

Strategic Review

Report for November 2009

1 December 2009
The National Trust for Scotland
The Rt Hon George Reid



OVERVIEW

- Methodology for the Review established
- Steering Group appointed
- Consultative Structures set up
- Framework for Futures Study agreed
- Presentations to NTS Council and Staff
- Over 40 one-to-one interviews, several dozen submissions, early trawl of Issues
- Forward work programme for December and January

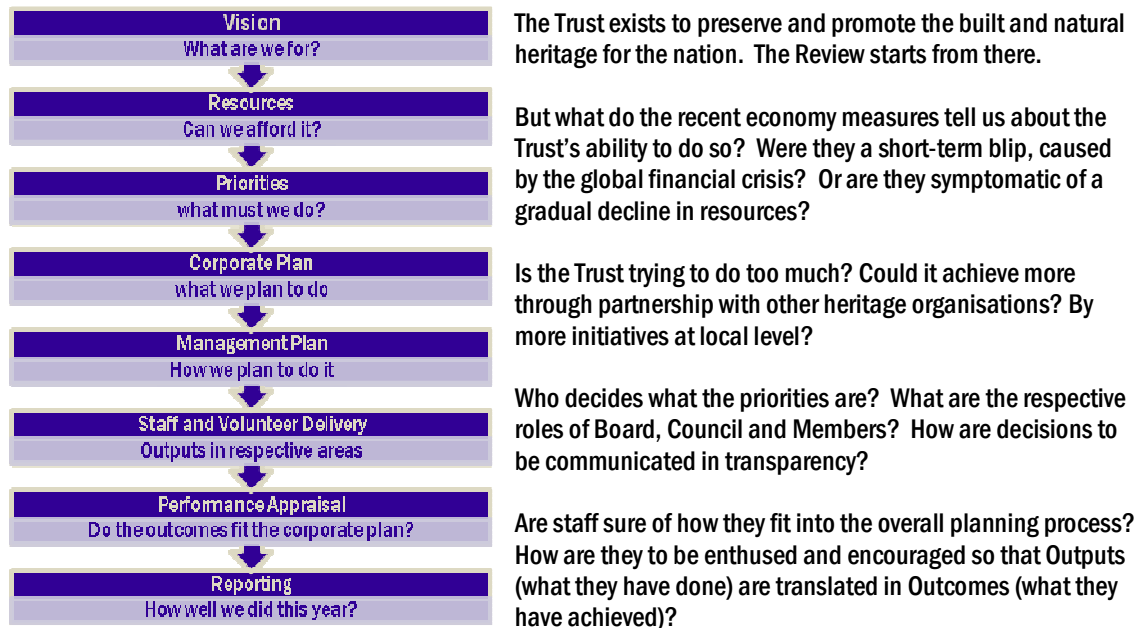
THE REVIEW MANDATE

At its meeting on 30 October, the Council of the National Trust for Scotland mandated the Rt Hon George Reid:

- To conduct a strategic review of NTS resources and governance in order to assess the organisation's capability to address current and future challenges
- To do so independently and transparently, taking into account the views of all stakeholders
- To report by end June 2010, making recommendations and providing an outline plan and timetable for implementation

THE KEY REVIEW QUESTIONS

The methodology is adapted from the capability review system developed by the Treasury, now widely used in surveys of public, private and Third Sector organisations. The fundamental question is whether an organisation is fit for purpose.



An organisation which is Fit for Purpose has a common culture and purpose. Elected representatives, staff, volunteers and members know why it exists, that it is adequately resourced for what it does, that the decision-making process is clear, and that everyone is aware of the contribution expected from them.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

The Review will work through four stages, each involving extensive consultation and analysis. The timescale is tight, since the final report will be published at the end of June 2010, allowing consideration thereafter by the Council in August 2010 and by the Annual General Meeting in September 2010.

The four stages are:



Significant work has already been done on the Issues — a process which will continue through widespread consultation to end February. Issues Groups (see below) will then analyse the Options, aided by a number of external experts. From April onwards the Steering Group (see below) will test the emerging conclusions against resources and the wider purpose of the Trust. The final report will be drafted and edited over the next two months, to allow publication at the end of the June.

THE STEERING GROUP

The Steering Group will agree the methodology of the Review, review the emerging Issues, consider the likely Options, analyse how these meet a Fit for Purpose model, and agree the final Report. The Group will meet a maximum five times [first meeting, 14 December 2009] between December and June 2010. Individual members will be available to assist George Reid in areas within their specific expertise.

The Steering Group [announced 1 December 2009] comprises: The Rt Hon George Reid; The Duke of Buccleuch, NTS President; Douglas Connell, Joint Senior Partner of Turcan Connell, Solicitors; Susan Deacon, Professor of Social Change at Queen Margaret University; Sir Tom Farmer, Entrepreneur and philanthropist; Sir Brian Ivory, former Chair of the Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland; Lesley Knox, a Governor of the Museum of London; Angus Macdonald, member of NTS Council, entrepreneur and charity fundraiser; Ian Percy, Former Chair of the Accounts Commission for Scotland; and Martin Sime, Chief Executive of the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations.

CONSULTATION ON THE REVIEW

There are four main ways to contribute to the work of the Review.



Mr Reid has already conducted over 40 one-to-one interviews with Trust office holders, staff, Government representatives and external experts. In addition, he has received several dozen written submissions. This process will continue to end February 2010, with a number of participants invited back for formal presentation and questioning by the Issue Groups.



The major focus group will meet under the auspices of Scotland's Futures Forum at the Scottish Parliament between January and March 2010, contributing to delineation of Options and Issues. There will be smaller, one-off, groups in Glasgow and two other centres outside the capital. These groups are open to everyone — officeholders, volunteers, staff and members. If space allows, there will be a limited number of places for the general public. It is hoped that an additional group can be arranged for young people, in cooperation with Young Scot.



Registration is now open for an on-line focus group. Participants should go to the National Trust website (www.nts.org.uk), click on “Strategic Review” and then navigate to the On Line Forum. The intention is to develop this forum to provide quantified responses to the analysis of issues and options. An extensive questionnaire will also be issued to all members inside the Trust’s Spring magazine, to provide a sound evidential base for the Report’s recommendations.



Issue Groups

Five Issue Groups, working over the period January to April, will provide specific expertise in the areas listed below. These will be small and composed of external experts and Trust representatives:

- **Futures Group:** to examine the drivers of change in the Heritage sector over the next decade.
- **Resources Group:** to provide expert advice on audit and resources. This group will be assisted by external consultants.
- **Governance Group:** to analyse the Trust’s decision-making processes and related legislation.
- **Estates Group:** to review the property portfolio of the Trust.
- **Engagement Group:** to study the Trust’s internal and external engagement with staff, volunteers, members, funders and other Heritage bodies.

Mr Reid will report to Council in January and March 2010. In addition, there may be a need for a small number of Study Groups in April-May to provide further evidence to the Steering Group in a number of technical areas.

The inter-relationship of external and Trust participants in the Review is illustrated in the following diagram:



TRANSPARENCY

In his presentation to Council on 30 October, Mr Reid stated that he was committed to a transparent review process, reporting to NTS elected representatives and staff every month. This document is the first of seven such reports.

These will be made publicly available through the Strategic Review pages of the Trust’s website, and will be augmented by a number of other documents posted there.

The website also gives postal and email addresses for persons wanting to contact Mr Reid directly.

EMERGING ISSUES

While it is too early to put any specific weight on the Issues identified in the following paragraphs, these are shared in the interests of transparency and ongoing discussion from the 40+ interviews conducted to date, submissions received by Mr Reid, and the “issues exercise” carried out with staff at their general meeting at Hutcheson’s Hall in Glasgow on 30 October 2009.

- **Financial Stability:** were the economy measures introduced earlier this year a financial blip caused by external pressures, or symptomatic of longer-term financial decline?
- **Governance:** are the Trust’s decision-making processes “byzantine”, as a Government Minister suggested?
- **Transparency:** how can key decisions be communicated clearly, so that all voices can be heard?
- **Too Big. Too Small:** has the National Trust for Scotland taken on too wide a range of obligations? Is its secretariat too small to service all of them adequately, without the economies of scale available to, for example, the National Trust?
- **Keep Wemyss House:** Mr Reid has made clear that he will not re-open decisions taken by the Trust before his appointment, though he will examine the decision-making processes involved. He has indicated that he will look at the possibility of the Trust having a small, ongoing presence in one of its other properties in Charlotte Square.
- **A New Localism:** Can more authority be delegated to Trust staff in locations furth of Edinburgh? Can properties be encouraged to explore new funding streams for community and enterprise work?
- **Climate Change:** What will be the impact of increased rain and flooding on Trust properties and gardens? Does the organisation have a rainy day fund?
- **Joined-up Working:** What more can be done in partnership working with other Heritage bodies?
- **Hearts and Minds:** How do we put our enthusiasm for Scotland’s heritage at the centre of everything we do? Are we in danger of becoming yet another bureaucracy? How can decision-making, and our place in it, be simplified so that we can get on with the job we love?

THE MONTH AHEAD

Mr Reid will make presentations to the NTS Board and its Conservation and Nominations Committees in December. He will be joined by the Chief Executive and Director of Finance at his meeting with the Steering Group on 14 December.

He will meet representatives of the Prospect trade union and of In Trust for Scotland. He will also have discussions in Swindon with the Director General of the National Trust and, in Edinburgh, with Government and Historic Scotland representatives. And he will continue with a limited number of one-to-one interviews.

His main drive in December will be to firm up initial arrangements for Focus and Interest Groups and to sign off an agreed work programme with Scotland’s Futures Forum. In January, he will be visiting a number of locations throughout Scotland and holding discussions with staff, volunteers and members there.

ENDS...

