

Our Past Our Future

The Strategy for Scotland's
Historic Environment

Priority 1 Delivering the Transition to Net Zero

Scotland's historic environment is increasingly contributing to Scotland's climate ambitions through improved emissions reduction, adaptation and resilience, but much greater action is needed to protect traditional buildings and achieve a climate-resilient, net zero future.

What We've Achieved Since 2023

- ▶ **Climate action is increasingly embedded across the sector**
Climate considerations are increasingly reflected in grants, projects, investment decisions and organisational planning.
- ▶ **Adaptation activity has accelerated**
Climate resilience planning, coastal monitoring and climate risk assessment have expanded.
- ▶ **Stronger evidence and partnerships**
New climate evidence, adaptation programmes and the emerging Historic Environment Route Map to Net Zero are helping coordinate action.
- ▶ **Growing climate skills capacity**
Investment in retrofit, traditional building and climate skills is helping prepare the workforce needed for future delivery.

Priority 1 Delivering the Transition to Net Zero

Key Evidence & Statistics

97%

of HES grant applications
referenced climate change
(2025-26)

100%

of HES capital repair grants
incorporated adaptation
measures since 2023-25

446,000

traditional pre-1919 homes remain in active use in 2024

68%

of pre-1919 experience critical disrepair in 2024, with 32% of
these in urgent disrepair to one or more critical elements
(up from 27% in 2022)

Why It Matters

Historic buildings are essential infrastructure for Scotland's communities, economy and housing system. The condition of traditional buildings is now both a **climate challenge** and a **climate opportunity**. Improving their resilience, maintenance, repair and reuse is critical to achieving Scotland's climate ambitions.

What Needs to Happen Next

- ▶ Scale retrofit, climate adaptation and resilience programmes
- ▶ Improve emissions measurement and reporting
- ▶ Strengthen climate evidence and advocacy
- ▶ Build stronger links with housing, energy and planning sectors
- ▶ Continue investing in climate and retrofit skills to support delivery

Our Past Our Future

The Strategy for Scotland's
Historic Environment

Priority 2 Empowering Resilient and Inclusive Communities and Places



Communities are playing a growing role in caring for and shaping Scotland's historic environment, but greater inclusion, representation and community capacity are needed to ensure benefits are shared more equitably.

What We've Achieved Since 2023

- **Community stewardship has grown**
Community ownership, and local leadership continue to expand across Scotland
- **More communities are influencing heritage activity**
Peer networks, heritage conversations and place-based partnerships have strengthened community voices
- **Inclusion is receiving greater focus**
Sector-wide EDI initiatives, outreach programmes, volunteering and partnership activity are helping broaden participation
- **Recognition of community capacity needs is growing**
Organisations and funders increasingly recognise the importance of skills, volunteering, leadership and organisational resilience

Key Evidence & Statistics

36%

of all (853) community-owned assets in 2024 were historic environment assets

6%

Community-owned assets located in the most deprived communities in 2024

7,728

volunteers supporting Doors Open Days activity across Scotland in 2025

The culture and heritage sector invested

£25.5million

in skills and resilience projects in 2025/26

Why It Matters

Historic places help build stronger communities, local identity, participation and Community Wealth Building. Communities are now major custodians of Scotland's heritage, but access to ownership influence and participation is not yet equally distributed across Scotland. Similarly, evidence of other forms of participation and shared decision making are under-evidenced.

What Needs to Happen Next

- Expand co-production and increase community influence in decision-making
- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion within governance, participation and organisational practice
- Support community capacity building, volunteering, workforce and organisational resilience
- Strengthen heritage contribution to community empowerment, place-making and Community Wealth Building

Priority 3 Building a Wellbeing Economy



Scotland's historic environment is delivering economic value, regeneration, wellbeing, and social impact, providing benefits that extend far beyond heritage.

What We've Achieved Since 2023

- **Stronger evidence of economic impact**
The contribution of heritage to jobs, investment and regeneration is increasingly understood.
- **Heritage-led regeneration is delivering results**
Historic buildings and places are supporting investment, economic activity and place renewal.
- **Wellbeing benefits are clearer**
Research and volunteering evidence increasingly demonstrate heritage's contribution to health, wellbeing and social connection.
- **Fair Work awareness is improving**
Many organisations are actively engaging with Fair Work principles and workforce wellbeing.

Key Evidence & Statistics

£6.1bn

direct contribution to
Scotland's economy
annually in 2024

£5.94

additional investment
generated for every £1 invested
by HES grants in 2025-26

91%

of heritage volunteers report
improved wellbeing in 2025

87%

of heritage volunteers report a
stronger connection to place in 2025

84,700

jobs supported across Scotland in 2024

Why It Matters

Heritage contributes directly to:

- economic growth
- local regeneration
- community wealth building
- learning and skills
- volunteering
- wellbeing
- quality of life

Heritage should be recognised as economic, social and community infrastructure that contributes to regeneration, Community Wealth Building, wellbeing and place-based development.

