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SCOTLAND

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ALBA

Properties and Collections Strategy: Towards Sustainable Stewardship

Draft for public consultation

Contents

A New Approach	3
Vision	5
Strategic Context	6
Value of the Properties and Collections	8
Challenges and Opportunities	11
A New Stewardship Model	17
Achieving Sustainable Stewardship	20
Success	28

A New Approach

We look after a large group of cultural heritage assets on behalf of the people of Scotland, under powers delegated to us by Scottish Ministers. These Properties in State Care, together with their associated Collections and archival records, represent some of the most important historic places in Scotland, contributing significantly to society and identity over many centuries.

We continue that very long tradition of State Care and, over the last century or so, there has been a strong focus on the way nationally important heritage assets are managed, presented and more accessible to the public. Today, the expectation of visitors continues to increase in terms of access and experience.

At the same time, society's approach to heritage – what is important and to whom, and what heritage can do for people and place – has also developed. With a different outlook, we can do some things differently and use the Properties and Collections to deliver a great deal more for Scotland.

This historic Estate offers significant opportunities for Scotland, as well as presenting challenges around care and management. The increasing rate of climate change and resultant impacts on heritage assets, together with increasing costs of care and a growing maintenance burden, fundamentally changes how we operate.

We must therefore reconsider how we care for and manage these assets and face challenges head-on, and prioritisation of resources is both inevitable and necessary.

This leads us to review our management approaches, cultivate new funding sources, and think creatively about how the Properties and Collections are used. It also leads us to make difficult choices around what we prioritise and how.

This long-term Strategy sets out how we will deal with those challenges as well as opportunities. It redefines how we will assess the value of the assets, both currently and in terms of their potential.

This Strategy brings a new vision and purpose for 'State Care'. Cultural significance and heritage value remain our primary drivers, but we will balance a range of values that also matter and take a sustainable development approach to investment planning. Our new Stewardship Model will adopt this values-based approach to decision-making, considering the importance of social, environmental, economic as well as cultural value in our thinking.

We will use the Properties and Collections to create positive impacts today and for future generations. We will work collaboratively, applying evidence and expertise to inform decisions, to determine how to best use limited resources to care for Properties and Collections, and get the best from them for people and places.

In reconsidering the Estate, we recognise there are clear differences in cultural value of the assets in our care – we acknowledge they are not of equal cultural significance. In some circumstances State Care may not be ‘in perpetuity’ as previously assumed – there may be more viable alternatives. We will be proactive in assessing the scope of the Estate as well as the range of benefits these assets can provide.

Our long-term strategic priorities are:

- Focusing on the cultural assets in our care that have both the greatest conservation need **and** the greatest potential to make a difference to people and place
- Ensuring Scotland’s most significant cultural assets in a national context are conserved and sustainably managed for future generations

Good stewardship remains our key objective, and in achieving this success will mean:

- Every cultural asset in our care has a clear plan
- Decision making is open and transparent, evidence-based and expertise-informed
- Communities participate in shaping plans, and we work towards shared goals
- Resources are used strategically, delivering long-term sustainable benefits
- Cultural assets in our care are conserved and used positively
- Governance and management approaches are flexible
- Cultural assets in our care are resilient to climate change impacts
- Visitor experiences are enriched for all
- Our culture is collaborative and innovative

Vision

Our vision for this Strategy is to **increase understanding** and **achieve sustainable management** of the Properties and Collections in our care.

‘Understanding’ is a cornerstone of the Strategy, in terms of increasing collective knowledge of the cultural significance and varied histories of the Properties, their associated Collections and supporting archival records. It’s also about better understanding their context – how the Properties are rooted in place – as well as their relevance and value to communities, including intangible cultural heritage. It’s about better understanding potential and looking at things in the round.

‘Sustainable management’ of these cultural assets means caring for them now in a way that will benefit both current and future generations, delivering benefits now without compromising the needs of the future. It means taking a rounded approach to deriving value - social, economic, environmental and cultural - from the assets in our care. Given what we know about how significantly our climate is changing, we have a moral imperative to take a balanced approach to our investment priorities and management.

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

- United Nations

Strategic Context

We are a non-departmental public body with charitable status. Our purpose is to investigate, care for, and promote Scotland's historic environment, for the benefit of people and communities.

Our key functions are delegated to us by Scottish Ministers and set out in the Historic Environment Scotland (HES) Act 2014.

The core principles of State Care - good stewardship and public benefit - remain at the heart of our work.

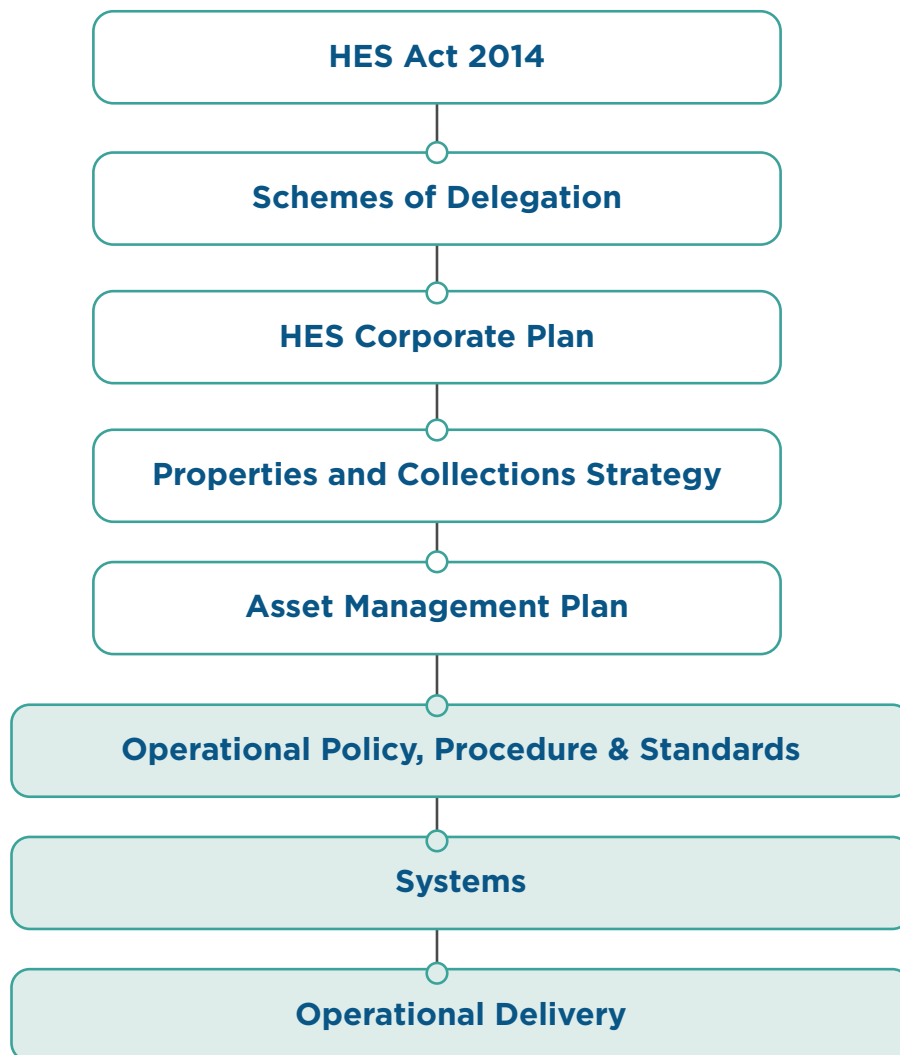
The objectives of this Strategy align with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). It also aligns with key Scottish Government strategies, plans and policies including Scotland's National Performance Framework. Through this Strategy, we will actively consider how we can achieve long-term benefits, including reducing inequalities, when making strategic decisions about the assets in our care.

Scotland's National Strategy for the Historic Environment, [Our Past, Our Future](#), sets out a mission to sustain and enhance the benefits of the historic environment, for people and communities now and into the future. It prioritises delivering the transition to net zero, empowering resilient communities and places, and building a wellbeing economy through historic environment-led activity.

Our Corporate Plan 2025-28, [Heritage For All](#), sets out our commitment to caring for the Properties and Collections, ensuring they are used well, now and in the future, and that people are able to visit, enjoy, and benefit from them.

These agendas provide common purpose and collective approach to sustainable management and strengthen the importance of the historic environment as a positive agent for change including climate action.

Strategic context and operational impact of the Properties and Collections Strategy



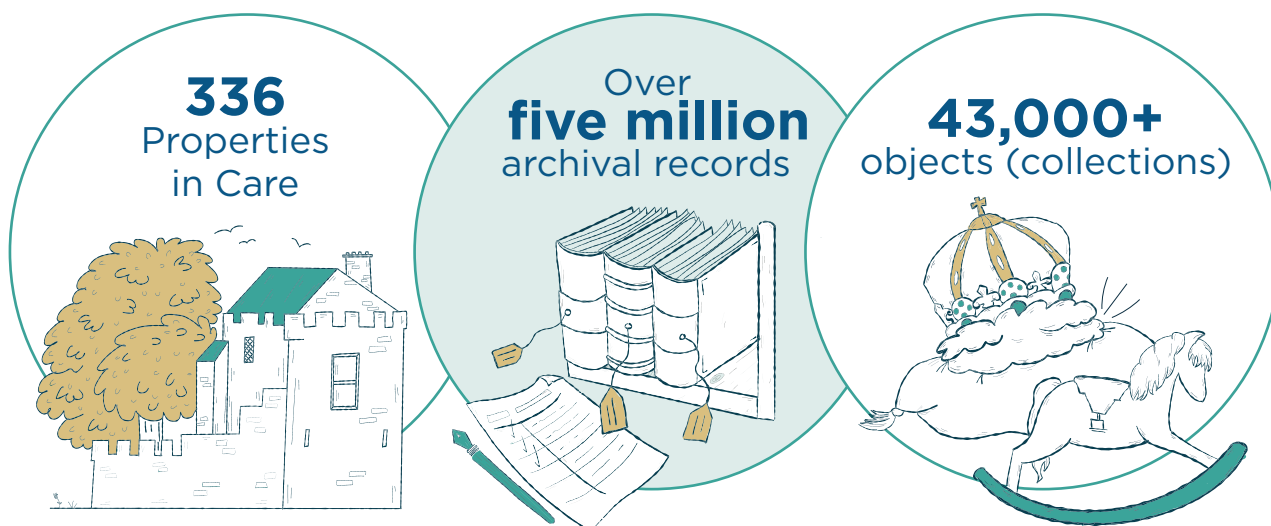
Properties and Collections Strategy alignment to Scottish Government and international outcomes and goals



Value of the Properties and Collections

On behalf of Scottish Ministers and for the people of Scotland, we care for some of the most culturally significant places in Scotland.

There are over 300 Properties, more than 43,000 objects and over 5 million archival records in our Collections. These assets are uniquely valuable to our cultural identity, to society, economies and our environment.



Many of the Properties are set within scenic landscapes or at the heart of our oldest towns and cities. It is a varied Estate, gathered over centuries, that includes Neolithic standing stones at Calanais in the Western Isles, Mousa Broch in Shetland, iconic castles in every region, Glasgow Cathedral, the Border Abbeys, Stanley Mills in Perthshire and a strong group of tower houses across Scotland. The history of State Care in Scotland is a fascinating and relevant story, and one that is not yet well understood.

We also care for objects, works of art and everyday items associated with these buildings, archaeological sites and monuments. These include some of the country's most important objects, from the Neolithic figurine known as the Orkney Venus to the Honours of Scotland – the oldest Crown jewels in the United Kingdom, still in use today.

We hold a large archive that relates to the Properties and Collections, part of the national archive of Scotland's historic environment. We must take a more integrated approach to the understanding and interpretation of these dispersed assets; the sum is greater than the parts. The associated Archives and Collections are vital to our understanding of the Properties and bring them to life; they are also a rich cultural resource for engagement that can make a real difference to the lives of people across Scotland.



Trinity House Collection

At Trinity House in Leith, the rich and eclectic collection of maritime objects, curios, fine and decorative art and an extensive documentary archive is what gives it its exceptional cultural significance. The history of Trinity House and its collection tells us much about the place, its people and communities, the strong seafaring traditions of Leith with its former trade routes across the globe.

The Properties and Collections tell many stories of Scotland and hold knowledge value for us today and for future generations. They matter to local people and attract visitors from all over the world; they are important to Scotland's identity, to our culture and economy, as a resource for wellbeing, learning and education, and in many cases are important green spaces and habitats for wildlife.

These cultural assets sit at the heart of this long-term Strategy, to act as catalysts for positive change for people and places. We will achieve this through renewed and sustainable approaches to their Stewardship, facing challenges and seeking opportunities.

Economic Value

The Properties we look after attract visitors from around the world who would otherwise not come to Scotland: half of all international visitors state heritage attractions as a motivation for visiting Scotland. The Properties also move visitors from Scotland around the country, distributing their spend across all thirty-two local authority areas. This spend generates positive impacts and supports jobs in hospitality, retail, transport and other recreational activities. Our direct investment in maintenance and improvement of the Properties supports construction and traditional skills.

By welcoming millions of visitors from around the world, we generate just under £1 billion (£994m) annually for Scotland's economy, supporting over 20,000 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs around Scotland.

Source: modelled in-house estimate based on Office for National Statistics (ONS) visitor surveys and site data. Full method available at: [Social and Economic Research | Featured Projects | Historic Environment Scotland](#)

Challenges and Opportunities

It's imperative that we face up to our challenges honestly and purposefully, and that we embrace a change in outlook and approach. If we do not do this, we will miss opportunities to adapt and respond effectively.

Challenges

Like other heritage asset managers, across the public, private and charitable sectors, we face increasing challenges from the impacts of climate change, increased costs, and a marked decrease in available expertise, traditional skills and materials.

