

Education and Culture Committee

Responses to specific queries raised by the Education and Culture Committee follow:

An update on early years / early intervention

SG Response: The Scottish Government's aspiration for children is a simple but ambitious one: for Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up. We know that supporting children in their earliest years gives them opportunities for learning and development that can make a huge difference throughout their lives.

We have reached a point now where we have the commitment and the will to deliver in this area, and we have a strong evidence base about what works to make improvements. In Scotland, we are working toward building a high quality, universal system for all children, where the most vulnerable benefit most, and we want to achieve this in a manageable, affordable and sustainable way. Our approach is based on a significant shift to preventative spend, and on working more closely than ever before with partners across the public, private and third sector to drive forward improvements for our children and young people. Over the last year we have made significant progress:

- We have introduced provisions through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill to increase the flexibility and amount of funded early learning and childcare to a minimum of 600 hours for 3 and 4 year olds, and our most vulnerable 2 year olds (those who are looked after or under a kinship care order).
- The Early Years Collaborative – the world's first national, multiagency quality improvement collaborative – is now working across Scotland to give our children the best start in life.
- The Early Years Change Fund has continued to shift the balance of spending toward prevention rather than intervention.
- The Play Strategy will help ensure that the value of play is recognised throughout society – while our National Parenting Strategy is encouraging agencies to work together to support families across Scotland.
- We are committed to making sure that all parents can get easy access to high quality, flexible, co-ordinated family support and we are investing £18 million to help achieve this.

An update on Historic Scotland expenditure

SG Response: Historic Scotland protects and promotes Scotland's historic environment, through the conservation and maintenance of 345 nationally significant historic properties and monuments in the care of Scottish Ministers and, as the largest operator of paid visitor attractions in Scotland, through the employment of over 1,100 staff around Scotland who help to maintain its position as a world-class visitor destination. In its work with VisitScotland and VisitBritain, it is a key player in supporting tourism in Scotland.

It provides advice on the special interest and management of the most important parts of Scotland's wider historic environment, including listed buildings, scheduled monuments, wreck sites, gardens and designed landscapes and battlefields, far beyond its 345 properties. It

promotes cultural identity and associated community regeneration through designations, through educational programmes and through the Historic Environment Grants Programme. This Programme contributes funding for the repair of Scotland's most important historic buildings, the regeneration of historic areas and the enhancement of the quality of Scotland's historic city centres.

Historic Scotland, as Scotland's largest employer of stonemasons, also protects and supports traditional skills through its employment of skilled crafts people and its work with colleges, Sector Skills Councils and others, and through its Modern Apprentices contributes to our youth employment agenda.

Over the course of 2013-14, Historic Scotland will:

- complete, in partnership with the National Trust for Scotland, the Battle of Bannockburn project ready for its opening in 2014;
- progress work on the National Conservation Centre enabling young people to learn traditional skills in a modern context, for completion in 2016;
- invest an additional £1 million in maintenance of historic properties throughout Scotland, providing local opportunities for the construction sector and helping the efficient carbon management of the historic estate and benefiting cultural tourism, economic regeneration and pro-active maintenance of the estate;
- invest in local regeneration throughout Scotland through grant schemes, refresh properties to improve visitor offering, and provide guidance on energy efficiency and on maintaining traditional buildings;
- continue to explore all means of growing income from current and alternative sources to support our functions;
- review processes and systems to identify further potential efficiencies, investing in the short term to deliver long-term savings;
- continue to support the development of a Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland; and
- take forward the proposed merger of Historic Scotland and RCAHMS.