



**OUR PLACE IN TIME - ANNUAL REPORT 2023**  
**THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND**

# OUR PLACE IN TIME (OPiT) ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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## Operating Context

Our Place in Time (OPiT) – the historic environment strategy for Scotland – was launched in October 2014. Developed and owned by the sector, the strategy sets out a shared ten-year vision to and twelve strategic priorities. Progress in delivering OPiT is measured against a set of [13 performance indicators](#) and reported on an annual basis.

In 2022, Scottish Ministers commissioned HES to lead a review of OPiT to ensure that it was fit for a post-Covid world. The review culminated in development of a new strategy focused on delivering the transition to net zero, empowering vibrant, resilient, and inclusive communities and places, and on building a wellbeing economy.

The next report will cover the period 2023-24 and will be a performance analysis of delivery against the new historic environment strategy, [Our Past, Our Future](#) published on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

**This report covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and is the final performance report on the OPiT strategy launched in 2014.**

It sets out the evidence for the progress that we, the historic environment sector, has made together in delivering the strategy. It uses existing information and data; reflecting the fact that a new historic environment strategy has just been launched.

Performance analysis of the delivery of the first strategy has informed the new sector strategy. Many of the KPIs continue as measures albeit in amended form, using lessons learned and carrying the good work of OPiT forwards.

## The Delivery Model

The Strategic Historic Environment Forum (SHEF), chaired by the Cabinet Secretary of Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, was set up in 2014 to provide strategic direction to support delivery OPiT.

The impact of COVID-19 provided a natural opportunity to reconsider SHEF's purpose and ensure that the format for future meetings is as effective and productive as possible. The [mid-term strategy evaluation](#) commissioned by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in 2019 had already identified the purpose of the Forum as an item for review. The report also highlighted the key role of SHEF and the then Cabinet Secretary's role as Chair in terms of leadership, both to OPiT and for the historic environment, and the aim is to try to retain a key Ministerial role in the revised format. However, it has also been acknowledged that more could be done to increase awareness and visibility of OPiT and its working groups, as well as its delivery progress and successes, in the wider sector and beyond.

The Scottish Government and HES worked together to reshape the Forum to allow it to play a clearer strategic role, providing a larger space for discussion and collaboration on key cross-cutting topics by senior leaders and policy-makers from across the sector and from other relevant sectors. The revised SHEF now takes place as an annual forum event; with the first forum in this new format taking place in June 2022 and serving to kickstart the development of the new strategy. As well as allowing for greater collaborative working, this event also provides an invaluable space for SHEF attendees to forge connections across sector boundaries. The next SHEF forum will take place in Summer 2023.

The OPiT CEOs Forum is responsible for ensuring momentum is maintained, identifying common threads and emerging themes, and addressing any issues in the delivery of the Strategy. Chaired by the CEO of HES, it comprises Chief Executives or equivalents from key organisations involved in the delivery of OPiT and meets bi-annually.

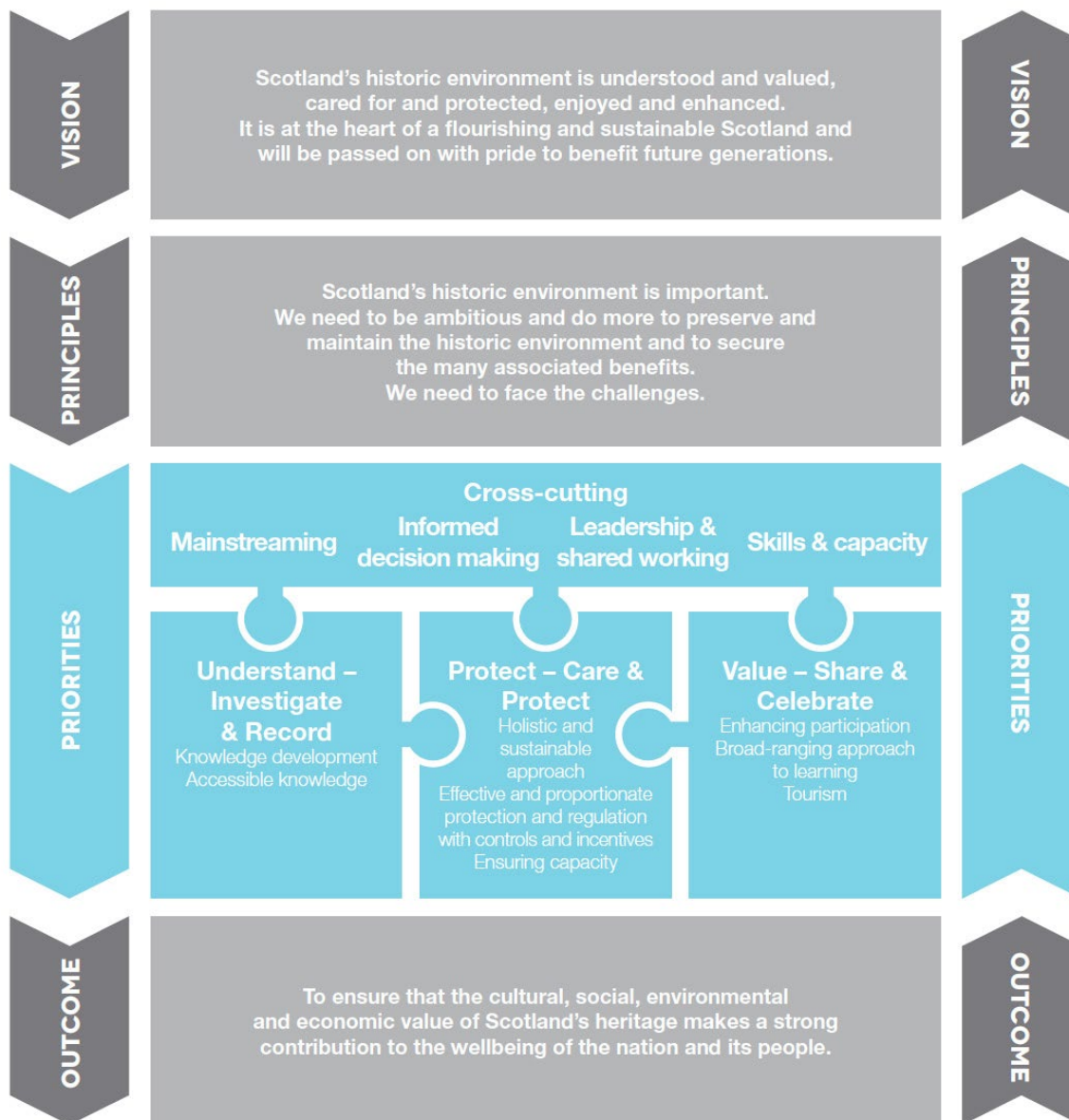
To support the delivery of OPiT strategic priorities a series of working groups were established to focus on delivering tangible outcomes and benefits for the historic environment and Scotland's people. These are: the Built Heritage Investment Group; the Climate Change Group; the Heritage Tourism Group; the Skills and Expertise Group; and the Volunteering Group. Some of these have refocused as time has gone on and events such as Covid-19 have occurred. The final updates from these working groups can be read in this document.

As the lead public body for Scotland's historic environment, HES leads and enables delivery of OPiT, but the strategy is sector wide and all working in the sector are part of its delivery. HES has responsibility for coordinating and supporting the OPiT working groups and for reporting on progress. In addition to the CEO's Forum, HES chairs four of the five working groups.

Further information on OPiT delivery can be found here. <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/who-we-are/our-place-in-time/#delivering-the-strategy> tab

## Strategy Cycle

The strategy cycle diagram below demonstrates the relationship between vision, principles, priorities and outcomes which are the key components of the OPiT strategic framework.



## OPiT Measurement Framework – Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

These 13 key performance indicators (KPIs) are used to measure the success of delivering [OPiT](#). The KPIs were developed with the sector and agreed by [SHEF](#).

	Priority	No	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)
Cross Cutting	Mainstreaming	01	Increase economic and social wellbeing benefits from the historic environment for the people of Scotland
	Mainstreaming	02	Improve the environment by reducing CO2 emissions
	Informed decision making	03	Increasingly historic environment evidence informs policy
	Leadership and shared working	04	Increase joined up working on strategic investment across public, private and voluntary sectors
	Skills and capacity	05	Improve skills and capacity to deliver priorities
Understand	Knowledge development	06	Increase customer focus of knowledge created on the historic environment
	Accessible knowledge	07	Improve access to knowledge on the historic environment
Protect	Holistic and sustainable approach	08	Improve or maintain the state of Scotland's historic sites and places
	Effective and proportionate protection and regulation	09	Increasingly the outcomes of management, including designation, reflects what people value
	Ensuring capacity	10	Improve capacity by supporting communities through community empowerment and engagement
Value	Enhance participation	11	Increase the number and range of people volunteering in the historic environment
	Broad ranging approach to learning	12	Increase the number and range of people who learn about the historic environment
	Tourism	13	Increase the number and range of people visiting the historic environment

## Progress with Priorities during 2021/22–2022/23

Our collective success over the 2021-23 period spans the full range of OPiT priorities.

The sector worked well together and continued to accomplish a great deal in 2021–23. This is all the more impressive as we all had to make huge adjustments in response to the impact of COVID-19 from March 2020 onwards and the cost-of-living crisis. But we must acknowledge that much of the sector's energy and focus has continued to be on responding to these impacts and on recovery. This has affected the ability of the sector to deliver against certain priorities and to give time and resource to providing information and data for performance measurement. Consequently, this report does not include detailed data analysis. Instead, it follows the approach taken with the 2020 and 2021 reports performance reports [Our Place in Time Annual Reports | Historic Environment Scotland](#).

Much of the evidence in this report is from HES, supplemented with readily available data from the Scottish Government and some other published sources. The data presented is designed to be illustrative of trends in the sector and any perceived bias is unintentional. During the period covered (2021/22-2022/23), many work programmes in the sector were on hold or adjusted and key surveys and data reporting were delayed or suspended. However, in keeping with previous years, we have scored each KPI as Red, Amber or Green (RAG). In doing so, we have relied on the professional judgement from analysts and policy makers, as it has proved too difficult to locate, collect, and analyse all the data we would usually use to update the RAG assessment. Looking ahead, we have been using our experience from reporting on OPiT to develop a practical approach to data collection and analysis for the new national strategy to reduce the resource burden.

The sector can be proud of its performance over the 2021/22-2022/23 period as we continue to work together to recover from the impact of COVID-19 and the ongoing impacts of the cost-of-living crisis. We have all had to adjust, to reprioritise and to innovate to meet these challenges and continue to do so. They have brought a heightened focus on digital, on tackling inequalities, on business resilience, on skills, and on the importance of community, of local places and the environment. And these crises allied with wider policy changes helped trigger our collaborative effort to first review and then refresh our sector strategy to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. As we mark the end of OPiT and look forward to the new strategy, Our Past, Our Future, we can see good signs of recovery (e.g., in visitor and engagement numbers).

Examples of what the sector has achieved together across the whole strategy period are provided in [Our Place in Time Annual Reports | Historic Environment Scotland](#) and on BEFS website at [www.befs.org.uk](http://www.befs.org.uk).

If you wish to submit a case study you can do this at any time throughout the year, using the link here [historic environment case study website](#). We will continue to welcome case studies relating to the forthcoming Historic Environment strategy.

## Performance Summary at 2023

### Our Place in Time Dashboard 2023

Cross-cutting							
KPI 1	KPI 2	KPI 3	KPI 4	KPI 5			
Understand		Protect			Value		
KPI 6	KPI 7	KPI 8	KPI 9	KPI 10	KPI 11	KPI 12	KPI 13

KEY	Green	Fully Achieved
	Amber	Partially Achieved. Evidence that most of the KPI has been delivered
	Red	Not met
	Grey	Evidence Gap. Not enough evidence to assess whether KPI is on track.

A Table showing KPI performance over time is provided on page 13

#### Key Performance Indicator Results at 2023

At the end of the strategy period (May 2023):

- 3 KPIs are Fully Achieved (KPIs 5, 7 and 9)
- 7 KPIs are Partially Achieved (KPIs 1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12,)
- 2 KPIs are Not Achieved (KPIs 8, 13)
- 1 KPI is rated as an Evidence Gap (KPI 2)

The partially achieved and not achieved KPIs are areas which have been particularly impacted by the pandemic, highlighting the importance of ongoing cross sector collaboration to aid recovery. Published findings from surveys by Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS), National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and others into the impact of the pandemic on the heritage sector have been useful to inform action to support long-term recovery.

The narrative below summarises the performance of each KPI over the strategy period. Spotlighting areas that are not achieved or partially achieved help to inform sector discussions on where and how to best work together to plan for and take appropriate mitigating action during the ongoing COVID-19 recovery and beyond. This information has heavily informed the development of the new historic environment Strategy, published on Historic Environment Scotland's [website](#).

**KPI 1: Partially Achieved.** (Increase economic and social wellbeing benefits from the historic environment for the people of Scotland) is assessed as partially achieved at the end of the strategy period. It was on track during at the end of 2019 but moved to at risk from 2020 onwards as the pandemic has had a very significant economic impact.

Across the sector there is evidence of good work on social wellbeing impacts. However, we cannot evidence an increase in economic benefit as the sum generated for Scotland's national and regional economies from the historic environment fell by 37% in 2020 (to £2.7 billion) due to tourism restrictions and closures, and was still 28% below the 2019 peak by the end of 2021. Partial results for 2022 are more encouraging, but the full data required to estimate economic impact for 2022 is not yet available (as at March 2023). The economic contribution has not recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels by the strategy end period.



**KPI 2: Evidence gap.** (Improve the environment by reducing CO2 emissions) is assessed as an evidence gap. It was on track 2017-2021.

The KPI was reported as on track to 2021 as at the time there was optimism and ambition that greater progress would have been achieved in establishing and rolling-out the means to measure and report on emissions by 2024 (the originally end date for the OPiT strategy). However, at 31 March 2023 there is no coordinated mechanism in place to measure CO2 emissions across the sector. While HES is mandated to report on CO2 reduction measures to the Scottish Government, the same is not true for most organisations in sector which has resulted in an evidence gap. From the limited evidence that has been collected, the sector has continued to work towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the period and worked collaboratively to contribute to COP26, in Glasgow in November 2021. Progress was not made as quickly as anticipated to gather consistent data from across the sector, in part due to COVID-19 impacts. A key positive result of OPiT is that the sector has a significantly increased awareness of climate change (and in particular greenhouse gas reduction and carbon literacy) and there is a legacy of strong cross-organisational networking in place to support future progress. The new strategy reflects ambitions to measure on the heritage contribution towards net zero and includes a collective action to develop a baseline from which to measure progress.

**KPI 3: Partially Achieved.** (Increasingly historic environment evidence informs policy) is assessed as partially achieved at period end. It was assessed as an evidence gap in 2017 and then at risk in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

This KPI is assessed as partially achieved. There are positive examples of how the historic environment is informing policy and decision making and a greater awareness of the need to evidence our contribution and decisions across the sector. Cross-cutting portfolio connections have been developed for the historic environment within Scottish Government to support the sector's mainstreaming agenda, which will continue into the next strategy. There is also some evidence of good engagement with key Scottish Government policy areas currently, including tourism, green agenda, and planning with strong engagement around National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).

HES is increasingly using evidence from the sector to drive policy making, but this is still in development. For example, recent Covid-19 sector surveys and stonemasonry sector evidence gathering activities have been used to design new strategies and provide policy advice to Scottish Government. But there is a lack of data and evidence gathering as standard across the wider sector, so this is likely to be an ongoing area of development for the new strategy. Resources and support are needed to improve this area for the historic environment.

**KPI 4: Partially Achieved.** (Increase joined up working on strategic investment across public, private and voluntary sectors) is scored as partially achieved at the period end. It has been assessed as at risk since 2017 meaning that progress has not been made as quickly as anticipated.

This KPI is partially achieved as there are good examples of leadership and shared working and these will inform the new historic environment strategy.

We had anticipated that KPI 4 would have progressed to fully achieved by the end of the strategy period, as the Built Heritage Investment Group (BHIG) work was making steady progress. However, that work was put on hold because of COVID-19 and required revisiting and reshaping in light of the pandemic and the green recovery agenda. Examples of good work in this area include CoastArch led by the SCAPE Trust, which has created new partnerships with communities and stakeholders to document coastal heritage.

**KPI 5: Fully Achieved:** (Improve skills and capacity to deliver priorities) is assessed as fully achieved. It was at risk in 2017 and on track in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

At the end of the OPIT reporting period, 10% of targets under the Skills Investment Plan have been achieved with 70% on track. This in combination with strong cross-sector work leads us to rate this as fully achieved.

Disruptions due to COVID-19 has meant progress was not made as quickly as anticipated. However, the sector has continued to work together with Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Funding Council and other key delivery partners from sectors such as education, construction, tourism and creative industries actively involved in delivering the 2019 historic environment sector [Skills Investment Plan \(SIP\)](#), under the oversight of the OPiT Skills and Expertise Group. The SIP delivery groups have worked to promote pathways into the sector for all and 69 schools and 2,500 young people participated in activities as part of a national campaign to promote careers.

Across the sector, the business support programme funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund and delivered by Museums Galleries Scotland delivered business support opportunities in leadership, governance, business planning and community engagement to 39 at risk organisations. Additionally, the digital literacy for leader's programme delivered by Museums Galleries Scotland and culture 24 provides support for 15 organisations.

Skills will remain an underpinning theme of the new national strategy, with major stakeholders understanding the importance of developing and maintaining a skilled sector adequately equipped to deal with multiple challenges.

**KPI 6: Partially Achieved.** (Increase customer focus of knowledge created on the historic environment) is assessed as partially achieved. It was on track 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

The sector has continued to effectively work together to ensure that Scotland's historic environment is better known and understood. Increased understanding of the historic environment was delivered throughout most of the strategy period through investigation, research and recording activities, adding to Scotland's National Record of the Historic Environment, sharing knowledge, and by investigating ways to improve digital access to information and data. COVID-19 impacted heavily on survey, recording and research activity carried out by organisations over the period with many of these activities having to be put on hold. However, on a positive note, we saw many organisations invest in enhanced digital services and modes of delivery, providing improved access to records, to learning resources and other materials to existing and often new audiences.

**KPI 7: Fully Achieved** (Improve access to knowledge on the historic environment) is assessed as fully achieved. It was on track 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Since 2021 and to the period end, there are several examples of improving access to knowledge on the historic environment. The move to digital has improved opportunities for promotion and engaging with wider audiences. The sector has continued to invest in research and innovation and worked with partners to deliver impactful outcomes.

HES has invested in developing the Heritage Hub project (due to be renamed in 2023), which will link data about the historic environment to a central location, simplifying how people access information and

making it easier to find. This multi-year project demonstrates continued investment in access to historic environment knowledge.

Figures from our online data sharing sources such as Canmore, Pastmap and Scran show generally positive trends for usage figures.

- Canmore Users 2021 (latest data): **1,506,305**; 2020 1,221,478; 2019 68,665; 2018, 1,081,140; 2017 1,356,106
- Pastmap Users 2021 (latest data): **80,573**; 2020 97,412; 2019 6,981; 2018 33,175; 2017 26,800
- Scran Users 2021 (latest data): **156,106**; 2020 152,460; 2019 134,461; 2018 152,348; 2017 187,666

**KPI 8: Not Achieved.** (Improve or maintain the state of Scotland's historic sites and places) is assessed as not met at the end of the strategy period. It was assessed as on track 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. It was scored as at risk in 2021 and subsequently not met at the end of the strategy period.

There is a well-documented longstanding issue with maintenance of historic buildings and sites across the UK. The pandemic has accelerated the impact on heritage conservation and repair and maintenance programmes across the sector; this is further exacerbated by the effects of climate change and pressures on funding. The sector has worked collectively on mitigating action in the form of remedial conservation and maintenance programmes to improve or maintain the state of Scotland's historic sites and places in the short to medium term. For example, work by the Oban Communities Trust on the Rockfield Centre has led to a building on the Buildings at Risk Register (BARR) since 2010 restored and eligible for removal from BARR.

Generally, delivery across the sector has fallen short. Restrictions on works due to COVID-19 has created more of a backlog, the impact of climate change has accelerated decay, and the scale of the work is greater than anticipated. There is also an ongoing lack of materials, skilled labour and financial resources available to carry-out the work. Funding, especially the lack of multi-year funding makes it difficult for organisations to invest in repair and maintenance. VAT on repair and maintenance works also remains an issue. To address this, the sector will need to work together to deliver more joined-up, resilient and sustainable approaches, with robust longer-term funding and tax frameworks. The high-level masonry programme in HES demonstrates the kind of multi-year, long term funded approach that is needed to address the state of historic sites and places and comes with a knock-on impact on short term accessibility to historic places. The new strategy will help the sector align to other funding streams (e.g., green funding) to deliver more investment in improvement/maintenance works, with the aim of leading to an improved condition state for our historic environment.

**KPI 9: Fully Achieved.** (Increasingly the outcomes of management, including designation, reflects what people value) is assessed as fully achieved at the end of the strategy period.

It was an evidence gap in 2017 and has then been consistently on track since 2017.

The sector continued to work together to apply effective and proportionate regulation and to play an efficient role in the planning system, you can find more information about our designation, management and protection of the historic environment within the Scottish Planning System in our annual Planning Performance Framework Report. The 2021-22 Report can be found at this [link](#).

In 2022-23, HES dealt with 96.17% of our regulatory activities, consultations, and decision with the stated timescales, compared to 96.16% in 2021-22, 95.92% in 2020-21 and 96% in 2019–20.

**KPI 10: Partially Achieved.** (Improve capacity by supporting communities through community empowerment and engagement) is assessed as partially achieved at the end of the period. It was an evidence gap in 2017 and on track in 2018, 2019 and 2020. It was at risk in 2021 and subsequently partially achieved by the end of the strategy.

The pandemic also highlighted the need for flexible and creative collaborations that deliver resource and knowledge sharing to support recovery and renewal plans within and across sectors. The [Community Connections Programme](#) is an example of this. HES and many other organisations also support community organisations and individuals via grants. In 2021-22, HES provided over £16 million pounds worth of grants to around 60 organisations and 8 individuals.

The pandemic impacted the sector's capacity to support communities from 2021 onwards, initially due to lockdowns and staff furloughs. Subsequently, the pandemic forced a rethink of community participation and support. New initiatives include the Talking About Heritage online resources and Caring for our Heritage, developed after the University of the Third Age approached HES in the summer of 2022, requesting an online workshop for UK-wide Local History group members.

- Scotland's Community Heritage Conversations ran 14 free online events between 2021-22, selling a total of 961 tickets.
- The Community Connections Forum hosted multiple online events over 2021 and 2022, including 2 internal development forums for 130 HES staff who work on community engagement or community development as part of their remit. It also hosted 6 free, online Make Your Mark (MYM) Knowledge Share events open to external heritage or volunteer involving organisations, selling over 200 tickets.
- The 'Talking About Heritage' series of online resources was launched in March 2022, with the aim of encouraging communities to start conversations around the heritage that is important to them. These downloadable resources have been specifically created for use by community groups or individuals and stats across a 9 month period show 321 page views
- The 'Caring for Our Heritage' event ran online in February 2023 and was attended by over 90 University of the Third Age (U3A) members who learned about micro-volunteering and using HES online resources. Excellent feedback was received from those who attended, and the U3A Local History groups are keen to work with HES in this way again in the future.

**KPI 11: Partially Achieved.** (Increase the number and range of people volunteering in the historic environment) is assessed as partially achieved at the end of the strategy period. It was on track in 2017, 2018 and 2019. It was at risk in 2020 and 2021 and subsequently partially achieved by period end.

This reflects the impact of COVID-19, which began to immediately affect the growth and diversity of volunteers in March 2020 and has continued to do so. Sector surveys during the pandemic highlighted the reliance of many smaller organisations on their volunteers, showing many have concerns about their health (often linked to age), which for some affects their confidence to return. Latest figures show a positive recovery trend in volunteer engagement coming out of the pandemic, but work is needed to rebuild volunteering across the sector.

Impressive sector-wide action across Scotland has mitigated the negative impact of the pandemic on volunteering, allowing this KPI to be partially achieved. The Mark Your Mark (MYM) in volunteering campaign [makeyourmark.scot](https://makeyourmark.scot) led by the OPiT Volunteering Group partners was key in helping with this. Examples of wider support include skills and volunteering being selected as a priority topic within the Community Connections Programme, membership of the Volunteer Scotland Board of Directors and membership of the Scottish Government Volunteering For All Framework Action Plan Group

The overall number of people volunteering in the historic environment has decreased significantly from 2020 to the strategy period end:

- HES had 327 volunteers in 2022-23, a sixfold increase from the previous reporting year
- 46 in 2021-22 and 28 in 2020–21, down 95%
- 999 in 2019–20.

