



Green Recovery Statement

For Scotland's Historic Environment



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

Front cover image: Stone masons
at Knock Castle, Aberdeenshire

USING SCOTLAND'S PAST TO SUPPORT OUR FUTURE

**GREEN RECOVERY STATEMENT
FOR THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

**‘Climate change remains
the greatest challenge
facing this planet.’**

Scotland’s First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon
March 2021



Pennan, Aberdeenshire

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INTRODUCTION



The historic environment can make a vital contribution to Scotland's green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and its transition to net zero and a climate resilient society.

This Green Recovery Statement supports the green principles set out by the Scottish Government and highlights seven key areas in which the historic environment can help deliver an economic recovery.

The statement has been prepared by Historic Environment Scotland, the lead public body charged with ensuring the historic environment is looked after, protected and managed for generations to come. Through our vision of [Heritage For All](#), we want the historic environment to make a real difference to people's lives; to our health, to our economy, to our culture, and to our environment.

A 'green economy' is one that is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive.

A 'green recovery' addresses the impacts presented by the COVID-19 pandemic in a way that enables us to build back better, while driving economic growth and job creation.

Under a green recovery, stimulus spending aims to accelerate action on the climate, biodiversity, and the pollution crises.

United Nations

GREEN RECOVERY STATEMENT

Stromness Harbour, Orkney

WHAT IS THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT?



The historic environment is part of our everyday lives.

It reaches far beyond what is often only assumed to be castles and ruins, as significant as these are to our national identity. The historic environment forms the backbone to many of our towns and cities. It is our housing and our tenements, it defines large areas of our rural landscapes, and forms much of the physical infrastructure that underpins our services and transportation networks.

The historic environment is central to our lives and our sense of place, identity and to our wellbeing. It inspires us and it reinforces our cultural and visitor economy, as well as providing a resilient sense of place in changing times.

Many aspects of our resilience stem from decisions made by our predecessors. The [Victorians](#) championed the benefits of green spaces for all with the provision of our first public parks. Traditional settlements were generally not built on vulnerable areas such as flood plains, and many traditional buildings provide natural [ventilation](#) with an inherent passive capacity to manage thermal comfort and air quality.

Our intangible heritage provides solutions through the provision of skills and land management which contributes to our cultural and wider creative economic potential.¹ We can learn from historic and traditional design principles and the use of natural materials and apply these as solutions to our contemporary problems.

'The historic environment is the physical evidence for human activity that connects people with place, linked with the associations we can see, feel and understand.'

Our Place in Time: The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland, 2014

12.0 °C

HOW THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS A GREEN RECOVERY

Thermal image of a traditional building

6.8

The historic environment provides solutions.

We all have a part to play in the transition to a low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive economy. The historic environment provides solutions, reconciling climate and economic objectives.

If we fail to harness the opportunities presented by our historic and existing built environment we will not become a net zero nation.

The historic environment is:





RESOURCE EFFICIENT

The reuse and adaptation of existing heritage assets is integral to a net zero transition.

Up to 80% of buildings in use in 2050 already exist today.² Traditional buildings (those which are pre-1919) make up 19% of our existing housing stock in Scotland.³ The reuse and adaptation of existing heritage assets mitigates resource scarcity, prevents waste and can reduce carbon emissions if low carbon materials are used. It also makes best use of the embodied carbon in the built assets we already have. Heritage status and designation is not a barrier for reuse – it supports change through responsible management and minimises the environmental costs of new construction.

A shift in how existing heritage assets are viewed is needed to achieve public acceptance of a transition to net zero. This in turn supports a Just Transition as all buildings are considered for their net-carbon potential, whilst nobody is seen as being at a disadvantage for where they live, study or have their business premises.

UP TO 80% OF
BUILDINGS IN USE
IN 2050 ALREADY
EXIST TODAY



SUPPORTING NET ZERO

Well maintained and retrofitted traditional buildings are more resilient and emit less carbon helping deliver net zero targets.

The Scottish Government [Heat in Buildings Strategy](#) states that Scotland's homes and workplaces account for 21% of our total emissions. [Retrofit measures](#) can be used to improve the energy efficiency of traditional buildings lowering carbon emissions and creating healthy indoor environments. Research has shown that a typical well maintained and retrofitted traditional building will emit less carbon by 2050 than if it was demolished and replaced with a new building.⁴

Traditional buildings have an inherent capacity to moderate extreme temperatures with passive qualities that were designed to maximise natural light and ventilation. They can be upgraded to give an [improved](#) level of thermal performance providing good, healthy, warm homes. Traditional buildings play a part in supporting the innovative solutions and technologies that will be required to deliver a net zero transition.

A WELL MAINTAINED
AND RETROFITTED
TRADITIONAL
BUILDING WILL EMIT
LESS CARBON BY
2050 THAN IF IT WAS
DEMOLISHED AND
REPLACED WITH A
NEW BUILDING



GOOD, GREEN JOBS

The repair, maintenance and retrofit of existing heritage assets delivers good, green jobs nation-wide.

Repair, maintenance and improvement – considered to be specialised construction activity – generates the biggest economic impact out of the construction industries. Both in terms of gross value added (GVA) impacts and employment impacts. For every £1 million directly spent on specialised construction activities around 21 full-time equivalent jobs are supported across Scotland – 40% higher than for new build.⁵ The national need for this service reduces inequalities and regional disparities through its job creation.

In 2019, £1.3 billion was directly spent on repairing and maintaining the built historic environment, or £2.5bn GVA – equating to over 27,000 jobs supported.⁶ Investing in the skills training and employment pathways for the sector will enable economic and social resilience at a local level, as well as prevent money and carbon being wasted through poorly informed decisions that can lead to maladaptation.

