



Our Past, Our Future

The strategy for Scotland's
Historic Environment

Delivery Plan 2026 – 2028



Our Past, Our Future

Detailed Delivery Plan 2026–2028

Purpose

This Delivery Plan translates the evidence from the OPOF Midpoint Report and Baseline Refresh into a focused programme of collective action for the final phase of *Our Past, Our Future* (OPOF): *The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment*.

Delivery will take place within a challenging financial and capacity context. Collective effort, partnership working and alignment of investment will therefore be critical to maximising impact between 2026 and 2028.

This is not the workplan of a single organisation. It is a shared framework for organisations, communities, funders, government and partners to accelerate progress towards the ambitions of *Our Past, Our Future* by 2028. References to partnership, alignment and collaboration identify opportunities emerging from the evidence and stakeholder engagement, not formal commitments by individual organisations.

The plan:

- identifies what needs to continue, grow and improve across the nine Outcomes
- highlights the strategic changes needed to accelerate progress
- identifies who needs to contribute and where effort should be focused
- sets out collective delivery actions for 2026–2028

The plan should be read alongside:

- **The OPOF Midpoint Report 2026** – what we have achieved and what needs to change
- **The OPOF Baseline Refresh 2026** – the evidence supporting delivery
- **The OPOF Delivery Plan Poster** – a visual summary of the overall framework

How the Delivery Plan Works

Strategy Layers:

- **Mission:** Sets the long-term ambition for Scotland's historic environment
- **Strategic Priorities and Outcomes:** Define what success looks like
- **Midpoint Report and Baseline Refresh:** Identify what needs to continue, grow and improve
- **Strategic Change Themes:** Identify the cross-cutting changes most likely to accelerate progress
- **Delivery Actions:** Set out the collective actions required between 2026-2028

Delivering the Nine Outcomes

The Midpoint Report confirmed that the nine Outcomes remain the right focus for delivery. The information below summarises the key areas where collective effort should continue, grow or improve during the final phase of the Strategy.

Outcome 1: Reduced Emissions from the Historic Environment

Climate action remains one of the defining challenges of the strategy period. The final phase should increase uptake, improve evidence and demonstrate greater collective impact.



What needs to Continue: Climate action planning; Carbon Literacy activity; energy efficiency improvements; sharing practical learning and capacity building



What needs to Grow: Retrofit delivery and uptake; climate and green skills; innovation and technology adoption; partnerships with housing, construction and energy sectors; climate and nature programmes



What needs to Improve: Emissions measurement and reporting; data quality; reporting consistency; evidence of collective impact

Who needs to contribute: Historic Environment Scotland, historic environment organisations, climate organisations, housing and construction sectors, local authorities and funders.

Success by 2028

Climate action is more widespread, coordinated and visible. Emissions reporting is more consistent. Retrofit, energy efficiency and climate skills activity are better connected, and the historic environment makes a clearer contribution to net zero.

Outcome 2: The Historic Environment is More Climate Resilient

Awareness of climate risks affecting Scotland's historic environment has increased. The final phase should strengthen climate adaptation planning, climate resilience activity and evidence of climate impacts.



What needs to Continue: Route Map to Net Zero development; adaptation planning; coastal monitoring; heritage risk monitoring; knowledge exchange



What needs to Grow: Adaptation partnerships; climate resilience skills; nature-based approaches; place-based resilience initiatives; integration with wider climate adaptation and land management programmes



What needs to Improve: Climate risk assessment; climate resilience planning; climate adaptation evidence; long-term preparedness; evidence and advocacy

Who needs to contribute: Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS), Historic Environment Scotland, historic environment and environmental organisations, communities, local authorities, planners, land managers and funders.

Success by 2028

Climate adaptation activity is better coordinated. Climate risk and resilience planning are embedded in more decisions. Climate-impact evidence is stronger and easier to use, and Scotland's historic environment is better prepared for long-term climate change.

Outcome 3: Improved Pathways for Historic Environment Skills

Long-term sustainability depends on attracting, developing and supporting future generations of heritage professionals, craftspeople and volunteers, and building a stronger, more connected skills ecosystem overall.



What needs to Continue: Skills Investment Plan (SIP) delivery; Heritage Careers Week; apprenticeships and training; education partnerships



What needs to Grow: Entry pathways and career routes; vocational opportunities; employer engagement; climate and digital skills; workforce development opportunities



What needs to Improve: Recruitment; retention; workforce data; work-based learning evidence; succession planning

Who needs to contribute: Skills Investment Plan partners, employers, skills agencies, colleges and universities, and training providers.

Success by 2028

Workforce pathways and vocational opportunities are clearer and better connected to employer needs. Awareness of heritage careers has increased. Workforce data informs planning and investment, and recruitment, retention and succession planning are better supported.

Outcome 4: Organisations Have the Right Skills and are More Resilient

Resilient organisations are essential for long-term delivery. The evidence highlights continuing challenges around capacity, volunteering, workforce sustainability and organisational resilience.



What needs to Continue: Volunteer development; leadership development; organisational support; workforce development



What needs to Grow: Organisational learning; knowledge exchange; peer networks; organisational resilience support



What needs to Improve: Workforce capacity; succession planning; long-term sustainability; financial resilience

Who needs to contribute: All historic environment organisations, support bodies, community-led organisations, volunteers, funders and workforce organisations.

Success by 2028

Organisations have stronger capacity, leadership and resilience. Volunteer infrastructure is better supported. Workforce and succession planning are better understood, and organisational sustainability is strengthened through learning, support and investment.

Outcome 5: Communities Have More Opportunities to Participate in Decision-Making

Community leadership remains one of the strongest themes emerging from the first phase of *Our Past, Our Future*. Community heritage activity, ownership, stewardship and volunteering continue to demonstrate the value of community-led approaches.



What needs to Continue: Community heritage activity; community ownership and stewardship; Scotland's Community Heritage Conversations; volunteering and local leadership



What needs to Grow: Community leadership; co-production and shared decision-making; place-based partnerships; community development partnerships



What needs to Improve: Consistency of support; community capacity; access to expertise and advice; long-term sustainability

Who needs to contribute: Communities and community organisations, local authorities, community support organisations, historic environment organisations and funders.

Success by 2028

More communities actively shape decisions affecting heritage, places and local priorities. Community leadership increases, place-based partnerships are stronger, and participation grows across Scotland.

Outcome 6: The Historic Environment is More Diverse and Inclusive

The first phase of the strategy has increased awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion. The next phase should embed inclusion within governance, participation, workforce development and organisational practice.



What needs to Continue: Inclusion initiatives; accessibility improvements; outreach activity; community engagement



What needs to Grow: Representation of underrepresented groups; co-production approaches; inclusive volunteering; diverse participation



What needs to Improve: Accountability; inclusion monitoring; evidence of progress; capacity to deliver change

Who needs to contribute: Historic environment organisations, equalities organisations, communities, funders and public bodies.

Success by 2028

Participation is more diverse. Representation improves. Governance and practice are more inclusive, and evidence of progress is stronger.

Outcome 7: A Responsible Contribution to Scotland's Economy

Heritage contributes to regeneration, Community Wealth Building, tourism, investment and local economic development. The next phase should strengthen these links and improve the evidence supporting them.



What needs to Continue: Heritage-led regeneration; Community Wealth Building activity; tourism partnerships; heritage and place approaches



What needs to Grow: Economic development partnerships; building reuse and adaptation; place-based investment; early involvement in regeneration, housing and investment discussions



What needs to Improve: Economic impact evidence; recognition of value; evaluation and reporting; policy influence; communication of heritage's wider contribution

Who needs to contribute: Historic environment organisations, economic development partners, local authorities, enterprise agencies, tourism organisations and funders.

