

The Scottish Civic Trust

CELEBRATE • TAKE ACTION • ADVOCATE

Get in touch
with the
Scottish Civic Trust

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Strategic Plan 2019-2024



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The Scottish Civic Trust is a charity registered in Scotland. No. SC012569.



1 / FOREWORD



The Scottish Civic Trust has played an important role in Scotland's built environment sector since our formation over fifty years ago.

Following our formation in 1967, we led efforts to save the key heritage assets of Edinburgh's New Town and New Lanark, which are now both recognised as World Heritage Sites. Over that period there has been widespread acceptance of the essential role played by places and spaces in defining our identity, and a corresponding increase in the protection and guardianship of our historic environment.

The job of the Scottish Civic Trust has also changed. As an organisation we have expanded from our original goals to add the pursuit of community empowerment and inclusion. As more and more responsibility for the delivery of regeneration and planning outcomes has been devolved to the voluntary sector, we have found that decision-

making authorities rarely reflect the diversity of local communities they are appointed to serve. In a similar vein, the aspirations of community-led projects are in some instances not matched by the skills or capacity of Scotland's voluntary organisations.

As the leading voice championing civic engagement in the built environment, it is the Trust's responsibility to help steer the sector towards greater diversity and inclusion, where volunteers are educated, empowered and supported to make meaningful contributions to the decisions affecting their locality. This plan outlines how we intend to achieve that goal over the course of the next five years, and we commend it to you.

Colin McLean
Chair, Scottish Civic Trust

2 / WHO WE ARE

The Scottish Civic Trust was set up in 1967 to help people connect to their built heritage and take a leading role in guiding its development. In its infancy, it successfully campaigned for the restoration of Edinburgh's New Town and can also claim credit for saving New Lanark and bringing Doors Open Days to the United Kingdom.

The Trust's original objectives were:

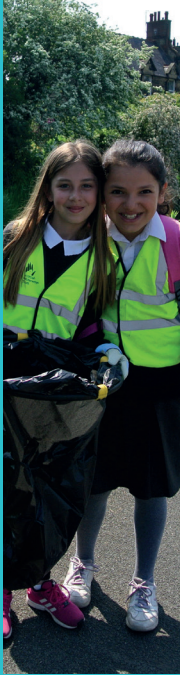
- Well-informed public concern for the environment of town and country
- High quality in planning and in new architecture
- The conservation and, where necessary, adaptation for re-use of older buildings of distinction or historic interest
- Knowledgeable and therefore effective comment in planning matters
- The elimination of ugliness, whether resulting from social deprivation, bad design or neglect

We are still working towards the same broad objectives today.



Image (left) © Donald MacLeod





We are fortunate to own our own eighteenth century townhouse in Glasgow – The Tobacco Merchant's House – where we have maintained our offices since 1995. We have a small staff complement that works hard to achieve our objectives, under the guidance of our Board.

Everything we do centres around the following core values:

- We are **robust** and **independent** in advocating for Scotland's places and buildings
- We are **positive** about the future of the built environment
- We **lead** thinking on Scotland's civic spaces
- We **collaborate** across the heritage sector and beyond to develop ideas that tackle exclusion
- We **support** community groups in looking after their localities

We are proud to represent Scotland's civic sector and strive to ensure our amenity groups are active, empowered, and educated to make a difference in their locality.



3 / OUR VISION

Thriving, beautiful and well cared for places and buildings, which help to support and sustain a high quality of life.

4 / OUR MISSION

To celebrate Scotland's built environment, take action for its improvement and empower its communities.

5 / OUR WORK STREAMS

Our Board of Trustees have agreed three work streams for the next five years to 2024 based on our priorities. These areas of activity have been developed to align the original aspirations of the Trust when first established with the current needs of the sector.

