



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

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## Public Services Reform Act (Scotland) 2010

### Statement on Sustainable Growth 2024/25

#### Background

The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, section 32(1)(a) requires listed public bodies to publish a statement of sustainable growth. The following statement sets out the steps that Historic Environment Scotland has taken in 2024/2025 to promote and increase sustainable growth through the exercise of its functions and in line with the Government's Economic Strategy. Further information is published in our [Annual Report and Financial Statements 2024/25](#) available on our website.

#### About Us

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) is a public body and charity, with statutory functions to investigate, care for, and promote Scotland's historic environment. We lead development and co-ordinate delivery of Scotland's national strategy for the historic environment, [Our Past, Our Future](#). Our functions are set out in the Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014. Our strategic priorities are set out in our Corporate Plan 2022-25, [Heritage for All](#), available on our website.

#### Sustainable Growth Contribution and Improvements 2024/2025

How we invest in, look after and celebrate our past is at the heart of how we make Scotland a more prosperous and equal nation. We are building strategic partnerships at local and national levels, for example with Community Planning Partnerships and Growth Deals, to ensure the best connection of national plans and resources with local needs and ambitions for inclusivity and growth. We are targeting investment to create good quality job

opportunities for people from all backgrounds and spread existing benefits more evenly to local communities throughout Scotland, helping to reduce inequalities.

All our functional areas and assets contribute to sustainable growth through various channels, with conservation, maintenance and planning all playing complementary roles as summarised below:

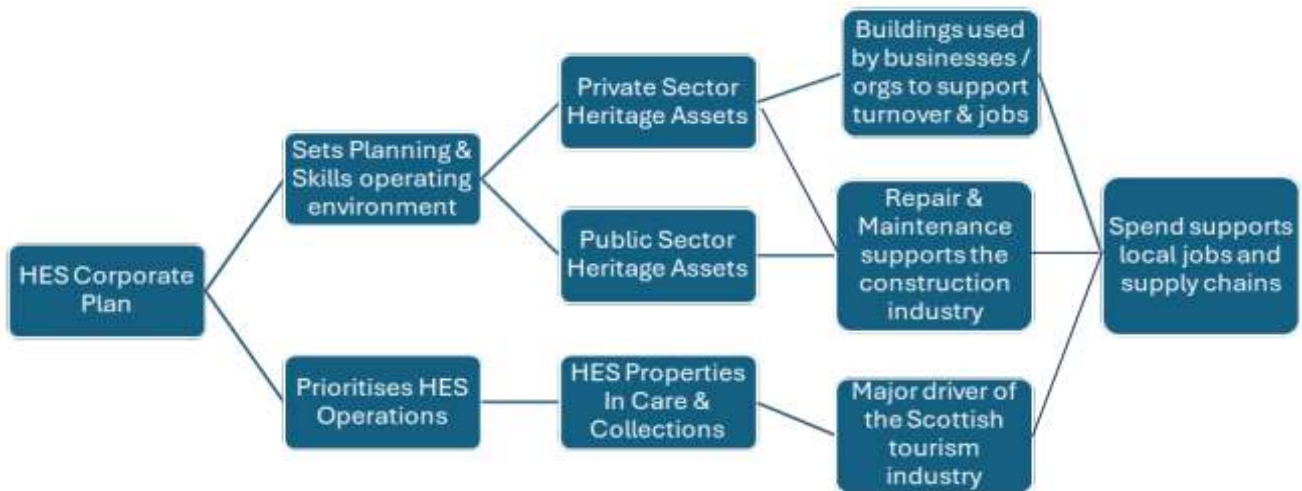


Figure 1: Diagram showing how the HES Corporate Plan on the left contributes to sustainable growth on the right

In 2024 the heritage sector was estimated to contribute more than £6 billion to Scotland’s economy through additional tourism spend and investment in pre-1919 buildings and infrastructure - an amount equal to Scotland’s total annual beverage production including whisky – with over £930 million of this generated by visitors to the properties in our care. This total supports over 81,000 full-time equivalent jobs across Scotland.

**Heritage for All** specifically targeted heritage in the economy (Outcome 3 of 5): “the historic environment makes a broader contribution to the economy of Scotland and it’s people”. The four priorities were to:

1. Promote responsible tourism.
2. Encourage enterprise and investment in the historic environment (through partnership working and our role in the planning system).
3. Enable sustainable change to the historic environment.
4. Increase the availability and demand for traditional skills and materials.

Our [Annual Operating Plan 2024/25](#) set out seven deliverables to drive progress towards this outcome. Five out of the seven deliverables were fully achieved and two were partially achieved. The two partially achieved were:

Tourism impact – we welcomed 4.7 million visitors, an increase compared to 4.5 million visitors in 2023/24 but not quite reaching our 4.8 million target. Linked to that, we increased the direct and indirect contribution to local tourism economies from £887 million in 2023/24 to £935 million, again not quite reaching our stretching target of £946 million.

HES grants programmes – we invested £12.4 million into local economies against a target of £13.5 million due to construction industry delays and other external factors. The full breakdown is included on p32 of our [Annual Report](#).

## Sustainable Tourism Sector

Sustainable tourism is one of the Scottish Government’s 6 key growth sectors identified in [Delivering Economic Prosperity](#), Scotland’s National Strategy for Economic Transformation, supporting nearly 1 in every 10 jobs (and double that in remote and rural areas) and £10.8 billion in annual business turnover in 2023 (see Scottish Government Sustainable Tourism Sector Briefing available at: [Industry statistics - gov.scot](#)). 60% of Scotland’s in-coming visitors and a third of Scottish daytrips include heritage in their itinerary, driving this business turnover.

In 2024 heritage tourism expenditure supported an estimated 36,000 direct full-time equivalent jobs across Scotland. HES plays a key role in advocating for Scotland internationally. We welcomed over 4.7 million visitors to our staffed sites in 2024/25 generating over £930 million of new expenditure for Scotland’s tourism economy. The sites attract visitors to spend in local shops, restaurants, hotels and other leisure services when they would otherwise not have been in the area or spent less there.

During 2024/25 we were working towards a sustainable tourism approach to guide how local heritage tourism projects can balance community needs and environmental impacts with a continued economic contribution. Our Estate Plan for work related to the properties in our care continues to balance economic, social, environmental and cultural factors in investment decisions.

Our grant funding follows a similar set of sustainability principles for applicants to demonstrate their contribution while our [Procurement Strategy](#) also directs sustainable spending by supporting “strategic sourcing and innovation” and “decoupling tourism growth from the consumption of finite resources”.

## Sustainable Building Investment and Net Zero

In 2024 an estimated £1.9 billion was spent on repair and maintenance of traditional buildings with pre-1919 elements in Scotland. Including the supply chain of materials and services, this figure increases to £3.8 billion. The overall value of investment in 2024 was comparable with the record investment set in 2023.

We continue to play a significant role providing training and technical guidance to both the construction industry and owners around how to sustainably maintain and adapt their property, while our planning role ensures sustainable investment for major new developments, reflecting the balance of economic, social, environmental and cultural requirements set out in [National Planning Framework 4](#) – the national spatial strategy for Scotland.

We also play a key role in supporting the Scottish Government to meet its ambitious carbon emission reduction targets: 13 to 16% of Scotland's total emissions are from domestic housing stock; one in every five of these residences are historic buildings. We are the Energy Saving Trust's key operational partner for adapting these buildings (and their owners' behaviour) to reduce their share of Scotland's carbon footprint – an amount equal to the emissions generated by three coal fired power plants in a year. A similar process is also in place to reduce emissions from Scotland's non-domestic traditional buildings. This essential conservation work to mitigate climate change effects and maintain historic buildings is key to sustaining the assets on which Scotland's tourism economy relies.

Our [Climate Action Plan 2020-2025](#) set out an ambitious programme of priority works to increase Scotland's resilience to climate change. In all our work, we strive to provide leadership and act as an exemplar in the face of climate change and impact by reducing our greenhouse emissions, acting in a sustainable way and adapting to climate change. We made a total reduction in our greenhouse gas emissions of over 4,000 tons during 2024/25, meeting the in-year target and the 5-year target set out in the 5-Year Plan. Our new Climate Action Strategy is set to be published during 2026.

HES invested £36 million with Scottish suppliers through our [Sustainable Procurement Strategy](#) in 2024/25, taking the total to £174.6 million since 2020, prioritised based on the sustainability principles set out in our Estate Plan, and monitored through our Project Management Office. We also invested £12.4 million through grants to our partners, and we estimate that this assisted repairs at over 5 times this level evidencing the significant leverage that historic environment investment can deliver. Our grants programme helps to stimulate regeneration, promote sustainable development and reinforce a sense of place.

## Sustainable Regional Impacts

The following table summarises our in-house estimate of the distribution of heritage’s economic impacts across Scotland’s development regions, reaching all areas to a significant degree. These figures are based on the regional distribution of heritage tourism and relative concentration of pre-1919 built assets:

Development Region	Regional Economic Contribution, 2024		
	Total £ impact including supply chain multiplier	Total FTEs supported including supply chain multiplier	£ impact per head of population
Aberdeen and Shire	£496,728,601	5,105	£1,000
Ayrshire	£350,571,937	3,306	£953
Edinburgh and Southeast	£1,533,681,176	25,377	£1,462
Forth Valley	£220,698,361	2,701	£720
Glasgow City	£1,060,983,636	13,701	£560
Highlands & Islands	£976,698,795	15,692	£2,420
South of Scotland	£556,707,806	5,715	£2,118
Tay Cities	£879,002,634	8,955	£1,107
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>£6,120,548,037</b>	<b>81,941</b>	<b>£1,103</b>

Figure 2: Table showing economic impacts of heritage in development regions across Scotland



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