

Historic Environment Working Group (HEWG)

Note of meeting 18th February 2025

Time: 2pm – 4pm

Date: 18/02/25

Venue: Online

Chair: Ian Baxter

BEFS attendees: Hazel Johnson

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Apologies

Gavin MacGregor - AS

Gordon Barr- AHF

Jocelyn Cunliffe (Martin Robertson attending for AHSS)

Seán O'Reilly - IHBC

Simon Gilmour - SoAoS

Terry Levinthal (Brigid Golden attending for Cockburn Association)

Victoria Collison - HCS (leaving early)

Attendees:

Andrew Hopetoun – HH

Brigid Golden – CA

DJ Johnson- Smith – SCT

Euan Leitch – SURF

Jennie Munro – RTPi

Jo Robertson – AHF

John Lawson – ALGAO

Jonathan Hunt – HH

Lindsay Lennie – SCHAT

Martin Robertson – AHSS

Matt Benians – SGLH

Rebecca Millar – NTS

Rob Lennox – CifA

Robert Toomey – RICS

Sam Gallacher - SHBT

Scott McGibbon – IHBC and PVOTAL

Silke Schneider – EWH

2. Agree [previous meeting note](#) (available online) – all necessary actions completed, or to be updated on in BEFS Sector updates.

See BEFS [HEWG page](#) for past papers.

3. BEFS Sector Updates and Policy Updates – led by BEFS

- BEFS team update

Historic Environment Working Group (HEWG)

Note of meeting 18th February 2025

Derek Rankine will be joining the team as BEFS new Head of Policy & Strategy. Derek brings an impressive 20-year track record in place-based regeneration from BEFS Members SURF - Scotland's Regeneration Forum, with experience in community empowerment, urban design, and policy development. We look forward to formally welcoming Derek to the team later this month, and continuing to work with SURF across policy areas, including heritage and placemaking.

At the end of last month BEFS launched our call for new BEFS Board Trustees. We are particularly keen to hear from candidates with skills and experience in the following areas:

- Finance and fundraising;
- Communications, digital and marketing;
- Legal and contractual;
- Human Resources;
- Public Affairs;
- Sustainability & Net Zero

We are also inviting expressions of interest for both the role of BEFS Chair and a Treasurer. More information about these roles can be found in the attached documents.

As part of Business Development in 2025 BEFS will be looking at a refreshed Membership strategy to help ensure we are best meeting Member and stakeholder interests – last Member survey was back in 2021. Flagging up this piece of work as we'll want to hear from Members about how BEFS can deepen our impact. More on this to follow.

- **General sector news and updates:**

Tenement Maintenance Working Group (TMWG) update – BEFS have been invited to present alongside Under One Roof to The Home Report Stakeholder Group on the how Home Report can support the improvement in tenement maintenance, recognising that this isn't an issue specific to Tenements and is relevant to all home buyers. Aim is to

- Set the scene and context – set out the issues around Home Reports. Primarily framed around repair, maintenance agendas etc and what the Home Report doesn't include – where homeowners or buyers might not realise there are gaps.
- Introduce the work of the TMWG and where it came from, outlining the TMWG proposals and relevance to Home Reports
- Towards exploring a quick win, we'll be asking for up front information provision on Home Report, enabling homeowners to find the additional information they need, and exploring what this looks like.

BEFS is meeting with the Heat in Buildings Team in March, updating on:

- Owners Association work update and timeframe
- 5 yearly inspection report and mechanisms
- Building reserve funds – update from SG and where TMWG should go next with this.

From this we'll be seeking to get an update from SG on timelines/info on Green Heat Task force as well as general updates on Housing Bill and Heat in Buildings Bill, including framing links of related areas of work such as skills and retrofit (and recommendations from the Retrofit report for a Ministerial Oversight Group on this).

Places of Worship Forum/ Conservation Officers Group

Work ongoing around branding, membership of the POWF and a strategic approach to the issues, recognising the role of local authority planning teams. To this end event planned for May this year to workshop what is needed in terms of information and support to address the pipeline.

- **Policy Consultations**

Historic Environment Working Group (HEWG)

Note of meeting 18th February 2025

How Can Permitted Development Rights Help Address the Housing Emergency?

BEFS response on behalf of COG: recognises the intentions of the proposed changes, towards easing pressure on planning teams to deliver ambitious net zero targets, address the housing shortages facing Scotland, and to enable easier implementation of climate and socially beneficial solutions within planning. The role that our existing building stock must play, through continued use, re-use, and a maintenance and fabric first approach - towards cross cutting solutions for people and places - cannot be understated. Appropriate adaptations of empty and vacant buildings are an important part of this.

This response urges caution however, as unintended consequences of some of the proposed exemptions should be considered; PDR may not be the best mechanism to deliver new housing and, at worst, could be the means for creating homes with sub-standard living conditions.

Further we would urge alignment and cognisance of other existing and nascent policy and legislation, such as the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), Building Standards, and the Heat in Buildings Bill, to ensure a coherent approach across the wider policy landscape and to avoid creating a complex hierarchy within decision making; a consistent framework is essential, and clear and transparent measures must be supported by joined up legislation. [Full response on BEFS website.](#)

- **Open Consultations**

Building Safety

Scottish Parliament

The Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee is holding an evidence session with the Minister for Housing on building safety issues in 2025 focussing on damp and mould, and Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). In its 2024 tracker report, the Committee noted that it was keen to see what progress is being made by the cross sector working group on RAAC and how those local authorities particularly impacted by this issue are responding, as well as understanding the implications for those living in affected properties. Views are invited by the Committee who will consider responses and use these to form the basis of questions to the Minister.

***NEW* Closed 19 February 2025**

Building regulations - proposed review of fire safety topics

Scottish Government

The purpose of this review is to consider changes to the standards and processes set within The Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (as amended) and other published guidance documents to improve provisions addressing fire safety. This consultation seeks to obtain the views and opinions of stakeholders on a review of building standards relating to the fire safety of historic buildings converted for hotel use and several other specific fire safety issues, to help ensure the safety of people in and around Scotland's buildings. The Building and Fire Safety Expert Working Group was created to look at the long-term commitments outlined within the Cameron House Hotel SLWG Report and to review other aspects of Scottish Building Standards and fire safety guidance. This consultation reflects the outcomes and proposals of the Expert Working Group. Information on the review process to date, including minutes of the building and fire safety expert panel meetings, can be found [here](#).

Closes 7 March 2025

BEFS seeking Member input, to amplify shared views and approaches.

Scottish Government's Fourth National Planning Framework

Scottish Parliament

Following the Committee's first annual review of NPF4, concerns were raised about local authority capacity to deliver the priorities set out in the spatial strategy and key policy goals. Since then, the Scottish Government has published a summary of responses to the consultation: [Investing in Planning](#)

Historic Environment Working Group (HEWG)

Note of meeting 18th February 2025

– A consultation on resourcing Scotland’s planning system. Ahead of their second annual progress review, the Committee is seeking views on the implementation of NPF4 and the progress made on this in the last year.

***NEW* Closes 7 March 2025**

BEFS seeking Member input, to amplify shared views and approached. Will invite written submissions from Members.

Cities in Placemaking 2025-2026

Placemaking Europe

This programme is a peer-to-peer learning experience for cities, designed to provide a comprehensive introduction to Placemaking, its application in the context of urban governance, and its implications for long-term systemic change. The goal is to create a collaborative effort that benefits from a wide range of perspectives, through interactive, participatory, and experiential learning, with a practical focus on the importance of Placemaking as a city-level strategy.

***NEW* Closes 31 March 2025**

Giving Voices to Historic Property Owners

Edinburgh School of Architecture & Landscape Architecture & City of Edinburgh Council

This University of Edinburgh project aims to understand what specific aspects of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas planning guidance (Consultation Draft 2024) require further clarification, and to explore possible improvements that will make the guidance more practical and accessible for historic homeowners. This project focuses on improving the clarity of the guidance document and making the content more accessible to all and is currently recruiting focus group and workshop participants for the project. Participants must be owner-occupiers of listed buildings and properties in a conservation area in Edinburgh.

Closes May 2025

4. Organisational Updates from Members

JL, ALGAO – ClfA CEO Nathan Baker has retired. Kate Geary and Alex Llewellyn acting up joint CEO. Val Turner retiring in Shetland, hiring for the post. Solar – look at how to deal with the issue of archaeology and heritage being seen as a blocker.

Scot Gov on planning – PDR on unused rural barn buildings. Some concern.

MB, SGLH – Recording project, non-inventory gardens in East Lothian. Reply to conservation enquiries. Pomology study day, Scotland’s Orchards event, over 100 attendees. Events programme for members and guests. Historic and Designed landscapes impacted by storm Eowyn; effects of the storm will be felt for some time.

RM, NTS – Also many sites hit by the storms. NTS staff supporting other sites that were impacted. Carbon emissions baseline work – retrofit key to NTS to hit target of 40% reductions. Visitor properties and holiday accommodation alongside wider estate. Working group with HES to work out standardised measure for emissions. Setting budget for the next year – will include larger programme for building conservation. Recruiting for building surveyors.

MR, AHSS – Next big case – announcement that mill at Innerleithen will be demolished. Oldest mill in Scotland. AHSS are looking for leadership from HES and SG as to how to respond to climate change, in particular in relation to windows. Housing crisis, poor design of social housing.

Historic Environment Working Group (HEWG)

Note of meeting 18th February 2025

RT, RICS – Looking for new Chair of RICS Conservation Forum, to be elected 10th April. Rob Adams stepping down after many years. Skills and workforce – accredited building surveying courses, looking at how conservation is (or not) embedded into the course. Seeing fall in student numbers; Glasgow Caledonian trains largest number of building surveyors in Scotland – 35 last year, 25 (max) this year. Course at RGU has gone, last few building surveying students finishing up this year, RT to meet with Edinburgh Napier. Flagging as a huge concern.

Engaging with SG on RAAC – approach to identifying it and how to handle. RAAC consumer guide – being drafted and published late Q2, early Q3, can share with group.

EL, SURF – Will recruit to replace Policy Manager following confirmation of funding. Many organisations reliant on budget being confirmed. Aim to recruit in spring – limited capacity until then.

SURF member organisations – housing crisis and cost of living crisis and other transport issues, underpin poverty agendas that SURF works to. This will become a focus, alongside housing, both new and appropriate re-use of historic buildings.

Shared learning event – projects of interest: Kirkhope Steading in Scottish Borders, housing and work/live units; NARTURE in Ayr – arts activities and access; Bute Community Forest – landscape history.

SS, EWH – Christina Sinclair has left as EWH Director. Megan Veronesi is in interim post, Director post soon to be advertised. Operations and Finance Officer being recruited for. Wider recruitment drive once funding is in place.

Public Realm – Looking at CEC decisions and foregrounding heritage. Public realm projects, building repair grants. Seeing more retrofit requests. Climate Emergency strand with the Climate Emergency Team at EWH. Also working with EFI.

Intending to do a project with SPAB about general maintenance.

SG, SHBT – Capital projects are progressing. Custom House – community partner to be announced in coming months. Tron Kirk – scaffolding costs, resulting from interventions of varying quality over years. Traditional Building Skills – Eyemouth project seeking to take on a number of buildings within a rural community.

Community Historic Buildings Partnerships – share knowledge and expertise.

Recruiting for new Project Officer role for Edinburgh and Lothians.

Lecture series – next one 12th March. [Is Heritage Over?](#)

JH, HH - Hands over to AH

AH, HH – JH will be taking over as Chairman of HH Scotland. 75 years since Gowers Report recommended that all the repair and maintenance costs of historic houses and their contents should be subject to tax relief. HH new report on VAT – What is proposed is a more directly targeted, fully costed rebate scheme for Listed Buildings that are open to the public for 28 days of the year or more. [See full report.](#)

AGM – HH in June at Hopetoun House. Parliamentary reception – take place in September with rural and heritage tourism as focus.

