



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD  
EACHDRAIDHEIL  
ALBA

**Rebecca Bailey**

Head of Exhibitions and Outreach  
John Sinclair House  
Edinburgh  
EH8 9NX

Joan McAlpine MSP, Convenor  
Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee

By email:

[europe@parliament.scot](mailto:europe@parliament.scot)

25 February 2019

Dear Ms. McAlpine,

### **Legacy of Scotland's role in slavery**

Thank you for your letter of 4 February 2019 to my colleague Lorna Ewan. This has been passed to me to provide further detail, as I am leading the development of a programme of research into this area.

We expect to be delivering a varied portfolio of research on the impact of slavery on Scotland's historic built environment. Our emphasis will be on identifying and acknowledging that impact. This research will be undertaken in three ways: by our own staff within their existing programmes of work, by working in partnership with other culture and heritage bodies, and by securing external funding to support additional staff and the contribution of academic partners.

An example of the first of those is research that will be undertaken by our Cultural Resources Team into our Properties in Care (PICs). Well over 80% of the 336 PICs date from prehistoric to late medieval periods and many of these were disused and ruinous by the 18th century, making slavery connections less prominent. Less than 20% of the PICs date from after 1700. This ratio does not reflect the composition of Scotland's wider historic environment, where the vast majority of listed buildings are of post 1700 date and the connections to slavery may be stronger. However, we do expect that for some PICs there will be particular connections to the history of enslaved people, and we will work to discover and include these narratives at PICs and to incorporate new understanding in our interpretation of the site.

We have begun a process of discussions with other culture and heritage organisations, focussing initially on those who, like Historic Environment Scotland, hold the status of Independent Research Organisations. There is a strong appetite to share knowledge and support each other in taking forward research in this area.



We have also begun a series of discussions with universities who have academics working in this field. To date we have met with academics at the universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Again, there has been a very positive response on the potential of working together.

We plan to start a full scoping exercise in March, both through the internal deployment of staff and the contracting of an academic consultant.

Initial discussion has taken place with the Arts and Humanities Research Council on the development of an application for significant external funds to research the wider built environment beyond our estate. We are aiming to submit an application around the end of 2019, for a project start in 2020. It is highly likely that the application will be made in partnership with one or more other Independent Research Organisations as well as one or more UK universities. We are also planning talks with the University of the West Indies to seek their involvement. The research outcomes of the project would be shared with the public, most likely through a publication and exhibition.

If the Scottish Cultural Heritage Consortium secures a third phase of funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, we plan to seek support for a pair of PhD studentships as part of our wider programme. If awarded, these would be recruited in February 2020, and start in October 2020.

Given both the preliminary and ongoing nature of this programme, I would be happy to provide the Committee with annual or six monthly updates.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Bailey  
Head of Exhibitions and Outreach