Success by 2028

Regeneration outcomes are stronger. Economic evidence is better. Heritage makes a greater contribution to local economies and is more visible in economic policy and investment agendas.

Outcome 8: The Historic Environment Provides Fair Work

Fair Work supports workforce wellbeing, sustainability and organisational resilience. The evidence suggests progress has been made, but greater consistency of implementation is needed across the sector.



What needs to Continue: Workforce development activity; Fair Work awareness; leadership development; organisational support



What needs to Grow: Fair Work implementation; workforce wellbeing activity; good practice sharing; workforce engagement



What needs to Improve: Workforce evidence; consistency of practice; understanding of impacts; monitoring and reporting

Who needs to contribute: Employers, workforce organisations, funders, skills organisations and support bodies.

Success by 2028

Fair Work is adopted more widely. Workforce experiences improve. Workforce evidence is stronger and organisational sustainability increases.

Outcome 9: Increased Engagement with a Focus on Enhancing Wellbeing

The evidence increasingly demonstrates that heritage contributes to learning, social connection, wellbeing and quality of life. There is now an opportunity to strengthen these partnerships and improve understanding of impact.



What needs to Continue: Learning programmes; community engagement; volunteering; public participation activity



What needs to Grow: Wellbeing partnerships; health sector engagement; participation opportunities; wellbeing-focused programmes; cross-sector delivery partnerships



What needs to Improve: Wellbeing evidence; evaluation; impact measurement; cross-sector collaboration

Who needs to contribute: Heritage organisations, museums, archives and archaeology organisations, data and evidence experts, health and wellbeing organisations, communities and funders.

Success by 2028

Engagement increases. Wellbeing evidence is stronger. Cross-sector collaboration grows and wellbeing impact increases.

Strategic Change Themes

The Midpoint Report identified seven Strategic Change Themes that will have the greatest influence on accelerating progress across all nine Outcomes. These themes form the collective delivery framework for 2026–2028.



Strengthen Leadership, Coordination and Collective Action

Continued progress will require strong relationships, effective coordination and clear opportunities for organisations, communities and partners to collaboratively contribute to shared priorities.



Build a Stronger Data & Evidence System

While the sector now has a much stronger evidence base than it did in 2023, the next phase should focus on improving the quality, consistency and use of evidence to support decision-making, influence policy and demonstrate impact.



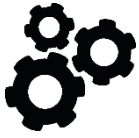
Put Place and Communities at the Centre of Delivery

Developing from strong progress on place-based approaches and community leadership, there is now an opportunity to strengthen links between heritage, regeneration, community development, climate action and local decision-making.



Improve Participation and Inclusion

Awareness of inclusion and participation has increased significantly. The challenge now is to embed these principles more consistently across governance, funding, workforce development, decision-making and delivery.



Invest in Skills and Resilience

Many of the challenges identified through the strategy will depend on building a strong, accessible and resilient skills ecosystem for the sector, improving workforce pathways, supporting volunteers, developing leadership and strengthening organisational sustainability.



Align Investment and Infrastructure with Shared Outcomes

Greater alignment between evidence, investment, infrastructure opportunities and outcomes provides an opportunity to increase impact and strengthen long-term sustainability.



Increase Heritage Influence and Advocacy

The evidence demonstrates that heritage contributes to climate action, community empowerment, regeneration, wellbeing and economic development. The next phase should focus on ensuring that this contribution is more widely recognised and reflected in policy, investment and decision-making.

Action framework 2026–2028

1. Leadership, Coordination and Collective Action

Strategic Change Needed

Improve collective leadership, strengthen governance, increase engagement and improve coordination across OPOF and related programmes.

