

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

07 AUGUST 2008

Highland Archive Strategy

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Summary

This report details progress towards implementation of the Highland Archive Strategy and the delivery of the Programme for Administration commitment to provide a state of the art Archive, Family History and Registrar's Centre by 2009 as the hub of a network of local archive facilities. The report seeks approval for the next steps to be taken.

1. Background

- 1.1 In June 2002 The Highland Council reaffirmed its Archive Strategy previously adopted in May 1996. The key feature of this strategy is the provision of Archives Services through a hub and spokes approach with access to archives through a network of local Archive Centres supported by a central Archive Centre as a hub.
- 1.2 The Council successfully applied to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for £4.3m towards the cost of the Hub with matched funding as a Highland 2007 legacy project. Good progress has been made on both hub and spokes.

2. Current Progress in Areas

- 2.1 Progress on Local Archives continues to be maintained through a number of projects and is strengthened by the element of 2007 capital funding identified for area archives.
- 2.2 Since the last report to Committee in September 2008 specific progress can be reported:
 - 2.2.1 Skye and Lochalsh – trainee Archivist continues in post. Following the feasibility study costed options have been drawn up and sources of funding are being identified. Meanwhile work continues to identify those records in Inverness and elsewhere which will transfer to Skye when appropriate facilities are complete.

- 2.2.2 Lochaber –Tasglann Loch Abar / Lochaber Archive Centre was officially opened in April 2008 although public access had been available since December 2007. A Lochaber Archives Advisory Group has been established to assist with raising the Archive's profile, helping to establish a development plan and access funding opportunities. An open day will be held in July and there will be representation and displays at the Lochaber Games. Tasglann Loch Abar has now been assessed and approved by the Keeper of the Records of Scotland. Following on from this a formal agreement between the Council, the National Archives of Scotland and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has enabled the transfer from Edinburgh to Lochaber of the church records for all parishes in the Lochaber Presbytery.
- 2.2.3 Caithness – North Highland Archive has reached capacity. The joint project to share accommodation and services with the proposed National Nuclear Archive has progressed to the design stage. Following difficulties in recruiting qualified archivists to the vacant post in Wick a trainee has now been appointed.
- 2.3 Progress continues in other areas to develop partnerships and to provide opportunities and expertise locally for customers wishing to access archives and pursue family history interests. Examples of this include the Searchroom at Grantown Museum and exhibitions in conjunction with Nairn Museum.

3. Current Progress on Hub

- 3.1 Construction of Tasglann agus Ionad-Clàraidh na Gàidhealtachd / Highland Archive and Registration Centre started as planned in 2007 and is proceeding according to programme. The Centre is scheduled to open to the public in Autumn 2009. HLF have complimented the work to date and have authorised payment of the first tranche of the grant.
- 3.2 The Council continues to work to meet the conditions of contract with HLF. The Records Manager, Education Outreach Officer and Inverness Archivist are now all in post and the required work to prepare for the transfer to the new Centre and to engage with users and depositors is underway. Arrangements are in hand to establish and implement the remaining stages of the staffing structure including posts shared jointly with Registration Services.
- 3.3 The selection and early implementation of an archive and record management system is in progress and being managed through the governance procedures of the Digital Highland Programme Board.
- 3.4 The Archive and Registration Centre project remains on time and in budget.

4 Current Activities

- 4.1 Public awareness of Highland Council Archives is increasing as the hub and spokes develop and through a series of events and exhibitions throughout the Highlands. These will tie in with a series of Genealogy and Family History events linked to 2009 – the year of Homecoming.

- 4.2 The heightened profile continues to attract new users and significant deposits of new archives in addition to those already identified for transfer back to the Highlands when hub or area centres open.
- 4.3 Following the reorganisation of the Court Service in June 2008 the Keeper of the Records of Scotland has instructed that records more than five years old shall be transferred to Local Authority Archives under charge and superintendence. Of the nine District Courts in Highland, seven have been visited, records surveyed and transferred into our custody. The remaining two will be completed by the end of the summer.
- 4.4 There has been a significant intake of Council records stimulated by recent restructuring arrangements and relocations. The Records Manager has identified significant shortcomings and inconsistencies in the Council's management of its own records which both expose the Council to the risk of non compliance with Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and other legislation and mean that in some cases large numbers of unnecessary records are being stored. The Records Manager will work with individual Services to review retention needs and is tasked in the Education Culture and Sport Service Plan to review the Council's Records Management Strategy.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 In addition to the actions noted above arrangements will need to be progressed during September to mark the topping out of the Highland Archive and Registration.
- 6.2 Arrangements will need to be progressed before the end of 2008 to complete final stages of the staffing structure in accordance with the contract with HLF.
- 6.3 The Records Management Scheme is being reviewed following the appointment of the Records Manager and a preliminary report should be available by the end of 2008 for submission to a subsequent Committee

7 Resource implication

- 7.1 Provision towards the lead in costs of the Archive network has been included within the Highland 2007 Capital Programme and the Council's contribution to the main build costs is included in the Education, Culture and Sport Capital Programme. Revenue consequences are being addressed through the budget preparation process.

8 Programme for Administration

- 8.1 The Highland Archive Strategy supports the Programme for Administration commitment to deliver a state of the art Archive, Family History and Registrars Centre by 2009 as the hub of a network of local archive facilities.

9. Recommendation

9.1 Members are asked:-

1. to note progress towards the delivery of the Highland Archive Strategy and the delivery of the Programme for Administration commitment 6.1
2. to agree that arrangements be progressed for ceremonies at appropriate time to mark topping out of the Highland Archive and Registration Centre
3. to agree that arrangements be progressed to implement final stage of staffing structure detailed in the contract with Heritage Lottery Fund
4. to note progress towards the review of the Council's Records Management Strategy and to call for a report to be submitted to a subsequent Committee.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 04 July 2008

Author: Christopher Phillips, Lifelong Learning Manager

Background Papers: