



# Our Past, Our Future

The Strategy for Scotland's  
Historic Environment

Annual Report 2023/2024

# Ar n-Àm a dh'Fhalbh, Ar n-Àm ri Teachd

An Ro-innleachd airson Àrainneachd  
Eachdraidheil na h-Alba

Aithisg Bhliadhnail 2023/2024

## Our Past Year

**Our Past, Our Future** is Scotland's strategy for the historic environment for the period 2023–2028. It outlines our collective mission to sustain and enhance the benefits of the historic environment, for Scotland's people and communities now and into the future.

This report provides an overview of activities towards achieving this mission, one year on from the strategy's publication.

Year one began with the official launch of the strategy in June 2023, which signalled a collective commitment towards safeguarding Scotland's heritage for future generations. Following the launch, a dedicated team was appointed to facilitate its implementation, hosted by Historic Environment Scotland.

One of the first steps taken was the development of a new governance structure for the strategy. A Steering Group of invited senior leaders was established to represent the diverse stakeholders in the strategy, to provide strategic oversight and guidance.

Some action groups established to support the delivery of the previous strategy continued, while new advisory groups and activities were identified to address specific challenges and identify solutions. Alongside this, engagement began with stakeholders to align and report action planning at all levels.

To ensure the strategy's robustness and efficacy, the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee conducted scrutiny of the strategy in November to ensure its alignment with national priorities and frameworks.

In February 2024, Scotland's Historic Environment Forum focused on the strategy's delivery. The event brought together a diverse range of stakeholders, including leaders and policymakers from the historic environment and other relevant sectors, to explore opportunities for collective action and positive change.

The first year culminated in the publishing of a Delivery Framework, which will serve as a roadmap for translating the strategic mission of *Our Past, Our Future* into actionable initiatives, workstreams and support. This framework outlines mechanisms, timelines and milestones to guide implementation over the strategy's duration. This is informed by the detailed and summary baseline evaluation reports, which assess the sector's current performance against the strategy's priorities and summarise the success measures to be reported against over time.

Alongside these achievements in the inaugural year of the strategy, the sector remains committed to its aspirations. With a solid foundation laid, all are poised to leverage collective strengths to achieve its outcomes and bring us closer to realising its mission.





## Priority 1 – Delivering the transition to net zero

### Prìomhachas 2 – A’ comasachadh an eadar-ghlusaigh gu cothromachadh-carboin

Delivering the transition to net zero is about ensuring that the historic environment can meaningfully contribute to Scotland’s target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2045.

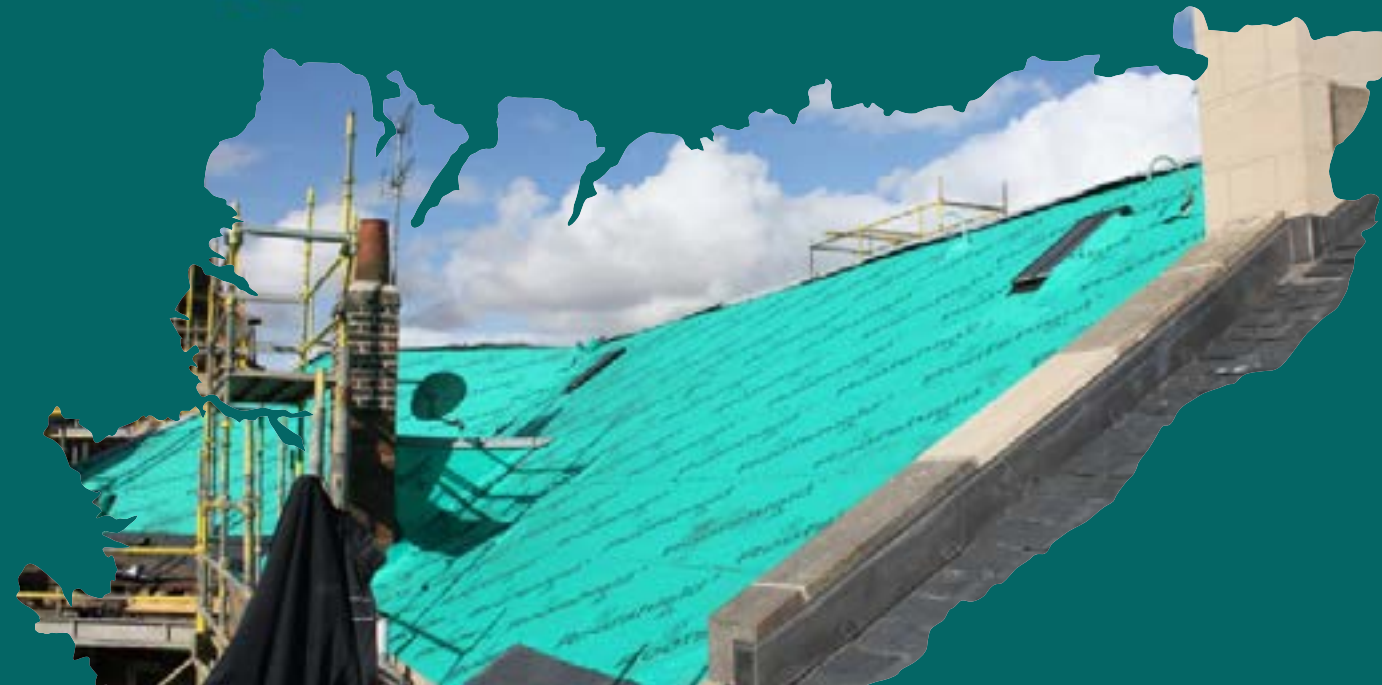
Since the publication of the strategy, key activities towards achieving this priority include:

- » Refresh and publication of a new [Skills Investment Plan](#) to help tackle Scotland’s heritage skills gaps
- » Progress has been made towards understanding and reporting the carbon emissions baseline for Scotland’s historic building stock
- » Active contributions by [Built Environment Forum Scotland](#) and others to national policy, including the proposed [Heat in Buildings Strategy](#), [Scotland’s National Adaptation Plan](#) and the implementation of [National Planning Framework 4](#)
- » [Scottish National Culture for Climate](#) group event focused on [encouraging joint working](#) with the [Scottish Government](#), [Transport Scotland](#) and local authorities, particularly around travel-related emissions
- » The [Swedish National Heritage Board](#) adapted [Historic Environment Scotland’s Climate Change Impacts Guide](#) for their purposes

- » [National Trust for Scotland](#)’s record breaking [Bioblitz recording at St Abb’s Head](#) is helping understand biodiversity in this coastal area
- » The [Scottish Ecological Design Association](#) ran a successful set of Spring Conferences [‘2045: The BIG Conversation in Scottish Construction’](#) with strong engagement from the historic environment sector and the environment

Looking forward some key actions will include:

- » Auditing, creating and/or signposting to guidance and training to support the implementation of Priority 1
- » Commissioning short-term Net Zero Advisory Group Activities to establish a common position concerning topics like recording carbon emissions, advancing retrofit and adaptation activities and establishing a net zero route map
- » Promoting and facilitating collaborative actions to reduce carbon emissions, including promoting a common methodology and sharing good practice to encourage responsible tourism
- » Review and consultation on [Historic Environment Scotland’s ‘Managing Change’ Guidance](#)



#### In focus: Stirling City Heritage Trust Retrofit Service

With Scotland experiencing the tangible effects of climate change, including warmer summers, milder winters, and increased rainfall (Scotland’s Environment, 2023), retrofitting traditional properties is of vital importance. With traditional buildings making up almost 20% of all buildings, improving the energy efficiency of these buildings is vital for meeting the national carbon reduction commitments.

Through a new [Retrofit Service](#), [Stirling City Heritage Trust](#) provides owners of older properties in Stirling with a range of specialist advice and retrofit solutions, helping them to make their homes more energy efficient. The Trust’s expert staff will conduct specialised inspections, applying a ‘fabric first’ approach to energy efficiency. Properties taking part in the scheme receive evaluation and a personalised report suggesting suitable retrofit measures to enhance both the EPC rating and the overall energy efficiency of the building. In addition, Stirling City Heritage Trust will administer a new Retrofit Grant, which aims to assist the implementation of the recommended retrofit measures.