Society as a whole faces climate change and a nature crisis, as well as concerns about 'over-tourism' and the present cost of living crisis.

The key challenges we face in terms of our Properties and Collections are:

- Climate change impacts - accelerated decay, harm or loss of historic fabric and cultural significance
- Condition of the built assets, associated safety risks and the cost of care
- National shortage of traditional and specialist conservation skills and traditional materials
- Critical need for enhanced storage, care, display, interpretation and access to Collections and Archives
- Changing visitor expectations
- Financial constraints

Investment needs

It takes knowledge, expertise, skills and materials, and financial resources to keep the Properties and Collections safe, in good condition, accessible and enjoyable. In recent decades there has been a marked increase in the rate of climate change, intensifying impacts on the fabric of cultural assets and increasing the conservation challenge.

Historically, the buildings and monuments in State Care have been subject to interventions and remedial work of varying quality, along with a historic lack of investment and a rapidly changing climate since the 1960s. Problems with the condition of our unroofed buildings – they are more prone to decay and more severely affected by direct impacts of climate change – have been exacerbated by all of these factors.

Combined with climate change, increasing visitor numbers at some Properties has created management challenges that test the balance between Stewardship and access.

There have been consequences at our Properties in recent years. We must mitigate and remove any risks to our staff, contractors and our visitors, resulting in limited public access at sites where potential risks to safety are identified. Site closures are an immediate and necessary response, but not a long-term plan.

Where historic sites are particularly vulnerable to climate change, due to coastal erosion for example, fully protecting those Properties may not be practical or even possible in some cases. This presents a reality where some loss of historic fabric may be inevitable.

Our role is to conserve assets in our care, and we will manage these changes as best we can, planning carefully and ensuring knowledge is retained and shared for future generations.

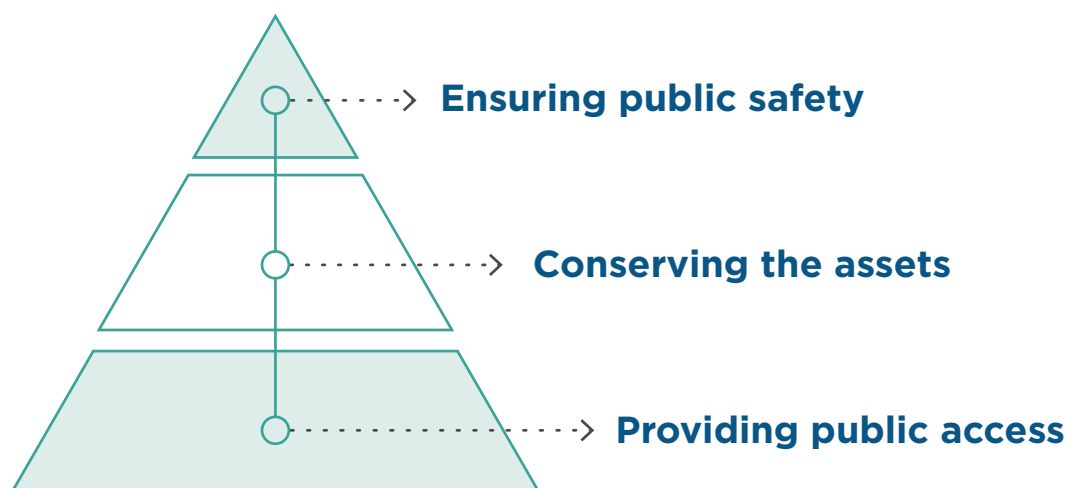
This all presents a big challenge however. Substantial investment is required to meet the ongoing conservation and maintenance needs of the Estate, including specialist traditional skills. Even if we had the funds available, there are not enough skilled stonemasons in Scotland to carry out all the work.

We have therefore considered what a long-term approach would look like to address conservation needs, traditional skills shortages and climate change impacts, in addition to delivering our public access obligations and statutory duties.

Prioritisation and effective use of resources

Prioritisation of resources is therefore necessary. Much as we might like to, we cannot quickly meet all the needs of our Properties and Collections, and we need to focus our planning towards the longer term.

Our duties in terms of the Estate are ensuring public safety, conserving the assets and providing public access to them. These are our core priorities, in that order.



Where those primary duties are being met, the Properties and their Collections become valued places for community engagement and participation, learning, health and wellbeing, tourism and income generation.

Over and above our core duties, our strategic priorities for the Properties and Collections during the next ten years are to focus on:

- The cultural assets in our care with both the greatest conservation need **and** the greatest potential to make a difference to people and place
- Scotland's most important cultural assets in a national context, ensuring they are conserved and sustainably managed for future generations

In the short term, we will prioritise the cultural heritage assets in our care where cultural significance and risk of decay and loss are high. We will also protect and grow our income from key income-generating Properties, without compromising what makes them special, to directly reinvest that revenue in the wider Estate.

