

## MEDIEVAL OR LATER RURAL SETTLEMENT WORKING GROUP

Note of meeting held on Thursday 11th April 2002 in the RCAHMS, Edinburgh

Present: John Atkinson (Glasgow University) (Chair), Malcolm Bangor-Jones (Historic Scotland), Piers Dixon, Jack Stevenson (RCAHMS), Sarah Govan, Lesley Macinnes, Rod McCullagh, Ian Shepherd (Aberdeenshire Council), Robin Turner (National Trust for Scotland) and John Wood (Highland Council).

Apologies: Donald Davidson (Stirling University), Jill Harden (National Trust for Scotland), Ross Noble (Highland Folk Museum), Richard Tipping (Stirling University) and Tim Yarnell (Forestry Commission).

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes of the last meeting were discussed and approved with no amendments. The actions were discussed, and unfortunately little progress had been made since September. All members agreed to ensure that any necessary action would be progressed before the next meeting.

It was agreed that Chris Dalglish should be asked to join the working group, and the Chairman agreed to approach him in this regard.

### **Discussion Group**

The Chairman noted that the first meeting of the Discussion Group (DG) held at Kingussie in November had been very successful, with around 40 attendees. There had been considerable benefit in meeting the wide range of people currently undertaking work in this field. Key messages that emerged were the importance of how people were actually recording, and the broader frameworks within which everyone can operate.

There was some discussion about the problems of access to the meetings, and whether certain topics should be repeated around the country for wider benefit. However, it was agreed that different issues would frequently arise in different areas. It was also noted that there is perhaps a difference between DG meetings and those that are explicitly designed as training events. There was some consideration of the type of training that could be provided, and what groups might want. LM suggested that HS could provide some support for group representatives to attend an event that is not local to them.

SG suggested that Biggar/Glenochar should be selected as the venue for the next DG meeting. The Biggar Museum Trust has undertaken extensive work, and the remains will present an interesting contrast to those considered at Kingussie. This meeting was arranged for Saturday 22nd June, and SG agreed to liaise with Tam Ward. SG suggested that the indoor session could include sessions on fund raising for local groups and the basic workings of the NMRS/SMR systems. Tam Ward has agreed to speak on the work the group has undertaken in the Glenochar area.

It was also agreed that a training day, possibly based at Ben Lawers, should be considered separately from a DG meeting. There was some discussion about the format and content of such a meeting, and JS/RT and SG agreed to meet to discuss the available options prior to the DG meeting in June. Mapping, survey, recording and documentary research were all discussed, although there

was a feeling that a confidence building exercise in basic skills might be most useful. This would give the opportunity for participants to input into the priorities for training for volunteer groups.

### **MoLRS Website**

RT and PD have met to discuss this issue, and reported that the domain name of MoLRS.org has been registered. PD suggested that some time could be found for design and set up within the RCAHMS, but work pressures might prohibit the early conclusion of the project.

The key decision for the group is what the site should contain, and how it should be structured to allow future enhancement. It was agreed that costed options should be prepared for consideration at the next meeting. SG agreed to send all existing documentation to PD/RT.

### **HS MoLRS theme proposal**

SG explained that she had not yet finalised, and that she was interested in the perception of the HS role in the generation and funding of projects. Guidance issued in 1998 indicated that HS would support a variety of projects, but to date few proposals seem to have been received. Issues raised included:

- the problem of securing matching funding
- archaeological visibility – surface remains are relatively recent while earlier remains are consistently elusive
- Ben Lawers is a good example of a landscape project, but the effort involved in its generation is quite prohibitive
- Problem of securing and sustaining partners over lifetime of a project
- Perennial problem of perspective – excavation versus the achievement of a regional overview
- There is perhaps a perception that HS won't fund, particularly the generation of PhD's (SG countered this and confirmed that any proposals, and particularly those that tie in with the GUARD document (1995) would be considered)

JS noted that the FESP report, which is expected shortly, will go some way to looking at regional groupings. Rcc also noted that he felt HS was already funding extensive work on MoLRS issues, but as one of a number of objectives. There is perhaps a need to co-ordinate and synthesise current and past work more effectively. RT noted that there are issues of regional and local distinctiveness and of national identity which should fit with the objectives of a variety of funding bodies.

Various projects were suggested as parallels, such as the Defence of Britain, the Atlas of Vernacular Buildings and the SVBWG Doo'cots project. RT noted that Scottish Environment Link have established the LEARN project, and there was potential to link this to the MoLRS website to raise awareness of the opportunities.

### **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting was arranged for Thursday 22nd August 2002 to be held at Glasgow University Archaeology Department at 11am.

The 2nd Discussion Group meeting was arranged for Saturday 22nd June 2002, to be held at Biggar and the Glenochar Bastle House.

**Actions**

- Analyse projects against national and regional research frameworks in GUARD document (RM, RTur, RTip)
- Invitation to attend to School of Scottish Studies (JA)
- Invitation to attend to Dr Chris Dalglish (JA)
- Arrangements for 2nd Discussion Group meeting (SG/TW)
- Preparation and dissemination of publicity material for Discussion Group meeting (SG)
- Consideration of options for a training event (RT/JS/SG)
- Costed option for the development of a MoLRS website (RTur, PD, RN)
- All existing papers to be sent to RT/PD (SG)
- Revision of Indices for production on a website (SG)