Historic Environment Working Group (HEWG)

Note of meeting 18th February 2025

JM, RTPI – Busy time. Josphe Ashmore joined RTPI as intern project officer, next 9 months. Responded to PDR call for view, also took the view that PDR in the way that are currently approached is not a good mechanism for this.

Will respond to call for views for Local Government Housing committee on NPF4. Specific topics – how are these applied, Improvement Champion, New Planning Housing Hub and others.

RTPI – new LinkedIn Page. No longer has X account.

Awards for Planning Excellence open. Young Planner Awards open.

Moving from Atholl Crescent – will keep HEWG posted.

JR, CoS – Political activity: Submissions attempting to save the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. LPWGS will continue but has been cut and introduced a cap. Restricts size of project that will receive the rebate.

Responded to DCMS, call for evidence. Coordinated with other church organisations.

Churches continue to close, lots of inventories.

BG, CA – 150th anniversary - events. Announcing new President this week. 149th AGM in May, launching the corporate Archive that have been digitised.

Launching book – campaigning for Edinburgh.

Working with CEC, funding from Edinburgh 900 to tell unknown stories of Edinburgh.

RL, ClfA – Chief Exec Nathan Baker has stepped down for personal reasons.

Conference in April, in Birmingham.

Solar – guidance document to smooth concerns, UK wide output. HE and CADW are closely involved. HES has not taken this up. Q: How does HES scope its interest in the planning system compared to rest of UK?

SMcG, IHBC and PVOTAL - IHBC: Increased branch reps to 14. AGM on the on theme of Local Regeneration.

Re-shuffle at IHBC – Mark Watson has stepped back as convener. Sally Roberts and Zinnie Denby Mann taking roles of Convener and Vice Convener.

IHBC has fed into consultations e.g. PDR. Two upcoming consultations – Building Safety and NPF4.

CPD events – Dumfries. Birnam and Dunkeld with Young Royal Town Planners.

Aberdeenshire. Joint ventures with other professional orgs – seeking collaborations.

PVOTAL: Work with SG – looking at housing sector. Recommendations from the report – looking at housing as a whole, whether as HE or general BE. Recognise the differences between building stock – benchmarking piece needed.

Funding awarded – project looking at health and safety of occupants in relation to Retrofit in homes.

JR, AHF – have heard that they have HES funding. Awaiting formal confirmation.

SCVO conference - well attended.

Funding: A lot of thinking around deprivation – heritage impact and social impact e.g. where projects are located.

Historic Environment Working Group (HEWG)

Note of meeting 18th February 2025

LL, SHT – Meeting in March with HES to discuss future funding (current funding comes to an end in March 2026). Parliamentary reception celebrating CHT at end of last year went very well.

Exhibition at the Stirling Smith on Stirling's conservation areas.

Speaking at conference in Bratislava in March, preventative maintenance, building health check schemes.

LL retiring later this year – role will be advertised.

DJ, SCT – Busy few months. Met with Culture Minister.

Recorded first Catholic Church as part of recording project. Won Innovation of the Future Award – Church Recording Scheme.

Museum of Scotland – loss of Cultural Heritage Across Scotland.

Responded to DCMS consultation.

In process of updating the SCT website, national directory of Scotland's Churches.

IB, HES Board – [Trove.scot](https://trove.scot) launched last week. High Level Masonry project is progressing around the country, Auchindoun Castle has been re-opened. New Strategic Plan published on 31st March. New Chief Executive Katerina Brown would be pleased to hear from HEWG Members.

5. Future meetings/looking to the year ahead – horizon scanning

Noted that it is useful for there to be a specific topic to frame each meeting.

- Invitations to HES Directors
- 2026 Elections and upcoming sector advocacy
- Hustings

6. AOB

--

Next HEWG:

27th May 2025

10am – 12pm Online