

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Forward thinker will take place in history

Historic Environment Scotland seeks a chief executive to deliver merged body's ambitious new strategy. By **Ken Mann**

STEWARDSHIP of Scotland's grand and internationally renowned historic environment takes a major step change on October 1 – that's the day full powers are vested in the new body, Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

Its statutory role is to investigate, care for and promote Scotland's historic environment. It will be the lead body, drawing on the established strengths of Historic Scotland (HS) and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). Looking after the properties and collections has up to now been a core function of HS and RCAHMS, which merge under the new umbrella organisation.

HES has been created to deliver Scotland's first strategy for its historic environment, dubbed Our Place In Time. It's been designed to offer an overarching, cohesive single public body approach. To that extent, it is a demonstration of the importance of our national past to our economic future.

HES Chair Jane Ryder explains:

"The new role as lead body focuses on working with, and enabling, others as part of a more collective approach. That requires crossing some conventional barriers and some creative thinking, including as to how we can best facilitate and engage with others, so that the collective approach which is laid out in Our Place in Time can be realised."

Having commenced the new fiscal year, HES has started the search for its first chief executive. The full board complement of 10, including Chair, was announced in January.

Ryder adds: "The new Board has swung into action, meeting for the first time in February and establishing a pattern of monthly meetings and visits. We are looking to fully understand the range of, and depth of, activities and opportunities for HES. This covers everything – the award of grants (of which there are 14 million a year), a statutory role as regulator and as adviser to Ministers, as well as looking after the 345 properties in care and drawing on all our specialist skills to provide advice to others.

"We will have approximately 1,200

permanent members of staff located throughout Scotland. In addition, we will have around 200 seasonal staff and volunteers. Together they provide an exceptional range and depth of skills and expertise, including archaeologists, art historians, conservators and skilled craftsmen – from older disciplines, such as stone masons and carpenters, to newer roles of environmental change specialists and digital 'champions'.

"As well as employing staff who will directly transfer to the new organisation, we will be actively promoting new development opportunities including modern apprenticeships."

History and heritage – the cultural estate, its evolution and related demographics – has become an economic powerhouse.

These employees manage some of the most iconic attractions in Scotland. The estate makes significant economic impact, including in rural areas – providing direct employment, attracting tourists or supporting local contractors.

"We want to recognise and develop that role in supporting local economic

strategies, working closely with local authorities, community planning partnerships and businesses to create environments which contribute to everyone's well-being, whether as a place to visit, to invest, to work or simply to live and enjoy," says Ryder.

From the perspective of the Scottish tax payer and Scotland's cultural offering, HES translates as a medium for improved overall forward planning and competitiveness.

Its Chair points to preparatory work having already given a much more detailed and systematic approach to managing the properties. By its nature, that enables better manage-

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ment of the whole heritage portfolio for the benefit of visitors and future generations alike.

She reasons: "What the development of the strategy and the creation of Historic Environment Scotland has also done is to raise a much greater awareness of the importance of the historic environment in so many different areas of life and what HES can contribute.

"As well as collaborative planning, we will be looking to make our world class resources more widely available. This can be digital resources or more hands-on projects such as at the Engine Shed, the exciting new conservation centre in Stirling.

"We can share our expertise in traditional areas such as academic research or stonemasonry through to areas such as climate change. The latter is a good example of a field where we have highly relevant direct experience and which has moved from being a minority, specialist area to one of mainstream importance."

The leader taking on the task will need to be imaginative, creative and with an ability to work across conven-

tional internal and external boundaries. But this blue skies thinking must be combined with significant management skill.

"Candidates could come from many different backgrounds," Ryder informs.

"What we are interested in is the right combination of skills and personal qualities that mean our new Chief Executive will combine the inspirational with the practical, and can lead the new organisation and its culture to deliver on expectations and opportunities.

"This is a unique opportunity to take the helm at one of the most important cultural organisations in Scotland. The new Chief Executive will have a key role at a critical planning stage as we evolve our plans for the first three years.

"The selected person will also want to prioritise our own organisational development to ensure that staff have all the necessary skills to meet the new challenges and new opportunities, and to establish key working relationships, nationally and internationally."



PRESERVING THE PAST: A prime example of Historic Environment Scotland's portfolio is the fascinating Orkney Neolithic settlement of Skara Brae.