HES also started capturing contributions through digital micro-volunteering\* in recent years

- 2022-23 7434 contributions
- 2021-22, 6698 contributions

*\*Micro volunteering is a way for individuals and groups to support an organisation by engaging in short-term, low-commitment activities, often online and can be as quick as a few minutes. For HES, micro-volunteering is carried out through contributions to the National Record of the Historic Environment via SCRAN and MyCanmore, and also to support our Climate Action Plan by submitting photos to Monument Monitor project.*

The NTS had 2,182 active volunteers in 2022-23, slightly up from 20-21

- 2,118 in 2020–21
- 2,784 in 2019–20, down 24%.

During 2022 Museums Galleries Scotland undertook a national survey of museums and galleries in Scotland. Respondents to the survey reported 2,598 volunteers across the sector.

**KPI 12: Partially Achieved.** (Increase the number and range of people who learn about the historic environment) is partially achieved at period end. It was on track in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. It was assessed as at risk in 2021 and partially achieved by the end of the strategy, as the full impact of COVID-19 was felt in 2020–21 and has continued to do so.

Good work has been undertaken across the sector to provide online learning resources and to deliver virtual training sessions. Despite the challenges of the pandemic's impact on learning visits and site-based activity, the sector undertook mitigating action and continued to support inclusive access to heritage resources to inspire learners of all ages. Providers across the sector worked well to offer creative and inclusive approaches to learning. With sites closed, partnership projects enabled participative activity to continue digitally, co-designing content with learners and promoting wider awareness amongst target audiences. These approaches enabled engaging and meaningful opportunities to participate.

We are now seeing evidence of an upward trend in numbers since 2019-2020. For HES, learner participation numbers dropped from 2019 high of 115k to a low of 2.5k in 2020-21 but in 2022-23 returned to 54k. While we are not yet at pre-COVID levels, and the learning offer is not as broad or wide ranging as it was, there are clear signs of recovery.

**KPI 13: Not Achieved.** (Increase the number and range of people visiting the historic environment) is not achieved at the end of the strategy period. It was on track in 2017, 2018 and 2019. This assessment was changed to at risk in 2020 and remained at risk in 2021 due to the impact of COVID-19 and, for HES, the high-level masonry project.

Despite being marked as not achieved, there is good reason to be optimistic and the sector has made excellent efforts to increase the number and range of people visiting the historic environment. One example of this is Roots Scotland, which aims to increasing minority ethnic awareness and participation within Scottish history and its environment. In the first 9 months of the 2022-23 phase of the project they reported delivery of 5 community cafés to allow 26 minority ethnic groups to engage with key heritage stakeholders

Overseas visitors have returned more quickly than anticipated this year, and the level of spend has been very strong. The domestic market has been resilient, but we are seeing some impact from the cost of living crisis (and high-level masonry programme) on membership numbers. Figures from NTS and Museums Galleries Scotland similarly demonstrate the impact of COVID-19 on the sector, with figures at the end of this section.

However, the figures also show the turbulence the sector is experiencing; strong growth in visitor numbers in the early years of the strategy was abruptly truncated by COVID-19 in 2019-20, and additionally for HES visitor numbers were impacted by the ongoing high level masonry project. This has meant that there is a dramatic dip in visitor number between 2020-2022. However, a strong recovery is underway with recent visitor numbers outperforming predictions. For example, HES is on course to exceed 3.3 million visits by year end with a higher return likely based on returns to date. This is over 60% up on the original target for the year and represents 168% increase year on year.

ALVA has reported that 2022 showed a 128% increase in visitors from 2021 across all visitor attractions with four Scottish sites making the top 20 of most visited attractions in the UK (National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh Castle and Scottish National Gallery and Glasgow's Riverside Museum). However, ASVA still caution that strong visitor numbers in early 2023 were still 13% behind pre COVID-19 figures and for this reason, the KPI is marked as not achieved

*The data below, for the NTS and HES illustrates the recent patterns.*

#### **Visitors:**

- NTS had 3.8 million visitors in 2022-23, of which 2.1m were to gated properties
- 2.3 million in 2021-22, of which 1.3m were to gated properties  
1.5 million in 2020–21, down 63% from 4.1 million in 2019–20. Of these, 0.5 million were visitors to gated properties, down 81% from 2.6 million in 2019–20.
- HES had 3.3 million visitors in 2022-23, 1.04 million in 2021-22  
0.25 million visitors to staffed sites in 2020–21, down 95% from 5.2 million in 2019–20 (26 of HES 73 staffed sites had footfall in 2020–21 compared with 37 sites in 21-22 and 43 sites in 22-23).
- During 2022 Museums Galleries Scotland undertook a national survey of museums and galleries in Scotland. Respondents to the survey reported a total of 5.2 million visits in 2021-22, down 40% from 12.8 million in 2019-20.

