

IN CONFIDENCE

HISTORIC MONUMENTS COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE 144th MEETING HELD IN DOWN COUNTY MUSEUM, DOWNPATRICK

ON

WEDNESDAY, 23rd April 2008 AT 1.30PM

PRESENT:

Mr J Moore - Acting Chairman
Mrs R Evans
Mr C Mallon
Dr K Muhr
Dr F McCormick
Dr E McShane
Mr J O'Neill
Mr P Walsh

IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr B Williams, EHS
Ms C Foley, EHS
Mr P Logue, EHS
Ms M Gormley, EHS
Mr T McErlean, CMA

Mr C Francey, Secretariat

VISIT TO DOWN COUNTY MUSEUM

Members were welcomed by Mr M King, Curator of the Down County Museum. He gave members a guided tour of the Museum, which included the historic gaol of the late 18th century, and a viewing of the 'Down Through the Times' and 'Tidal Mill' exhibitions. He highlighted a number of the artefacts on show and gave members a talk on their history.

The Chairman thanked Mr King for a very interesting and worthwhile tour.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the Chairman, Mrs H Lanigan Wood, Mr T Canavan, Mr A Moreno, Mr B Black, Mr I Hill and Mr M Coulter, EHS.

The Acting Chairman referred to Mrs H Lanigan-Wood's recent illness and informed members that the Chairman had written to her on behalf of Council wishing her a speedy recovery.

2. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

2.1 EHS State of the Environment Report

The Chairman informed members that the EHS State of the Environment Report was launched by the Minister recently.

Dr Williams gave a brief overview of the Report which was a baseline study of the environmental issues covered by EHS and included a section on the Built Heritage. He highlighted a number of the statistics in the Report relating to monuments and listed buildings. Other features included Areas of Archaeological Interest; historic parks, gardens and demesnes; industrial heritage, and maritime heritage. Dr Williams mentioned that Ms Rhonda Robinson, EHS had recently initiated a scanning project for the EHS:HMU articles of information and these would be posted to the EHS website soon. He believed that the use of information on the website for public access was a suitable way forward for transparency of the Department's records.

3. MINUTES OF 143rd MEETING of 13th FEBRUARY 2008

The minutes of the meeting of the 13th February were agreed.

4. MATTERS ARISING REPORT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 143rd MEETING.

4.1 Devenish Island

Dr Williams reported that there is to be a meeting in May between EHS and the owners legal team in order to resolve the situation of the non-payment of the rent for Devenish Island. It is hoped that the matter will have a successful outcome. It is known that the owner wants EHS to continue to manage this monastic island.

ACTION: Update Council on negotiations

Dr Williams

4.2 Donaghmore Cross

Mr Mallon reported that he attended a meeting of the local historic society and EHS about plans for the Cross. There was a good cross section of local interest and the debate focused on the options for the Cross. It was agreed that further investigations by EHS were needed before a final decision could be made. The meeting would then be reconvened in the summer.

Ms Gormley explained that more information was required on vibrations from traffic and the logistics of moving the Cross. Consideration would also have to be given to the design of a shelter in the event of the Cross being moved.

4.3 HMC Report

Although the text of the HMC Report has been finalised, Council has still to identify appropriate photographs and illustrations for inclusion in the Report. The Acting Chairman undertook to discuss this with the Chairman.

4.4 HMC Field Visit

The Acting Chairman tabled an itinerary for the HMC field visit on the 6th May 2008 which includes sites in the area of the north Antrim Coast.

4.5 Ulster Museum

Ms Foley updated Council on some aspects of the refurbishment of the Ulster Museum. She mentioned that the items from the Museum were currently held in storage pending completion of the work and what plans it has for future exhibitions.

5. ANY OTHER MATTERS ARISING NOT ON MAIN AGENDA

There are no other matters arising and not on the main agenda.

6. EHS CORPORATE PLAN 2008-2011

Dr Williams introduced the EHS Corporate Plan and explained that it was a composite document for the whole of EHS which contained a section on the Built Heritage. He emphasised the importance of having resources identified within this Corporate Plan.

Dr Williams highlighted the key targets and action plans for the Historic Monuments Unit and specifically mentioned the objectives relating to delivery of better regulation, planning consultations, conservation programmes, statutory protection of monuments and buildings, building up partnerships, buildings at risk, state of the environment and improving public awareness and understanding of our environment and heritage.

In response to a question on the number of monuments at risk, Ms Foley informed members that currently there are 28 such monuments which represents a priority list of the total number of 400 on the register of buildings at risk.

Members were concerned that the budget allocation for historic monuments was at the bottom of the table in relation to the other areas within EHS. Dr Williams explained that Historic Monuments had made appropriate bids for its work programme but not all bids were successful.

7. PROPOSALS FOR SCHEDULING for 2008-09 (HM 449)

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, Ms C Foley, EHS and Mr T McErlean, Centre for Maritime Archaeology, presented 9 sites proposed for Scheduling i.e 5 maritime sites and 4 in counties Tyrone and Fermanagh . Dr K Muhr commented on the place-names relating to some of these sites.

Council endorsed the scheduling of the following sites:

MRA 001:0032	Portbradden – Ice House
MRA 003:219	Kebble – Ship graffiti
MRA 008:025	Townparks (Ballycastle) – Ice House
MRA 009:012	Tornaroan – 17 th century salt pans
MRA 010:008	East Torr - Ice House

County Fermanagh	FER 192:015	Drumcullion – standing stone
County Tyrone	TYR 024:029	Bullock Park – portal tomb
County Tyrone	TYR 025:038	Garvahullion – wooden trackway
County Tyrone	TYR 029:023	Tattykeel – court tomb

8. HMU DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (HM 450)

Mr Logue introduced the planning paper and outlined the structure for dealing with planning consultations and the associated response targets. He explained that the system involved identifying and monitoring the action taken to respond to PS. This involves a colour coding system highlighting outstanding returns. The overall effect of

this has been increased performance levels in meeting targets. Mr Logue pointed out that the built heritage had the highest number of consultations to handle compared to other units and was the highest performing unit within EHS. He added that the HMU had often been criticised about its high level of refusal recommendations in relation to proposed developments. However, he pointed out that out of some 2000 planning applications in 2007, it had only recommended refusal in 31 cases.

Council commended HMU in its performance levels attained in dealing with planning consultations.

9. STATE CARE WORK PROGRAMME 2008-09

Ms Gormley outlined how EHS arrived at its State Care Work Programme for 2008-9 and the team structure set up to progress the work. She highlighted the key issues in identifying the programme, which was based mainly on inspection of monuments and prioritisation of the work to be done, such as (a) site inspections (b) experience of managers, and prioritisation of sites using appropriate criteria (d) Comprehensive assessment and more visits with EHS Regional Operations to establish a baseline of where work is needed and, (e) risk assessments

Council welcomed the work programme tabled by Ms Gormley and the approach used to prioritise the list.

Members expressed concern about the boundary limits set for the work teams. This appeared to be a limiting factor in the deployment of resources in dealing with staff shortages in other areas.

10. JCIH

Members noted the minutes of the 6th March 2008.

11. MEMBERS REPORTS

11.1 Bonamargy Friary, Ballycastle

Mr Mallon reported that he had been made aware of damage to the graveyard wall of Bonamargy Friary in Ballycastle. The matter was passed to EHS for action. It appears that this wall is in the ownership of Moyle District Council and EHS has written to the Council about repairs.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 25th June 2008.

(the meeting finished at 3.45pm)