

HISTORIC RURAL SETTLEMENT GROUP

**Minutes of Meeting Held on Tuesday 24th May 2005
At 2pm, Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh**

Present: John Atkinson (GUARD, Chair)
Steve Boyle (RCAHMS)
Althea Davies (UoS)
Piers Dixon (RCAHMS)
Olivia Lelong (GUARD)
Alex Morrison (GUAD)
Richard Tipping (UoS)
Robin Turner (NTS)
Mairi Davies (HS)
Martin Brann (HS, minutes)

1. Apologies Malcolm Bangor-Jones (HS)
John Lawson (CECAS)
Fiona Watson (UoS)

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (1st March 2005)
The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Matters Arising
There were no matters arising.

4. *Scotland's Rural Past Project Update*

Robin Turner informed the Group, for the benefit of new members attending, that all three draft reports for the project planning stage had been received:

(a) The Project Context Review which puts the project in context through review of similar projects and engagement at a local level.

(b) The Audience Development Plan which addresses a specific requirement of HLF funded projects - to ensure that the project delivers benefits to the local community.

(c) These reports had both fed into the Project Design for the HLF bid.

Early discussions with HLF indicate that they are happy with the project design to date.

Robin Turner had also had positive feedback from John Graham, Chief Executive, HS. The project seemed to fulfil the objectives of the HS Corporate Plan.

Robin Turner also informed that he was hopeful that the NTS will be able to make a £50,000 contribution, spread over 5 years.

RCAHMS are to take to be the lead body in the project, providing a cash contribution in addition to the in kind contribution of office services, use of computers, etc.

Piers Dixon enquired about Historic Scotland's current involvement with the project. Robin Turner advised that HS are necessarily not involved with the project planning at this stage, since they are likely to be one of the funding partners and act as assessors for the HLF.

Robin Turner advised that the project Planning Group are due to meet on 1st June to discuss the project design / management of the project. This will map out the submission to the HLF, which is due in October. This timetable will allow further feedback from the HLF to be incorporated into the final project design.

Robin Turner advised that it was the intention to put the project context review and the audience development plan documents onto the website as .pdf documents to inform others putting together similar projects.

Robin Turner flagged up the concern that HLF may perceive some overlap with the CSA's Graveyard Recording project, which is also bidding for HLF funds. Robin Turner will be in dialogue with Eila McQueen of CSA and HLF to address this concern, so that nothing either party does compromises the ability of the other to put in a competent bid to HLF.

5. Discussion Group Meetings

Steve Boyle reported on a successful, enjoyable and well-attended (26 people) DG field meeting held on 14th May at the township of Auchtavan (NO29NW 7) on the Invercauld Estate, Aberdeenshire.

Possible venues for future meetings of the Discussion Group were discussed:

Olivia Lelong suggested Sutherland as a possibility for a future meeting.

Richard Tipping and Piers Dixon suggested the Kelso area, as this could potentially attract a large attendance from local history groups in the Borders and possibly also from Northumberland. It was agreed that they would work towards a meeting based in Kelso in May 2006.

Steve Boyle advised that the Buteshire Natural History Society (BNHS) had requested that the group hold a field meeting on Bute. Steve Boyle is to suggest to the BNHS that they arrange a training weekend in September 2005, to coincide with Scottish Archaeology Month. If and when arrangements were confirmed, the meeting would be advertised on the website well in advance.

6. Website Project update

Robin Turner reported that the project had continued to attract funding from Historic Scotland. The need for a change in the URL name of the website had previously been discussed. Richard Tipping suggested 'Historic Rural Settlement' – thus avoiding any possible conflict with other organisations using the initials HRS. Any other suggestions will be welcomed.

Piers Dixon reported that a link had been established between the website and its English counterpart, the website of the Medieval Rural Settlement group.

Robin Turner asked for any other suggestions of how to improve on the website.

7. Future Involvement of HS in HRSG

Martin Brann (attending as a member of the HS Ancient Monuments north-east team, which now has responsibility for HS policy on historic rural settlement) advised that Historic Scotland no longer wished to provide the secretariat for the group and, as previously advised by Sarah Govan, it felt that this role should rotate around the principal bodies from which the groups membership was drawn.

Robin Turner added that the group had been aware of this possibility for some time and it was recognised that Historic Scotland had fledged the group and now wished to stand back. The group therefore now had to decide whether it wished to appoint a Secretary to drive the group's activities or simply to rotate the minute taking and its distribution.

Piers Dixon advised that the RCAHMS were not in a position to offer help with the secretariat.

Richard Tipping volunteered to act as Secretary. This proposal met with universal support from the meeting. Historic Scotland would need to forward to Richard the e-mail contact lists. Steve Boyle questioned whether transferring the contact list might represent contravention of the Data Protection Act. Robin Turner felt that this would not be an issue, but advised that the addresses of all the other recipients should not appear on the header of the e-mail. A need to update the mailing list and use email more effectively was recognised. The mailing list for postal use is ten years out of date. It was recognised that some interested parties do not have access to email and some hard-copy mailings would still be required.

Richard Tipping asked that the group consider its structure and appoint other office holders as well – eg. membership secretary, events secretary, etc. He also asked that the role and direction of the group be considered by all of its members and wondered whether its role as an advisory group to Historic Scotland would continue, as in the past?

Steve Boyle enquired what Historic Scotland's future involvement with the group would be and what it wanted to get out of its membership? Martin Brann answered that this was something to be resolved by the person who would be taking over Sarah Govan's former MOLRS policy remit. The appointment of a successor to Sarah had yet to be announced. However, Martin Brann assured the group of Historic Scotland's continued commitment and advised that a revision of the 1998 HS policy document on MOLRS was to be considered, and if it was decided to proceed with this it would obviously look to the group for advice.

John Atkinson suggested that the group needed to try to widen its membership, to include further representatives from the archaeological units .

Robin Turner agreed that there was scope for the group to expand and complement the activities of the Scotland's Rural Past project (should the project proceed).

Olivia Lelong thought that the group could act as a valuable forum for the discussion of sites, reports, recording methodologies, etc. Steve Boyle also thought there was scope for the group to a 'round table' for research in progress. Richard Tipping expressed reservations about lecturing to a very small audience attending group meetings. He suggested that if the

group's function was to be the exchange of information on current research into HRS, then this would more profitably be fed into conferences.

Richard Tipping suggested that the a group mission statement was needed and this should be posted on the website.

8. AOB

(1) Mairi Davies briefed the group on Historic Scotland's recent scheduling trip to Strathdon, which had looked at and considered for scheduling a number of HRS sites identified by the RCAHMS survey. It was recognised that defining 'national importance' or otherwise for many HRS sites was far from being a clear cut exercise.

Martin Brann advised that the Strathdon scheduling trip formed part of Historic Scotland's new approach to scheduling. A 30 year programme covering parishes throughout Scotland was being drawn up by Gordon Barclay and Laura Hindmarch of Historic Scotland. The next two trips planned are to Invernessshire in September 2005 and Eastern Dumfriesshire in spring 2006.

(2) Steve Boyle advised that following an approach by North of Scotland Archaeology Society (NOSAS), two areas had been considered for the next Discussion Group Training Day – Strathnairn and Glenurquhart. SB is to pursue, with NOSAS, Glenurquhart as the venue for a Training Weekend on 10th-11th September. He will put a programme together and approach the landowner concerned. There will be spaces for 12 persons on the building recording / plane table survey training course. RCAHMS staff will be out in force, but SB requested that others come along to help out with the training.

Robin Turner suggested that SB contact Gill Harden regarding possible input on NTS Tin Hut Recording.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on 6th October at 2pm at the offices of RCAHMS, Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh.