



Response to Call for Written Evidence on the Historic Environment Scotland Bill

The National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) has been set up to address the recommendations of the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee Inquiry on Science and Heritage and to implement the National Heritage Science Strategy (NHSS) objectives.

The Forum provides a platform to support the policy, research and professional needs of institutions engaged in heritage science. The NHSF brings together many disciplines under the wide-ranging, interdisciplinary heritage science umbrella. Through working together, Forum members address the research and practice needs of institutions interested in or engaged with heritage science.

We have fifteen members:

- National Galleries Scotland
- Historic Scotland
- English Heritage
- National Museums Wales
- National Trust
- British Library
- Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery
- Institute of Conservation
- The National Archives
- University College London
- The British Museum
- Historic Royal Palaces
- Natural History Museum
- Oxford University
- Tate

Our response is limited to issues that specifically affect heritage science. We feel that question 3 is the most appropriate question for the NHSF to answer. We have also included comments on the specific areas identified in the Call for Written Evidence.

Question 3 – Does the Bill establish a clear and appropriate relationship between Historic Environment Scotland and all other public and private bodies with an interest in Scotland’s historic environment?

As the Bill stands it does not wholly clarify the relationship of this new body with other public and private bodies, in particular the relationship with National Trust for Scotland and what the relationship of HES is with respect to the preservation of movable heritage held in care by HES or other public or private bodies. With the current structure this ambiguity also exists and it would be useful if the Bill could go some way in providing resolution and providing clear direction.

Comments on specific areas:

- **The possible benefits and disadvantages of Historic Environment Scotland being granted charitable status;**

The granting of charitable status aligns the new body with a number of other organisations relating to national heritage collections, and as such could increase the ease by which collaborations and cross working can happen – this is something that the NHSF would support. What remains of concern is the state of the funding package that would come with this change in status and if the already stretched funds available for the various charitable bodies will need to stretch even further.

- **The implications for staff in Historic Scotland and RCAHMS of the creation of Historic Environment Scotland;**

With any merging of organisations there is always the concern that staff numbers reduce under the umbrella of efficiency savings without a detailed analysis of need. It has already been identified through the Select Committee that the numbers involved directly in Heritage Science across the nation is small and inadequate and in Scotland specifically key scientific posts have been lost in the last 5 years.

- **Whether the Bill will improve existing policy and practice in relation to grants and loans; scheduled monuments; and listed buildings.**

This point is linked with the potential change to charitable status. It is not clear if the change to a charitable body was to take place how the grant giving function across the heritage sector would remain without there being a conflict of interest.