Our corporate priorities and specific priorities at individual asset level will inform our investment planning for Properties and Collections.

Opportunities

Challenging times also bring opportunities and encourage us to be creative, bold and decisive.

We have the opportunity and responsibility to innovate. As we face these challenges, we lead not only by example but by embracing change, rethinking and pioneering new approaches in conservation and heritage management, and by supporting others to do so too.

The context of climate change and a cost-of-living crisis reinforces our commitment to sustainable development, circular and wellbeing economies. These approaches are important to the health of society and our environment more widely.

Our new business model, agreed by Scottish Ministers, means we are now able to retain and reinvest all the revenue that we generate through our commercial activity, rather than return a surplus to the Scottish Government annually. This, and our enhanced ability to fundraise as a charity, means we can increase funds, manage resources and plan on a longer-term basis.

Our key opportunities include:

- Embedding sustainable management principles and practice across our Estate
- Leading innovation and advocacy on sector challenges
- Using our cultural assets for traditional skills training while also enhancing the visitor experience
- Strengthening collaboration within and beyond the heritage sector
- Securing increased external funding, including philanthropic giving
- Increasing our total income and focusing reinvestment in conservation of the assets in our care
- Enhancing interpretation including free-to-enter sites

Financially, most of the Properties do not and will never deliver an operating surplus, but the free-to-enter sites provide important accessibility. Only a few Properties directly generate enough revenue to support the others across the Estate. It's important that we maintain and grow those revenue generation abilities, while ensuring we do not devalue cultural significance in the process, seeking new opportunities and being clear about the needs of the whole Estate.

We aim to increase our membership, enhance our retail and events offer to increase income, using the revenue to directly support our care and management of the Properties and Collections.

Realising potential through sustainable management

Delivering sustainable management means taking action to meet the needs of the present without compromising future generations' ability to meet their needs. It is a balanced model that places environmental protection, social equity and economic growth alongside each other. In heritage management, this of course includes cultural significance.

To do this, we will use a values-based approach to gauge current and potential benefits from the Properties and Collections across the four pillars of sustainable development: social, economic, environmental and cultural. What's possible will vary across sites, and the outcomes that can be achieved. Values also change over time.

At every level and every step, sustainable management needs to be integral to our decision-making and practice. In this way, we use our resources effectively, as a public body, to achieve Best Value from the Properties and their Collections.

A New Stewardship Model

The principles of State Care, that remain present today, were developed in the nineteenth century in response to societal concerns about the condition of and public access to nationally important Monuments. State Care protection has been perceived to be forever, or ‘in perpetuity’ and, by being ‘in care’, these Properties may be assumed to be of equal significance. But, within the Estate, there is a hierarchy as some Properties can be considered more culturally significant than others.

We acknowledge that the Properties and Collections are not of equal value in terms of cultural significance. Equally, some may have more potential to generate social value, environmental or local economic benefits.

Against a backdrop of challenges, we face difficult choices that will have long-term impacts. The social, economic and environmental landscape today has evolved, as has conservation philosophy and practice. It is no longer always desirable, necessary or even possible to continue to ‘preserve as found’. ‘Managing change’ is key to heritage management; change, decay and renewal are constant. The focus on the material or ‘fabric’ alone is no longer a valid approach.

Reflecting on this, our Strategy moves us from a traditional State Care position towards sustainable management and new Stewardship approaches.

A focus on compatible use

As we shift from a fabric-based approach focused on conservation of intrinsic value and the art of ‘ancient monumentry’ (Magnusson, Ed., *Echoes in Stone*, 1982) we adopt a model that also values intangible cultural heritage, and the social, economic and environmental values of the assets.

We can reasonably consider these historic places as a resource to be used well, and not only by HES. By using our Properties and Collections in appropriate ways and unlocking potential, we can increase skills development, enhance visitor experiences and learning opportunities, and build resilience to climate change impacts.

In accepting that the Properties are not of equal significance, or the same in their type, rarity, or character – we can be more flexible in some cases.

Some cultural assets have scope for positive change, compatible reuse, adaptation or restoration. Others, by their very nature, are so culturally significant in their material form and national importance that we must do all we can to protect them as they are with a traditional conservation approach. But this can no longer be our only approach.

Scope for change

Many of the Properties and our current management methods have scope for change, new thinking and different technical approaches. These may include adaptation to make the structures more resilient to climate change using well-proven traditional methods (lime harling for example) or using the process of restoration to deliver programmes of traditional skills training. We can also further enable community participation and learning opportunities, and reconsider how the Properties are managed and by whom through innovative governance models. The experience our visitors enjoy will be further enriched, while retaining authenticity in our offer.

This Strategy sets out how we will be more flexible, proactive and innovative about how we use our assets - sustainably - as positive agents of change, responding to challenges and opportunities and, importantly, taking the long view to plan a clear direction of travel and future for each asset.

This Strategy drives us to do some things differently and renews our State Care purpose, because positive change is needed.

Purpose of State Care

As a baseline, and through good Stewardship, we fulfil our primary duties of safety, care and public access.

The renewed purpose of State Care builds on this and is:

- *to achieve long-term sustainable management of the assets for people, economies and the environment, with conservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage at the heart of what we do*

Re-considering our portfolio and the concept of Collective Stewardship

We will re-examine what we hold in our portfolio, and how it has come into State Care, acknowledging that the assets we hold are part of a broader interrelated picture of nationally significant sites, collections and places in Scotland looked after by many others.

We will help ensure these assets are protected, used and well-managed either through our direct care on behalf of Ministers, or by supporting others.

This is a broad spectrum, from how we intervene or step-in to take control of an asset at one end, through brokering relationships or working in partnership, giving 'in-kind' support or through grant aid, or by providing advice at the other end of the spectrum. In this way, Scottish Ministers and HES together offer a broad range of support and flexibility for Scotland's historic environment, working collectively with others.

While Ministers are regularly asked to take properties into care this has rarely happened in recent decades, and the portfolio has remained static in the last 10 years or so. There are always emerging challenges, however, in securing the future of nationally significant heritage assets in Scotland.

In terms of acquisition of Properties to the portfolio, or their release from State Care, Scottish Ministers are open to movement where the case is made. In terms of release from State Care, alternative models of care may well in some cases deliver better outcomes or present greater opportunities; State Care may be a sound backstop, but it is not the only way.

The Properties and Collections in our care are a key part of our collective heritage in Scotland, but a small part within that wider national context. With Scottish Ministers and other heritage asset managers and partners, we will consider how best to support sector needs. With Ministers, we will review the approach to acquisitions and release, and the best Stewardship models for Scotland's most important heritage assets.

Always, we will work together with others to ensure Collective Stewardship of Scotland's nationally important cultural assets and places.

Achieving Sustainable Stewardship

For us, Stewardship is purposeful care with positive intent for future benefit – this in itself is a sustainable approach.

To achieve this, we have set out strategic objectives and the actions we will take to meet them. Our objectives are rooted in conservation thinking and practice and encompass wider sustainable development principles.

Our Objectives:

1. Take the long view, reflecting on the past to inform the future

In taking a long-term approach to our Properties and Collections, we need to better understand what has come before us. How did these cultural assets come into State Care, why and how have approaches to State Care evolved? We can tell this story authentically, leading conversations about the long history of State intervention as well as gaining new perspectives, being better able to address present challenges and prepared for the future.

Climate change is a long-term global problem; it cannot be ignored. Whilst reflecting on the culture and practices of the past, planning for the long term leads us to make more pragmatic decisions. It shifts our work from cyclical repair to more adaptive interventions that may reduce decay, for example.

More broadly, society today is less the top-down environment it was in the past; land reform, community empowerment, equalities, place-based working and public service reform are relevant in our outlook and to our management approaches. These important agendas lead us to innovative governance models for managing the Estate. Collectively, we can take action.

By reflecting on the legacy of State Care, we gain the insight to further evolve as an organisation. exploring new Stewardship models, responding effectively to climate change and embedding Collective Stewardship in our thinking and practice.

We will:

- Focus our actions on long-term benefits
- Research and share ‘a history of State Care in Scotland’, learning from our past
- Assess our Estate portfolio, reviewing our approach to acquisition and release
- Focus on long-term approaches to climate change and its impacts, sharing our learning and leading by example
- Foster a Collective Stewardship approach in Scotland

2. Prioritise cultural significance, targeting our research and innovation

Understanding and sustaining cultural significance, tangible and intangible, is at the core of what we do. By targeting research and innovation, we increase our understanding and enable informed decisions. Our conservation priorities and management approaches are developed on a sound evidence-base, so that our assets can be properly future-ready.

By using innovative digital solutions, conservation science and focusing research we are better able to manage risks to significance and take proactive or preventive action.

We will:

- Target research to support conservation planning and sustain cultural significance
- Use data and expertise to assess condition and levels of risk to significance
- Use digital documentation and innovation as a tool for conservation, interpretation and learning
- Use the Properties and Collections as a research resource
- Engage communities in research programmes

3. Increase focus and investment in our associated Collections and Archives

Our primary aims for the associated Collections and Archives are to increase understanding, provide the right care, and enable public access and benefit - without compromising the assets themselves.

Most of the Collections we care for relate directly to the Properties, and a high proportion of our Collection items are held in, or close to, their place of origin. For reasons of security, lack of display space or conservation needs, some of the Collections are housed in central or regional stores.

Collections relating to the Properties are also held by others across Scotland and globally. Our Archives also hold valuable information about the Properties and associated Collections, including excavation records, survey work, photography, and works of art. These have potential to add much value, and we will explore how these dislocated objects can better contribute to our knowledge and engagement opportunities.

Collections and Archives are often sensitive to environmental conditions, and our changing climate will mean changing our management approaches in some cases. Our current storage and conservation facilities are not fit for purpose for the Collections we hold, and public access is limited at present. We will ensure access is at the heart of future new Collections facilities we develop.

Our Inventory project will provide us with important data on our Collections and a foundation on which to build and develop our aims for their management and discoverability.

Collections and Archives will play a more prominent role, as we take a more holistic Stewardship approach to the cultural assets in our care.

We will:

- Deliver fit-for-purpose Collections storage and care facilities with public access
- Better integrate associated Collections and Archives with the Properties
- Use Collections and Archives to deepen engagement and enhance visitor experience at Properties
- Reconnect dispersed Collections and Archives to enhance understanding

4. Integrate sustainable development to our investment planning and asset management approaches

By embedding sustainability and values-based thinking into our planning, we aim to derive cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits from the assets in our care.

Understanding the holistic character of an asset and its context, by gathering and analysing datasets across cultural, social, economic and environmental values, enhances our ability to identify and interrogate strengths, weakness and opportunities. It helps us take a sustainable, rounded approach to investment and management, and enables us to balance a broader range of values from the assets.

We take place-based approaches to our assets, considering them in themselves, and their context within communities, whether town, coast or rural landscape, and their wider connections and associations.

A key consideration is how we prioritise investment when there are many competing demands. Assessing the current and potential values of the assets against strategic priorities guides us towards this. We can 'lean in' to strengths and opportunities and apply weighting towards overarching priorities.

We will gather and analyse data, combining this with expertise, to create a full picture of the assets and their potential. This will inform decision-making on investment of our resources, and what work to prioritise, where and how. We will also use this approach to evaluate project proposals and underpin the case for support for philanthropic giving.

We will:

- Share increased knowledge and understanding of the Properties and Collections
- Develop and apply a values-based tool to inform decision making and investment planning
- Seek to balance outcomes and potential across sustainable development pillars
- Actively prioritise long-term benefits in our strategic decision making
- Develop sustainable new income streams to support the future of Properties and Collections

5. Embed democratic participation and empowerment, involving people and shaping plans together

How we work as an organisation is as important as what we do.

Our approach must be open, inclusive and collaborative in our projects and plans, enabling use of the Properties and Collections as positive agents for change to achieve shared goals for people and places.

Accessibility is central to achieving this. These assets can only be socially productive if we remove barriers and set the right conditions together, creating a strong sense of shared ownership of Properties and Collections and a reality of access for all.

As a public body land manager, we have a responsibility to inform and involve communities in decisions about land that may affect them, but we must go further, through meaningful collaboration in decisions. We also have a role in strengthening the Place Principle in Scotland, through participative approaches and integrated, cross-sector collaboration.

Listening to, understanding and valuing perspectives of all communities is key to identify and achieve shared goals for a place, activity or service.

Equally, empowering staff, enabling involvement and creating agency across all levels and disciplines leads to better-informed plans.

We will:

- Look outwards and co-create
- Be open and transparent in our decision making, fostering community participation
- Collaborate effectively across sectors, with communities and partners
- Work as one team in HES
- Develop the skills we need

6. Strengthen our response to climate change and its impacts, adapting our management approaches

As a leading heritage asset manager in the sector, we must be open and honest in the face of climate impacts, and the challenges around necessary resources, skills, and expertise to mitigate these impacts. We must continue to share knowledge, test innovative solutions, share learning and collaborate with sector partners.

Climate change is highly impactful to cultural heritage assets, both directly and indirectly. If we fail to respond effectively, this will result in increased losses. In some cases, acceptance of some loss of historic fabric may be necessary, but any potential loss will be carefully managed to retain a level of knowledge, interpretation and access.

Our Conservation Principles will include more pragmatic approaches. Necessary interventions that build resilience to climate change impacts will replace cyclical repair, to bring longer-term solutions. Climate change adaptation may bring different approaches to vegetation management and benefits to wildlife; interventions at wall heads, reinstatement of roofs and other water-shedding elements may provide positive long-term outcomes.

