

**REPORT TO: CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE  
ON 17 FEBRUARY 2010**

**SUBJECT: LIBRARIES: LOCAL HERITAGE SERVICE AND ARCHIVE  
COLLECTIONS**

**BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 Committee is invited to note the results of the options appraisal study in respect of a new Local Heritage Centre, approve the recommendations in respect of the continued use of the old East End School premises, approve the recommendations in respect of the Council seeking to meet its statutory obligations in respect of libraries and historic records, and consider how possible future uses of the Tolbooth might be addressed.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Sections D(20), D(21) and D(22) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the statutory duties of the Council to secure the adequate provision of libraries, to deal with matters related to the provision of library and information services and to deal with the provision of museums and related services.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That Committee notes the conclusions of the options appraisal study in respect of a new Local Heritage Centre and agrees that, given the current financial pressures on local government and reduced availability of external funding opportunities such a centre cannot be considered in the short to medium term.
- 2.2 That in order for the Council to ensure an effective Local Heritage Service that contributes to the social, cultural and economic regeneration of Moray and meets its statutory obligations in respect of libraries and historic records, Committee approves the following recommendations, which can be achieved from within existing financial resources and which have been the subject of consultation with the Keeper of the Records of Scotland:
- a) that the Local Heritage Centre continues to be located at old East End School, Elgin;
  - b) that, should the current meeting rooms within the premises become available, Committee recommends to the Council's Asset Management Group that they be used for records and archival storage purposes, thereby enabling valuable collections to be returned and located to Moray;
  - c) that the James S MacPherson bequest be used to fund the development of the proposed storage area within the Local Heritage Centre and that appropriate recognition be made by designating the existing search room the "James S MacPherson Room";

- d) that the existing Greshop store be used to house the Council's archives, including those currently stored at the Tolbooth, Forres;
- e) that, as essential measures, conservation and preservation programmes be prepared in consultation with appropriate organisations including the National Archives of Scotland and, wherever possible, seeking external funding.

**2.3 That in respect of the Tolbooth, Forres, Committee:**

- a) Notes that the Libraries and Museums Service would have no further interest in the property should alternative provision be agreed for archive storage and that the museum offices transfer to the museum store;
- b) Agrees that the future use of the Tolbooth be referred to the Council's Asset Management Group for consideration while noting that there are very strong expressions of interest from the community in managing the premises, and;
- c) Notes that by vacating the Tolbooth annual savings of £10,000 can be achieved

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide adequate library facilities and a statutory duty to make appropriate arrangements for the management of its historic records, with this approval coming from the Keeper of the Records of Scotland. The Keeper removed records previously held under Charge and Superintendence in the late 1990s because the Council was no longer meeting its obligations. Council archives including education and poor law records are also stored at the Aberdeen Archives at a cost of £6,250 per annum, at the Tolbooth, Forres in no longer adequate conditions, and following the fire at Grant Lodge in 2003, at Greshop, Forres. The "Executive Summary of Proper Arrangements for Record Keeping by Scottish Local Authorities" issued by the National Archives of Scotland is contained in **Appendix I**.
- 3.2 It should be emphasised that the National Archives of Scotland are very keen to see Moray achieve appropriate standards and would be committed to transferring major collections with a local connection to the Council's care if the appropriate standards were attained in respect of staffing, accommodation and storage, access and archives management.
- 3.3 The existing local heritage collection offers an invaluable record of Moray's history and forms one of the most comprehensive collections in Scotland, but it is a collection that is dispersed in various places, including outwith Moray.
- 3.4 The collections give Moray Council a greater opportunity to develop heritage and ancestral tourism than most other areas in Scotland while also supporting the daily business of the Council. When the Council's collections and heritage services are placed alongside the other key heritage provider's services and

collections in Moray, the Moray area has considerable potential in offering a unified and effective experience to ancestral tourists.

- 3.5 Following the fire at Grant Lodge it was identified that the Grant Lodge premises would not be suitable to be developed to meet the Council's obligations in respect of Local Heritage Services and that any new accommodation would be likely to require the assistance of significant external funding. The report identifies the continued need for the Council to provide appropriate accommodation to meet its statutory requirements and that it is unlikely that any proposals in respect of a new Local Heritage Centre could be considered under the capital plan for the foreseeable future.
- 3.6 At the Educational Services Committee held on 14 February 2007 (para 11.ii refers) approval was given for the carrying out of a feasibility study in respect of a Local Heritage Centre that would meet the Council's obligations.
- 3.7 In preparing the brief for that study particular emphasis was paid to the increasing importance of heritage, and particularly family history and genealogy, as key contributors to economic development and ancestral tourism as reflected in major developments such as the Shetland Archive, Hawick Hub and new Highland Archive Centre, all funded through significant external funding. Likewise the brief reflected the growing move towards an integrated genealogy services "one stop shop" approach as part of a wider heritage, cultural or educational campus.
- 3.8 The Local Heritage Service is currently situated within Old East End School, Elgin on a medium term basis until more appropriate Local Heritage Centre premises can be provided. Consideration of the potential of the East End premises as a permanent solution was included in the brief.
- 3.9 The options appraisal in respect of possible sites, provision and outline costs was carried out by Andrew P K Wright, Chartered Architect and Heritage Consultant. A copy of the report is available in the Members' Library and on the Members' portal, while the Executive Summary is contained in **Appendix II** of this report.
- 3.10 The costs of a centre of c.1,620m<sup>2</sup> were subsequently estimated at £3.8-£4 million. Having reviewed the proposals it is identified that the suggested area could be reduced by c.10% with revised costs being £3.5-£3.75million.
- 3.11 The results of the feasibility study are extremely helpful in confirming the significant benefits of a facility of regional importance for Moray, but it is premature to suppose, or indeed propose, that such a centre can be provided. Given the capital and revenue funding challenges currently facing the Moray Council and the significantly reduced availability of Heritage Lottery Funding in Scotland due to the 2012 Olympics commitments, the reality of the situation is that any such new centre is not feasible within the foreseeable future. The reality remains that the Council is failing to meet its obligations and that appropriate steps are required to address these shortcomings, particularly the challenges of storage. There is also essential work to be done in developing the service in aspects of collection care, community engagement, marketing

and widening the user base in addition to attaining those standards required by the Keeper.

- 3.12 This report identifies that by judicious use of existing accommodation, by new approaches to creating a “virtual” family history service for Moray, and by working closely with the Keeper, the Council can move towards meeting its obligations, while also vacating those premises no longer suitable for heritage purposes. The report also identifies that appropriate essential programmes will be required to be prepared and costed to meet the Council’s obligations and that wherever possible these will seek to maximise external funding opportunities.
- 3.13 In addressing the requirements of the Keeper in relation to staffing, accommodation and storage, access and records management it should be noted that significant progress has been made by the Authority in improving its records management since the appointment of a Records Manager within the Libraries and Museums Service. There have also been parallel developments in further improving collections handling and access policies in relation to archives within the wider Local Heritage Service. The archive collecting policy has been approved by the National Archives of Scotland. In relation to retaining archives it is essential to note there is an absolute presumption against their disposal.
- 3.14 While it is recognised that the existing East End premises are inadequate to include storage of all the collections, the existing public area is adequate, of appropriate appearance, and makes appropriate use of surplus school accommodation at very economic cost. Signposting to the centre is a major problem and a recurring complaint. VisitScotland has recently identified that the centre can qualify under its Visitor Attraction Scheme which will be applied for and which would allow for the provision of road signage, while the potential of improved pedestrian signage from the town centre is being pursued as part of the Elgin Town Centre initiative.
- 3.15 In addition, should the existing meeting rooms area within the premises no longer be required following the conversion of the former Safeway building to new council offices, that area has the clear potential to be converted into storage to accommodate those archives of highest use and interest and in particular those council records currently stored in Aberdeen, those records removed by the Keeper from the Tolbooth to Edinburgh in the late 1990s and any other records from the National Archives of Scotland that the Keeper would consider appropriate to locate to Moray.
- 3.16 At the meeting of the Educational Services Committee held on 10 August 2005 (para 24 refers) committee noted the generous bequest to the Council’s Libraries Service from Mr James Stewart MacPherson who had begun his career in journalism with the Elgin Courant, had worked in Fleet Street and the New York Daily News, and who had returned to Elgin in 1991 and worked for the Press & Journal until his retirement. Mr MacPherson died in 2004. Committee agreed that the bequest be used towards funding for the proposed Local Heritage Centre and that in recognition of his generosity the newspaper

search area within the proposed new centre be designated the “James S MacPherson Room”. The value of the bequest is approximately £39,000.

- 3.17 Given the relative appropriateness of the Local Heritage Centre premises and the potential of the meeting room space for future storage of key collections committee is requested to agree that the Local Heritage Centre continues at East End School, that it be recommended to the Council’s Asset Management Group that the meeting rooms be made available in due course for storage purposes and that Mr MacPherson’s bequest be used in part to fund development of that storage area in respect of rolling shelving etc, with appropriate acknowledgement being made by the existing principal search room being redesignated the “James S MacPherson Room”.
- 3.18 In addressing storage, discussions with the Keeper have clarified that while meeting BS5454 would be an appropriate aspiration, the existing storage accommodation at Greshop would be acceptable as an interim measure. This view is corroborated by a recent National Preservation Office (NPO) review of the Tolbooth and Greshop.
- 3.19 The Greshop store, fitted out with rolling stacks and dehumidifiers, currently houses those archives formerly held at Grant Lodge, reserve and other items from the Local Heritage Service transferred there following the Grant Lodge fire. It has been identified that the store has the capacity to house the archives currently held at the Tolbooth, Forres.
- 3.20 It is proposed that the Greshop store be used for the storage of the Council’s archives and that the other local collections items there be transferred to storage within the Elgin Library Complex or to the Local Heritage Centre as appropriate. The 48 hour response to archives enquiries would remain in place.
- 3.21 In addressing the needs of the Keeper in relation to staffing the Council requires to have a professionally qualified archivist in place. This can be met via the Record Manager’s post with support from the Local Heritage Officer.
- 3.22 There is an urgent need to address issues of conservation and preservation, with a dedicated programme requiring to be prepared. The service has received a grant from the Scottish Council on Archives to allow it to work with the NPO to identify conservation and storage needs of the archive collections.
- 3.23 Crucially the service requires to engage more effectively with a far wider range of groups. The potential market is far greater than the 3,400 that currently visit the centre. This will be addressed by the development of community engagement, education and marketing strategies. In addition the service following the success of its Year of Homecoming initiatives is already working effectively with other family history organisations within Moray Connections to develop integrated approaches.
- 3.24 The urgent need to transfer the archives from the Tolbooth to appropriate accommodation at Greshop brings into question the future use of that facility. The Tolbooth, Forres was built in the 1840s and is a category A listed building. It is currently used as offices for the Council’s museums service and

for storage of the Council's historic records and archives. The court room is used for community council meetings.

- 3.25 The archives etc urgently require to be transferred while the office requirements of the museums service would be better met by relocation to the museum store. This latter aspect is currently being explored from within departmental resources. Assuming this transfer the Libraries and Museums Service would have no further interest in the building. The annual saving in moving the museums officers and removing the archives would be in the region of £10,000.
- 3.26 Should the building then cease to be used for meetings, the community council being the only other users, and emptied, then as an empty listed building no rates would be charged, giving a saving of £5,496.
- 3.27 In 2004 a Tolbooth Focus Group drawn from community organisations considered possible future uses for the premises with the findings of this group going out to wider public consultation during March 2005. In summary a range of possible uses was identified but with there being no overwhelming view. A public meeting to explore potential community use was held on 18th January 2010. The meeting, attended by c.60 people, expressed a very strong interest in the community managing the premises. Should the building be used by a registered charity then the rates relief enjoyed by the organisation would be at least 80%.
- 3.28 Any identification of alternative uses will be influenced by the Tolbooth's status as an A listed building, with this giving particular challenges in respect of access, the limited space available and the costs of future maintenance. It would be appropriate for the future use of the Tolbooth to be referred to the Council's Asset Management Group for consideration.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

**(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan**

National Outcome 15 identifies the need for local authorities to make more efficient use of their assets.

Under National Outcome 13 of the SOA 2008-09 the Council was committed to develop a strategy to develop a centre for heritage and ancestral tourism.

Under local priority 9 the Council was committed to delivering a successful Homecoming 2009 to support tourism.

The proposals form a key part of the longer term Ancestral & Heritage Tourism Strategy.

**(b) Policy and Legal**

Under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 section 53 requires that "a local authority makes proper arrangements for the preservation

and management of [their records]" in consultation with the Keeper of the Records of Scotland.

Section 163 (2) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 places a duty on local authorities to make adequate provision of library facilities in their area. The Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLQIM) is the supportive tool for local authorities in defining an adequate library service.

Audit Scotland, through its Statutory Performance Indicators, requires Councils to be mindful of PLQIM.

**(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)**

**i. Finance**

Assuming that the recommendations are agreed the annual savings in vacating the Tolbooth would be in the region of £10,000. These are included in the Budget Proposals for 2010-2011.

The cost of developing the meeting rooms within the Local Heritage Service for storage, should they become vacant, would be met by the James S MacPherson bequest.

Assuming the return of collections from Aberdeen due to that new storage there would be a potential saving of £6,250 per annum on current fees to Aberdeen City Council. It would be a matter for Policy & Resources to consider if that sum, or part of that sum, should be used to support essential conservation and preservation programmes.

The costs of providing office accommodation within the Museums Store have yet to be finalised.

**ii. Risks**

Should the Council not address the inadequacies in storage, access and collection care it will fail to meet its statutory obligations.

It is essential that that the Council demonstrates its willingness to continue to work with the Keeper of the Records of Scotland towards achieving satisfactory arrangements.

Should the future use of the Tolbooth not be addressed at an early stage the Council may not be able to ensure the most effective management of its assets.

**iii. Staffing**

None.

**iv. Property**

Property implications form part of the main report.

**(d) Consultations**

The Educational Services Senior Management Team has been consulted and supports the recommendations within the report.

Mr George P Mackenzie, Keeper of the Records of Scotland has been consulted and would identify the recommendations as appropriate for the Council at this time.

Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant, has been consulted and agrees with the financial implications of the report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Head of Estates Services have been consulted in respect of the asset management implications.

**5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 That the Committee considers the recommendations in respect of the Local Heritage Centre, the Tolbooth, Forres and the Council seeking to ensure it meets its statutory obligations in respect of libraries and historic records.**

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Background Papers: Tolbooth Focus Group Files  
Code of Practice on Records Management Under Section 61 of the Freedom of Information Scotland Act

Ref: Correspondence from the Keeper of the Records of Scotland  
DMD/JR/Reports/Children and Young People's Services Committee/17 February 2010/Libraries: Local Heritage Service and Archive Collections

## Appendix I

### “Executive Summary of Proper Arrangements for Record Keeping by Scottish Local Authorities”

issued by the National Archives of Scotland

#### 1. Introduction

1.1. These notes are being issued by the Keeper to assist local authorities in Scotland to meet their responsibilities under the Act and to look after the records in their custody in a professional and cost-effective manner.

1.2. The principal obligations of a local authority towards its records are set out in the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994. Section 53 states that:

‘A local authority shall, in accordance with the provisions of this section, make proper arrangements for the preservation and management of [their] records ...and shall, before putting any such arrangements into effect, or making any material change to such arrangements, consult the Keeper of the Records of Scotland, and have regard to any comments which he may make on the proposed arrangements or changes.’<sup>1</sup>

1.3. Although the Keeper has the power<sup>2</sup> to return the records of a local authority and its predecessor(s) that were transmitted to him in terms of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937 and although the Keeper has the power to transmit certain categories of other local records into the custody of local archive services under his general charge and superintendence, in practice he will only do so when he is satisfied that ‘proper arrangements for their custody are in place.

1.4. These notes should be read in conjunction with other legislation relating to information and records and the supporting guidance – in particular, the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, the Code of Practice on Records Management under Section 60 of that Act and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 - but are not intended to replace either this guidance or a council's obligations under these acts.

#### 2. Definitions

2.1. In terms of sec 53 (1) of the Act, a local authority is obliged to make ‘proper arrangements’ for its ‘records’, not simply for archives which are records that have been accepted by a local authority for permanent custody. Proper arrangements for records therefore extend to records of any age, including current and semi-current ones.

2.2. In terms of sec 53 (6), ‘records’ also means information ‘of whatever form and in whatever medium’ and so cover an authority’s electronic records and records in microform and other types of specialised media as well as paper and parchment records.

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<sup>1</sup> Sec 119 set out the same procedures for the water and sewerage records of local authorities but has since been replaced and repealed by the Water Industry (Scotland) Act 2002, sec 58 and Schedule 7, 23 (e).

<sup>2</sup> In terms of The Disposal of Records (Scotland) Regulations 1992 No 3247 and the Disposal of Records (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2003 No 522.

2.3. While 'material change' (sec 53(1)) is not defined in this guidance, significant examples of it are listed in Annex 1 which local authorities are asked to note for reference purposes. A supporting list of archive and record legislation, standards and guidance is given in Annex 2.

### **3. Constitution, Finance and Staffing**

- the record-keeping arrangements of a local authority should be authorised by the authority and the current aims and objectives of the archives and records management services should be publicly available for inspection (para 4.1)
- a local authority may make joint or agency arrangements with another local authority or authorities for the provision of a record-keeping service (para 4.2)
- archives and records management services should be integrated or closely linked (para 4.3)
- a local authorities should provide its archive and records management services with a delegated budget on an annual basis (para 4.4)
- a local authority's own records are inalienable and if it operates any aspect of its record-keeping arrangements via a trust, any services that the trust is to provide to the council and other users should be explicitly identified when constituting it (4.5).
- a local authority should ensure that they have professionally-qualified staff to manage both their archive and records management services, with at least one assistant plus support staff (para 4.6)
- a local authority without professionally qualified records manager should ensure oversight in the interim from the local authority's professional archivist, from a records professional in a neighbouring authority or from the National Archives of Scotland until it appoints its own records manager (para 7.5.).

### **4. Accommodation and Storage**

- accommodation and storage, which should be regularly inspected, should conform to the principal recommendations of BS5454 (2000 edition), particularly in the case of newly-built or substantially-altered archive repositories (para 5.1.)
- accommodation for current and semi-current records should be adequate to the task and each authority should actively consider establishing a corporate records centre as a cost-effective approach to storage (para 5.2)
- an archive repository and a corporate records centre should have enough space to accommodate regular accessions of records on an annual basis (para 5.3)
- the repository should include suitable shelving for all records, including those in specialised formats (para 5.4)
- it can be cost-effective for archive services to share premises with other local authority services such as a library or museum as long as the specialised needs of records and archives are respected by the authority (para 5.5)
- it may also be cost-effective for an archive repository and a corporate records centre to share accommodation, particularly in the case of newly-built premises or older or heritage buildings that are specially converted for records purposes (para 5.6)
- a local authority archive service should provide a conservation service preferably directly or through an external supplier (para 5.7)
- a local authority should have a disaster plan in place that covers all its records, supported by appropriate equipment and materials and following on consultation with the local emergency services (para 5.8.)

### **5. Access**

- Archivists and records managers provide expertise in selecting, appraising, cataloguing and interpreting records and making these or information about them available both onsite and remotely (para 6.1)
- a local authority have explicit legislative powers to make its records in a variety of ways (para 6.2)
- at a minimum, a local authority archive service should provide a public search room and reprographic facilities and equipment; prepare catalogues of the records in its custody; and supply information about its services and holdings for in-house use and remote display (para 6.3)
- in terms of physical access, a local authority archive service needs to comply with health and safety and disability legislation (para 6.4)
- maintain a registration and tracking system of local authority current and semi-current records
- publish information about access arrangements to current and semi-current records
- each local authority archive service in consultation with the records management service should develop a clearly-defined collecting policy while the archive service should also develop a prioritised cataloguing strategy for uncatalogued records (para 6.5)
- a local authority archive services should develop an outreach and educational policy, including a website presence, to contribute to heritage activities within its communities, to advertise its holdings to non-users and to enable archives to be developed for educational use by schoolchildren and lifelong learners (para 6.6)

## **7. Records Management**

- a local authority needs to manage their records to meet its statutory obligations, to provide evidence of its dealings to help it meet its business needs. Good records management will save a local authority money (para 7.1)
- information cannot be made available if it cannot be found. A local authority should follow the Section 61 Code of Practice of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 on records management and exercise caution when disposing of records; if it fails to do so, it may be unable to meet its obligations under the Act (paras 7.2-7.3)
- it is essential that a local authority establishes a corporate records management policy, that a senior member of the authority endorses it and that staff who in turn must receive written guidance and regular training about their responsibilities under the Section 61 Code (para 7.4)
- each local authority should implement a controlled system of disposal and retention via scheduling in whose creation and overview the records manager should be closely involved. The authority must also meet its statutory obligations in retaining designated classes of records for specified periods. (para 7.5)
- all local authorities urgently need to develop a corporate or departmental strategy for managing electronic records in conjunction with their records manager, archivist and IT staff due to the complexity and proliferation of these records (para 7.6)
- a local authority should consider investing in an electronic record and documents management system, to help it meet its business needs, its statutory obligations and to preserve electronic records that are selected for permanent preservation (para 7.7).