Who Needs to Be Involved: National Strategy Team, OPOF Steering Group, Scotland's Historic Environment Forum (SHEF) partners, Communities and community organisations, Historic environment organisations, Funders, Public bodies, Delivery partners

Delivery Actions 2026–2028

1.1. Review OPOF governance and engagement arrangements

- **Lead Owner:** OPOF Steering Group
- **Success by 2028:** Refreshed governance and approaches to collective leadership

1.2. Deliver an annual SHEF engagement programme

- **Lead Owner:** National Strategy Team
- **Success by 2028:** Annual engagement programme delivered with increasing participation

1.3. Improve mechanisms for organisations, communities and partners to collaborate and influence

- **Lead Owner:** National Strategy Team with SHEF
- **Success by 2028:** Increased participation and evidence of collaborative activity

1.4. Establish annual strategic alignment discussions for OPOF and relevant national climate, skills, wellbeing and place programmes

- **Lead Owner:** OPOF Steering Group
- **Success by 2028:** Alignment discussions held and position reviewed annually

2. Data & Evidence

Strategic Change Needed

Improve consistency, quality and use of evidence across all OPOF Outcomes and wider national evidence sources.

Who Needs to Be Involved: National Strategy Team, Historic Environment Scotland, Researchers, Universities, Funders, Reporting organisations, Evidence partners

Delivery Actions 2026–2028

2.1. Develop (where possible) and promote shared approaches to impact and performance reporting

- **Lead Owner:** National Strategy Team
- **Success by 2028:** Common reporting approaches adopted by OPOF delivery partners

2.2. Establish a Data Hub approach to improve evidence sharing and access to sector intelligence

- **Lead Owner:** National Strategy Team
- **Success by 2028:** Data Hub approach established and regularly used

2.3. Deliver the next phase of Mapping Scotland's Historic Environment Sector and update Scotland's Historic Environment Audit (SHEA)

- **Lead Owner:** Historic Environment Scotland
- **Success by 2028:** Updated sector intelligence and evidence published

2.4. Seek to improve evidence relating to emissions, climate resilience, wellbeing, inclusion, workforce needs and economic impact

- **Lead Owner:** National Strategy & Skills Investment Plan (SIP) Teams
- **Success by 2028:** Tackle research question remaining across priority OPOF areas

2.5. Improve climate risk, resilience and adaptation evidence to support investment and advocacy

- **Lead Owner:** Historic Environment Scotland
- **Success by 2028:** Improved evidence available and being used by delivery partners

2.6. Continue workforce data gathering through employer surveys, skills research and work-based learning analysis

- **Lead Owner:** All SIP Partners
- **Success by 2028:** Workforce evidence updated and informing planning and investment decisions

3. Place and Communities

Strategic Change Needed

Increase community influence, strengthen place-based delivery and embed heritage within wider community priorities.

Who Needs to Be Involved: Communities, Community organisations, Local authorities, DTAS and Community Ownership Support Scheme (CoSS), Community Land Scotland, Heritage organisations, Enterprise Agencies, Funders

Delivery Actions 2026–2028

3.1. Promote and build earlier involvement of heritage in regeneration, housing, reuse, Community Wealth Building and place-making programmes

- **Lead Owner:** HES and OPOF Heritage & Place Group
- **Success by 2028:** Increased examples of heritage involvement in place-based initiatives

3.2. Support community ownership, stewardship and local heritage leadership activity

- **Lead Owner:** Community Support Organisations
- **Success by 2028:** Increased community-led heritage activity and participation

3.3. Expand co-production and shared decision-making approaches across heritage activity

- **Lead Owner:** Heritage organisations with communities
- **Success by 2028:** More examples of communities influencing decisions and delivery

3.4. Share learning about community heritage experience, skills and other successful community-led programmes

- **Lead Owner:** Heritage and Community Support organisations
- **Success by 2028:** Good practice resources published and promoted

3.5. Strengthen relationships between heritage organisations and community development networks

- **Lead Owner:** Heritage and Community Support Organisations
- **Success by 2028:** Increased joint working activity and partnerships

4. Participation and Inclusion

Strategic Change Needed

Move beyond participation towards increased influence, representation and accountability.

Who Needs to Be Involved: Historic environment organisations, Equalities organisations, Communities, Funders, Public bodies

Delivery Actions 2026–2028

4.1. Review, agree lead(s) and approach to implement recommendations from OPOF EDI and Collaborating for Communities recommendations

- **Lead Owner:** OPOF Steering Group
- **Success by 2028:** Agreed recommendations implemented and reported

4.2. Increase representation of underrepresented groups within governance, volunteering and participation activity

- **Lead Owner:** All Delivery Organisations
- **Success by 2028:** Improved representation demonstrated through reporting

4.3. Embed inclusive approaches within engagement and decision-making processes

- **Lead Owner:** Historic Environment Organisations
- **Success by 2028:** More organisations reporting inclusive engagement practices

4.4. Develop and share practical examples of inclusive practice

- **Lead Owner:** National Strategy Team
- **Success by 2028:** Annual programme of case studies and learning resources published

4.5. Improve approaches to data gathering, monitoring and reporting relating to participation and inclusion outcomes

- **Lead Owner:** All Delivery Organisations
- **Success by 2028:** Improved evidence of inclusion outcomes and progress

5. Skills and Resilience

Strategic Change Needed

Improve workforce sustainability, organisational resilience and future skills capacity to support delivery of OPOF outcomes.

Who Needs to Be Involved: Skills Investment Plan (SIP) partners; Employers; Skills Development Scotland (SDS); Colleges and universities; Training providers; Historic environment organisations; Support organisations; Funders

Delivery Actions 2026–2028

5.1. Deliver SIP priorities relating to workforce pathways, future talent, vocational opportunities and skills capacity

- **Lead Owner:** SIP Pillar Leads
- **Success by 2028:** Annual SIP reporting demonstrates progress against agreed priorities and actions

5.2. Expand provision of climate, retrofit, digital and innovation skills to support net zero, climate resilience and sector transformation

- **Lead Owner:** Route Map to Net Zero Group
- **Success by 2028:** Increased skills provision and participation in priority skills areas

5.3. Extend the geographical reach of heritage skills and workforce development activity across Scotland

- **Lead Owner:** All SIP Partners
- **Success by 2028:** Skills activity delivered in a wider range of geographic areas than in 2025

5.4. Increase vocational pathways, apprenticeships and entry routes into the historic environment workforce

- **Lead Owner:** All Employers, SDS and Training Providers
- **Success by 2028:** More vocational and entry-level opportunities available across the sector

5.5. Improve workforce data through employer surveys, workforce research and analysis of education, work-based learning and career pathways

- **Lead Owner:** SIP Team
- **Success by 2028:** Regular workforce data published and used to inform planning and investment decisions

5.6. Pilot and evaluate the Skills at Risk methodology and use findings to inform workforce planning

- **Lead Owner:** ICON
- **Success by 2028:** Skills at Risk pilot completed and priority workforce risks identified

5.7. Coordinate urgent partner and sector-wide action solutions on workforce priorities through an OPOF Skills Taskforce

- **Lead Owner:** OPOF Skills Taskforce
- **Success by 2028:** Skills Taskforce recommendations and actions reported

5.8. Strengthen volunteering as a pathway for participation, skills development and workforce progression

- **Lead Owner:** Make Your Mark in Volunteering
- **Success by 2028:** Increased volunteering opportunities and evidence of volunteer development activity

5.9. Promote Fair Work and workforce wellbeing through sharing practice, tools and learning across the sector

- **Lead Owner:** Employers and Funders
- **Success by 2028:** Increased evidence of Fair Work and workforce wellbeing activity across the sector

6. Investment and Infrastructure

Strategic Change Needed

Ensure evidence, investment and delivery are aligned around shared priorities.

