

PE1523/D

Petitioner Letter of 19 November 2014

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Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh

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My ref: PE 1523. Your ref: 201404478.

Having read the replies regards Petition PE 1523 (Saving the Heart of the Travelling People) from Argyll & Bute Council, Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop and Historic Scotland, I hereby reply to all three.

1) Firstly I was pleased and encouraged that A&B Council are supporting the petition and for urging Scottish Government to direct Historic Scotland to take positive steps in preserving and restoring the Tinker's Heart.

In regards the transfer of the land on which the Heart sits from public to private ownership. I note that in 1969 it is recorded that the land ceased to be a highway. However there is no specific mention of who purchased the land, if indeed it was sold. I'm lead to believe that under the roads and bridges Act of 1878 (section 42) it simply went out of use. A little Internet investigating shows that, that piece of roadway is used by tractors operating from Ardkinglass Estate and not Arndo, which belongs to Mrs. Kate Howe who claims ownership of the Heart.

2) Scottish Government response- Ms. Hyslop says she fully recognizes that the Heart is rich in associations for the Scottish Traveller community but can I add that not only Scottish Travellers visited the Heart but local people also took vows of marriage there. Indeed in the late 1990s there is a photograph of two brothers marrying their Croatian brides at the spot. There were many others and I believe the landowner has this evidence.

Ms. Hyslop also goes on to say that 'it represents an important symbol of the significant contribution made by the Scottish Traveller community to the HISTORY OF SCOTLAND. She goes further to state that she acknowledges the significant contribution of intangible heritage in Scotland's first ever, Historic Environment Strategy, 'Our Place in Time.' This Strategy, which is owned by the people of Scotland, seeks to ensure that the historic environment, in its widest possible sense, is understood and valued, cared for and protected, enjoyed and enhanced and that it is at the heart of a flourishing and sustainable Scotland to be passed on with pride to benefit future generations.

She then in contradiction states that the Tinker's Heart does not meet the criteria for scheduling. She assures us that the Heart is already protected by RCAMS yet surely while it is in private hands, it most certainly is not.

I went to great lengths over two years to invite RCAMS to photograph the Heart, I gave them all the necessary information but this is only an indication of where it was/is, nothing more. RCAMS had already put all the info in place but it did not stop the landowner from introducing cattle. The caged protection was due to media pressure and a meeting between MSP Michael Russell with landowner, where Mr. Russell pleaded for a form of protection. His request for the old road to be a pathway to visit the Heart was categorically denied.

Ms. Hyslop goes on to state she is supportive of the petition's call for practical steps to be taken towards restoration and preservation. What form would this take? She says that Historic Scotland has invited an application from a community or Scottish Travellers group for a grant towards funding. This is puzzling. What can one do with funding if there is no co-operation with landowner? She has already stated she wants no change.

Ms. Hyslop summarizes that positive steps are being taken to deliver the priorities set out in 'Our Place in Time' as far as the Tinker's Heart is concerned.

This is not how we read this. Truth is there is no evidence that Scottish Government, either gave support or help in any way. She says that the Scottish Government will continue to play a positive part in securing the future of the Tinkers Heart. I simply ask, "what steps have they played so far and how do they go about offering security?"

They knew nothing of the place until it was brought to their attention through the petition.

The use of 'intangible cultural heritage' applies to Standing Stones etc., as there is no written evidence as to their history or age. The Tinker's Heart is more tangible because it has a written history. Rev John Macorkingdale and Lady George Campbell plus connections to Scottish Travellers allow us to see that this is a cultural part of Scottish history, as Ms. Hyslop has already stated. So if Historic Scotland protects and recognizes Scotland's Standing Stones etc., then why not the Heart?

3) Historic Scotland has sent quite a large reply but what in truth does it say?

Mr. Walford (Head of HS) agrees both with Mike Russell and myself that the Tinker's Heart is a symbol of the important contribution made by the Scottish Traveller community to the history of Scotland.

