

IN CONFIDENCE

HISTORIC MONUMENTS COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE 142nd MEETING HELD IN
BELMONT TOWER, BELMONT ROAD**

ON

WEDNESDAY, 12TH DECEMBER 2007 AT 10.15AM

PRESENT:

Mr R Black, OBE– Chairman
Mr B Black
Mrs R Evans
Mrs H Lanigan Wood(Item1-8)
Mr C Mallon
Ms A Moreno(Item 1-6)
Mr J Moore,OBE
Dr F McCormick
Dr K Muhr
Dr E McShane

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr M Coulter, EHS (Item 1-6)
Dr B Williams, EHS
Mr L McQuillan, EHS
Ms R Robinson, EHS
Ms L Bourke, EHS

Prof S Christie, NIAF
Ms N Whitehouse,NIAF

Mr C Francey, Secretariat

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr T Canavan, Mr P Walsh, Mr I Hill, Mr D Flinn.

The Chairman welcomed Prof S Christie and Dr N Whitehouse of the Northern Ireland Archaeological Forum and EHS staff.

2. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS -

2.1 The Ice-House Portstewart

The Chairman referred to the recent correspondence received from Councillor Alexander of Coleraine Borough Council about the demolition of the Ice-house at Portstewart. This ice-house had no form of protection against demolition. He felt that this raised the issue of what type of protection could have been given to this structure and if it was of sufficient quality to merit scheduling or listing. Mr Coulter informed members that EHS had considered the ice-house for listing sometime ago but felt that it did not meet the criteria. There was a fundamental question to be addressed on the protection of ice-houses and whether or not they needed to be preserved or conserved.

Dr Williams highlighted the successful outcome for EHS of the planning appeal relating to the proposed housing development for a site involving the scheduled ice-house at Portballintrae. This result was important in terms of other such structures which may be under threat from developers. Generally, EHS will consider protection for those structures which are deemed to be of the best quality. Mr Coulter pointed out that currently EHS was considering a system of local listing which would be non-statutory but have a level of protection through Area Plans. This had the benefit of people being involved at a local level and would enable them to highlight their concerns about specific buildings/structures. He was happy to involve Council in this debate but pointed out that the listing/scheduling process was still a matter for the Department.

The Chairman suggested that consideration should be given to protection measures for local structures at a future meeting.

2.2 REGNI Workshop

The Chairman reported that there had been a good turn out of members at the workshop on the 7th December to discuss the REGNI Report. This had been a worthwhile opportunity for the SACs to debate the recommendations of the Report.

2.3 Programme for Government

The Chairman reminded members that the NI Executive's Draft Programme for Government was launched recently. He asked that members let the Secretariat have any comments on this Programme before the end of December 2007.

ACTION; send comments to Secretariat Members

3. MINUTES OF 141ST MEETING of 26th OCTOBER 2007

The minutes of the 141st meeting dated 26th October were agreed.

4. MATTERS ARISING REPORT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 141ST MEETING.

4.1 Donaghmore Cross

Members noted a report from Ms C Foley in connection with the visit she had with Mr Mallon, HMC. They met Mr P O'Neill, resident of Donaghmore, to discuss the options for protecting the cross.

4.2 Boa Island Carved Stone

Members were informed that EHS will make the EHS replica of the Boa Island figure available for display at the Fermanagh County Museum if it is required.

Council considered the generic position on the protection of carved stones and expressed concern about the lack of an EHS conservation statement on how it will progress suitable measures for retaining and protecting stone monuments. Members were disappointed that a list of such structures at risk had not taken priority. Mr Coulter assured Council that this had not been forgotten about but because of recent re-structuring within Built Heritage it had not been possible to take this forward at present. Now that the various archaeological posts had been filled, EHS would be drawing up a conservation programme. It was not possible to give a definitive time when this can be done as investigations would firstly have to be undertaken. Members suggested that EHS should carry out an audit of all its monuments to determine the extent of the problem. Dr Williams pointed out that EHS has a list of all carved stones at risk and a laser copy has been taken of a number of these.

The Chairman commented that Council had been grappling with these issues on the best form of protection for stone monuments for some time. Members recognised the delay caused by the re-structuring but suggested that EHS should produce the conservation statement soon.

ACTION: Progress conservation statement EHS

4.3 O'Neill Country Historical Society

Mr Mallon reported that he had been in contact with this Society about their efforts to obtain signage for its local tour of O'Neill's Castle, Dungannon. He is to keep in touch with them.

5. ANY OTHER MATTERS ARISING NOT ON MAIN AGENDA

There were no other matters arising not on the main agenda.

6. PRESENTATION ON THE WORK OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL FORUM

Dr Whitehouse gave part of the presentation on the work of the Northern Ireland Archaeological Forum (NIAF). She outlined the background to this Forum and its remit, mission, aims and activities.

Prof Christie continued with an overview of how a survey of various stakeholders and players in archaeology set the stage for establishing an archaeology forum. This presented the opportunity to raise awareness of archaeology in Northern Ireland and at the same time involve local communities. The NIAF was launched on the 18th October 2007 by the BBC Team Time at O'Neill's Castle, Dungannon. She mentioned a number of bodies and stakeholders which make up the Forum. It is intended that the Forum will develop publications, a database, a website and newsletter and arrange various events including an annual conference.

Council congratulated Prof Christie and Dr N Whitehouse on their role in establishing and managing the NIAF. Members recognised, however, that

this new body in archaeology needs support. Prof Christie informed Council that the Forum had a network of people working together to provide this. She pointed out, however, that an officer is required to assist in developing a programme to meet its aims and objectives. It was hoped that funding for this post will emerge from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

7. **SCHEDULING (HM445)**

In accordance with the requirement for EHS to consult with Council under Article 3(6) of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995, Mr L McQuillan, Ms R Robinson and Ms L Bourke presented 4 sites proposed for Scheduling in counties Down, Antrim and Londonderry. Dr K Muhr gave comments regarding place-names relating to some of these sites.

Council approved the scheduling of the following sites:

County Down

MRD168:142 Kircubbin Harbour Complex

DOW 24:32 The Abbacy

County Antrim

ANT 52:61 Carrickfergus Town Wall

County Londonderry

LYD 17:7 Drumnadreen Rath

Members offered the following comments on the proposals as follows:

Carrickfergus Town Wall (Part)

Members suggested that EHS should identify those sections of the wall which have no statutory protection and consider the whole of the wall for scheduling. This would encourage and provide a better management regime for the wall.

The Abbacy

Members suggested that when repairs are being effected to the walls of the house, particularly when the work involves the routing out of loose mortar, the charcoal content of the original mortar should be kept for sample analysis in establishing the date of the walls.

Drumnadreen - Rath

It was noted that the owner of the land on which the rath is sited, has offered to manage the area. His livestock is still using the site but he has erected temporary fencing to protect the remaining trees.

The Chairman thanked Mr McQuillan, Ms Robinson and Ms Bourke.

8. **THE MONUMENTS AND BUILDINGS RECORD – A REVIEW AND PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE (HM 446)**

Ms Robinson introduced the paper on the Monuments and Buildings Record (MBR) and outlined the diverse material available within its archives. She highlighted some of the current methodologies for archiving and storage and future plans for modernising these facilities such as cataloguing of archives,

re-vamping the search engine of the EHS website, introducing a mapping package and scanning of records.

Ms Robinson pointed out the main issues which impact on the future of the MBR such as (a) appropriate storage of the archive material and (b) organisation and cataloguing of the archive material. She proposed to use off-site storage to cater for the substantial number of records held 'in-house' and to contract a person for up to 3-years to organise and catalogue material.

Members were impressed with the EHS wide ranging recording and archiving systems and supported the proposal to update their storage and accessibility.

The Chairman thanked Ms Robinson for her presentation.

9. FRESHWATER ARCHAEOLOGY IN NORTHERN IRELAND (HM 447)

Ms Bourke introduced the paper on Freshwater Archaeology in Northern Ireland. She emphasised that NI had a significant freshwater environment and outlined the measures associated with the recording and protection of this aspect of NI's archaeological resource. Ms Bourke gave a resume of the legislative background and highlighted the key area in respect of (a) the recovery of artefacts (b) structural remains and (c) lakeside settlement.

In order to initiate an integrated management approach to assess and protect the archaeological resource, EHS was considering the creation of a freshwater post. The post could be incorporated within the Centre for Maritime Archaeology, University of Ulster.

Members expressed their concern about the substantial number of crannogs which have dried out, mainly as the result of agricultural drainage schemes; many have become totally destroyed. It was suggested that EHS should take steps to identify other sites which are in the process of drying out and introduce measures to prevent their loss.

In supporting the EHS recommendation for a freshwater post, members urged that EHS should expedite the appointment soon, particularly in view of the plans for the restoration of inland waterways which could impact on part of the rich archaeological resource of NI.

The Chairman thanked Ms Bourke for her presentation.

10. JCIH

Members noted the minutes of the JCIH meeting of the 30th October 2007. Mr Moore reported that he and Mr Robinson met the head of the Civil Service, Mr N Hamilton, in the summer of this year to discuss Maritime Heritage and Titanic Quarter. Although it was intimated that he would respond to the JCIH letter of the 4th January 2007, this has still not been received.

11. LOWER BANN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LBAC)

There was no business to report regarding the LBAC.

12. MEMBERS REPORTS

There were no members reports.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 Whitepark Bay, County Antrim

Members raised a question about a possible golf course for the Whitepark Bay area and the likely impacts this could have for archaeological protection. Dr Williams felt that this proposed golf course related to a site at Runkerry, near the Giant's Causeway. However, he noted Council's concerns and undertook to investigate the matter.

ACTION: investigate proposal for golf course EHS

14. DATES OF MEETINGS FOR 2008

The following dates for HMC meetings during the year 2008 were agreed.

- Wednesday, 13th February
- Wednesday, 23th April
- Wednesday, 18th June
- Wednesday, 27th August
- Friday, 24th October
- Wednesday, 10th December
- HMC FIELD VISIT - Tuesday, 20TH May