research that institutions are prepared to share with other researchers.

The funding by AHRC and EPSRC of the Science and Heritage Programme (2007-2014) has shone a bright light on the UK's leadership in heritage science. Yet while the training of heritage scientists has been given a much needed boost, furthered by the award to a consortium of South East universities of a CDT in Science and Engineering in Arts Heritage and Archaeology, the underpinning capital investment in science and research infrastructure is lagging behind. Creating access to a full range of world-class research infrastructure is vital if the UK is to maintain its reputation as a leading centre of research excellence in heritage science.

On December 8th 2015, the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructure (ESFRI) in Brussels voted in the new Roadmap 2016. There are six new research infrastructure projects in the Roadmap, among them is the European Research Infrastructure Heritage Science (E-RIHS), which the UK is supporting as a national priority and in which many leading UK heritage organisations and universities are involved. This is the only ESFRI Research Infrastructure project in the Social and Cultural Innovation domain.

In 2014, the National Heritage Science Forum, jointly with the AHRC/EPSRC Science and Heritage Programme, responded to the BIS consultation on capital investment in science and research (http://www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk/images/dynamicImages/file/SHP%20and%20NHSF_respo_nse%20to%20BIS%20consultation%20on%20Capital%20Infrastructure%20Investment.pdf).

In the light of the success of E-RIHS last week, we reiterate the urgent need for delivery of the investment in heritage science capital infrastructure outlined in the BIS document *Creating the Future: A 2020 Vision for Science and Research A Consultation on Proposals for Long-Term Capital Investment in Science & Research* (April 2014):

(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/321522/bis-14-757-consultation-on-proposals-for-long-term-capital-investment-in-science-and-research-v2.pdf):

'Enhancing the UK's position at the forefront of the emerging field of heritage studies requires integrated access to a wide range of advanced tools, facilities, instruments and sensors to support inter-disciplinary approaches capable of addressing heritage science problems that cannot be tackled by one technique alone. £10m capital investment would enable heritage researchers to take advantage of handheld, portable and transportable, non-destructive and non-invasive, scientific analytical equipment to enable on-site analysis on location at museums, historic properties and archaeological sites where, for reasons of size, weight, fragility, importance, value or context, heritage assets cannot be sampled or moved. Further capital investment of £6m for the development of two to three Centres for Heritage Science Studies would provide the high tech scanning and mapping equipment, as well as co-ordinating the sort of mobile facilities needed for on-site analysis as well as funding for projects to pilot/ demonstrate the use of these technologies, and explore the usage of the heritage artefacts themselves.' (1.13 Heritage Science, p 69)

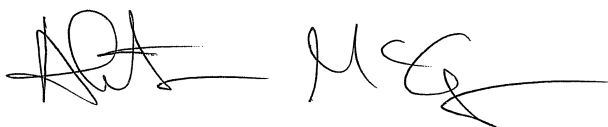
Such an investment is in the national interest; it would also facilitate collaboration in what will be the single most important international infrastructure project of our time – the E-RIHS. Five research hot spots have emerged across the UK as a result of the AHRC/EPSRC Science and Heritage Programme strategic funding in Scotland and Northern Ireland; North of England; Central England; London and the South East, and Wales and the South West which we consider as a possible foundation on which five regional clusters of excellence engaging HEIs, IROs and industry can potentially be developed. NHSF members have a demonstrable commitment to developing distributed and shared mobile science facilities. The funding by EPSRC of the CDT in Science and Engineering for Arts Heritage and Archaeology (SEAHA) for a Mobile Heritage Science Laboratory, with public engagement capability, is a perfect model of the infrastructure that should be rolled out across the UK. With the UK as the global pace setter for heritage science, it is widely acknowledged that there is no comparable vision anywhere in the world that links infrastructure to the 'users', as well as the 'doers' of heritage science.

In 2014, the estimated cost to deliver this vision of integrating equipment, services and data management was £40M. It is now timely that there should be capital support from the UK for the nascent E-RIHS. We consider that AHRC is the most obvious agency to handle it but more importantly, it is vital for the growth of this cross-disciplinary field that capital funding is put in place to make this happen, whichever source that ultimately comes from.

A copy of this letter has also been sent to you by email on 17th December.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alastair McCapra', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alastair McCapra
Chairman