# SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM LATEST C-19 SECTOR SURVEY

JANUARY 2022

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND
ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This survey is the third in a series designed and conducted by Historic Environment Scotland, which attempt to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the historic environment sector. They are aimed at those who work or volunteer in the sector.

We published results of the two previous surveys into the impact of COVID 19 on the historic environment sector in October 2020 and June 2020.

We would like to thank all who have engaged with our surveys to date. Across all three surveys we have received 385 responses that help shape our understanding of how COVID-19 is impacting the historic environment sector.

### Key Findings of Survey 3:

- Survey 3 received 38 valid responses, compared to 82 for Survey 2 and 265 for Survey 1
- Across all three surveys, the Jobs Retention Scheme was the most applied for financial support measure, with 44% of respondents from Survey 3 accessing it compared to 33% in Survey 2
- 13% of respondents view their organisations as being at high risk due to the pandemic
- For 53% of respondents, staffing levels had stayed the same as pre-pandemic levels with 18% reporting a decrease and 11% an increase in staff numbers
- 42% of respondents plan to increase recruitment over the coming 12 months
- Only 3% of respondents think that they will not be able to deliver against any of their priorities over the next 12 months
- Written comments show sector concerns around financial stability, staffing and changing audience/customer habits
- Many comments recognise new operating modes of operating are needed within the sector
- Comments also show a desire to learn from others within the sector with access to more support and guidance

# CONTENTS

# 1.0 CONTEXT

On Friday 2 April 2021 the stay-at-home order for Scotland was lifted, and from 26 April 2021 non-essential businesses (including museums and indoor heritage attractions) were once again reopened to the public following lock downs that began in March 2020. Heritage sites and businesses gradually reopened, including 26 staffed HES sites, with domestic travel restrictions and social distancing easing over the following months. The vaccine programme ramped up throughout the year and limited international travel was permitted.

Many attractions retained timed entry slots to comply with social distancing needs and, despite reopening, visitor numbers for heritage attractions have not returned to normal by December 2021, with ASVA reporting a 65% decrease for visitor numbers compared to 2019[1]. This has had a commensurate impact on finances for many within the historic environment sector.

At the time of writing, the Scottish Government is once again recommending people work from home where possible and there is a possibility of restrictions being reintroduced over the next few weeks as the new Omicron variant circulates. There is no obvious linear recovery path for the sector out of the pandemic and the circumstances that historic environment organisations operate in remain subject to change and uncertainty.

## Comparison of samples

This report shares the quantitative results from Survey 3 with comparisons to Surveys 1 & 2 where relevant, and summaries of the text-based answers in Survey 3.

- Survey 1 was modelled on a UK-wide sector survey by National Lottery Heritage Fund and
- Survey 2 repeated some key questions from Survey 1 to understand any changes.
- Survey 3 was conducted in October 2021. It repeated some key questions from surveys 1 and 2 but focused more on qualitative and quantitative questions looking at the future for the historic environment sector.

Each survey has received fewer responses than its predecessor:

- Survey 1: 265 responses
- Survey 2: 82 responses
- Survey 3: 38 responses

The reasons for this are uncertain. For both surveys 2 and 3, extra promotion was conducted, and the closing dates were extended to increase visibility of the surveys. At the time of the survey 3's release, the relative easing of Covid-19 restrictions and the rollout of the vaccine programme may have made the survey subject seem less pressing. While the lower response rate makes applying certain

[1] 2019 (Latest COVID information – update for Scottish visitor attractions on First Minister's statement to Parliament (asva.co.uk)).

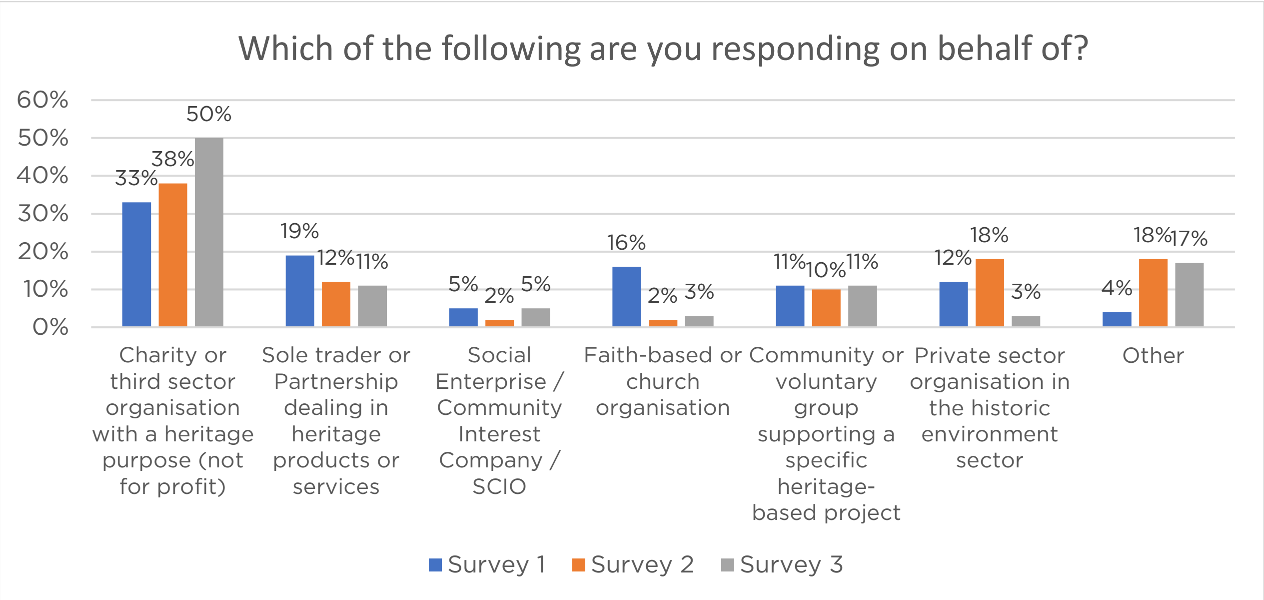
types of analyses of the results less relevant, it does mean that the comments can be understood in detail. For this reason, a full list of the free text comments has been attached as an appendix.

# 2.0 FINDINGS

## 2. 1 QUANTATIVE RESULTS – RESPONDENTS

All surveys received responses from the charity/third sector, community groups, faith-based organisations, sole traders and private sector organisations. The rise in the level of response from the charity and third sector over the three surveys might reflect how the pandemic has continued to affect the economy, with tourism particularly impacted.

*Fig. 1 Respondents*



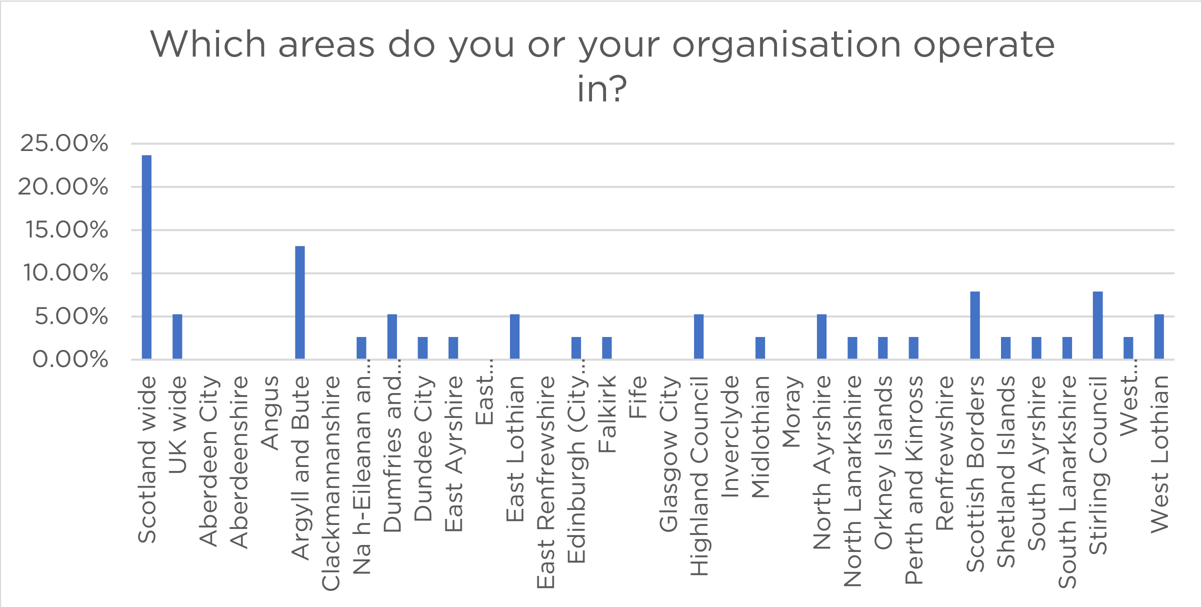

Respondents in survey 3 were asked where they or their organisation operated. 24% operated Scotland wide, and 13% operated in Argyll and Bute. In line with the low response rate, some areas had no response, notably:

- Aberdeen City
- Aberdeenshire
- East Dunbartonshire
- East Renfrewshire
- Fife
- Glasgow City
- Inverclyde
- Moray
- Renfrewshire

Respondents in Survey 3 were asked how many paid employees and how many full-time equivalent volunteers they had:

- For paid employees, answers ranged from 0 to 50, with the average being 10 and the median being 4.
- For volunteers, answers ranged from 0 to 120, with the average being 35 and the median being 5.

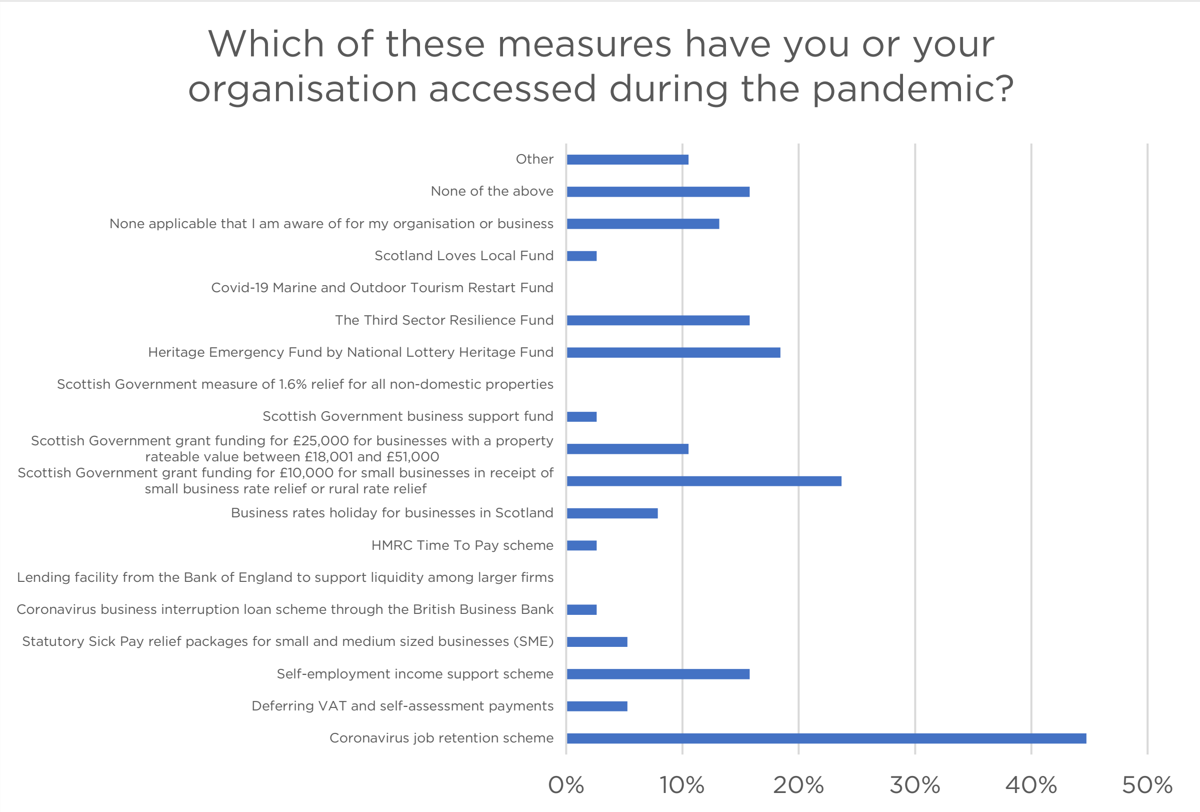
*Fig. 2 Respondents*



## 2.2 QUANTATIVE RESULTS - UTILISATION OF SCHEMES

In all surveys, we presented an extensive list of schemes and measures applicable for different types of organisations. In all three surveys, the Job Retention Scheme was the most applied for measure, 29% in Survey 1 applied for this scheme, 33% in Survey 2 had successfully utilised this scheme and by Survey 3, 44% of respondents had accessed this scheme.

*Fig. 3 Measures and Schemes*




## 2.3 QUANTATIVE RESULTS - VIABILITY

Our sector's view of the level of risk they are at has changed with each survey. In Survey 1, 22% reported that they were at high risk, in Survey 2 this had halved to 11%. In Survey 3, the percentage rose slightly and 13% of respondents viewed themselves to be at high risk.

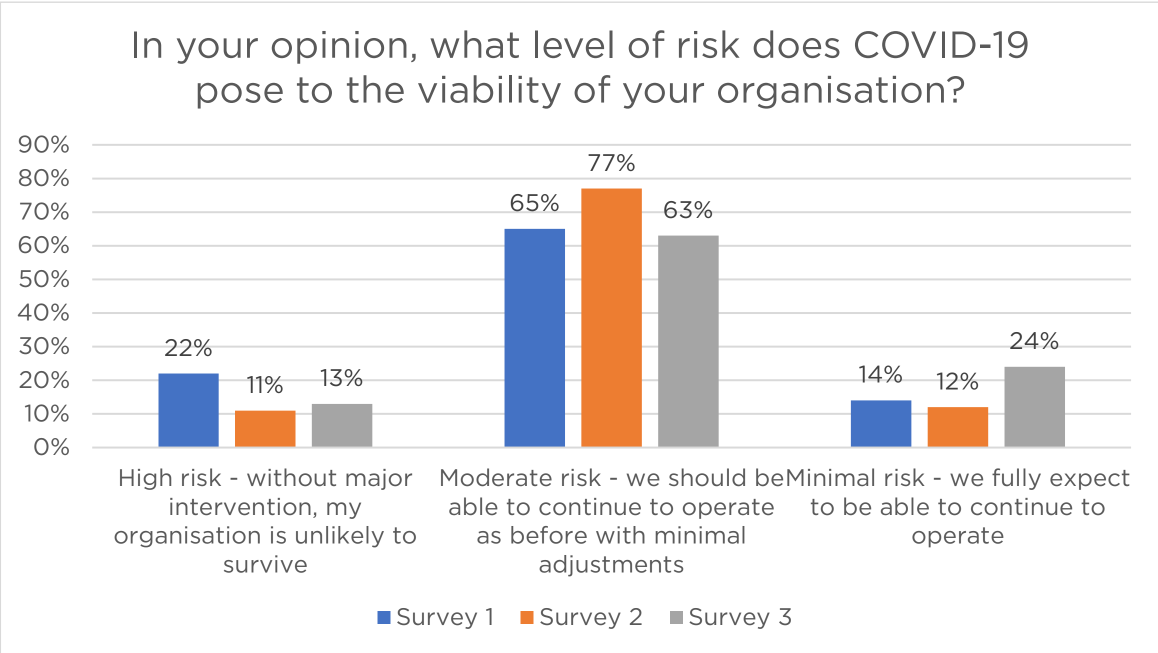
In Survey 3, 63% of respondents viewed themselves to be at moderate risk; this is close to the 65% of respondents who viewed themselves to be at moderate risk during Survey 1 but a decrease from the 77% of respondents who viewed themselves at moderate risk in Survey 2.

24% of responses in Survey 3 placed themselves in the minimal risk category, almost double that of responses from surveys 1 and 2.

Like our first survey, this survey found that “museums” was the category of the Historic Environment that reported the highest level of risk (11% of respondents). “Built heritage” was the category of the Historic Environment that reported the lowest level of risk (18%). This compares to “urban and rural” reporting the lowest level of risk in Survey 1.

These fluctuations could reflect the changing confidence of the sector as Covid-19 measures alter based on the prevalence of the virus, and long-term impacts are more properly understood e.g., with visitors being allowed to return to heritage sites and businesses able to operate more easily.

*Fig. 4 Risk*




## 2.4 QUANTATIVE RESULTS - STAFFING

Survey 3 asked several questions about staffing (the term ‘staff’ includes paid staff and volunteers). The majority (53%) of respondents said that their level of staffing had stayed the same since the pandemic began, with 11% having a higher number of staff and 18% having a lower amount.

50% of respondents had at some point furloughed staff and, of these respondents, over 80% had brought staff back on the same terms as before furlough. Recruitment stayed at the same level for the majority of respondents, as did staff training, with 42% of respondents planning to increase their recruitment over the coming 12 months.

## 2.5 QUANTATIVE RESULTS - SECTOR ACTIVITIES & PRIORITIES

In Survey 3, for the first time we asked a series of questions relating to how activities and future priorities had changed compared to before the pandemic started. The key points are below with charts showing the full spread of results.

Respondents were asked if their activities on a range of areas had increased, stayed the same or decreased as a result of the pandemic before being asked about priorities. The following infographic summarises the key points.

Activities

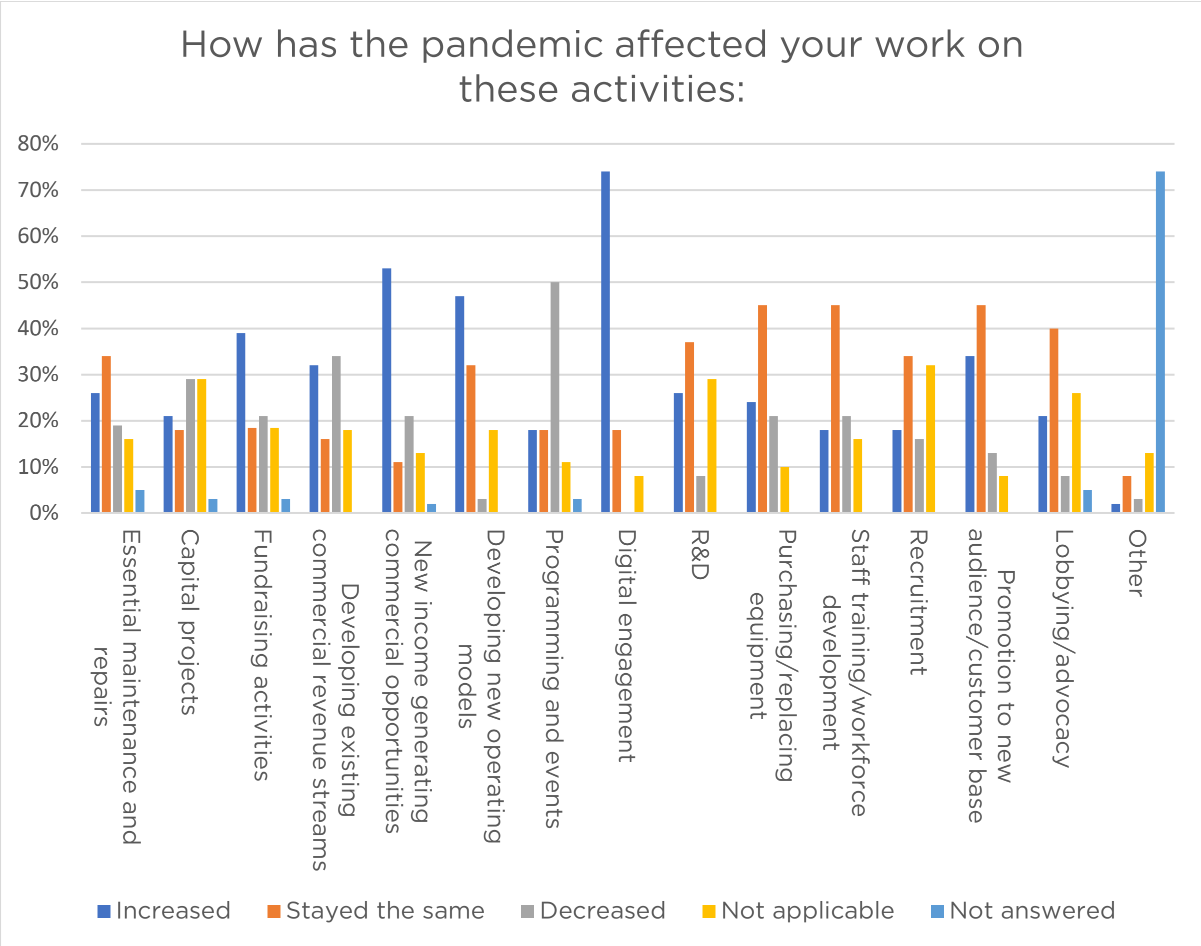
- 39% of respondents had increased their fundraising
- 34% had decreased their development of existing commercial revenue streams
- 53% had increased pursuit of new income generating opportunities

- 74% had increased their digital outreach activities
- 50% had decreased their programming and events activities
- 34% had increased promotion of their organisation to new audiences

- 34% of respondents had maintained the same level of activity relating to essential maintenance
- 18% had decreased the level of activity relating to essential maintenance
- 29% had decreased the level of activity on capital projects, new or pre-existing

- 47% had increased the level of activity relating to developing new operating models (e.g. homeworking)
- 44% had maintained the same level of activity on staff training or recruitment
- 16% had decreased the level of activity relating to recruitment

*Fig. 5 Activities*




We then asked respondents if they planned to do more of less of these activities over the next 12 months (compared to the level of activity on these areas prior to the pandemic). The following infographic shows the key points.

## Priorities

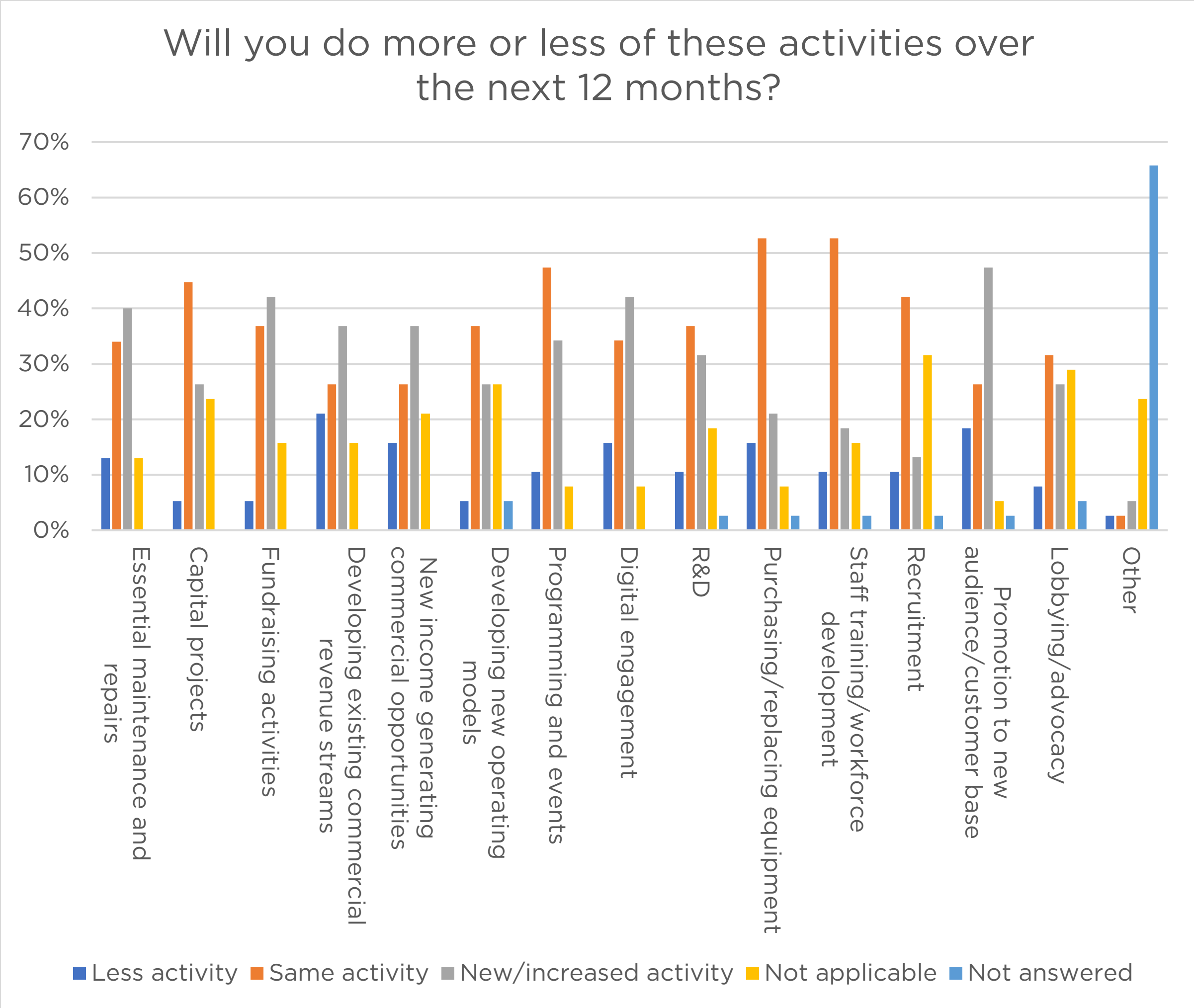
- 42% of respondents planned to invest more time in fundraising compared to prior to the pandemic
- 37% planned to spend more time developing existing commercial revenue streams
- 37% planned to spend more time developing new income generating opportunities

- 42% of respondents planned to invest more time in digital engagement
- 47% of respondents planned to spend more time promoting their organisation to new audiences/customers
- 47% planned to spend the same amount of time on programming/events

- 45% planned to spend the same amount of time on capital projects
- 53% planned to spend the same amount of time either replacing or getting new equipment

- 53% planned to spend the same amount of time on staff training
- 42% planned to spend the same amount of time on recruitment
- 37% planned to spend the same amount of time on developing new operating models

*Fig. 6 Priorities*




Respondents were next asked how they felt about their ability to deliver these activities over the next 12 months: 66% of respondents said they would be able to invest in new activities or areas of development over the next 12 months, but 32% said that they would not be able to do so.

Respondents were also asked if they felt they had the resources (skills and capacity) to deliver their priority areas. 18% believed that they could deliver all desired areas, 32% thought that they would be able to deliver over half of their priority areas, 45% believed that they could deliver a few of their priority areas. However, 3% did not think that they would be able to deliver against any of their priorities.

We asked if respondents thought that they would be able to develop the missing capacity over the next 12 months: 16% thought that they would train existing staff/volunteers to achieve their needs, 24% said they would recruit new staff/volunteers and 13% said they would use contractors. However, 50% stated that they did not have the capacity to do so without further support.

## 3.0 QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Survey 1 received many written comments that displayed anxiety and distress; Survey 2 less so. The comments from Survey 3 demonstrate sector needs and opportunities, with concerns expressed around funding, staffing and organisational resilience.

### 3.1 IMPACT

Respondents were asked what the single greatest impact of Covid-19 had been on their organisation.

Many said that the financial impact, including reduction or total loss in income and inability to fundraise was the greatest impact; several stated the pause on projects was the greatest impact and a couple mentioned that they had no ability to function at all during parts of Covid-19. At least three respondents said that the greatest impact had been on the health and wellbeing of staff, as this comment illustrates:

- *"The biggest impact was on staff wellbeing. It has taken a long time for people to start recovering from working in isolation. We had not realised how important human contact was across the team, as well as with the outside world. We were all more or less traumatised by the crisis mode having gone on too long, and the ways this has emerged in relationships, fragilities etc has been extended and difficult. Burnout is prevalent - working from home poses problems among the diligent. No holidays, no break, the blurring of lines between home and work."*

However, two respondents had positive things to say about the impact of Covid-19, with one respondent stating that the shut-down of their site allowed them to revisit their business plan and catch up with overdue actions. And another respondent replied that the resilience fund had allowed them to update their facilities:

- *"The recovery and resilience grant funding that we were awarded from several sources. It enabled us to open in a Covid secure manner and moved the museum forwards by ~5years with regard to IT, displays, heating etc."*

### 3.2 THE FUTURE

Survey 3 asked three free text questions asking respondents to consider their situation in the future:

- what priorities they had for the next 12 months
- what challenges they believed the sector faced over the coming years
- what opportunities were available for the sector

Many respondents focused on business recovery and financial stability, with some seeing a chance to work differently and attract different types of audiences/business.

## 3.3 PRIORITIES

Respondents were asked what their priorities were for the next 12 months. Over half of all respondents referenced improving their financial situation, stabilising their organisation and recovering business. A couple simply mentioned that their priority was survival. These types of responses did not always directly correlate with respondents who had stated that they were at 'high risk' (see section 2.3), perhaps indicating underlying uncertainty in the sector, especially from organisations reliant on footfall and visitor numbers to generate income.

- *"Survival. We have kept going this year with grant support. If visitor numbers remain at 40%, we have a very rocky future as a not-for-profit organisation" (respondent viewing themselves at high risk)*
- *"Increased marketing; developing new activities; engaging more with education; young people. Why? To ensure the future viability of the site" (respondent viewing themselves at minimal risk)*
- *"Increase income to ensure that the museum is sustainable. If not, then it will close." (respondent viewing themselves as moderate risk)*
- *"Our priority is to stay open to visitors to ensure steady income. Hopefully the overseas travellers will return to pre-pandemic levels. The very next priority is to develop commercial opportunities on site." (respondent viewing themselves as moderate risk)*

## 3.4 CHALLENGES

Respondents were asked what key challenges the sector faced over the next few years; responses broadly fell into categories of:

- **Lack of funding** - several respondents believed that funding would decrease or become harder to access over the coming years, with short term funding being raised a specific concern
- **Change in audience habit** –a few respondents pointed out the fall in international tourism as a specific concern
- **Problems recruiting/retaining staff and volunteers** - A couple of responses commented that they had issues recruiting; others pointed out the reticence of volunteers, many of whom are elderly, to return to pre-pandemic activities.

Other responses pointed out the challenges in adapting to the new world circumstances that required even small organisations to develop blended approaches and new business models.

- *"It is a changed world.  Organisations must be fleet of foot to identify and take opportunities.  But it is a challenge to think differently without losing sight of core values and purposes."*

One respondent noted this was especially a challenge for smaller organisations

- *"Lots of heritage organisations are tiny in our area, and they don't have the scale to be resilient and are reliant on volunteers."*

Other respondents noted the balancing act needed between continuing to make heritage relevant while protecting it from environmental impact and increased footfall at especially popular sites.

## 3.5 OPPORTUNITIES

Respondents were also asked what opportunities they believe the sector faces over the coming years. Many of these were similar to the challenges, and focused on potential change in audience habits, making the most of digital expansion and changes to traditional operating models.

- *"A new approach to publicity and marketing. New ways to present our offering - digital and physical. Tap into philanthropic funding. Promote and practise sustainability. Return of tourism to pre pandemic numbers. Chance to plan against 'over tourism' as we rebuild.*
- *"The increased interest in rural areas and local heritage.  Stronger communities.  The increased focus on digital.  Hopefully people are more self-aware when visiting."*

One mentioned opportunities for the sector relating to Green Recovery:

- *"Towards a Green Recovery - the opportunity to represent the built and historic environment as an important and sustainable asset towards solutions across key policy agendas and portfolios."*

## FINAL THOUGHTS – including on how the sector can work together

Respondents were invited to contribute any final comments, especially thoughts they had on how the sector could best work together in the future.

Some comments asked for more certainty around funding and a return to multi-year grants, however many of the comments suggested ways that the sector could work together more. There were suggestions that more accessible advice and support should be available especially for smaller organisations, as well as joint marketing for regions and a move towards viewing each other as collaborators rather than competition, with increased networks and forums to facilitate this cooperation. One respondent also suggested that advice on transitioning to net zero would be useful.

- *We need a coherent national network of communities which care about and want to take care of their local heritage. We have models of amazing things going on, from which other communities could learn and take inspiration. There is so much knowledge and energy which is dissipated, and so much built heritage lost unnecessarily*.
- *Produce guidance, and ideally funding, to support communities to transition to a low- or no-carbon economy while retaining all that is best in heritage terms in their environments.*
- *… Small museums do not have support staff to provide HR or legal advice. Early guidance can avoid situations escalating. Maybe, a central 'helpdesk' in a bigger organisation could be used to at least help decide whether further professional advice is indicated. Maybe small museums could be allocated to the bigger museums with a help link on a hub and spoke basis for such guidance. It can be very lonely at times, as a volunteer trustee, trying to sort out things like redundancy and employment tribunals. Thank you for asking :)*

## 3.6 CONCLUSIONS

As with previous reports, this survey shows a mixed impact of COVID-19 on the historic environment sector. While insights from Survey 3 are limited given the small sample size, it is encouraging to see that more organisations believe themselves to be at minimal risk than a year ago.

All three surveys show that the sector has adapted to the constraints COVID-19 has posed, by increasing digital offerings and changing their structures to allow for different modes of working. The written comments in survey three demonstrate a blend of cautious optimism for the future as well as concern around finance streams in the face of unclear audience habits and uncertain funding landscapes. Many comments reflect worries about staffing following on from the pandemic. This survey reinforces that a primary concern of the sector is financial and organisational stability.

The results of this survey are an important information source during changing times for the historic environment sector in Scotland. The findings in this report are informing further discussion and collaborative action by sector stakeholders and will help to inform the future development of Scotland' strategy for the sector, *Our Place in Time*. They will also be used to inform HES's plans as lead body for the sector.

Thanks to:

- All who contributed ideas and assistance in the making of this survey
- Partner organisations who helped us promote this survey and offered feedback

- Everyone who contributed their views:  the insights provided in the written comments were especially valuable and we appreciate the time you took to help us understand how these uncertain times for Scotland’s historic environment are affecting you and your organisations.

## APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey reproduced in full

1. Your data GDPR statement.
2. **Which of the following are you responding on behalf of? Please select one option only.**

- Charity or third sector organisation with a heritage purpose (not for profit)
- Community or voluntary group supporting a specific heritage-based project
- Sole trader or Partnership dealing in heritage products or services
- Social Enterprise / Community Interest Company / SCIO
- Faith-based or church organisation
- Private individual with an interest in heritage
- Other

3. **Which areas of the historic environment sector is your organisation involved with? Please select all that apply**

- Archaeology
- Archives or Collections
- Museums
- Community heritage
- Education, training and life-long learning
- Built Heritage, including historic buildings, monuments and industrial heritage sites
- Intangible Cultural Heritage, such as cultural traditions
- Natural heritage (including landscapes)
- Traditional building skills
- Traditional building materials
- Planning system
- Urban and rural development
- Other

