

[OFFICIAL]

Sixth Heritage Council

Tuesday 7 December 2021, 2pm - 3:30pm

MINUTES

Summary of actions by agenda item:

1	A summary of the meeting minutes will be published on gov.uk after prior circulation to members.	DCMS
1.1	Council members to feed back any issues or comments on Terms of Reference to DCMS officials.	HS*
2.1	DEFRA to continue working with DCMS and with the wider heritage sector on Environmental Land Management policy development.	DCMS/DEFRA
2.2	Sector members to share ideas around increasing access and engagement with DEFRA.	HS/DEFRA
3.1	DCMS to put Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) in touch with DLUHC officials to work with them on shaping funding programmes.	DCMS/DLUHC
3.2	DCMS and DLUHC to follow up on why some levelling up fund bids were not successful.	DCMS/DLUHC
3.3	DCMS and DLUHC to continue engagement with one another and sector members on Levelling Up agenda.	DCMS/DLUHC
4.1	Sector members to continue sharing statistics on the impact of COVID measures on their organisations or the sector with DCMS.	HS

*HS = Heritage Sector members

Attendees

Chair - Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society, Nigel Huddleston MP
(MSTHCS)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Victoria Prentis MP (Minister Prentis)

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

Department for Transport (DfT)

Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT)

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)

Historic England (HE)

Historic Houses (HH)

Heritage Alliance (HA)

National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)

National Trust (NT)

Natural England (NE)

English Heritage Trust (EHT)

The Landmark Trust (TLT)

Historic Royal Palaces (HRP)

Church of England (CE)

Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF)

Historic Environment Forum (HEF)

Item 1: Welcome and introductions

- MSTHCS welcomed everyone to the sixth meeting of the Heritage Council, noting that the Council has not met in almost a year but that he is keen to re-establish it as a forum to support collaboration across key areas of government policy relating to heritage. COVID has been added to the Council's remit along with a slightly expanded membership to ensure that recovery and ongoing concerns can be addressed as part of wider sector discussions.
- The Terms of Reference for the Council were recirculated in advance and it was agreed Members should feed back any issues or comments to DCMS officials. These and the membership will continue to be reviewed annually.

Actions:

- 1.1 Council members to feed back any issues or comments on the Terms of Reference to DCMS officials.**

Item 2: Heritage and the Environment (Environmental Land Management and 25 Year Environment Plan)

- MSTHCS welcomed Minister Prentis to the Council and invited her to update Council members on work relating to heritage and the environment.
- Minister Prentis gave an overview of DEFRA's ambitious vision for Future Farming policy. She acknowledged that farming standards are likely to change over time and reassured the group that DEFRA will continue to pay for heritage access and engagement via Countryside Stewardship, which has already seen a 30-40% uplift in applications. DEFRA will also consider how to maintain investment in these areas as part of future schemes. Minister Prentis reassured Council members that more work will be done to embed heritage in future policy and it will be an iterative process, and that heritage is an important part of the future of the countryside. The Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery schemes will all avoid negative impacts on important features, such as scheduled monuments or other relevant aspects of our historic environment.
- Sector members raised the importance of heritage asset protection as part of land management, their concerns that a heritage standard should be added to the sustainable farming incentive and that heritage will be part of future schemes.
- Sector members agreed that the sector could do more to help land managers without access and in need of support to build capability. Several organisations offered their assistance with interacting with the wider sector and implementing robust policy in practical terms. They agreed that addressing access issues was crucial.
- Questions were raised about arrangements for conditionally exempt land and its eligibility for funding in order to increase public value.

Actions:

- 2.1 DEFRA will continue working with DCMS and with the wider heritage sector on Environmental Land Management policy development.**
- 2.2 Sector members to share ideas around increasing access and engagement with DEFRA.**

Item 3: Heritage and Levelling up

- MSTHCS made clear that heritage organisations have lots to offer to levelling up policy development and the implementation of related funding schemes.
- Local Growth Funding Policy Design team in DLUHC gave an overview of the department's work on levelling up, with a focus on the design of local growth funding and the agency of local authorities. The importance of heritage and embedding carbon net zero targets in DLUHC's work on levelling up was emphasised.
- Levelling up was strongly reflected in the recent Spending Review as it is a key part of the government's agenda. The White Paper is due to be published in January.
- Sector members emphasised the importance of an ongoing dialogue between heritage organisations about the role of culture and heritage in levelling up. The civil society sector, sustainability and net zero targets were raised as important areas to discuss in relation to levelling up and community-led regeneration.
- Sector members raised the following concerns:
 - Local authorities often lack capacity and capability. Capacity is usually a problem in town projects and new forms of ownerships and delivery models are needed.
 - Some social enterprises face difficulty in influencing larger funds.
 - Local authorities often need support in developing stronger partnerships and business cases for funding applications. Making funding schemes more flexible in the long term will also be helpful.
 - Lack of investment is a particular problem in rural areas with socio-economic problems, such as coastal communities.
 - The discrepancy in VAT for new builds and retrofitted buildings will need to be addressed.
- Sector members offered their support in working between local and central government to deliver the levelling up agenda on the ground, as well as to work in partnership with other heritage organisations. They remarked on opportunities to leverage private investment alongside government funding, and to match an emphasis on capital investment with a focus on promoting skills development and learning opportunities in the levelling up agenda.

Actions:

- 3.1 DCMS to put Architectural Heritage Fund in touch with DLUHC officials to work with them on shaping funding programmes**
- 3.2 DCMS and DLUHC to follow up on why some levelling up fund bids were not successful.**
- 3.3 DCMS and DLUHC to continue engagement with one another and sector members on Levelling Up agenda**

Item 4: COVID update

- MSTHCS updated the Council Members on Government policy relating to the emerging public health situation.
- A sector member praised the Culture Recovery Fund loans for helping to stabilise their business, and several sector members provided an update on the impact of COVID on visitor figures, operations and financial performance at their organisations. They anticipated the following challenges over the coming months:
 - A small increase in cancellations of events that was likely to increase with the growing domestic presence of the Omicron variant.
 - Changes to restrictions that might impact buildings with multiple uses during the Christmas period
 - Difficulties for organisations reliant on big corporate events. Suggestion that if restrictions continue, the government should give low-cost support to affected businesses, such as VAT reduction, and temporary arrangements on outdoor weddings, Permitted Development Rights for putting up marquees.
 - Concerns about the tightened rules of CRF3 funding for private owners, especially those dependent on hospitality.
 - Lack of recruitment and equipment for organisations with high visitor figures.
- MSTHCS encouraged Council members to send DCMS data on the impact of latest measures across their organisations. He is keen to continue working with HM Treasury to gather information and statistics, and keep the situation under review. A key priority is rolling out the booster vaccination programme.

Actions:

- 4.1 Sector members to continue sharing statistics on the ongoing impact of COVID measures on their organisations or the sector with DCMS.**

Item 5: Heritage Statement update

- MSTHCS said that the Heritage Council was the result of the previous Heritage Statement, and that a new statement in 2022 would set the strategy going forward. He thanked the group for their input so far. He gave an overview of the four priority areas, which had all been discussed directly or indirectly during the meeting. He reiterated that accessibility was the key focus for the Secretary of State for DCMS.
- Sector members thanked MSTHCS for giving the sector an opportunity to contribute to the Heritage Statement and looked forward to the Minister unpacking the statement in further detail at Heritage Alliance's Heritage Day next year.

Item 6: Closing remarks

- MSTHCS thanked the Council members and encouraged ongoing contribution of statistics and discussion of the issues covered today.