What Needs to Happen Next

- Strengthen evidence of economic and wellbeing impact
- Improve outcome measurement and reporting
- Build stronger and more diverse partnerships
- Increase heritage influence within economic regeneration, housing, tourism and health development and investment decisions
- Continue promoting Fair Work and workforce wellbeing across the sector

Our Past Our Future

The Strategy for Scotland's
Historic Environment

Skills, Volunteering & Workforce Resilience



Delivering for the people needed for Scotland's Historic Environment

Without a larger, more diverse and better-supported workforce, Scotland will struggle to deliver its ambitions for climate action, traditional buildings, regeneration, community stewardship and economic growth.

What We've Achieved Since 2023

- ▶ **A shared national Skills Investment Plan is driving action**
Sector partners have come together around a coordinated programme to strengthen workforce pathways, future skills and organisational resilience.
- ▶ **Investment in skills is increasing**
More projects, apprenticeship opportunities, training activity and careers promotion are being delivered across Scotland.
- ▶ **Heritage careers are reaching new audiences**
Heritage Careers Week, Craft Your Career and related initiatives are improving awareness of heritage careers and vocational opportunities.
- ▶ **Volunteers remain a vital part of the workforce**
Volunteers continue to make a major contribution to participation, stewardship, wellbeing and future workforce development.

Key Evidence & Statistics

£25.5m **119**

invested across 119 skills-
related projects (SIP, 2025)

skills projects supported
in 2025-26

56.5%

increase in skills-related
projects since 2024-25

£1.35m

in estimated annual value
generated by heritage
volunteers' contributions

76,548+ **7,000**

volunteer hours were
recorded annually in 2024

people engaged through
careers activity and promotion

40%

employers expect that skills
gaps will have a considerable
impact on their organisation

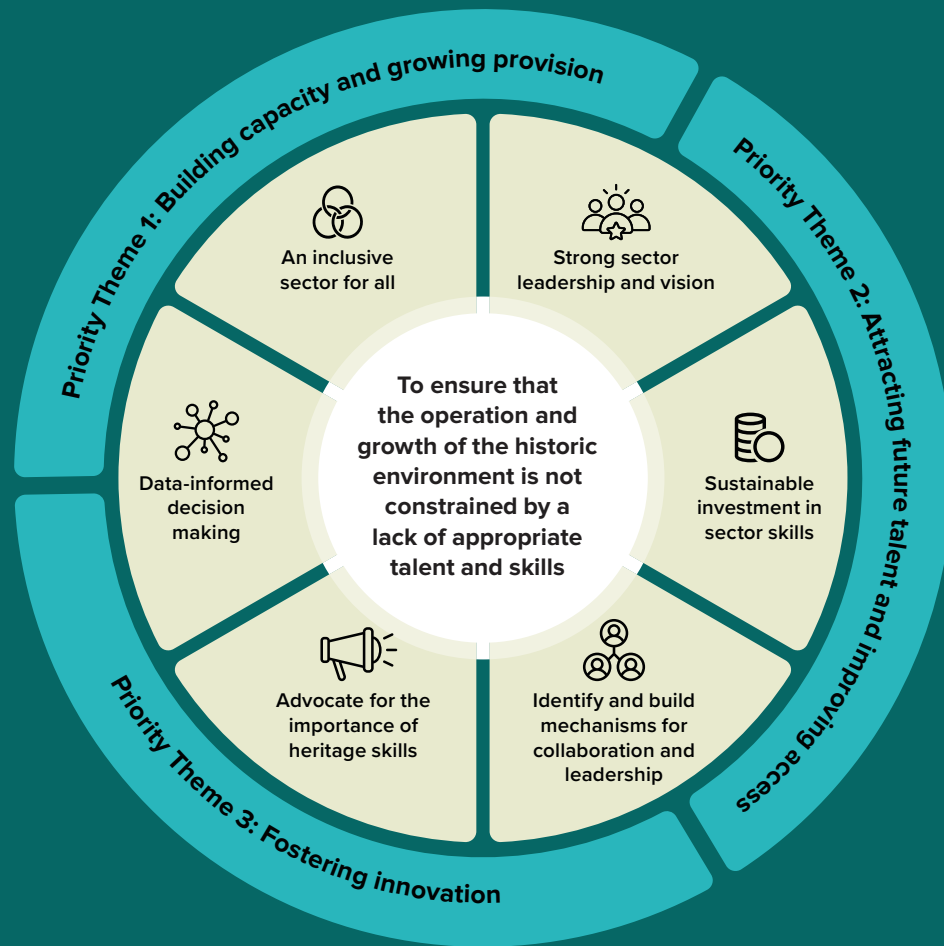
46%

of employers stated that their
organisation does not have the
skills that they need in 2025-26

Our Past Our Future

The Strategy for Scotland's
Historic Environment

The Skills Investment Plan Framework



Why It Matters

➤ Delivering Net Zero

Scotland needs more traditional building, retrofit and climate skills to adapt and repair historic buildings.

➤ Supporting Communities

Communities need volunteers, leaders and local skills to sustain stewardship and ownership of heritage assets.

➤ Growing the Economy

A skilled workforce underpins regeneration, construction, tourism, placemaking and economic development.

Critical Priorities to 2028

- Expand vocational pathways and apprenticeships
- Address recruitment and retention challenges
- Grow climate, retrofit and digital skills
- Strengthen volunteering pathways into participation and employment
- Improve workforce data and understanding of Skills at Risk
- Support Fair Work, workforce wellbeing and organisational resilience
- Establish sector-wide action on workforce priorities through the OPOF Skills Taskforce

Our Past Our Future

The Strategy for Scotland's
Historic Environment

Underpinning Priorities



Leadership, Evidence & Collective Action

Since 2023, OPOF has strengthened the leadership, partnerships, evidence and collaboration needed to accelerate delivery of Scotland's Strategy for the Historic Environment through to 2028.

What We've Achieved Since 2023

- **Stronger leadership and coordination**
The OPOF Steering Group, National Strategy Team and SHEF have established a stronger framework for collective action.
- **Better evidence for decision-making**
The Baseline Refresh, SHEA updates and new strategic research have significantly improved understanding of the historic environment's contribution to national priorities.
- **Greater collaboration across sectors**
Partnerships have expanded beyond heritage into climate, regeneration, community development, skills, wellbeing and economic development.
- **New foundations for system change**
Focused work on communities, inclusion, skills, place, wellbeing, and evidence is helping shape the next phase of delivery.
- **Stronger collective voice**
Heritage is increasingly recognised as contributing to climate action, community empowerment, economic development and wellbeing.

System Achievements

Strategic Change Themes agreed

Providing a shared framework for action to 2028.

National Baseline Refreshes completed

Strengthening understanding of progress and impact.

Updates to Scotland's Historic Environment Audit (SHEA)

Providing stronger strategic evidence for decision-makers.

Shared Delivery Plan

Aligning collective action across organisations and partners.

Why It Matters

- No single organisation can deliver OPOF alone.
- Progress depends on strong partnerships, shared evidence, collective leadership and coordinated action across communities, organisations, funders, government and wider sectors.
- The systems and relationships established since 2023 provide the foundation for achieving greater impact by 2028.

Our Past Our Future

The Strategy for Scotland's
Historic Environment

Delivery 2026 – 2028

What Needs to Happen Next



Strengthen Leadership & Coordination

Refresh governance and increase opportunities for collaboration and influence.



Build a Stronger Data & Evidence System

Improve reporting, evaluation and shared intelligence.



Put Place & Communities at the Centre

Increase community influence and strengthen place-based partnerships.



Improve Participation & Inclusion

Embed inclusive practice and improve representation across the sector.



Invest in Skills & Resilience

Support workforce capacity, volunteering and organisational sustainability.



Align Investment & Infrastructure

Increase evidence-based investment and shared outcomes.



Increase Influence & Advocacy

Strengthen recognition of heritage's contribution to Scotland's climate, wellbeing, place and economic ambitions.

Who Needs to Play a Role?



Communities & People

Lead local heritage activity, shape priorities, participate in decision-making and support community ownership, stewardship and place-based action.



Historic Environment Organisations

Deliver activity, provide expertise, share evidence and learning, support participation, develop future skills and leadership, strengthen and diversity partnerships.



Public Bodies & Government

Embed heritage within climate, housing, regeneration, wellbeing, skills and economic policy and investment decisions.



Funders & Investors

Align investment around shared outcomes, support innovation and resilience, and use evidence to inform funding decisions.



Education & Skills Providers

Develop workforce pathways, expand vocational opportunities and support historic environment climate, retrofit, digital and future skills ecosystem.



Climate & Environmental Partners

Integrate heritage into net zero, adaptation, resilience and nature recovery programmes and share expertise and evidence.



Housing, Construction & Planning Sectors

Scale repair, reuse and retrofit, involve heritage earlier in development and regeneration decisions and support future skills development.



Economic Development, Tourism & Regeneration Partners

Embed heritage within regeneration, Community Wealth Building and local growth activity and strengthen economic evidence and investment opportunities.



Health, Wellbeing & Community Development Partners

Develop partnerships that increase participation, wellbeing and quality-of-life outcomes through heritage.



Researchers & Evidence Partners

Improve data, evaluation and impact measurement and strengthen understanding of heritage social, environmental and economic contributions.