

Institution: University of the Highlands and Islands
Unit of assessment: 30
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Since its foundation, the University of the Highlands and Islands has aimed to ‘sustain and develop high impact research and knowledge exchange activities’ (Strategic Plan 2012-17, 4a.4, http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/about-uhi/strategy-and-planning). The UHI Centre for History has been at the forefront of this strategic aim during the REF 2014 period, being involved in research that impacts civil society, cultural life, public discourse and public policy in the Highlands and Islands region and Scotland more broadly. Through close collaboration with cultural heritage bodies, policy makers, schools and local communities, the Centre for History has disseminated its research to a wide range of audiences, having a considerable influence on public understanding of the past in the region and its diaspora, for example, in changing public perceptions of Highland connections to the slave trade. The impact of the Centre’s research has been felt in three key areas: on curatorial policy within the Highlands and Islands (through the Centre’s work with Timespan museum in particular, focusing on emigration); on Highland schools (through the Centre’s ‘Slavery in the Highlands’ project, judged the best piece of public engagement in Scotland by Edinburgh Beltane); and on public policy debate about land reform and community ownership in Scotland (through Professor James Hunter’s work on the Scottish Government’s land reform policy and by his involvement in community buyout schemes across Scotland).</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>The Centre for History’s research has facilitated impact by developing relationships with cultural heritage bodies, policy makers, schools and local communities. During the REF2014 period, structures and systems have been put in place at both departmental and University level to support the Centre for History’s programme of public engagement, dissemination of research and impact. This approach has been underpinned by the founding philosophy of the department outlined by Professor James Hunter in his inaugural lecture (2006; see REF 5), which stressed the importance of knowledge about the past in raising awareness and self-esteem among the region’s people and which would foster social, cultural and economic life in the Highlands and Islands. The main impact of the Centre’s research has been to effect change in curatorial practice, public understanding of the region’s past, and in public policy.</p> <p>Since 2008, historians at the Centre for History have identified potential areas of impact according to the research strengths of the department. David Worthington, James Hunter, Elizabeth Ritchie and Karly Kehoe (employed at the Centre 2009-11) have all carried out research on the history of the Highlands and Islands region and its diaspora, which has been disseminated to a wide range of users, beneficiaries and audiences, through talks to local history and heritage groups and local and national media appearances. Extensive consultancy work has built strong relationships with cultural heritage bodies, community groups and schools, and this has fed directly into the research of the Centre. During the REF 2014 period, the Centre developed an existing relationship with the Forestry Commission, receiving £350,000 in 2008 to carry out a major research project on the social history of forestry in the Highlands. Working with Highland Council archivists, the extensive oral history materials derived from this research were deposited at the Highland Archive Centre in Inverness in 2011. The impact of this project may be seen in the extensive public contribution to the research process. For example, the Forestry Memories website (http://www.forestry-memories.org.uk/), received 1531 photo contributions and published online 538 reminiscences from members of the public during the REF2014 period.</p> <p>Working together with local communities to produce research has been central to the Centre for History’s approach to impact since 2008 and was borne out by the Centre’s success in securing funding for specific public engagement projects. As part of the redevelopment initiative in John O’Groats, the Centre was awarded £5,000 by Highlands and Islands Enterprise for a historical exhibition in the town during 2010, building on the Centre’s research on development in remote areas of the region and changing public perceptions of local history</p>

through collaboration in research. Funded by £3,600 from the Wellcome Trust, Karly Kehoe and historians from the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow Caledonian examined the history of health and healthcare provision through the career of Dr Lachlan Grant, a prominent Highlands' GP. The Centre helped organise a one-day event in Ballachulish (September 2011), which combined academic papers with workshops for the community, enabling members of the public to contribute their own memories and analysis of Grant, and their wider thoughts on social, economic and political change in the Highlands. In one of the sessions, a number of medical professionals took part in discussions which focused on applying the history of Highland health and medicine to the training of current medical practitioners. This workshop was followed by a number of events which explored these themes (see A. Tindley and S. K. Kehoe, 'Dr Lachlan Grant of Ballachulish, c.1870–1945: A One-day Workshop, 10 September 2011', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 32 (2012), pp. 74-86, an article which also demonstrates how public engagement and consultancy work with local communities has directly informed subsequent research carried out by staff at the Centre). Karly Kehoe and Elizabeth Ritchie also achieved impact through their work with local schools on the project 'Looking Back to Move Forward: Slavery and the Highlands'. Highland school children engaged in research about this topic and contributed directly to the creation of a public exhibition at the Highlands Archive Centre, Inverness, demonstrating how local archival sources could be used by pupils to engage in academic research. As one of the school teachers stated, 'This project has given students an insight into original hands-on experience in learning about the connections between Inverness Royal Academy and the development of slavery in the Highlands' (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-16030622>). The success of this project, and of the Centre's approach to impact, was recognised by the award of the prize for best public engagement project of this type in Scotland by the Edinburgh Beltane Beacon for Public Engagement (March 2012, £2,000).