4. **Which areas of Scotland do you or your organisation work in? Please select all that apply.**

Local authority area (list of all local authorities)

Scotland wide

5. **How many paid employees (full time equivalent) do you or your organisation have?**
6. **How many volunteers (full time equivalent) do you or your organisation have?**
7. **Which of these announced measures and schemes have you or your organisation accessed during the pandemic? (Please select all that apply)**

- Coronavirus job retention scheme
- Self-employment income support scheme

- Statutory Sick Pay relief packages for small and medium sized businesses (SME)
- Coronavirus business interruption loan scheme through the British Business Bank
- Lending facility from the Bank of England to support liquidity among larger firms
- HMRC Time To Pay scheme
- Business rates holiday for businesses in Scotland
- Scottish Government grant funding for £10,000 for small businesses in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief
- Scottish Government grant funding for £25,000 for businesses with a property rateable value between £18,001 and £51,000
- Scottish Government business support fund
- Scottish Government measure of 1.6% relief for all non-domestic properties
- Heritage Emergency Fund by National Lottery Heritage Fund
- The Third Sector Resilience Fund
- Covid-19 Marine and Outdoor Tourism Restart Fund
- Scotland Loves Local Fund
- None applicable that I am aware of for my organisation or business

8. **Compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic started, is the number of paid employees in your organisation:**

- Higher
- The Same
- Lower
- Not applicable

9. **Did you have any staff on furlough at any time during the last 18 months?**

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

10. **If you answered yes, what has happened to the staff you had furloughed?**

- Brought back staff on the same terms as before furlough
- Brought back staff but with reduced wages
- Made staff redundant
- Other.

11. **How has the pandemic affected your organisation's approach to the work areas outlined below:**

- for each specified area, has your activity increased, stayed the same or decreased compared to levels of activity before the pandemic started?
- Activity areas - Activity relating to essential maintenance and repairs
- Capital projects (either new or pre-existing)
- Fundraising activities

- Developing existing commercial revenue streams
- Pursuing new income-generating commercial opportunities
- Developing a new operating model e.g., more home working
- Activity areas - Programming and events, e.g., planned exhibitions, campaigns, open days etc.
- Digital engagement, including digital outreach to audiences, digital activities, online lectures, online education
- Developing/ working on research and development such as energy efficiency measures
- Purchasing or replacing equipment
- Staff training/workforce development
- Recruitment
- Promoting your business to new audiences/customer bases
- Lobbying/advocacy activities
- Other

12. What has been the single greatest impact of Covid-19 on your organisation?
13. In your opinion, what level of risk does COVID-19 pose to the viability of your organisation over the next 12 months?

- High risk - without major intervention, my organisation is unlikely to survive
- Moderate risk - we should be able to continue to operate as before with minimal adjustments
- Minimal risk - we fully expect to be able to continue to operate

14. Do you plan to invest in any new work activities, new priorities, or new areas of development over the next 12 months? These are new work activities, which are additional to your usual day to day priorities or additional to the work activities you conducted pre-pandemic

- Yes, I/ We will be able to invest in new activities and/or areas of development
- No, I/We will not be able to invest in new activities or areas of development
- Not applicable

15. Over the next 12 months, what are your plans for the level of activity on the following areas? This is compared to your levels of activity on these same areas before the pandemic began.

- Activity areas - Activity relating to essential maintenance and repairs
- Capital projects (either new or pre-existing)
- Fundraising activities
- Developing existing commercial revenue streams
- Pursuing new income-generating commercial opportunities
- Developing a new operating model e.g., more home working
- Activity areas - Programming and events, e.g., planned exhibitions, campaigns, open days etc.
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- Purchasing or replacing equipment
- Staff training/workforce development
- Recruitment
- Promoting your business to new audiences/customer bases
- Lobbying/advocacy activities
- Other

16. What is your priority for the next 12 months and why?
17. Over the next 12 months, do you feel you currently have the resources (e.g., skills and/or capacity) to deliver the priority areas that you described above?

- Yes, we will be able to deliver all our priority areas
- Yes, we will be able to deliver the majority (over 50%) of our priority areas
- Yes, we will be able to deliver a few of our priority areas
- No, we will not be able to deliver any of our priority areas

18. If you do not believe you currently have the necessary resources to deliver either your business-as-usual activities or new strands of work, do you think you will be able to develop the missing capacity over the next 12 months? Please select all that apply.

- Yes, we will train existing staff/volunteers
- Yes, we will recruit new staff/volunteers
- Yes, we will use contractors
- No, we will not be able to access these skills without additional resources that we currently do not have access to
- Not applicable

19. What do you think are the key challenges facing the sector over the next few years?
20. What do you think are the key opportunities facing the sector over the next few years?
21. This is a free flow space for any additional or final comments, we are especially interested in your thoughts on how the heritage sector can best work together in the future

Historic Environment Scotland is the lead public body established to investigate, care for and promote Scotland's historic environment.

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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

Historic Environment Scotland
Longmore House, Salisbury Place
Edinburgh EH9 1SH

0131 668 8600
historicenvironment.scot

Historic Environment Scotland – Scottish Charity No. SC045925
Registered Address: Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh EH9 1SH