



Scottish skills to help save Forbidden City

China calls in Scots experts after being impressed by preservation of Stirling Castle

Julia Horton

Centuries after China's elite craftsmen were summoned by emperors to build the Forbidden City, Scottish experts have been called in to help preserve the iconic palace.

Chronic air pollution in Beijing, combined with climate change and wear and tear caused by millions of visitors, is destroying the vast world heritage site.

Now heritage watchdog Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and Stirling University are working with specialists in the Chinese capital on the epic task of restoring the elaborate complex to showcase its remarkable history as the seat of imperial power from the 1400s to the early 1900s.

Officials at the palace, which became a museum in 1925, made contact to discuss sharing expertise, after being impressed by Scotland's growing global reputation for combining traditional skills with world-leading technical advances to protect cultural heritage attractions such as Stirling Castle.

The work is set to include thermal imaging techniques pioneered by HES to tackle water damage caused by global warming, and new 3D audio and visual digital recordings of the Chinese palace for staff to monitor its condition more closely to prioritise repairs. Such recordings could also be used to create a "sound and vision" app for tourists, providing a unique look at areas closed to the public for repairs.

Revealing how the partnership came about, Professor Richard Oram, dean of arts and humanities at Stirling University, said: "I had just arrived in Beijing for a meeting in a completely different place on a completely different subject when our Chinese liaison officer met me at the airport and told me we were going to the Forbidden City first."

"They had identified that we had expertise which would be useful for the restoration of the Forbidden City to help them safeguard the phenomenal site, and they also have a whole range of skills which we don't have."

A key challenge will be identifying the range of materials used in past restora-

tion work of the site, which features thousands of rooms in dozens of colourful timber buildings with terracotta roof tiles set in ornate landscaped gardens built by the Ming and Qing dynasties.

An unrecorded putty-like fabric used in the 1960s to replace limestone has become so brittle it now resembles "lumps of chewing gum" and is accelerating the deterioration of the original buildings, Oram said.

Ewan Hyslop, head of technical research and science at HES, said Scotland was leading the way in areas such as tackling global warming.

"We're facing increasing challenges from climate change here, with 25% more rainfall now than in the 1960s, and there is a very delicate balance between



The Beijing palace, above, has been damaged by climate change and tourism, but could benefit from techniques pioneered at Scottish heritage attractions such as Stirling Castle, below

not changing monuments too much and protecting them," said Hyslop.

"At Stirling Castle, where we have found damp, we've been using techniques to track water movement like thermal imaging and microwave moisture imaging, which have never been applied to heritage conservation before. The Forbidden City suffers from flooding too [so this approach could be helpful]."

Teams from China and Scotland are establishing joint training programmes, with staff and student exchanges planned. "Both countries share concerns that traditional craft skills and materials are being lost," said Hyslop. "Scotland is very strong in stone masonry while China is very strong in tiles, ceramics and paintwork."

"The joint training programmes we are working on aim to provide everything from stonemasonry apprenticeships to PhDs [to help develop a future workforce of conservators]."

The memorandum of understanding was signed in Beijing last October, and staffing and specific projects are being finalised.

A spokesman for the Forbidden City confirmed that a draft agreement had been signed with the Scottish institutions to work on restoring the palace. The main focus for the Chinese is "training" to help with ongoing restoration work, he added.

Gordon's fund raises target to £1m to fight killer disease

Jason Allardyce

The husband of Gordon Aikman, the Sunday Times columnist who lost his battle against motor neurone disease (MND) earlier this year, has urged the public to mark the campaigner's birthday today by giving the gift of a cure for the disease.

Aikman, who was diagnosed with MND aged 29 in 2014, led the remarkably successful Gordon's Fightback campaign, persuading the first minister to double the number of MND nurses and fund them through the NHS.

Writing in this newspaper today, Joe Pike tells of the pain of life without his husband. But he also reveals that the campaign has now smashed Aikman's £600,000 target for research to help fund a cure for the terminal condition – and that a new target of £1m is being launched.

He writes: "Today, for the first time, I won't be able to kiss my husband, hold him and say: 'Happy birthday. I love you.' There are no cards this year, no gifts, no fancy meals – just memories. But Gordon never wanted pity, and I don't either."

"I want to turn a negative into a positive. Today, I want everyone to mark Gordon's birthday by giving the gift of a cure for motor neurone disease."

"Before Gordon died he set a target of raising £600,000 to fund cutting-edge research into MND. He will never know that by his birthday his £600,000 target would have been well and truly smashed. He would have been beyond delighted. For you Gordon, on your birthday, we're raising that target to £1m."

Pike writes of the huge gap left behind by the death of his husband who refused to stop fighting as his muscles gradually weakened and his body shut down.

"I miss Gordon's voice, his

eyes and his smile. I miss the in-jokes and affection and finishing each other's sentences. But above all I miss his zest for life," he said. "The energy of the Gordon who once would run round Arthur's Seat each lunch break. Who would backflip and cartwheel across the beach. And who loved nothing better than racing his nephew and niece around the park."

"It is testament to his force of character that even when typing became an exhausting struggle, he wouldn't stop tapping at that keyboard. And in the final hours of his life, he was still focused, still determined, still passionate."

He also tells the pain of opportunities lost, including parenthood together. "I would have loved to have



I want to mark his birthday by giving the gift of a cure

seen where his career would have taken him, what an incredible father he would have been, how we would have grown old together. But we both knew a cure would come too late.

"Yet today with your help we can and we will fund a cure for future generations. The pounds in your pocket hold the key to progress in this fight against MND. A cure for MND – that would be a real gift to remember Gordon by."