The Centre has supported its researchers to achieve impact in their research in a number of ways. All lecturing staff receive support for research activity, including dedicated time, seed-corn funding at departmental level, and access to Faculty and University research funds. The Centre's research ethos emphasises the importance of conducting research that can be disseminated and used widely in order to engage communities and users outwith UHI. Staff are supported in their public engagement activities with time and resources in order to give talks to local societies and attend meetings with local cultural and heritage bodies. Regular staff meetings and workshops are held to discuss the department's approach to impact and public engagement, aligning it with UHI's Strategic Plan. Moreover, the Centre receives institutional support from UHI's Research Office and European Office to support public engagement, knowledge exchange and impact.

c. Strategy and plans

For the next REF, the Centre for History will focus on our current research strengths in the history of the region and its diaspora, while also harnessing our impact strategy to emerging areas of research expertise, such as British identities and sports history. Impact will be achieved through this research by focusing on developing existing relationships with schools and cultural heritage bodies while fostering a number of new partnerships.

All new research projects will adopt a 'twin-track' approach, combining academic research of the highest international quality with a commitment to engaging with and transforming local communities. In addition to building upon our existing mechanisms for the support of research impact, future staff development plans include greater participation in bodies such as The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement and Edinburgh Beltane, taking advantage of training opportunities and other events. Moreover, the Centre will aim to become involved in the History and Policy network, in order to increase the significance of our research and to ensure that it is used effectively to inform and contribute to public policy, especially in the context of the constitutional future of Britain. A number of projects are already underway which will help the Centre's research to achieve impact. The Centre's is involved in the development of a Schools Module in Humanities at UHI, offering secondary school pupils the

chance to take an interdisciplinary module about identity in the region. This module, running for the first time in 2013-14, will foreground the research done by members of the Centre and will both shape the nature of the school curriculum and strengthen the impact of our research on local communities. The Centre's research on diasporas will also be developed by a closer relationship with Polish communities in the region (who now comprise the most significant migrant group in the Highlands), demonstrated by David Worthington's membership of the advisory board for the Scottish-Polish Heritage Trail project. Furthermore, the Centre's research on the region will be bolstered by extensive public engagement through the Strathnaver Conference on the Clearances in 2014, at which our Carnegie Professor, Eric Richards (Flinders University, Australia), will play a leading role. This event is expected to attract considerable public attention and engagement, especially during the Year of Homecoming 2014, which will have a significant impact on tourism in the region. In addition, the Royal Dornoch PhD studentship recently secured by UHI and located in the Centre for History, will also provide a focal point for further public engagement through the organisation of an exhibition, public lectures and other events to celebrate 400 years of golf in Dornoch during 2013-16 and will help strengthen the impact of our emerging research in sports history (<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/heritage/history-of-golf-in-north-of-scotland-to-be-studied-1-2994351>).

The Centre will seek to further develop its relationships with a number of other cultural heritage and public policy bodies. Meetings have already been held, in October 2012 and September 2013, to discuss future collaboration with Highland Highlife, the region's museums and archives services. Timespan will continue to play an important part in the Centre's Impact strategy, and meetings have been held in September and October 2013 to discuss future collaboration. The Centre has already been involved in the development of ideas for an exhibition on 'Remoteness', to be held in 2014 and exploring ideas about the changing position of the Highlands in a comparative, global perspective and in discussion about an exhibition on the maritime character of the region. Links with National Trust Scotland will also be further developed through working with the Culloden Battlefield Visitor Centre. For example, a successful public event was held there in October 2013, attracting over fifty people to a lecture and tour of the battlefield site. Strategic links with governmental and non-governmental bodies (such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise) will be developed further in order to build the Centre's capacity to influence public policy. For example, the Centre's new research network, the Hub for the Study of British Identities, will seek to use the Centre's expertise in Britishness to engage with public policy debates about Scottish independence. Through this work, new relationships will be built with think-tanks such as British Future and Scottish Constitutional Futures Forum.

d. Relationship to case studies

The two case studies demonstrate the Centre's strength in the history of the Highlands and Islands and its diaspora, where impact has been achieved through changing both curatorial policy in museums and public policy about land reform in Scotland. 'The Land for the People' case study focuses on the research of Professor James Hunter and how it has influenced public policy and community activism. This case study demonstrates how the Centre developed its approach to impact during this period: not only did this research lead to Professor Hunter's appointment to the Scottish Government's Land Reform Review Group but, through his activism, he was able to inform the work of groups campaigning for land reform in their own communities. The 'Northern Highlands and Emigration' case study indicates how the Centre achieved impact through its close relationship with both local communities and cultural bodies. The Centre shaped curatorial policy and public understanding of the past through its work with Timespan museum in Helmsdale, by organising events, giving public talks and developing an innovative iPhone app. Moreover, the Centre's use of digital technologies, such as the Scottish-Polish Historical Relations Facebook page, demonstrate how the Centre communicates its research on emigration in the region not just to immediate local communities but to the world beyond.