

## Fifth Heritage Council minutes – 16 December 2020

### In attendance:

Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage, Nigel Huddleston MP (Minister for Heritage) (Chair)  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Defra, Minister Rebecca Pow MP (Minister for Environment)  
Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive - Historic England (DW)  
Ian Morrison, Director of Policy and Evidence, Historic England (IM)  
Ben Cowell, Director General - Historic Houses (BC)  
Emma Robinson, Head of Policy, Historic Houses (ER)  
Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive - National Lottery Heritage Fund (RS)  
Amanda Feather, National Lottery Heritage Fund (AF)  
Lizzie Glithero-West, Chief Executive - Heritage Alliance (LGW)  
Hannah Shimko, Head of Policy, Heritage Alliance (HF)  
Ingrid Samuels, Director of Policy, Historic Environment - National Trust (IS)  
Elaine Willett, Principal Historic Environment Adviser - Natural England (EW)  
Kate Mavor, Chief Executive, English Heritage (KM)  
Peter Hinton, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (PH)  
Re Hobley, EU Negotiations and Engagement Team, BEIS (RH)  
Lucy Hargreaves, Planning Development Management Team, MHCLG (LH)  
Paul Brummel, FCO (PB)  
Tony Strutt, Heritage Team, DCMS (TS)  
Helen Ward, Landscapes, Access and People Team, Defra (HW)  
Rob Munroe, ELM Team, Defra (RM)

### Apologies

Joanna Keeley, Director of Growth and Infrastructure, HM Treasury

### 1. Welcome and introductions

- The Minister for Heritage welcomed everyone to the fifth meeting of the Heritage Council.

### 2. Readiness for the end of the Transition Period

- The Minister for Heritage set out the position on the EU negotiations and invited feedback from heritage organisations on sector readiness.
- BC thanked MSTH for engagement so far. HH members had appreciated working closely with DCMS officials so far on preparation and wanted this to continue.

- LG-W raised concerns about the impact on volunteering and a lack of clear guidance to date on impacts, which would be disruptive to the sector. There were bandwidth concerns regarding dealing with a no-deal scenario and future stringent Covid related restrictions.
- IS raised concerns regarding supply chain disruptions and cost inflations caused by the end of the transition period. She was also concerned about potential tariff on construction materials and shortages due to disruptions at ports. She said that whilst she appreciated government webinars to aid preparation, too often comms representatives were on transmit mode rather than listening and answering questions.
- KM stated that English Heritage Trust has put extensive measures in place to mitigate the impacts of the Transition Period ending, including changes to VAT. She shared concerns about supply chain shortages, including food produce, although many catering operations have already adapted their menus. She said that inbound tourism was already being hit hard by Covid and raised concerns that the end of the transition period might result in congestion and lorry parks in Kent which would be an additional deterrent, which will impact all tourist sites including heritage organisations.
- The Minister for Heritage concluded that there is a for of the sector to take on board with the end of Transition Period on top of Covid, and DCMS will ensure that the sector is as informed as it can be as the negotiations with the EU continue.

## Actions

- **1. DCMS to continue to share information with the Heritage Council on the EU negotiations and consequential activity.**

## 3. Priorities for 2021 post-EU Transition

- The Minister for Heritage invited input from the attendees about top priorities for the heritage sector in early 2021 regarding the end of the Transition Period.
- PH welcomed that archaeology has been added to the shortage occupation list however there were still concerns about the implications of the new immigration system for the archaeology sector. Archaeologists might not meet the salary threshold for skilled workers meaning there would be a shortage for UK heritage organisations. In addition, any increased admin costs would be stretching and visa sponsorship was perceived to be too costly and too slow, especially as many contracts in the sector are quite short and involve transferring from one employer to another. While there is work happening to increase investment in skills, this won't address short-term needs. PH also mentioned concerns about ClfA professionals being able to work abroad post-EU Transition. Regarding the immigration system, he proposed a workshop on the new visa system and modelling future skills demand to assess what the likely impact on the industry.
- RK raised concerns about the replacement of EU structural funds by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). She said that NHLF has 240 projects which have 88m of known EU funding either committed or on the table, against total project costs of 920million in 2019 which was a significant number. She said that she welcomed UK

guarantee of funding across these project lifetimes, however concerns remained that this matched funding will continue. NLFH is supportive of UKSPF focussing on disadvantaged regions and is very keen to be involved in the development. TS responded that DCMS will want to engage with this and will follow up with the sector in the new year.

- LG-W briefly mentioned concerns in other parts of the heritage sector regarding the new immigration system: many specialist heritage workers, such as those in conservation, might also fall below the skilled worker salary threshold, and many skilled workers from Europe and beyond were heavily relied upon. Conservation and a suite of other skill-shortage areas should be added to the shortage occupation list. All 6 of the ONRC painted hall conservators for example were from Italy, where the skills are plenty. Construction also relies on a large number of EU nationals up to 13% UK. There were worries for heritage science, with equipment, people and knowledge sharing becoming more difficult. LG-W suggested that swift access to visas or access to a heritage version of a 'diplomatic visa' may help or we could create a skilled exchange system and consider what a tier 1 visa for heritage would look like.
- IS asked about the movement of cultural objects post-transition. This was a challenge for the heritage sector as well as the culture sector with associated insurance and fragility risk. IS wondered whether there could be an exemption for cultural products. TS said that DCMS would follow up directly about this.

## Actions

- **2. DCMS to liaise with ClfA and the Home Office about a workshop on the impact of the new immigration system.**
- **3. DCMS to follow up with Heritage Council about developments with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and opportunities to engage with this.**
- **4. DCMS to liaise with National Trust about movement of cultural objects post-EU Transition.**

## 4. EU R&D programmes

- RH gave a presentation on the current position on research infrastructure and funding. As negotiations were still ongoing, the position was not finalised but the UK's membership of various European Research Infrastructure consortia (ERICs), including on Heritage Science, would not be affected by the EU negotiations and participation would continue. The Heritage Science ERIC has been identified as a priority by UK Research and Innovation. Membership of the Horizon Europe scheme is subject to the EU negotiations, but if participation does not continue, an ambitious alternative will be designed and launched quickly, mirroring the focus of the scheme. Under all scenarios, it is intended that UK researchers will still be able to collaborate with those based in the EU.
- DW thanked RH for her presentation. It was obvious now more than ever that international cooperation was very important. He raised concerns about moving from one framework to another. It was a complicated situation, and the heritage industry would welcome continued engagement from DCMS and BEIS to make processes as simple as possible to access research programmes .

## Actions

- **5. BEIS officials to follow up with Heritage Council in the New Year on the plans for R&D programmes**

### 5. Environmental management and heritage post-EU transition

- The Minister for Heritage welcomed Rebecca Pow, Minister for the Environment to the Council and invited Historic England to provide some context on the relationship between management of the natural environment and historic environment.
- IM gave a presentation highlighting the indivisibility of the landscape from the UK's heritage; for instance, 84% of scheduled monuments were on farmland. EU agri-environment schemes have provided significant investment in heritage, which has helped to remove assets from the Heritage at Risk Register but also helped to conserve landscape character and support sustainable tourism. He welcomed Defra's engagement at the Council and said that the end of the Transition Period represented an opportunity to develop policy that acknowledged the relationship between agriculture and heritage.
- The Minister for the Environment said that Defra were determined to continue working closely with DCMS and the heritage sector to protect the UK's heritage. The Environment Bill, the Agriculture Act and the Fisheries Bill all demonstrated this commitment. She thanked RK for her work getting Green Recovery Fund money to projects. This had been fantastic work and demonstrated the close relationship between the agricultural sector and heritage sector. The Minister for the Environment wanted to assure the sector that heritage will be part of future iterations of the 25 Year Environment Plan and that heritage input into this will be welcomed.
- LG-W said it was good to see the Agriculture and Fisheries Bills taking good account of the historic environment, but asked The Minister for the Environment if she would look at suggested amendments to the Environment Bill so that the historic environment was recognised in legislation, the sector remains seriously concerned about the Bill. The Environment Bill as it stands threatens our endangered rural heritage by the artificial distinction it creates between the natural and historic aspects of our environment, we had hoped for more progress and reassurance. The Minister for the Environment emphasised that the 25 Year Environment Plan would be the first plan of many, which is now set out in law, and the inclusion of heritage in the first iteration is a sign of the Government's commitment.
- EW emphasised the value for money opportunities that could be exploited. Defra could realise efficiencies by recognising the dual opportunities for the historic environment and natural environment in the design of future funding schemes. She also highlighted the importance of expert heritage advice and access to this. Important that funding schemes avoid incentivising damage to the historic environment.

- DW welcomed Defra's engagement which he hoped would continue during the delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan. He would welcome being put in contact with a senior policy lead responsible for heritage at Defra, this had been a useful point of contact in the past. He also flagged the potential ramifications of rewilding policy on the historic environment, which Historic England would welcome engagement on.
- DW also noted that there used to be a senior policy lead for Heritage at Defra, and asked whether this post could be reinstated as it would make liaison easier.
- BC wished to emphasise the link between the historic and natural environment of this work. HH members feel keenly on this, and have been fully involved - often leading the way - on measures such as rewilding, for example at Somerleyton, in Skye etc.
- BC also wished to note the tax implications for estates held under conditional exemptions. If they weren't enabled to apply for support under any new system, that would be a concern for his membership.
- IS also spoke of innovative land management at National Trust properties, and said that understanding historic interventions in the environment such as dew ponds can be adopted again successfully instead of developing something new. IS will send officials some examples of this type of land management.

## Actions

- **6. HE to follow up with Defra about securing contact for the policy lead on the Historic Environment.**

## 6. Closing remarks

- The Minister for Heritage thanked the attendees and encouraged ongoing contribution and discussion of the issues covered today.

## 7. AOB