Who Needs to Be Involved: Funders, Public bodies, Policy makers, Delivery organisations, National Strategy Team, OPOF Steering Group

Delivery Actions 2026–2028

6.1. Establish annual dialogue between funders, policy makers and delivery organisations on OPOF Strategic Themes and Delivery Gaps

- **Lead Owner:** National Strategy Team
- **Success by 2028:** Annual investment discussions completed

6.2. Improve understanding of future investment requirements across the historic environment and its adjacent sectors

- **Lead Owner:** Funders
- **Success by 2028:** Updated evidence of sector investment needs available

6.3. Encourage use of OPOF evidence in funding and investment decisions

- **Lead Owner:** Funders
- **Success by 2028:** Increased evidence-informed investment decisions

6.4. Encourage alignment of investment around shared outcomes

- **Lead Owner:** National Strategy Team
- **Success by 2028:** Stronger alignment between investment and OPOF delivery priorities

7. Influence and Advocacy

Strategic Change Needed

Increase recognition of heritage contribution to national priorities including climate action, wellbeing, skills, regeneration and economic development.

Who Needs to Be Involved: OPOF Steering Group, National Strategy Team, Historic environment organisations, Government, Public bodies, Climate organisations, Health and wellbeing organisations, Housing, planning and construction partners, Economic development organisations

Delivery Actions 2026–2028

7.1. Strengthen engagement with policy makers around climate, place, wellbeing, housing and economic priorities

- **Lead Owner:** OPOF Steering Group
- **Success by 2028:** Heritage represented within key policy discussions and initiatives

7.2. Promote evidence demonstrating heritage contribution to net zero, climate resilience, wellbeing and economic development

- **Lead Owner:** Historic Environment Scotland
- **Success by 2028:** Increased use of heritage evidence within policy and advocacy activity

7.3. Strengthen relationships with climate, health, housing, planning and economic development sectors

- **Lead Owner:** All Historic Environment Organisations
- **Success by 2028:** Increased cross-sector partnership activity

7.4. Promote case studies demonstrating heritage contribution to national priorities and local outcomes

- **Lead Owner:** National Strategy Team
- **Success by 2028:** Annual programme of case studies published and shared

7.5. Support coordinated advocacy and messaging across the sector

- **Lead Owner:** OPOF Steering Group
- **Success by 2028:** Greater consistency in sector advocacy messages and priorities

Working Beyond the Heritage Sector



Climate and Environment Sector: Working together to deliver net zero, climate adaptation and nature recover outcomes



Housing, Construction and Planning: Working together to scale repair, reuse and retrofit and embed heritage in place-making



Education and Skills: Working together to strengthen workforce pathways and future skills



Community Development: Working together to support community leadership and shared decision-making



Economic Development: Working together to support regeneration, Community Wealth Building and local growth



Health and Wellbeing: Working together to strengthen wellbeing outcomes and evidence of impact



Tourism and Culture: Working together to support sustainable tourism, identity and thriving places



Funders and Investors: Working together to align investment with shared outcomes

Measuring Success

Progress will continue to be measured through:

- **Nine OPOF Outcomes** to measure long-term strategic progress
- **Annual Reporting** to monitor delivery activity and commitments
- **Baseline Refresh** to track change against priority indicators
- **Strategic Theme Action monitoring** to monitor delivery of 2026-28 actions
- **Skills Investment Plan monitoring** to track workforce and skills progress
- **Mapping Scotland's Historic Environment Sector** to improve sector intelligence
- **Scotland's Historic Environment Audit (SHEA)** to strengthen evidence base
- **Research and evaluation** to support learning, impact measurement and continuous improvement

Evidence, learning and delivery experience from this Plan will also help inform future strategic planning beyond 2028.



© Historic Environment Scotland 2026

You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated.

To view this licence, visit <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at:

Historic Environment Scotland
Longmore House
Salisbury Place
Edinburgh
EH9 1SH
+44 (0) 131 668 8600
www.historicenvironment.scot

You can download this publication from our website at historicenvironment.scot