## Priority 2 – Empowering resilient and inclusive communities and places

### Prìomhachas 2 – A’ cumhachdachadh coimhearsnachdan is àitchean a tha daingneachd agus in-ghabhalach

Empowering resilient and inclusive communities and places is about enabling the conditions which will put people and communities at the heart of Scotland’s historic environment.

Since the publication of the strategy, key activities towards achieving this priority include:

- » Launch of the [Inclusive Volunteering Toolkit](#) by the **Make Your Mark in Volunteering** campaign designed to support more inclusive volunteer programmes
- » Refreshed [investment principles](#) from the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**, including greater focus on supporting greater inclusion, diversity, access and participation in heritage
- » Piloting work by **Historic Environment Scotland** on the [‘Your Historic Place lens’](#), a support resource within the Place Standard Tool
- » Joint working and successful advocacy by [Built Environment Forum Scotland](#), [Historic Environment Scotland](#) and [Chartered Institute for Archaeologists \(Cifa\)](#) led to the recognition of the contribution of the historic environment in the [Scottish Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill](#)
- » [Scotland’s Community Heritage Conversations 2023](#) event, coordinated by **Cifa**, **Scottish Council on Archives**, **Historic Environment Scotland** and **Archaeology Scotland** focussed on supporting resilience and celebrating grassroots community heritage
- » Launch of the [Delivering Change](#) programme by **Museums Galleries Scotland** aiming for partnering museums, galleries, and community groups to restructure organisations based on anti-oppressive principles
- » The [Places of Worship Forum](#) promoted a case study on [successful community ownership](#)
- » [Scotland’s Archaeology Month](#) theme was ‘Living Heritage’ in September 2023 with its launch at the reopened **Scottish Crannog Centre**
- » [Scotland’s Archaeological Research Framework](#) programme established new research frameworks for South East Scotland, Roman Antonine Wall and a first event for Clyde Valley



Looking forward some key actions will include:

- » Auditing, creating and/or signposting to guidance and training on key topics to support delivery of Priority 2
- » Work to increase and share knowledge of the organisations that make up the historic environment and its key stakeholders
- » Commissioning new or collaborating with current historic environment Communities and Place Advisory Groups to inform or support implementation of recommended actions
- » The launch of [trove.scot](#) by **Historic Environment Scotland** to improve digital access to information on the historic environment through a more discoverable and accessible platform
- » Developing plans for implementation, following the UK Government’s ratification of the **2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage**
- » Implementation of individual [Skills Investment Plan](#) Action Plans with a focus on the plan to achieve a digital skills profile next year and creation of a ‘heritage skills at risk list’ to support workforce and succession planning
- » Review and consultation on **Historic Environment Scotland’s ‘Managing Change’ Guidance**

#### In focus: The Shieling Project

The [Shieling Project](#) is a social enterprise, off-grid learning centre in the Highlands of Scotland. The project’s purpose is to promote and learn from traditional and outdoor living approaches – from looking after livestock to making real buildings, from weaving baskets to making food from the cattle and crops raised.

Volunteers help with seasonal tasks like planting, moving the cattle, making hay, or harvesting the crops. This underpins the tradition of the ‘shieling’, a place where people lived and worked outdoors all summer, herding cattle, living in a traditional building and sustaining themselves with what surrounded them in the natural environment. This project provides a historic environment lens to build sustainable future solutions for communities.

Alongside providing schools provision, the centre also offer courses and events throughout the year from craft weeks to family camps, providing learning experiences that are hands on, that connect generations, and that encourage resilience and strengthen community.



## Priority 3 – Building a wellbeing economy

### Prìomhachas 3 – Togail eaconamaidh maitheis

Building a wellbeing economy is about deepening our understanding of how our historic environment can allow current and future generations to live well and help our local places to thrive.

