

NINETY FIRST SNH BOARD MEETING, 10 & 11 NOVEMBER 2003, INVERNESS MARRIOTT HOTEL

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Members Present

John Markland, Chairman
Michael Scott, Deputy Chairman
Peter Chapman
Simon Fraser, Chairman, North Areas Board
Keith Geddes, Chairman, Audit and Risk Management Committee
Isabel Glasgow, Chairwoman, West Areas Board
Nick Kempe
Jeremy Rowan-Robinson, Chairman, East Areas Board
Janet Sprent, Chairwoman, Scientific Advisory Committee
Sue Walker

In Attendance

Ian Jardine, Chief Executive
Andrew Bachell, Director
Ian Edgeler, Director
Colin Galbraith, Director
John Thomson, Director
Jeff Watson, Director (10 November only)
Jane Clark, Head of National Strategy
Alan Mowle, Head of Corporate Services
Iain Rennick, Head of Secretariat, Press and PR
Kate Alexander, Acting Board Secretary
Roger Burton, for item 8
Sheila Currie, for item 9
Katherine Bryan, JNCC, for item 11
Deryck Steer, JNCC, for item 11
Richard Davison, for items 12 and 13

Apologies

Alice Lambert

****CLOSED SESSION****

ITEM 1: DECLARATION OF INTEREST (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS)

1. There were no declarations in relation to the items in the closed session.

ITEM 2: MINUTES (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS)

2. The minutes of the closed sessions of the 2 September 2003 Board meeting was agreed as a true record.

ITEM 3: CURRENT ISSUES (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS)

3. There were no confidential current issues raised.

ITEM 4: KINLOCH CASTLE (RESTRICTED)

4. Kinloch Castle had been one of the 10 finalists featured on the BBC's 'Restoration' programme. While it did not win, it received a lot of support and subsequent interest in securing its long term future. Discussions on the future of the castle had taken place with Historic Scotland and Scottish Executive and SNH has been approached by the Prince of Wales' office. As a result of the Prince's interest, meetings had been held with the Phoenix Trust and Landmark Trust. A paper to look at the risks and benefits of the various options would be presented to the Board in February 2004. It was important that this work should not derail SNH's current activity on the National Nature Reserve and with the community.

ITEM 5: RELOCATION UPDATE

5. The Chairman had received a response to his letter to the First Minister on the redundancy situation, and had replied. Copies of this correspondence had been circulated to the Board on a restricted basis.
6. A letter had been received from our Minister, Allan Wilson, indicating that SNH's proposals regarding flexibility had been accepted. 50 posts could remain in Edinburgh following the move in 2005/6, with this number reducing over time to a position where only 25 posts remained in Edinburgh after 2010. SNH's proposals had also included issues on the timing and phasing of the move to Inverness which would be addressed through the Project Plan.
7. The Relocation Project Brief and Initial Project Plan had been submitted to the Executive on 31 October as required. This had been circulated within the Executive. It was likely that the Executive's Buildings Unit would challenge aspects of the building proposals. The Board's wish for a sustainable flagship building would need to be defended strongly. Highland Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise were likely to support SNH in this. An illustrative financial summary had also been submitted to CANH.

8. A policy had been drawn up for filling vacancies as they arose prior to the move to Inverness. Vacancies in posts currently based in Edinburgh would be recruited to Inverness wherever possible. It was likely that there would be exceptional circumstances which would make this impractical, particularly until temporary accommodation had been secured in Inverness. These exceptions would be considered by the Chief Executive. Staff had been advised that efforts would be made to facilitate the move of any staff member who wishes to relocate early. In these cases, any enhanced relocation package offer would be awarded retrospectively.
9. Highland Council and HIE have developed a website to cover the areas of concern to staff. A set of seminars to enable staff to discuss relocation issues was also being planned, as were familiarisation visits to Inverness for Edinburgh staff and their families.
10. The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union were taking SNH to an employment tribunal on grounds of failure to consult on redundancy. SNH had objected to this on the basis that we could not reasonably have been expected to consult until a Direction had been received from Ministers. Requests for a preliminary hearing to allow us to argue this point had so far been refused. The tribunal therefore seemed likely to go ahead in January. PCS were likely to try to call Ministers as witnesses.
11. The Parliamentary petition put forward by the trade unions had been remitted to the Finance Committee, who had agreed to consider it alongside their wider investigation into the Executive's relocation policy.
12. There had been a noticeable effect on staff in recent months, with a loss in morale. This combined with some staff losses and the beginnings of staff moves to Inverness was placing an increased burden on managers. This would be kept under review. It was fundamental for staff wellbeing to push for the best possible relocation and redundancy deal for staff.

ITEM 6: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13. There were no items of confidential any other business.

John Markland
Chairman