Yet he says, it does not fit the criteria, history, culture, ancestral links etc. So on one hand he agrees with both Mr. Russell and myself, that the Tinker's Heart is an important contribution to the history of Scotland then on the other he states it does not meet the criteria?

The Tinker's Heart is more tangible than intangible. It has written evidence as I have previously stated and most certainly meets the criteria with added values.

I would also like Mr. Walford to explain what he means by his statement- on page two (bottom of page) of his reply; "In the case of unscheduled sites, we welcome ideas and proposals to support conservation and interpretation of historic assets and we do whatever we can to advise, guide and encourage beneficial management-as we have in the case of the Tinker's Heart."

Can I please ask Mr. Walford when they have given advice, visited the Heart, who they spoke to and who was given guidance and beneficial management? I am unaware of any input from HS and as previously stated, Scottish Government.

I spent many months in conversation and meetings both at the Heart and at my home with a member of RCAMS who photographed and surveyed the area for inclusion for recording to National Monuments Record database, which it was in 2012. He was enthusiastic to find such a historically important 'gem' in Scotland.

It was then added to the Argyll Sites and Monuments record, curated by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service for Argyll and Bute Council. Which means it would be protected through the planning system if the site or its setting were to be affected by any development proposal in the future. Sadly these are not the facts, as one would like to imagine. If indeed the landowner were to develop the area, she could cover it with concrete and so long as she listed in her plans that it was there, then no laws are in place to halt any plans she or future owners may have.

What I cannot understand is, if both RCAMS and A&Bute Sites and Monument records view the Tinker's Heart as a proper historical monument then why can't Scot Gov. and HS do the same?

Mr. Walford adds that the Tinker's Heart is of significant cultural heritage interest but it does not meet the criteria for scheduling. He/HS believe that the value of the Heart lies in its associations, rather than its intrinsic archaeological quality. In answer, I invite Mr. Walford to read the comments (120) on the Petition page, and see how far and wide the Tinker's Heart's historical significance travels across the world.

Tinkers are mentioned in 12th century documents held in Perth library. Walter Scott included Tinkers (Cairds) in some of his famous works, as did Robert Burns. So if both these famous sons of Scotland recognized Tinkers/Travellers, I wonder what they would have thought of HS and Scot Gov. decisions to ignore a public request to protect the only small place that signifies their **Place in Time.**

Mr. Walford goes on to assure us that we are not the only ones who apply for scheduling and have to be refused. He then states a comparison example of a group of Royal Navy ship names created by the ships crew laying out stones to spell their vessel name on the side of a hill, including HMS Hood and other vessels lost during WW2.

In total contrast the Scottish people would like to enquire why Historic Scotland has recently awarded Cultybraggan POW Camp in Comrie £198,000 to enhance several huts for holiday accommodation. This is a place of pain and imprisonment and has little to do with Scotland's historical value? There are raised eyebrows as to why this place has been given such a vast sum of public money. It has very little age. The only fact of any value to Scottish History is that Rudolph Hess spent a very short time there. Certainly not a place of national importance or cultural values.

Historic Scotland should explain to Scotland why they denied the placing of stones of the Hood and of other lost vessels on a Scottish hillside for scheduling, then giving a German POW camp so much importance.

Mr. Walford tells us that the Tinker's Heart does not meet the criteria for scheduling. I say it does meet the criteria of culture, history, ancestral links, and diversity and is without doubt, 'A Place in Time.'

If the area was recognized as a Scottish Monument through Scot Gov. and HS, then everybody concerned, and that covers the entire country, will be satisfied that those who make important decisions on our behalf make no comparisons between all of its peoples. We could then go ahead and apply for positive funding, and if successful, work with Archaeology Scotland, A & Bute Council and the landowner to enhance, create a pathway, and beatify the area that has, according to the late Lady George Campbell-since time immemorial, lain at the junction of the old roadways of Hells Glen and Struchur as a sacred *Place in Time* to the Scottish Travelling People and the many thousands of Scots who came from those roots. Roots that travel the world.

JESS SMITH

I await landowner's response. Without this I cannot answer her directly.