

HISTORIC RURAL SETTLEMENT GROUP

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 28th June 2006 at 2.00 pm in Room 4U5, School of Biological & Environmental Sciences, Stirling University.

Note: action points denoted by bullet points.

Present:

John Atkinson (JA) (Chair) (Glasgow University)
Richard Tipping (Rti) (Secretary) (Stirling University) (Minutes)
Robin Turner (RTu) (National Trust for Scotland)
Adrian Cox (AC) (Historic Scotland)
John Raven (JR) (Historic Scotland)
Steve Boyle (SB) (RCAHMS)
Derek Alexander (DA) (National Trust for Scotland) (Treasurer)
Chris Dalglish (CD) (Glasgow University) (Web Officer)

1. Apologies: Richard Oram, Piers Dixon, Donald Davidson, Olivia Lelong, John Lawson, Sarah Govan, Althea Davies, Meryl Marshall.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (2nd March 2006): The minutes of the meeting were approved.

3. Matters Arising: None not dealt with in agenda items (below).

4. Constitutional Affairs (Richard Tipping): RTi noted the absence of a constitution for the group. He explained that one was not needed when the group served to advise Historic Scotland, but was needed now the group had found a new role. A formal structure allowed, for example, the smooth transition of 'offices' and less crisis management. RTi provided a draft of a constitution shamelessly adapted from ones with which he was familiar (Appendix: below) which enabled the formal appointment of officers with defined duties and terms of appointment, and voting mechanisms.

SB pointed out that some concern had been expressed when affairs were formalised, with the creation of the Historic Rural Settlement Trust (HRST), but JA indicated that the present proposal was different in that it affected the internal workings of the group. JA and CD expressed support for a constitution, though JA wondered whether the existing HRST constitution would serve better. The possible transplanting of this constitution to the HRSG raised in SB the question as to the need, now, for the HRST. There was general interest in streamlining affairs, but RTu pointed out that the HRST still had an important mediating role to funding sources. It was agreed that the HRST would continue. No agreement was reached on the adoption of a constitution. The Secretary would present copies of the constitution as proposed in the Appendix and that of the HRST by e-mail to members of the Working Group for consideration and a decision at the next meeting.

- JA to send to RTi a copy of the HRST constitution
- RTi to send copies of both variants of the constitution to members of the Working Group for comments and opinions.

5. Chairing of the Group (John Atkinson): JA indicated to the Group that he wished, after many years, to stand down as Chair of the HRSG. RTi led a vote of thanks, recognising that JA had led and successfully managed the transition to independence from the Group's advisory role with Historic Scotland, and had placed the Group in a strong position for the future.

JA proposed that SB become Chair of the Group, and this was seconded by RTi and accepted without demur. JA continued to chair the meeting, standing down at its close.

6. Report on the Annual Conference: Kelso – May 2006 (Richard Tipping): RTi reported on a successful day-conference of the Group on May 6th 2006. The meeting was held at the Tait Hall in Kelso, Borders Region, continuing our tradition of moving in peripatetic fashion to regions around the country, and focused on new work on historic rural settlement in the eastern Borders. The support of the Friends of Kelso Museum was gratefully acknowledged. The meeting attracted an audience of 55. This included a large proportion of people not previously associated with the HRSG, which was a very pleasing aspect of the meeting. More pleasing was the high proportion of attendees asking to be members of the Group. A registration fee of £15.00 was requested, and after expenses, resulted in a £450 profit for the Group. A full report on the meeting would be lodged in due course on the HRSG web-site.

7. HRSG Web-site Developments (Chris Dalglish): CD reported no major developments or problems with the Group web-site. It was noted that reports of, in particular, our conferences were missing. SB and RTi promised to rectify this. CD indicated that Katinka Stentoft had not been paid for her work for some time: DA was aware of this and would provide a payment. SB reported that the HRSG logo had been drawn by cartographic staff at the RCAHMS, and would be passed on for incorporation into the web-site.

An outstanding matter arising remained the difficulty of obtaining high-quality scans of diagrams presented on-line in Sarah Govan's 2003 publication. RTu suggested that this could be resolved for very little cost. AC agreed to clarify the situation with Sarah Govan.

- DA to present a payment for work owed to Katinka Stentoft
- SB and RTi to provide reports on past conferences to CD
- SB to forward the new HRSG logo to CD
- AC to clarify with Sarah Govan the position with regard to her publication.

8. The 'Scotland's Rural Past' (SRP) Project: Update (Robin Turner): RTu reported a very successful outcome to the Group's first bid to secure major funding for its activities. After 3 years of work by a sub-group of the HRSG, approval had been given on June 7th 2006 by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the SRP Project to proceed. In collaboration with its partners, Historic Scotland, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, National Trust for Scotland and RCAHMS, a sum of £1.1m had been secured over 5.0 years, hopefully commencing in October 2006, to employ 4 f/t staff at the RCAHMS offices whose job it will be to meet and assist local communities and groups throughout Scotland in developing active interests in recording, conserving, understanding and appreciating their historic rural settlements and landscapes, and communicating this regard to a wider audience. RTu indicated the feedback from

HLF that the SRP Project was seen as a 'beacon' for future developments in the emphasis throughout on local communities and the links between amateur and professional bodies.

This success will considerably elevate the significance of the HRSG, RTi indicated, and raised the question as to how this achievement would impact on the Group. It was agreed that one of the major activities of the Group, in working with local communities in understanding our historic landscapes, would be well-served by the project. RTu suggested that other areas can be addressed now, and in particular the galvanising of inter-disciplinary research on Scotland's historic rural settlements.

More specific issues over the SRP Project were raised, not least its impact on the provision of web facilities. The intention is to use the existing Group web-site to support the project, but CD indicated that a huge increase in traffic would place too many demands on himself, and that due to changing circumstances, support from Katinka Stenoft would be unavailable. An urgent meeting of the web-site sub-group would be needed, and CD agreed to co-ordinate one.

- CD to call a meeting of the web-site sub-group and report back to the Working Group at the next meeting.

9. Planning for Training Days – Summer 2006 (Steve Boyle): SB reported that the next training weekend, in which representatives of local groups learn the techniques of recording and analysis, would be held at Newtonmore on the weekend of the 7th October 2006, with support from RCAHMS staff. SB also reported that with the delivery of the SRP Project, the co-ordination of training weekends would pass to SRP staff, with the number of participation opportunities increasing from one to four a year. SB would continue to report on these very successful components of the work of the Group to future meetings.

10. Planning for Annual Conference: May 2007 (Richard Tipping): RTi asked the Group whether this conference might be a weekend event, given the plan to hold the conference in northern Scotland and the abundance of localities that could be visited. SB mentioned that attendees at past conferences had not supported such a proposal, and it was accepted that a compromise might be reached whereby a second day might include site visits outwith the formal conference.

DA reported that other meetings of archaeologists were to be made to Sutherland in May 2007, and that we might wish to avoid such clashes. RTi mentioned the invitation made by members of the Buteshire Natural History Society to visit the island, and this was seen as a good alternative for the 2007 conference. E-mail discussions would be undertaken within the Group, and confirmations reported to the Group at the next meeting.

11. Planning for the HRSG Research Conference (Richard Tipping): RTi reported that an approach had been made in March 2006 to Historic Scotland to seek funding support for this conference, but had as yet received no reply because of structural changes within that organisation. AC reported that discussions had occurred, and requested refinements to the request before full consideration could be made. These refinements hinged around the degree of financial support requested, and RTi agreed to modify the request. RTi indicated that, with the planning needed to make a successful conference, a date in early 2007 might now be anticipated.

- RTi to write to Sarah Govan (HS) clarifying the request to HS for funding.

12. Projects and Other Developments: Colleagues present reported on some recent developments. AC reported that Historic Scotland was developing good links with local landowners in Dumfries & Galloway over their scheduling procedures. CD mentioned his forthcoming conference, also in Dumfries on 30th September and 1st October 2006 on archaeological links between England and Scotland. SB reported that the RCAHMS were about to appoint field archaeologists under a recent Institute of Field Archaeology bursary scheme. DA reported successful survey and excavation work by the NTS at Loch Lomond and Crarae, Argyll, and JA reported on continuing work at Ben Lawers, Robroyston and Norton House, Edinburgh.

13. AOCB: None.

14. Date of Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Working Group will be on **1st November 2006** at 2.00 pm in the Boardroom of the National Trust for Scotland, 27 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm.