

MoLRS WORKING GROUP

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 30th March 2004 at 2pm, University of Stirling.

Present: John Atkinson (GUARD, Chair)
Derek Alexander (NTS)
Malcolm Bangor-Jones
Steve Boyle (RCAHMS)
Donald Davidson (UoS)
Althea Davies (AHRB CEHP)
Sarah Govan (HS)
Lesley Macinnes (HS)
Alex Morrison (GUAD)
Ross Noble (Former HFM)
Richard Tipping (UoS)
Robin Turner (NTS)

Apologies: Chris DalGLISH (GUARD)
Piers Dixon (RCAHMS)
Jill Harden (NTS)
Bob Powell (Highland Folk Museum)
Rod McCullagh (HS)
Ian Shepherd (Aberdeenshire Council)
Jack Stevenson (RCAHMS)
Jim Souness (HS)
John Wood
Tim Yarnell (FC)

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved subject to the following amendment under 'Work in Progress'. The last bullet point under 9 should read:

AD informed the Working Group that she is part of a group at the Centre for Environmental History conducting research into the impact of changing land management upon plant diversity in three upland estates (Sutherland, Breadalbane and Buccleuch) over the past 800 years. Olivia Lelong has been contacted re Strathnaver, and Malcolm Bangor-Jones and Piers Dixon have provided help re Sutherland/Assynt and Liddesdale, respectively.

There were no further matters arising.

2. Scotland's Rural Past Project (SRP)

RTu produced a copy of the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a project planning grant which had been submitted in January. He hoped to hear from them by early May (they have a target of 12 weeks for consideration of such grants). The meeting discussed the project, and it was agreed that the planning stage should have practical outputs beyond the generation of a bid for further funding, to ensure that we can move forward even if the final bid for funds is not successful.

RTu indicated that because the timing for the project is tight, it was hoped to explore possible contractors for the work in advance of confirmation of the grant. He recommended the establishment of a SRP Planning group and asked for volunteers. SB and RTi volunteered and LM/SG agreed to discuss with RM who would be the best representative from HS. RTu also indicated that a project manager would be required for day to day management. The possibility of conflict of interest was also discussed, and JA indicated that he would retire from the sub-group as it was possible that GUARD would tender for the work. AM indicated that he could not commit to the group but was happy to volunteer for any public presentations that might be needed. It was also agreed that members of the group not present at the meeting should be given the opportunity to join the planning group.

The issue of longer term project management was discussed, with an eye on the possible success of a broader bid, and RTu confirmed that he had discussed the project with both the NTS and the CSA, although neither had confirmed their interest at this stage. He also indicated the possibility of joint lead bodies, such as NTS, CSA and RCAHMS working together, although he was not aware of whether this approach had been successful elsewhere. LM suggested that we should keep an open mind at this stage, and welcomed RTu's offer to take the lead on management at the project planning stage.

A discussion of possible tenderers followed, with GUARD and AOC Scotland Ltd being suggested, along with a recommendation to explore specific contractors who have experience in audience development plans, and similar large scale funding bids. The meeting was reminded that the contractor did not have to be archaeological, and there were a variety of heritage consultants that could be approached. LM was aware of consultants involved in land-use issues, and MB-G suggested Glasgow Caledonian University. RTu suggested that possible tenderers be invited to an open round-table meeting to discuss the project.

RTu reported that under HLF rules a cash contribution of at least 5% had to be made by the project applicant and the NTS have donated £500 to the group to enable this, although he has since discovered that this is not necessary at the project planning stage. JA expressed the Group's thanks for this generosity. RTu believes the overall funding should be adequate for a good result.

3. Constitution and the Name of the Group

JA reported that a formal constitution was required to put the group on a firm footing and to gain charitable status. He also suggested that this would be a good opportunity to consider a change of name, as concern had been expressed about the clarity of the term 'MoLRS'. Scotland's Rural Past was suggested, although it was agreed that the work of the group was much wider than the proposed project of the same name. Historic Rural Settlement Trust was suggested and this met the agreement of the meeting.

JA referred to the draft constitution which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, and explained the need to establish a legal base in view of the project and the plan to employ contractors and possibly staff in future years. The draft had been taken from a shell constitution provided by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations. It was agreed that a lawyer should be asked to look at the constitution at this stage and RTi agreed to contact someone through SCAPE who may be prepared to help. SG reported that it would not be appropriate for HS to be a Trustee,

but that they could retain observer status, and it would not be necessary to indicate this formally in the constitution.

SB asked about membership of the Trust and how individuals go about becoming Trustees, and it was agreed that this was an issue that required detailed consideration. RTu indicated that there was no obligation for the Group to build up a membership, but it was entirely for the group to decide if this was desirable. SG emphasised the importance of a flexible constitution that allowed the Group to develop and evolve. RTu confirmed that the Working Group meeting would become the Trustees meeting, and that establishment as a Trust was still relatively informal and not as detailed as that of a limited company. A trust could act as a stepping stone to something else in the future when further change was felt to be appropriate.

JA asked that all members examine the draft in detail and give him any comments shortly. SG will then circulate a revised version that can be ratified at the next meeting of the Working Group.

4. Discussion Group Meeting, Auchindrain, Spring 2004

AM reported that John MacDonald (Curator of the Auchindrain Museum), Murdo MacDonald (Archivist, Argyll and Bute Council) and Peter Quelch (Native Woodlands Advisor, Forestry Commission) had agreed to speak at the meeting which would begin at 10.40 on Saturday 17th April. AM confirmed that he would lead a tour around the site in the afternoon. A £10 charge was agreed, which would cover speaker's expenses and the entry charge to the museum. SB agreed to circulate a flier and SG agreed to send him an up to date mailing list for the Discussion Group.

5. Website

RTu reported that a further revision to the design of the site had been made by the contractor, Katinka Stentoft. He also reported that the Ben Lawers Historic Landscape Project had copied the original design, initially without permission, but that this had now been resolved. He confirmed that a further year of funding was being sought from HS for continuing development, which include the conversion of the bibliography into a database to allow for more detailed searches. SB noted in this context that the issue of keywords was something to think about.

RTu also reported that a new photo gallery was being developed, which was to be simple initially, but for which there was also a longer term vision. There had been no entries to the message board as yet, although the site itself is receiving 1200 'hits' per month (this figure must however be taken tentatively as it will probably also include hits by search engines!). The fonts have been made scalable which improves access to the site for those with certain disabilities. SG noted that it was time to publicise the site again, and agreed to look into possible options.

6. Work in Progress – Round Table Reports

- SB reported that the RCAHMS will be starting the survey of Caithness at Yarrow, shortly, working with the Caithness Archaeological Trust.
- SB also noted that the RCAHMS have scanned and rectified the estate maps of John Farquharson on the north side of Loch Tay, and that information can be found on the Ben Lawers project website www.benlawers.org.uk.
- DA reported that the Ben Lawers Historic Landscape Project would begin the 2004 field season on 3rd April for two weeks, at Tombreck and Kiltyrie. They are hoping for quite early structures, and will be using geophysical survey to support the work.

- DA also reported that a leaflet has been published for the Ardess hidden history trail, and it is also available on the internet. A link to the leaflet has been put on the MoLRS website.
- RTu reported that a 3 year studentship was being advertised in partnership with Aberdeen University to look at non-financial values of historic landscapes, focusing on Loch Tay, Loch Earn and Loch Lomond.
- RTu also reported that a half-day workshop was being held by NTS/BEFS to consider the consultation document on the review of scheduling criteria. He would be attending, but he encouraged a representative from the group to attend to consider any MoLRS issues. This prompted a discussion about the scheduling of MoLRS remains and LM noted that one problem was the ubiquity of the remains alongside a limited understanding of their character and chronology. RTu asked if it was possible to include a map of all scheduled MoLRS on the website, and SG agreed to consider this. JA indicated that he would try to attend the meeting on behalf of the group.
- RN reported that the Knockando woollen mill, which has been under threat, has been leased by the estate to a Preservation Trust. It dates to the late 18th/early 19th century, is Group Listed at Category A, and is thought to be the oldest working rural woollen mill in Europe. It is possible that archaeological work will be required during the process to bring it back into working order.

7. AOCB

- RN reported his wish to resign from the Working Group. He felt that his place would be filled by Bob Powell who had been invited to attend for the Highland Folk Museum. JA expressed the heartfelt thanks of the group for his work, and hoped that he would still stay in contact.
- RTi asked about plans for the training day in September, and SB agreed to take this forward. The possibility of a 2 day session was discussed and it was agreed that opinion could be canvassed at the Discussion Group meeting in April.
- JA reported that he had passed a note of the Discussion Group meeting held in November to CD who will finalise and place it on the website.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the MoLRS WG will take place on Thursday 17th June 2004 at 2pm in the RCAHMS Offices, Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh.