

## Consultation for Historic Environment Scotland's corporate plan 2025-28

03/January/2025

Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) is an umbrella body for organisations working in the built environment in Scotland. Drawing on extensive expertise in a membership-led forum, BEFS informs, debates and advocates on the strategic issues, opportunities and challenges facing Scotland's existing built environment. BEFS is a supporting member of the [Climate Heritage Network](#).

Other relevant consultation responses from BEFS can be seen below, as many issues overlap and demand associative consideration:

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### [HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND CORPORATE PLAN 2019-22 – HES CONSULTATION RESPONSE \(02/11/18\)](#)

BEFS welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Corporate Plan and recognises the engagement and consultation that was undertaken in the development of this draft. Comments below accompany and should be read alongside feedback given by BEFS Members during engagement in July 2024.

BEFS will be responding only to relevant questions of the consultation, as below:

#### **Our Vision and Principles**

##### **7. Our vision is: heritage for all.**

Yes, I support this vision statement.

##### **8. We've identified a set of principles to guide our work over the next three years. Do you agree with these?**

- Heritage should be for everyone  
**Yes, I agree**
- People sit at the heart of heritage  
**Yes, I agree**
- We need to work with others  
**Yes, I agree**
- We must focus our work on the areas where we can make the most impact  
**Not Sure**
- We must find new ways of doing things  
**Yes, I agree**

*Please add any comments on the principles here:*

In relation to the principle 'We must focus our work on the areas where we can make the most impact' BEFS recognises that HES cannot be all things to everyone however the draft Corporate Plan could be clearer about what *is/is not* for HES. BEFS would note comments by Members the AHSS here:

*'The functions of HES are set out in Section 2 of the Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014. HES has the general function of investigating, caring for and promoting Scotland's historic environment. Section 2 (2) lists the particular functions...*

*...HES must not lose sight of the functions set out in the legislation. Some of these functions require expenditure without the justification of economic benefit or HES being able to point to 'making the most impact'.*

This point is also worth considering in relation to the principle '*We must find new ways of doing things*'; whilst broadly in agreement and taking in to account the context of the world within which HES and the wider sector now operate, we would note again reference to HES functions.

Reference to transparency in decision making is welcome however it could here too be useful to refer back to the role of the lead public body, its statutory function and articles.

As part of the introduction to HES, some high-level clarity around HES functions in relation to its Directorates would perhaps be beneficial, such as a diagram to visualise how all areas of HES fit into the Corporate Plan. It is understood that the detail of this will sit in HES operating plan and is referenced in 'Delivering our Plan' on p.24.

## Our Priorities, Outcomes and Actions

**This section sets out our draft priorities, outcomes, and actions which are based on engagement feedback. Please tell us what you think of them. You do not have to choose a response option to comment in the text box.**

**9. We have identified five priorities for HES to focus on over the next three years. Do you agree with them? Please use the text box to explain your answer. You do not have to choose a response option to comment in the text box.**

- Scotland's heritage  
**Yes, I agree**
- Skills and learning  
**Yes, I agree**
- People and places  
**Yes, I agree**
- Climate action  
**Yes, I agree**
- Inclusion and resilience  
**Yes, I agree**

Please add any comments on the priorities here:

HES principles and priorities, whilst specific to HES as an organisation, could better and more explicitly demonstrate an overarching and clear read across to the national priorities contained within Our Past, Our Future, Scotland's strategy for the historic environment, demonstrating where - as the lead public body - HES activities support delivery. This is particularly relevant when considering the principle 'We need to work with others'.

This also presents opportunity for HES acknowledgement up front of other Strategies, where relevant.

**10(a). Each priority has a set of outcomes associated with it. Do you agree with these outcomes as the main areas for HES to focus on within Priority 1? Please use the text box to explain your answer. You do not have to choose a response option to comment in the text box.**

### Priority 1: Scotland's heritage

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By 2028, we will:

- have built strong foundations for the long-term future of the properties, collections, records, and archives in our care
- have the right evidence to inform policy and decision making
- have developed advice and guidance to support people seeking to reuse existing buildings

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**Yes, I agree with the outcomes**

Please add any comments on the outcomes here:

Repair and maintain should be added to 'reuse existing buildings'.

**10(b). Do you agree with these outcomes as the main areas for HES to focus on within Priority 2? Please use the text box to explain your answer. You do not have to choose a response option to comment in the text box.**

### Priority 2: Skills and Learning

By 2028, we will:

- have improved pathways across Scotland for key historic environment skills
- be the sector leader for delivering heritage skills
- have made Scotland's historic environment a valued national resource for lifelong learning

**Yes, I agree with the outcomes**

Please add any comments on the outcomes here:

Some reference to and recognition of the benefit of heritage skills to climate change targets and a just, green recovery would be welcome here.

**10(c). Do you agree with these outcomes as the main areas for HES to focus on within Priority 3? Please use the text box to explain your answer. You do not have to choose a response option to comment in the text box.**

### Priority 3: People and Places

By 2028, we will:

- have increased and broadened our contribution to a growing Scottish economy
- have used our grants and influence to build a more resilient historic environment sector
- have developed authentic and memorable visitor experiences at the properties in care

## Not sure

Please add any comments on the outcome here:

The Outcomes for Priority 3 would benefit from greater clarity, for example it is unclear what is meant by 'our grants and influence'. There also seems to be a missed opportunity here to refer to the benefits the historic environment delivers culturally, economically, socially and environmentally, for people and places, within the outcomes themselves but also in the resulting HES proposed actions.

We would also flag a comment by BEFS Members the AHSS in their response: 'We note that Outcome 9(b) refers to 'enhance visitor experience at 'key sites' – what happens at non-key sites which may not be 'key' in HES terms but may be 'key' and of importance in a remote local area?'. BEFS notes this as a potential divergence within the wider context of People and Places in that 'the historic environment sits at the heart of Scotland's communities', as stated in the introduction.

BEFS welcomes the inclusion of 'working in partnership at local and national level, and supporting fair and green economic growth'.

**10(d). Do you agree with these outcomes as the main areas for HES to focus on within Priority 4? Please use the text box to explain your answer. You do not have to choose a response option to comment in the text box.**

## Priority 4: Climate action

By 2028, we will:

- have reduced carbon emissions from historic environment assets across Scotland
- have supported Scotland's historic environment to adapt to meet the changing climate

## Not sure

Please add any comments on the outcome here:

BEFS welcomes the recognition of climate action as crucial and essential. However, it is unclear if the Outcome 'have reduced carbon emissions from historic environment assets across Scotland' refers to HES assets or Scotland's assets more widely. Draft actions suggest the latter.

An additional Outcome or reference to delivering net zero, and the role of the historic environment here - or a re-distribution of the actions - could provide some further clarity?

BEFS would also agree with the AHSS that: 'The sentence 'With so many of our nation's homes, offices, and public buildings built in a traditional style, we cannot reach net zero unless we understand these buildings and the retrofit solutions they require' needs modification. We do not agree with the expression 'traditional style' in this context. We suggest 'With so many of our nation's homes, offices, and public buildings occupying traditionally constructed buildings, we cannot reach net zero unless we understand these buildings and the retrofit solutions they require'.

Overall this section could make more of the important role that the historic environment has to play in delivering net zero – beyond reducing emissions and adaptation - and how HES activity will support this.

**10(e). Do you agree with these outcomes as the main areas for HES to focus on within Priority 5? Please use the text box to explain your answer. You do not have to choose a response option to comment in the text box.**

## Priority 5: Inclusion and resilience

By 2028, we will:

- have the financial resources to deliver our priorities
- have cultivated the environment for a safe and welcoming workplace
- have made our work and services accessible to everyone in Scotland

### Not sure

Please add any comments on the outcome here:

Broadly agree but would welcome additional reference to 'actively removing barriers' as part of Outcomes 13 and 14.

## 11. Do you think any actions are missing to deliver against any of the outcomes?

Please refer to the draft plan for example actions that HES might take: please note that these are indicative only.

Please add any comments on actions here:

Not an action specifically, but perceived lack of quantification in relation to HES budget re the Priorities. Also more on HES own cultural asset management.

BEFS responses to a number of Consultations in relation to the Built Environment can be found at:

<https://www.befs.org.uk/resources/consultations/>

### RESPONDENT INFORMATION

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