#### **Members:**

- NTS had 314,000 members in 2022-23
  - 314,359 in 2021-22,
  - 309,871 in 2020–21

- 353,768 in 2019–20
- 367,000 in 2018–19
  
- HES had 183,599 members in 2022-23,
  - 167,469 in 2021-22
  - 186,000 in 2020–21
  - 206,455 in 2019–20
  - 204,000 in 2018–19

## Key Performance Indicators: Results at 2023

	Priority	No	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	RAG 2017	RAG 2018	RAG 2019	RAG 2020	RAG 2021	Final RAG end of Strategy Period
Cross Cutting	Mainstreaming	01	Increase economic and social wellbeing benefits from the historic environment for the people of Scotland	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Partially Achieved
	Mainstreaming	02	Improve the environment by reducing CO2 emissions	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Evidence Gap
	Informed decision making	03	Increasingly historic environment evidence informs policy	Evidence Gap	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Partially Achieved
	Leadership & shared working	04	Increase joined up working on strategic investment across public, private and voluntary sectors	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Partially Achieved
	Skills & capacity	05	Improve skills and capacity to deliver priorities	Amber	Green	Green	Green	Green	Fully Achieved
Understand	Knowledge development	06	Increase customer focus of knowledge created on the historic environment	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Partially Achieved
	Accessible knowledge	07	Improve access to knowledge on the historic environment	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Fully Achieved
Protect	Holistic and sustainable approach	08	Improve or maintain the state of Scotland's historic sites and places	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Not Achieved
	Effective & proportionate protection and regulation	09	Increasingly the outcomes of management, including designation, reflects what people value	Evidence Gap	Green	Green	Green	Green	Fully Achieved
	Ensuring capacity	10	Improve capacity by supporting communities through community empowerment and engagement	Evidence Gap	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Partially Achieved
Value	Enhance participation	11	Increase the number and range of people volunteering in the historic environment	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Amber	Partially Achieved
	Broad ranging approach to learning	12	Increase the number and range of people who learn about the historic environment	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Partially Achieved
	Tourism	13	Increase the number and range of people visiting the historic environment	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Amber	Not Achieved



## Strategy Working Groups Progress

This section provides an update for the four OPiT working groups between 2021-2023.

### **Built Heritage Investment Group**

The last meeting of the Built Heritage Investment Group was in March 2021. It was acknowledged that a new and more holistic way of working is needed. The policy landscape was changing and a presumption towards the re-use and adaptation of existing buildings was growing. The need was recognised to change external perceptions of the sector; from built heritage as 'a problem' and 'difficult to change' – to that of a carbon rich resource, part of the solutions needed for all our places.

Members of the group contributed to events at COP26 in November 2021, including presentations at a Technical Day in Edinburgh with a focus on upgrading and adapting Scotland's historic built environment to meet the on-going challenge of climate change.

The Green Recovery Statement, published by HES in April 2022, was shaped partly using knowledge developed as a result of the OPiT Climate Change Group and BHIG, and several OPiT group members fed into its drafting.

BEFS have been leading on a strand of work previously referred to as prioritisation for the built heritage. Through a series of events, feedback, and detailed consultation this developed into the Sustainable Investment Toolkit (SIT). Publication of the toolkit was understandably delayed due to COVID-19 and is now planned for 2023. The tool informs evidence-based decision-making, visualizing the wider benefits that built heritage provides through mapping contributions to positive outcomes for people across culture, wellbeing, climate, and the economy.

### **Climate Change Group**

The last meeting of the CCG was in February 2020, attended by representatives of 13 organisations. The group has not formally met since the decision to suspend activity during the pandemic, however it has continued to function as a strong network and has supported a number of activities:

Much of the initial focus was planning for COP26 (Nov 2021) and several members of the group contributed to events, with significant presence from the Scottish heritage sector on events related to climate hazards and risk, energy reduction and retrofit, and responsible tourism.

Following COP26 several of the national cultural organisations decided to formally collaborate to support continued climate action, with the formation of the Scottish National Culture for Climate group (SNaCC). The founding organisations include HES, Creative Carbon Scotland, Museums Galleries Scotland and National Galleries of Scotland. There has been a series of on-line meetings, and a one-day conference 'Strengthening Culture's Role in Climate Action' was held on 29 September at V&A Dundee 2022, at which several CCG members were represented.

The Green Recovery Statement, published by HES in April 2022, was shaped partly using knowledge developed as a result of the OPiT CCG and Built Heritage Investment groups, and several OPiT group members fed into its drafting.

Knowledge sharing and alignment across CCG member organisations has continued over the period, for example support to National Trust for Scotland and General Trustees of the Church of Scotland, to

help inform carbon reduction programmes. NTS have recently appointed their first full time Climate Change Coordinator.

Members of the CCG have been active during 2022 feeding into the development of the new historic environment strategy, coordinated by BEFS (a CCG member), resulting in strong visibility of climate change particularly in connection with net zero in the new strategy reflecting a desire for increased activity.

### **Skills and Expertise Group**

Skills is a cross-cutting priority and supports the agendas of all the working groups. The group meets twice yearly to set the direction and review progress in delivering the sector Skills Investment Plan. The group last met in November 2022.

Over the most recent reporting period, the group has improved the evidence base by identifying data sets to address the shortcomings of labour market intelligence and identify high level demand drivers for heritage skills. This will be used to support future skills planning but also to advocate for new or different provision.

