

## Our Past Our Future

The Strategy for Scotland's  
Historic Environment

# Scotland's Economic Growth



Scotland's historic environment is a significant economic asset, supporting jobs, attracting investment and contributing to sustainable, place-based economic growth.

### Why This Matters

Economic growth increasingly depends on attracting investment, supporting sustainable regeneration, creating thriving places and strengthening local economies. The evidence shows that Scotland's historic environment is already contributing to these ambitions at local and national levels.

### Evidence at a Glance

**£6.1bn**

contributed to Scotland's economy directly and annually in 2024

**84,700**

jobs supported in 2024

**£5.94**

generated for every £1 invested through HES grant programmes in 2025

**52%**

increase in investment leverage since the previous OPOF evidence baseline

### What Heritage is Already Delivering

- Supporting regeneration and town centre renewal
- Leveraging public and private sector investment
- Contributing to Community Wealth Building
- Supporting tourism and local business growth
- Bringing historic buildings back into productive use
- Strengthening confidence and investment in places

### Opportunity to Do More

- Recognise heritage as economic infrastructure
- Embed heritage within regeneration and local growth strategies
- Increase use of heritage-led approaches within Community Wealth Building
- Strengthen economic impact evidence to inform investment decisions

#### Contribution to national priorities through delivery of Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Outcomes:

- **Outcome 7:** The historic environment makes a responsible contribution to Scotland's economy
- **Outcome 9:** Increased engagement with the historic environment with a focus on activities that enhance wellbeing

## Our Past Our Future

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Historic Environment

# Climate Transition & Resilience



Scotland cannot achieve its climate ambitions without addressing the future performance and resilience of its traditional buildings and historic places.

### Why This Matters

Historic buildings form a substantial part of Scotland's homes, workplaces and public buildings. Their condition, maintenance and adaptation are increasingly important to achieving climate resilience, net zero and sustainable reuse objectives.

### Evidence at a Glance

**446,000**

traditional pre-1919  
homes remain in active  
use in 2024

**68%**

experience critical  
disrepair in 2024

**97%**

of HES grant applications  
referenced climate  
change in 2025-26

**100%**

of HES capital repair  
grants incorporated  
adaptation measures  
since 2024-25

### What Heritage is Already Delivering

- Climate adaptation and resilience planning
- Sustainable building reuse
- Lower-carbon repair and maintenance approaches
- Climate-focused investment programmes
- Development of retrofit and climate skills
- Evidence and innovation supporting net zero ambitions

### Opportunity to Do More

- Strengthen links between climate, housing and heritage policy
- Scale adaptation, repair and retrofit activity
- Expand climate and traditional building skills provision
- Improve climate risk and emissions evidence
- Position historic buildings as part of Scotland's climate solution

#### Contribution to national priorities through delivery of Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Reduced emissions from the historic environment
- **Outcome 2:** The historic environment is more climate resilient
- **Outcome 3:** Improved pathways for historic environment skills

# Communities & Place



Communities are becoming custodians of Scotland's historic environment, using heritage to strengthen places, build local capacity and support community-led change.

## Why This Matters

Community empowerment, local decision-making and place-based approaches are increasingly central to Scotland's ambitions for resilient communities and inclusive growth. Historic buildings and places often provide the platform through which these ambitions are delivered.

## Evidence at a Glance

**307**

heritage assets in  
community ownership  
in 2024

**36%**

of all community-  
owned assets are historic  
environment assets  
in 2024

**7,728**

volunteers supported  
Doors Open Days activity  
in 2025\*

**6%**

of community-owned  
assets are located in  
Scotland's most deprived  
communities in 2024

## What Heritage is Already Delivering

- Community ownership and stewardship
- Local leadership and volunteering
- Stronger place-based partnerships
- Community Wealth Building opportunities
- Greater community participation
- Support for local identity and belonging

## Opportunity to Do More

- Strengthen community influence and shared decision-making
- Improve access to ownership and stewardship opportunities
- Increase support in disadvantaged communities
- Build community capacity, leadership and resilience
- Embed heritage within wider place-making and regeneration activity

### Contribution to national priorities through delivery of Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Outcomes:

- **Outcome 5:** Communities have more opportunities to participate in decision-making about the historic environment
- **Outcome 6:** The historic environment is more diverse and inclusive
- **Outcome 4:** Organisations that care for the historic environment have the right skills and are more resilient

# Our Past Our Future

The Strategy for Scotland's  
Historic Environment

## Workforce & Skills



The workforce that cares for Scotland's historic environment is also essential to delivering national ambitions for housing, climate adaptation, regeneration and economic growth.

### Why This Matters

Without sufficient workforce capacity, specialist skills and future talent, Scotland's ambitions for repair, retrofit, adaptation and regeneration will become increasingly difficult to achieve.

### Evidence at a Glance

**79%**

of employers reported they are facing skills or knowledge gaps

**£25.5m**

invested across 119 skills-related projects in 2025/26

**7,000+**

people took part in careers awareness activities in 2025/6

**46%**

of employers report in 2025/26 they do not currently have the skills they need

### What Heritage is Already Delivering

- Traditional and specialist skills development
- Green and retrofit skills
- Apprenticeships and vocational opportunities
- Workforce development and capacity building
- Volunteer pathways into employment
- Support for Fair Work and workforce wellbeing

### Opportunity to Do More

- Expand workforce entry routes and apprenticeships
- Improve recruitment and retention
- Grow climate, retrofit and digital skills
- Strengthen workforce data and planning
- Align heritage skills with green skills and housing priorities

#### Contribution to national priorities through delivery of Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Outcomes:

- **Outcome 3:** Improved pathways for historic environment skills
- **Outcome 4:** Organisations that care for the historic environment have the right skills and are more resilient
- **Outcome 8:** The historic environment provides fair work

# Our Past Our Future

The Strategy for Scotland's  
Historic Environment

## Wellbeing & Quality of Life



Participation in Scotland's historic environment delivers measurable wellbeing, social connection and learning benefits for individuals and communities.

### Why This Matters

Scotland's public service priorities increasingly focus on prevention, wellbeing, social connection and resilient communities. The evidence shows heritage can make a meaningful contribution to each.

### Evidence at a Glance

**91%**

of heritage volunteers surveyed in 2025 reported improved wellbeing

**87%**

report a stronger connection to place in 2025

**76,548+**

volunteer hours were recorded annually in 2024

**£1.35m**

in estimated annual value generated by heritage volunteers' contributions

### What Heritage is Already Delivering

- Improved wellbeing and quality of life
- Stronger social connections
- Increased confidence and belonging
- Learning and skills development
- Volunteering opportunities
- Community pride and identity

### Opportunity to Do More

- Strengthen links with health and wellbeing agendas
- Increase participation opportunities
- Improve measurement of wellbeing outcomes
- Expand opportunities for underrepresented groups
- Build stronger cross-sector partnerships

#### Contribution to national priorities through delivery of Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Outcomes:

- **Outcome 9:** Increased engagement with the historic environment, with a focus on activities that enhance wellbeing
- **Outcome 5:** Communities have more opportunities to participate in decision-making about the historic environment
- **Outcome 6:** The historic environment is more diverse and inclusive

# Public Confidence & Participation



Public support for Scotland's historic environment remains exceptionally strong and provides a platform for future investment, engagement and public value.

## Why This Matters

Strong public support creates opportunities to increase participation, broaden representation and strengthen the role of heritage within national and local priorities.

## Evidence at a Glance

# 86%

agree Scotland's heritage  
should be well looked  
after in 2023

# 33%

visited a historic  
place in 2023

# 30%

visited a museum  
in 2023

# 21%

visited a gallery  
in 2023

## What Heritage is Already Delivering

- Public engagement and participation
- Learning and cultural discovery
- Civic pride and identity
- Social connection
- Increased awareness of local places
- Opportunities for volunteering and involvement

## Opportunity to Do More

- Build on strong public support
- Remove barriers to participation
- Increase representation and inclusion
- Develop new audiences and partnerships
- Improve access and relevance for diverse communities

### Contribution to national priorities through delivery of Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Outcomes:

- **Outcome 6:** The historic environment is more diverse and inclusive
- **Outcome 9:** Increased engagement with the historic environment, with a focus on activities that enhance wellbeing

## Our Past Our Future

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Historic Environment

# Regeneration & Community Wealth Building



Historic places are helping drive regeneration, Community Wealth Building and local economic resilience across Scotland.

### Why This Matters

Scotland's ambitions for resilient places and inclusive local economies require long-term investment in existing assets, communities and places. Historic assets provide a platform for achieving these ambitions.

### Evidence at a Glance

**£6.1bn**

direct economic  
contribution to Scotland's  
economy in 2024

**84,700**

jobs supported in 2024

**£5.94**

additional investment  
generated for every £1 invested  
through HES Grants in 2025

### What Heritage is Already Delivering

- Town centre regeneration
- Reuse of underutilised buildings
- Community enterprise and ownership
- Local economic activity
- Place-based investment
- Long-term value creation

### Opportunity to Do More

- Embed heritage within regeneration programmes
- Align heritage and Community Wealth Building activity
- Increase productive reuse of heritage assets
- Strengthen partnerships with economic development agencies
- Improve understanding of long-term social and economic value

#### Contribution to national priorities through delivery of Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Outcomes:

- **Outcome 7:** The historic environment makes a responsible contribution to Scotland's economy
- **Outcome 5:** Communities have more opportunity to participate in decision-making about the historic environment
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Historic Environment

# Heritage as Infrastructure



Scotland's historic environment is not only a cultural asset. It is a significant part of the nation's housing, economic, community and public-service infrastructure.

### Why This Matters

Investment decisions often overlook the role historic buildings already play in supporting homes, businesses, communities and public services. The evidence demonstrates their importance as active infrastructure.

### Evidence at a Glance

**33%**

of retail floorspace  
(SHEA, 2026)

**24%**

of office floorspace  
(SHEA, 2026)

**41%**

of public sector  
floorspace (SHEA, 2026)

**446,000**

traditional dwellings  
in 2024

**1,553**

organisations making up the Historic Environment (estimate, Mapping Scotland's Historic Environment Sector 2026). Out of those, **53%** are registered charities.

**14%** are located in the Highlands and **20%** located in the four major Scottish cities.

### What Heritage is Already Delivering

- Homes and housing capacity
- Business and commercial premises
- Public services and facilities
- Community hubs and assets
- Tourism infrastructure
- Foundations for sustainable reuse

### Opportunity to Do More

- Recognise heritage as infrastructure in policy and investment decisions
- Improve maintenance and resilience of existing assets
- Align heritage with housing and infrastructure agendas
- Promote reuse before replacement
- Increase understanding of the wider value of historic assets

**Contribution to national priorities through delivery of Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Outcomes:**

- Crosscutting across all nine OPOF Outcomes

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Historic Environment

# Delivering Impact Through Partnership



The greatest progress is achieved when government, communities, funders, organisations and delivery partners work together around shared outcomes.

### Why This Matters

Many of Scotland's biggest challenges, including climate change, workforce shortages, community resilience and inclusive growth, require coordinated action across multiple sectors.

### Evidence of Progress

- Delivery of *Our Past, Our Future* through shared leadership
- Scotland's Historic Environment Skills Investment Plan partnership delivery
- HES funded City Heritage Trusts programme
- Growing climate and adaptation partnerships
- Community ownership and stewardship support networks
- Heritage-led regeneration programmes across Scotland
- Increasing collaboration beyond the heritage sector

### What Partnership is Delivering

- Shared investment and resources
- Stronger evidence and learning
- Better policy alignment
- Greater reach and impact
- Innovation and problem solving
- More effective delivery at scale

### Opportunity to Do More

- Align investment around shared outcomes
- Strengthen cross-sector partnerships
- Improve collective leadership and coordination
- Increase use of shared evidence
- Embed heritage within wider national priorities

**Contribution to national priorities through delivery of Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Outcomes:**

- Crosscutting across all nine OPOF Outcomes