Since the publication of the strategy, key activities towards achieving this priority include:

- » Launch of the [Sustainable Investment Tool](#) by **Built Environment Forum Scotland**, to support decision-making by demonstrating the Economic, Cultural, Environmental and Social outcomes of potential investment in built heritage
- » Ongoing work within the historic environment to define wellbeing and key areas of focus
- » Launch of the [Collaborative Local Development Plan](#) pilot, involving collaboration between the Key Agencies Group and six local authorities embedding a whole-place collaborative approach in the development of Local Development Plans
- » [Digital Skills Portal](#) launched by the **Scottish Government** and the **Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland** to provide planners with a hub for information about digital planning tools, training, and skills
- » **Historic Environment Scotland** published its new Gaelic Language Plan with community and partnership working at its core
- » A new [Dunfermline City MOU](#) between **Abbey Church, Dunfermline, Fife Council** and **Historic Environment**

**Scotland** will focus on collaborative action, economic growth and community wellbeing

- » [The Corner, Darvel](#) won the **Scottish Civic Trust's, My Place Awards 2024** – a multi-purpose public space for events, markets and active travel

**Looking forward some key actions will include:**

- » Work with key funders to understand priorities and gaps in funding for the historic environment and the national strategy
- » Auditing, creating and/or signposting to guidance and training on key topics to support delivery of Priority 3
- » Commissioning short-term Wellbeing Economy Advisory Group Activities
- » Further research on and development of methodologies for historic environment economic impact reporting
- » Exploring how Regional Economic Partnerships can align to national strategy interests
- » Broadening engagement with and understanding of the needs and demands on local authorities
- » Collaboration with new sector partners to embed the national strategy in new places and sectors (Scotland's Town Partnership pilot in Year 2)

#### In focus: Vibrant Gala

**Energise Galashiels Trust**, a community-based organisation, was established in 2014 to respond to the continuing decline in Galashiels town centre and with the aim of creating a more vibrant and welcoming community for their residents to utilise and take pride in and for visitors to enjoy.

The key aims of the project are to improve the economic performance of the town centre and enhance community activity and wellbeing. To achieve these aims, the project has focused on developing community led projects and events in the town centre; marketing Galashiels and providing digital support to enterprises; progressing the Tapestry Way Feasibility Study and development activity; and contributing to a Futures Forum.

**Energise Galashiels Trust** have also supported the improvement of 35 town centre properties with priority given to long-term vacant premises, large vacant units or those negatively impacting the town centre. This has encouraged new-starts and expanding businesses, creating a more attractive and vibrant town centre with new and additional retail and service offers, as well as local employment.





## The Priorities and Outcomes of Our Past, Our Future are:



### Priority 1: Delivering the transition to net zero

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



### Priority 2: Empowering resilient and inclusive communities and places

Outcome 4: Organisations that care for the historic environment have the right skills and are more resilient

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



### Priority 3: Building a wellbeing economy

Outcome 7: The historic environment makes a responsible contribution to Scotland's economy

Outcome 8: The historic environment provides fair work

Outcome 9: Increased engagement with the historic environment, with a focus on activities that enhance wellbeing

## Next Steps

In Year One, we laid the strategic groundwork. In Year Two, we will take the following steps to implement Our Past, Our Future:

- » New short-term **Advisory Groups** or related **Advisory Activities** will be pivotal in prioritising actions and providing solutions to the now identified challenges we face under each priority area. Their outputs will drive implementation in years three to five
- » A **Data & Evidence network** will be developed to support the monitoring and reporting on the strategy alongside new research as resources allow.
- » **Knowledge exchange opportunities** for the sector will be sought that will harness current and future opportunities, to share skills and experience and to build capacity. Target topics in year two include Responsible Tourism, Wellbeing and Fair Work.
- » The **OPOF website** will be refreshed to share case studies, data (including **Scotland's Historic Environment Audit 2024**) and to signpost to relevant support and resources.
- » We will work across the sector to **promote OPOF**, aiming to build and expand communications, encourage alignment and action, sharing of new practice, activity or impact.
- » **Scotland's Historic Environment Forum 2024/2025** will provide updates from Advisory Groups, Advisory Activities and Action Groups and will involve a diverse range of organisations.
- » Across all OPOF activities there will be a commitment to **supporting and embedding best practice in equity, diversity, justice and inclusion**. For next year this includes considering how the Advisory Groups Activities and findings can include and be as representative of the broad interests of the sector and its stakeholders as possible.



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