Equally, we must play our part in reducing carbon emissions from our Properties and Collections and respond effectively to our climate change duties as a public body. And we need to strike an appropriate balance between achieving the right environmental conditions for conservation and care of cultural assets, and our corporate approach to energy use.

We will:

- Achieve climate resilient Properties and Collections
- Increase our contribution to a Net Zero ready historic environment
- Enable the landscapes, green spaces, and biodiversity in our care to thrive
- Take long-term adaptative measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change, reducing cyclical repair programmes
- Review our Conservation Principles, developing new Stewardship Principles fit for the challenges we face now and for the future

7. Increase productive, sustainable and compatible use of the assets in our care

By activating cultural assets in our care, we can unlock more potential.

The use and adaptation of Properties and Collections is integral to delivering sustainable development. These cultural assets are tools for learning; they enhance our livelihoods and act as a catalyst for local economies. By enabling productive and compatible uses, we unlock their potential to deliver skills, good green jobs, enhanced wellbeing, and income generation. Properties and Collections can be developed to enhance visitor experience and to increase economic benefits.

There is also a critical need to increase the availability of heritage skills and materials in Scotland. Traditional skills are a fundamental component of historic environment Stewardship and the transition to a low carbon society. A decline in availability, quality, and appropriate training has precipitated a crisis. Many traditional craft skills and practices that are important intangible cultural heritage in Scotland are now endangered.

Through the conservation, restoration, and adaptation of the Properties, we will provide scope for skills development through dedicated programmes where we can also meet the need of the built assets we look after.

We can also support community wealth building through sustainable procurement and socially productive use of land and buildings on our Estate.

We will:

- Use our assets to actively train people in traditional skills and support the use of traditional materials
- Enhance the visitor offer, providing engaging and meaningful opportunities centred on conservation and skills
- Use the Estate to help build and retain wealth locally
- Prioritise circular and wellbeing economy approaches
- Grow our income responsibly at our Properties, to reinvest in their care

8. Set a direction of travel for each asset, developing clear and proportionate plans

The Properties and Collections are varied - there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution. But we can broadly categorise the assets and assess their scope for change.

A Property may be primarily in need of conservation, or it may present major scope for compatible development, increasing our revenue, for example. Some assets in our care have significant untapped potential and present a clear need for change.

Our values-based approach will assess potential across social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits, informing a way forward, or determining potential options, for each asset. We will assess the current situation, identifying barriers to progress, and scope potential, importantly in the context of place and community. This is a proactive, evidence-based and collaborative approach.

In a small number of cases, the direction of travel may not be as positive.

There will be cases where we are neither able to, nor choose not to prevent loss, for reasons including rising sea levels, coastal erosion, cost benefit analysis, practical or health and safety considerations. Where we are unable to protect heritage from climate change impacts, and unable to secure built fabric and tangible significance, we will consider approaches to manage potential loss of historic fabric. This is a last resort approach, and decisions around managing loss will be evidenced and transparent.

While decay and loss are inevitable, there are innovative ways to manage such a process, extracting what other benefits we can. We must anticipate early and plan long-term to secure other benefits through a careful process of managing change. We can use digital technologies to record structures in detail, interpret and communicate those changes, and value the transformation of a place in other ways, such as welcoming an increase in biodiversity as nature takes hold.

We will:

- Understand each asset in the round, using evidence and expertise to inform decisions on investment
- Reach an agreed direction of travel for every asset, collaboratively
- Develop proportionate management plans that deliver clear outcomes
- Be pragmatic, honest and decisive about our planning and decision-making
- Take carefully planned approaches to 'managing loss' where there is clearly no viable alternative

Success

This Strategy aims to bring positive change over the long term. If we achieve this, success will be demonstrated by reaching the ‘desired future state’ for management of our Properties and Collections, over the lifetime of the Strategy:

- Every cultural asset in our care has a clear direction of travel and a plan, set within local, regional and national contexts, leading to sustainable investment and management
- Decisions about Properties and Collections are transparent, data-led and expertise-informed, considering a broad range of values and potential outcomes
- Local communities, colleagues and partners are actively involved in shaping the future of our Properties and Collections to identify and achieve shared goals
- Resources are allocated based on clear strategic priorities and investment decisions lead to long-term benefits
- Properties and Collections are actively used for training people in traditional skills and supporting the use of traditional materials
- Innovative governance models, community participation and local wealth building are achieved through asset management, procurement, and partnerships
- Conservation management encompasses the realities of climate change, and we find new ways to adapt, build resilience, enhance biodiversity, and reduce our carbon emissions
- Visitor experiences are enriched through improved access, interpretation and engagement, ensuring that places are welcoming and relevant to diverse audiences
- We foster a culture of collaboration, openness and innovation, where colleagues are empowered to drive change and overcome internal barriers to progress



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