The skills group has supported development of the following qualifications:

- Two new modern apprenticeship pathways or frameworks have been created or are in development-museums and galleries technician and archaeology
- One new graduate apprenticeship has been developed in tourism
- MSc in Technical building conservation
- Four new qualifications are in development or have been developed in construction, archaeology and visitor operations

The group has also focused on increasing employer engagement in training provision, with employer groups established to influence and support further education/higher education providers to deliver tourism skills provision. This includes a graduate apprenticeship in tourism and hospitality, Professional Development Award (PDA) in operations and management of visitor attractions and an MSc module in sustainable tourism

The skills group has supported transition to net zero through skills provision by delivering the level 3 award in energy efficiency measures for older and traditional buildings to 80 people. This has helped build the capacity of training organisations to deliver this qualification to support the net zero agenda.

HES's new Skills Training Centre opened in September 2021. This plays a key role in supporting the promotion and delivery of the Skills Investment Plan and highlights the importance of traditional skills for the reuse and retrofit of our existing built environment. This links into the wider climate change agenda and delivering net-zero by delivering continuing professional development (CPD) to professionals, and college and university staff. The new, larger facility increases capacity and responds to need and demand for traditional skills training. As well as delivering the Modern Apprenticeship in Stonemasonry the new facility is hosting additional courses including the PDA Repair and Maintenance of Traditional Buildings.

In March 2022, a consultant was commissioned by HES on behalf of the group to review the Skills Investment Plan and its delivery since publication in 2019. The review marks the start of a process to update and refresh the SIP in response to a changed context and publication of a new strategy for Scotland's historic environment. A revised SIP will be published in late 2023.

## **Heritage Tourism Group**

The Heritage Tourism Group's (HTG) focus in recent years has been on the impacts of the pandemic on the heritage tourism sector and the pathways to recovery.

Due to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic and the change in personnel in the HTG group resulting from staffing changes at VisitScotland and The National Trust for Scotland, the HTG has not formally met since late 2021.

Key members have kept in touch on key priorities. Stephen Duncan, HES Director of Marketing and Engagement was appointed onto the Industry Leadership Group (ILG) for Tourism and Hospitality and he is representing the interests of the Heritage Tourism Group. It is anticipated that more formal meetings will resume to align with the new historic environment strategy.

## **Volunteering Working Group**

Throughout 2021–23, the OPiT Volunteering Working Group continued to focus on development of the Make Your Mark (MYM) in Volunteering campaign with the group and sub-groups meeting regularly. Linking to OPiT goals, MYM works with volunteer-involving heritage organisations and marginalised and excluded groups to increase the number and diversity of heritage volunteers in Scotland. At March 2023, the campaign has 82 member organisations across Scotland. In October 2022, MYM received funding from the Scottish Government to develop the support the campaign offers to volunteer-involving heritage organisations. This has allowed an inclusive volunteering development programme to support organisations to develop inclusive volunteering action plans among other activities.

To support volunteer-involving heritage organisations, the group has supported:

- Peer-to-peer support events through its Volunteer Organisers Network.
- Inclusive volunteering case study events and half-day conferences. Topics include removing class barriers to heritage volunteering, recognising racism in volunteer engagement, involving refugee volunteers and engaging with non-screen users. In 2021-23, 500 people attended 13 Make Your Mark case study events.
- Sharing inclusive volunteering resources, which have reached an audience of 400,000 people worldwide.
- Promoting inclusive heritage volunteer opportunities through its online volunteer portal.
- Celebrating volunteer stories to show the breadth of roles available in heritage and the many benefits of heritage volunteering.
- Connecting MYM campaign members with 100+ community groups and advocacy organisations across Scotland.

Looking forward, the Make Your Mark campaign has received funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to continue and expand their activities to increase and diversify heritage volunteering. This grant will enable Glasgow Disability Alliance, Jambo! Radio, AMINA Muslim Women's Centre and Scottish Refugee Council to join the OPiT Volunteering Working Group and embed diversity at the heart of the campaign. These new partners will input into campaign strategy, act as ambassadors for Make Your Mark and heritage volunteering more widely and work directly with marginalised audiences to facilitate inclusive heritage volunteering opportunities.

## Looking Ahead for the Sector

This report marks the conclusion of OPiT and is published at the same time as the launch of a new strategy for Scotland's historic environment, *Our Past, Our Future*. While the new strategy preserves some of the spirit of OPiT it calls for sector to focus on three priorities and is published with a new set of outcomes and a new performance measurement framework. Over the course of the next year there will be changes to the delivery model that exists for OPiT, we expect that elements will be retained in some form such as Scotland's Historic Environment Forum, a strategy steering group broadly comparable to the OPiT CEOs Forum, and some of the existing working groups but it is likely that new action-oriented groups will need to be formed. However, we will continue to report regularly on progress and communicate the contribution that the historic environment makes to Scotland's communities and places. In doing so we will be drawing on the experience of measuring and reporting on OPiT and incorporate Scotland's Historic Environment Audit (SHEA) with the aim to better represent the breadth and achievements of the sector.

Further information on OPiT, the Historic Environment strategy for Scotland can be found via the following link

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/who-we-are/our-place-in-time/>

And

[Our Past, Our Future](#) – the new strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment

Case studies are available to view and submit on BEFS website at [www.befs.org.uk](http://www.befs.org.uk)

With thanks to all those who contributed to this report.

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