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The greatest gift you can give Gordon, page 29



Pike, right, and Aikman, who would have been 32 today

Many convicted sex offenders are autistic, says psychologist

Gillian Bowditch

An eminent clinical psychologist believes a high percentage of sex offenders in prison who have accessed child pornography may be showing signs of Asperger's syndrome.

The effects of Asperger's and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in everything from depression to gender dysphoria may be being overlooked, according to Tony Attwood, a world-renowned expert on the syndrome who is based in Queensland, Australia.

Attwood, who is delivering a keynote speech in Glasgow next month, suggests more screening for autism might help people with the disorder who initially present with psychological problems, such as anorexia nervosa.

While he believes gender reassignment may be right for some people who have gender dysphoria, he believes that screening people who seek the surgery could be worthwhile for others who might benefit from alternative treatments.

Most controversially, he

wants society to tackle the taboo subject of ASD and paedophilia. Speaking ahead of world autism day today, Attwood said he believes many inmates in sex offenders units, including those convicted of child pornography offences, show signs of Asperger's or ASD.

He says people with learning disabilities, Asperger's or ASD are not more likely to have paedophile tendencies than the general population but they are more likely to get caught because they are less able to cover their tracks.

Attwood said a recent visit to a sex offenders unit in Australia to speak with prison staff about the condition led to a "lightbulb" moment, with prison officers suspecting about half of the inmates were showing some signs of the syndrome.

"We need to work with the prison service," he told The Sunday Times. "People with Asperger's syndrome are not good at forming relationships so they may seek a relationship commensurate with their mental maturity – but it's illegal."

"Then pornography becomes a special interest and they want to complete the collection. They download pornography illegally to complete the collection, not necessarily because they are a paedophile. When I talked to the prison staff at the sex offenders unit, the lightbulbs went on in relation to about



Dustin Hoffman played an autistic savant in Rain Man

half the people there having signs of Asperger's syndrome."

Asperger's is characterised by delayed social maturity and social reasoning, difficulty forming relationships, difficulty with the communication and control of emotions and a fascination with a topic that is unusual in its intensity or focus and which can become an obsession.

The incidence of ASD in children has gone from one in 2,500 a generation ago to about one in 88 mainly because of a change in understanding and diagnosing the condition.

Autism has been in the news after US president Donald Trump appeared to side with the "anti-vax" movement in America, which promotes the discredited theories of the disgraced British doctor Andrew Wakefield, which erroneously linked autism to the measles, mumps and rubella vaccination.

A document from a course on religious activism, obtained under freedom of information laws, says: "Language is important and highly symbolic. In your essay, I thus expect you to be

Don't man up: university students may lose essay marks for using 'he'

Sian Griffiths
Education Editor

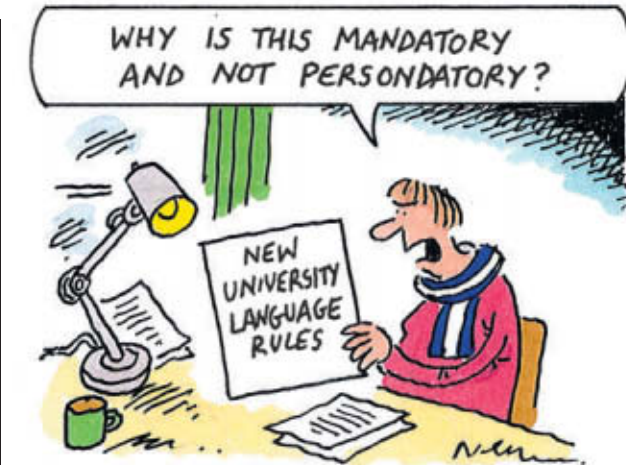
Students at a British university have been told their essays will be marked down unless they use "gender-sensitive" language.

Universities across Britain are already advising staff and students not to use masculine pronouns such as "he", "his" and "him" if the person referred to could be either male or female. Instead, they are told to use "he or she", "she/he" or "they".

Words such as "mankind" and "manmade", as well as "forefathers" and "workmanlike", are often frowned on.

Academics at Hull University have now gone further. Undergraduates in the school of social science have been warned that employing non-inclusive language will have an "impact on their mark".

A document from a course on religious activism, obtained under freedom of information laws, says: "Language is important and highly symbolic. In your essay, I thus expect you to be



aware of the powerful and symbolic nature of language and use gender-sensitive formulations. Failure to use gender-sensitive language will impact your mark."

A senior lecturer in religion at the university said: "Should any student use language which is not deemed gender-neutral, they will be offered feedback as to why. Deduction of marks is taken on a case-by-case basis."

Critics described the move as "linguistic policing". Frank Furedi, professor of sociology at Kent

University, said: "Usually such threats are implicit rather than spelled out. This linguistic policing is used as a coercive tool to impose a conformist outlook. The alternative is to pay a penalty of being marked down."

Professor Alan Smithers, director of the centre for education and employment research at Buckingham University, said the rule could interfere with students' fluent expression – where the marks should be earned.

"Malcolm Bradbury satirised it brilliantly in the 1970s in The History Man where an examiners' meeting could not get under way until it had agreed on whether to call the chairman Mr Chairperson," he said. "That was more than 40 years ago and by now we should have grown beyond this pettifoggery."

An academic at Chester University tells students to "avoid gender specific terminology" on the university's online grading system but a spokesman insisted students would not lose marks for ignoring this.

Linking gender-inclusive language to the assessment of students' work is the latest development in a drive to promote equality on campus.

Cardiff Metropolitan's code of practice on language has a "gender-neutral term" checklist, giving alternatives for 34 words or phrases. It includes using "efficient" instead of "workmanlike" and "supervisor" instead of "foreman".

A similar list produced by the Open University includes replacing "forefathers" with "ancestors or forebears". @siangriffiths6