

Statement on sustainable growth 2023-24

The following statement sets out the steps that Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has taken in 2023-24 to promote and increase sustainable growth through the exercise of its functions. Further information on this is contained in our Annual Report and Financial Statements.

We support the Scottish Government's purpose 'to focus on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth'.

How we invest in, look after and celebrate our past is at the heart of how we make Scotland a more prosperous and equal nation. We are building strategic partnerships at local and national levels, for example with Community Planning Partnerships and Growth Deals, to ensure the best connection of national plans and resources with local needs and ambitions for inclusivity and growth. We are targeting investment to create good quality job opportunities for people from all backgrounds and spread existing benefits more evenly to local communities throughout Scotland, helping to reduce inequalities, while our grants programmes come with conditions related to inclusivity and skills development further channelling investment in support of local and sustainable economic growth.

The heritage sector was estimated to contribute more than £6.0 billion to Scotland's economy in 2023 through additional tourism spend and investment in pre-1919 buildings and infrastructure – an amount equal to Scotland's total annual beverage production including whisky – with over £880 million of this generated by visitors to HES's properties in care. This figure returned the sector's impact to the pre-Covid level following two years of significantly reduced tourism expenditure as sites were able to re-open.

Sustainable Tourism Sector

Sustainable tourism is one of the Scottish Government's 6 key growth sectors identified in Scotland's Economic Strategy, supporting nearly 1 in every 10 jobs (and double that in remote and rural areas) and £9.4 billion in annual business turnover in 2022¹. 60% of Scotland's in-coming visitors and a third of Scottish daytrips include heritage in their itinerary, driving this sustainable tourism business turnover. Heritage tourism expenditure supports an estimated 34,000 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs across Scotland in 2023.

HES plays a key role in advocating for Scotland internationally, driving the 2022-23 COVID recovery as well as promoting sustainable growth. We welcomed over 4.4 million visitors to our staffed sites in 2023-24, a significant recovery to 86% of pre-Covid levels. Despite the reduced visitor numbers, HES's Properties in Care generated over £880 million of new expenditure for Scotland's tourism economy. The

¹ SG: <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Business/Publications/GrowthSectors/Briefings>

sites attract visitors to spend in local shops, restaurants, hotels and other leisure services when they would otherwise not have been in the area or spent less there.

Sustainable Building Investment and Net Zero

An estimated £1.9 billion was spent on repair & maintenance of traditional buildings (with pre-1919 elements) in Scotland in 2023. Including the supply chain of materials and services, this figure increases to £3.8 billion. The overall value of investment in 2023 was a record and 25% higher than 2022, with a notable shift from spend on public to domestic/residential buildings. HES continues to play a significant role providing training and technical guidance to both the construction industry and owners around how to sustainably maintain and adapt their property, while our planning role ensures sustainable investment for major new developments, reflecting the balance of economic, social, environmental and cultural requirements set out in NPF4.

HES also plays a key role in supporting the Scottish Government to meet its ambitious carbon emission reduction targets: 13 to 16% of Scotland's total emissions are from domestic housing stock; one in every five of these residences are historic buildings. HES is the Energy Saving Trust's key operational partner for adapting these buildings (and their owners' behaviour) to reduce their share of Scotland's carbon footprint – an amount equal to the emissions generated by three coal fired power plants in a year. A similar process is also in place to reduce emissions from Scotland's non-domestic traditional buildings. This essential conservation work to mitigate climate change effects and maintain historic buildings is key to sustaining the assets on which Scotland's tourism economy relies.

Our Climate Action Plan 2020-2025 sets out an ambitious programme of priority works to increase Scotland's resilience to climate change. In all our work, we strive to provide leadership and act as an exemplar in the face of climate change and impact by reducing our greenhouse emissions, acting in a sustainable way and adapting to climate change. We made a total reduction in our greenhouse gas emissions of 20% over the 4 years to 2023-24.

The Properties in Care form a nationally valuable cultural, social, environmental and economic asset for the people of Scotland. Over £43 million, inclusive of staff costs, was invested in conservation, maintenance and management of the Properties in Care in 2023-24, prioritised based on the sustainability principles set out in our Estates Plan, and monitored through the Project Management Office.

In addition to managing the properties in our care, we invested over £12 million through grants to our partners and we estimate that this assisted repairs at nearly four and a half times this level evidencing the significant leverage that historic environment investment can deliver. Our grants programme helps to stimulate regeneration, promote sustainable development and reinforce a sense of place.



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