## **Moray Heritage Centre Options Appraisal Report - Executive Summary**

### **1 Executive summary**

- 1.1 The Draft Brief prepared by the Council sets out the case for securing external funding for the Heritage Centre. By following best practice in the care and presentation of archives, and in making them accessible under controlled conditions to researchers, the new facility promises to be a major attraction for Moray while allowing the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities. Moreover, it would play a significant part in meeting current objectives for the revitalisation of the town centre.
- 1.2 There is an undeniable logic to the desire to include the Registrar's service in the building brief. Not only would this provide a single point of access for those interested in family history, but shared facilities would produce real economies in keeping the size of the accommodation down, and hence the capital cost of the project compared with the cost of providing two separate services on different sites.
- 1.3 A new facility provided to prescribed standards for the care and display of archives would see returned to Moray those archives of historical importance to the area, and these would become available once more to researchers.
- 1.4 An audit has been carried out of the conditions under which the collections are currently held at the Forres Tolbooth, and at the Greshop Industrial Estate, Forres. Arrangements in both locations are far from ideal, and the collections are considered presently to be at risk. While short term improvements may be considered, these will not avoid the risks in the longer term.
- 1.5 The conditions in which the archives are currently held give weight to the compelling argument set out in the Draft Brief for the provision of the new facility. By housing the collections on the same site as the Heritage Centre reflects best practice and avoids unnecessary risks of double-handling archival material and having to order material in advance in order to inspect it at firsthand.
- 1.6 The draft brief has been developed into a schedule of accommodation for the proposed building, which allows for the Heritage Centre and Registrar's service to be accommodated on the same site. An indicative floor area of 1,620m<sup>2</sup> has been arrived at for the building, and this has been applied to each of the fifteen sites under consideration. There may be opportunities to reduce the area of the facility from examining the potential for flexibility in how the spaces defined in the draft brief are used and shared.
- 1.7 The present facility at the East End Primary School has been evaluated. While there is additional space within the range of rooms formerly in educational use, this is insufficient to house the schedule of accommodation for the new facility. While consideration might be given to reducing the accommodation to be provided in this and other locations so that the building brief fits the available space, the project proposal would be compromised to the extent that external funding would be highly unlikely.
- 1.8 A list of three possible sites for housing the new facility has been expanded during the course of the study to include other sites in Elgin where the possibility of development has been identified. Of these, a number of sites are considered to be unsuitable for a variety of reasons which include the fact that the site may be too small. A significant number of sites close to the town centre may be at risk from flooding despite the measures that are being considered for the flood alleviation programme for the River Lossie. The commercial value of any given site has not ruled it out automatically for consideration at this stage.
- 1.9 The study reinforces the presumption set out in the Draft Brief for the site of the Heritage Centre to be located centrally in Elgin. There are two sites that have emerged from the study which appear capable of accommodating the new facility: the former Safeway site at the east end of the High Street, and the site immediately to the west of the Public Library in the

Cooper Park. Both appear suited to housing the Registrar's service, and both are recommended for further consideration.

- 1.10 If the Council decides that a peripheral site may be suited to housing the new facility the following three sites may be considered: Bishopmill House, Hamilton Drive and Spynie Hospital. In addition to the fact that these are thought to be relatively remote to the town centre, there are other drawbacks, not least that some of the Registrar's services would be unsuited in these locations.
- 1.11 The Council should be vigilant in exploring opportunities for accommodating the Heritage Centre as they arise, and as circumstances change. For instance, there may be opportunities arising for a shared facility as part of the UHI campus for the Moray College; or, greenfield sites may emerge associated with a new bypass, having the potential to act as gateway sites for Elgin.
- 1.12 Once the Council has determined a preferred site, recommendations are made in the report for a feasibility study to be undertaken to give greater certainty to issues such as an outline proposal showing the disposition of the elements of accommodation in relation to the preferred site; project programme; capital and revenue costs for the facility; flexibility of the building and shared services; external funding; a draft brief for building services to achieve energy efficiency, an evaluation of the storage needs of the collections; environmental controls and monitoring; site specific matters; and an outline business plan for the facility.
- 1.13 The value of such a feasibility study, if commissioned, would support the need for the Moray Heritage Centre and would enable focused discussions to be opened up with the principal funding agencies over the potential for securing external funding for it.
- 1.14 The study supports the view that the proposed Moray Heritage Centre should be developed as a building of civic importance.