**£1.3 BILLION WAS
SPENT IN 2019 REPAIRING
AND MAINTAINING
THE BUILT HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT,
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27,000 JOBS**



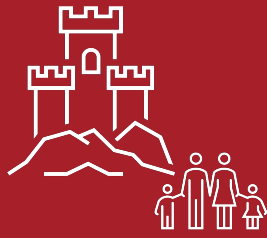
LOCALISM

Community empowerment drives benefits by putting more control of the historic environment into local hands.

Historic environment regeneration makes good places.⁷ By investing in historic assets the appeal of a place is enhanced and attracts inward investment for local residents, workers and visitors. Regeneration activity acts as the catalyst for further economic investment and business growth, creating and sustaining jobs across the country. When we invest in our historic environment, we support community wealth building by not only creating jobs and helping to tackle climate change but building resilient, vibrant places.⁸

Localism can empower communities and increase their sustainability making them climate-ready and resilient. Ambitions for “20 Minute Neighbourhoods” where people can live, work and learn in communities close to home reinforces low-carbon lifestyles. For centuries this is how many of us have settled and lived. Living locally and commuting less helps to support the development of networks and sustainable supply chains that are crucial for the transition to a circular economy. This enables sustainable living by reducing miles travelled, restoring local supply and demand chains, and re-establishing local skills capacity, all of which helps to realise a Just Transition.

INVESTING IN
OUR HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SUPPORTS
COMMUNITY
WEALTH BUILDING



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Heritage assets can make better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit.

Tourism contributes around 8% of global carbon emissions making it a key sector in a net zero transition.⁹ Heritage tourism can support low carbon activities by using sustainable supply chains, reducing energy use and waste generation on sites, and developing lower-carbon and regional itineraries. Tourism can work for the local area when good quality, local jobs are created and sustained, and local businesses and communities are included.

Historic sites in urban areas enable the creation of public spaces which promote inter-city and local level connectivity and encourage the use of active travel networks that provide healthy, sustainable and inclusive transportation choices. Dispersal of visitors to historic sites and other local attractions in rural areas provides meaningful engagement with local communities, reduces the impacts of over-tourism at more popular sites, and creates a more varied visitor experience that further promotes a collective recovery.

**HERITAGE TOURISM
SUPPORTS LOW
CARBON ACTIVITIES, AND
CREATES AND SUSTAINS
GOOD QUALITY, LOCAL
JOBS**



LAND MANAGEMENT

The historic environment helps build resilient landscapes and climate friendly places.

Responsible land use supports well-functioning natural ecosystems that help us build resilient landscapes and adapt to climate change.¹⁰ To make and keep our landscapes resilient, we have to consider the environment on a holistic basis and draw on both cultural and natural heritage. When historic sites and landscapes are in good, robust condition they can help us adapt to climate change by enabling natural ecosystems and processes to function well. This in turn increases biodiversity and enables carbon capture. Land use change can be used to achieve emissions targets for example by transforming vacant and derelict land.¹¹

Well-informed land use change can continue to provide a strong sense of place and identity, connecting the past with the present and people with their environment. Land management decisions that consider both the cultural and natural dimensions of our landscapes will retain cultural significance and evidence of human interaction, in the past, now and into the future.

**HISTORIC SITES AND
LANDSCAPES IN GOOD,
ROBUST CONDITION
CAN HELP US ADAPT TO
CLIMATE CHANGE**



DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

The use of digital technologies helps protect historic places and offers new and sustainable ways to engage with our historic environment.

Enhancing digital access to our historic environment supports a more connected society and demonstrates the role that data and technology can play in ensuring no one is left behind, while understanding and addressing digital exclusion. Adoption of digital technologies allows individuals and communities to explore new ways to interact with Scotland's historic environment while working to achieve net zero emissions.

Digital documentation of the historic environment informs conservation and management approaches and enhances visitor experiences. The integration of digital technologies within construction industries is improving workflows and driving efficiencies in the maintenance and repair of traditional buildings. Digital innovations support virtual access to historic sites, learning and interpretation, in turn facilitating responsible tourism and engagement at local and global scales.

Digital access and documentation can enhance our understanding of our existing environment – so we can learn from our past, to inform our future.

**ENHANCING DIGITAL
ACCESS TO OUR
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
SUPPORTS A MORE
CONNECTED SOCIETY**

**The
historic
environment
is...**

a solution.

GOING FORWARD



We have an opportunity to re-frame Scotland's relationship with its past.

The historic environment sector and the traditional materials, construction methods and skills that go with it provide over 5,000 years of accumulated knowledge and practice of how to live sustainably, which is as applicable to the future as it is to being good stewards of the past.

The historic environment supports a green recovery and makes a significant contribution towards the national transition to a low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive economy. However, one sector cannot achieve this alone. We must work collaboratively to address the causes of climate change and prepare for its impacts, helping to build resilience across all aspects of Scotland's society and economy.

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) will continue to articulate our contribution to the transition to a low carbon economy including informing policymaking and infrastructure investment decisions. Working with others we will collectively deliver the vision of the national strategy, [Our Place in Time](#) (OPIT), that positions the historic environment at the heart of a flourishing and sustainable Scotland. The delivery of HES's [Climate Action Plan](#) and the sector-wide OPIT Built Heritage Investment Plan will see sustainable actions embedded that support a green recovery. More public and private sector investment can help the historic environment sector build on this activity further.

Our historic environment encompasses the places we live, enjoy and work, and also much of the infrastructure that keeps our nation moving. In Scotland, we will continue to champion the historic environment and its potential to deliver solutions and provide a source of resilience for communities as we all work together towards a green recovery.

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

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