1. The Scottish Civic Trust is a charitable non-government organisation working to protect and promote Scotland’s built environment. The Trust is an active member of Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) and in addition to this written evidence, we fully support the written evidence submitted by BEFS on behalf of its members.

2. The Trust wishes to register its strong support for the provisions currently set out in the Historic Environment (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill, particularly the harmonising proposals which will ensure that arrangements across heritage and planning legislation are consistent.

3. Overall, the historic environment sector is estimated to contribute in excess of £2.3 billion to Scotland’s national GVA, directly supporting 41,000 FTE (full-time equivalent) employees. The greater share of economic impacts relate to tourism expenditure attributable to the historic environment (representing nearly £1.3 billion in respect of GVA). Recent data released by Historic Scotland highlights this value, indicating a 7% increase in visitor figures in the last 12 months. In addition, the care and maintenance of the historic environment is an important factor in the economic security of Scotland’s construction industry. More than half of the industry’s annual £6.5 billion turnover comes from the repair and maintenance of existing building stock and £1.2 billion is spent on pre-1919 buildings.

4. The historic environment is not only a major contributor to the Scottish economy, but also sits at the heart of place-making – acting as a catalyst for regeneration and an opportunity for people to get involved with their local ‘place’. Research in 2008 identified that 12,449 volunteers carry out a total of 167,721 hours per annum - a clear indication of peoples’ enthusiasm for the historic environment. The historic environment provides the context for achieving quality places that are valued (and therefore valuable), that work for people and that are locally distinctive.

5. The provisions in the Bill, as introduced, will simplify processes without weakening controls, and close some loopholes that presently allow unacceptable threats to the historic environment. However, the Scottish Civic Trust would also suggest additional amendments which are considered to be in the spirit of the Bill and will allow the Bill to go further in pursuit of the aim ‘to improve the management and protection of our historic environment’.
6. We ask Ministers to consider that the Bill—

- provide for a **responsibility on all public bodies to protect, enhance and have special regard to Scotland’s historic environment in exercising their duties.**
  - The Scottish Civic Trust fully recognises the current challenging economic climate and the Government’s view that it should not impose new statutory duties and burdens. It is not the intention that these ‘asks’ represent additional burdens. The objective behind this first ‘ask’ is to place stronger emphasis on the use of **existing duties**, so that in undertaking their functions public bodies take cognisance of the historic environment. This will:
    - Help ensure that public bodies protect and sustainably manage our unique and irreplaceable historic environment for future generations, especially in extremely challenging financial circumstances.
    - Underpin the future care of Scotland’s historic environment as an integral component in the wider management of resources, by providing a stronger emphasis within the strategic operational context of public bodies.
    - Provide a baseline provision and legislative context for the Government’s strategic policy on the historic environment.
    - Help ensure better assessment of the significance of historic assets (both those currently unrecognised or unprotected as well as those afforded statutory protection through scheduling, listing etc).
    - Inform understanding of what is important, which enables us to assess the impact of development proposals and identify better, sustainable solutions for change in the historic environment.

- ensure that **planning authorities have access and give special regard to appropriate information and expert advice on the local historic environment in exercising their duties.** Stakeholders, in consultation with Historic Scotland, are currently exploring what such a provision might look like. At strategic level, the principle is important because—
  - 81% of our historic environment is not protected by **statutory designation** and therefore not covered by the provisions set out in this Bill. These are the buildings that form the character of Scotland’s towns and burghs. Undesignated assets are managed at local level through the planning process. Expert advice is therefore essential to help communities protect and appreciate important local assets.
  - Understanding what is significant or valuable about a historic environment asset is essential to inform the management, protection and enhancement of such assets. In the absence of
appropriate information and expert advice, understanding is reduced, to the potential detriment of the historic environment.

- Understanding the wider context of our designated historic environment is vital, since it informs decisions on what is nationally and locally significant and worthy of designation, protection and sensitive management.

7. We believe that the two ‘asks’ set out above would strengthen the operational context, or help provide the right ‘conditions’ for achieving good outcomes for both the historic environment and the people that value and appreciate it.

Gemma Wild
Technical Officer (Conservation and Design)
20 August 2010

---

i Economic Impact of the Historic Environment in Scotland (Ecotec, 2008)—

ii http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/news_search_results.htm/news_article.htm?articleid=28639

iii Scottish Historic Environment Policy (Historic Scotland, 2009)

iv Volunteering and the historic environment (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2008)—

v Scotland’s Historic Environment Audit – 2008 baseline data tables (Historic Scotland)—
http://www.heritageaudit.org.uk