- Our **Advocate** stream represents our high-profile work in supporting community voices within the planning process. Work within this category will include commenting on planning issues and applications, advocating for civic amenity groups' concerns in national forums at a strategic level, and leading on a fairer, more inclusive and diverse view of our heritage.
- Our **Celebrate** stream includes events such as *Doors Open Days*, the *My Place Awards* and the *Scottish Heritage Angel Awards*. It also includes our networking events for local groups and our ongoing work to celebrate and maintain the wonderful architecture of our Tobacco Merchant's House in Glasgow.
- Our **Take Action** stream covers our mentoring of community groups to build their capacity in the heritage sector. It includes our work to encourage more young people to participate in heritage and our support of minority groups to become better represented. Our knowledge sharing and online networking initiatives are also included within this stream.

Underlying all of our activities is the Scottish Civic Trust's remit to remain **independent** in our actions. We view our ability to retain an uncompromised voice within Scottish heritage as crucial to the health of the sector.

5 / OUR WORK STREAMS

Celebrate

- **Doors Open Days:** celebrate our shared built and cultural heritage by enabling access to places, spaces, and activities not usually open to the public
- **My Place Awards:** recognise the impact of regeneration projects on local communities
- **My Place Photography Awards:** celebrate the involvement of young people in the built environment
- Run **annual celebration and networking events** for local groups engaging with heritage
- **Maintain the Tobacco Merchant's House** as an example of sustainable best practice

Take Action

- **Mentor** groups looking to expand their capacity or try something new
- Create a **best practice website** for information sharing, aimed at local groups
- Encourage the engagement of **young people** in the civic environment
- Support minority groups to become **better represented** in heritage
- Organise conferences and events that stimulate public debate on topical issues



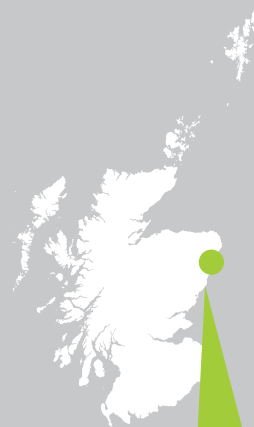
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Advocate

- **Advocate** for local members' issues at a policy level
- **Comment** on nationally-significant planning issues
- Promote a **more inclusive** view of Scotland's heritage
- **Publicise and comment** on important issues affecting civic spaces
- Advocate for Scotland's **civic amenity groups** in Europe and internationally
- Annual **national campaign** on civic issues

6 / OUR PRIORITIES

• EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO BECOME MORE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN HERITAGE AND THE WIDER BUILT ENVIRONMENT



We want communities to have the tools to make informed decisions relating to their heritage resources and the wider built environment, and to be able to lead projects if they consider it appropriate.

We offer a free mentoring upskilling programme for community groups working on heritage projects with ad hoc support on specific issues where needed. *My Place Mentoring* is tailored to the individual needs of each group and can give between 8-20 days of support. Our plan is to develop our mentoring service further, by pro-actively seeking out groups for support and increasing the numbers of groups on our programme.

CASE STUDY: THE VICTORIA ROAD SCHOOL, TORRY, ABERDEEN

We are helping Torry Development Trust plan to redevelop their former Edwardian school building into a centre for community activities. The school closed in 2008 and has been vacant ever since. The former school comprises of the original granite building built in 1878 and a large two storey extension built around 1904. The building is unlisted but is a significant architectural landmark within the community. We are assisting by provide expertise in negotiation with key local stakeholders, community consultation and capacity building with the Trust's members.



• CELEBRATE SCOTLAND'S PLACES AND BUILDINGS

Scotland's world-renowned built environment should be celebrated by as many people as possible.

Our Doors Open Days festival attracts more than 100,000 visitors each year, who make over 259,400 visits to sites across the country.

Beginning with the thirtieth anniversary of Doors Open Days in 2019, our intention is to grow and develop the event, so that we maximise its potential for widespread engagement in architecture and heritage. We plan to achieve this by diversifying the offer with annual national themes, and by creating a greater digital presence to allow those with access issues to participate more fully.

Findhorn Icehouse, Moray © Tim Negus



CASE STUDY: HERITAGE 3D

We are creating an accessible tour of sites in Scotland for those who experience issues with physically visiting venues. On our Doors Open Days website, we are developing a map of all the 3D building tours, together with a briefing note on what virtual visitors can expect to see when they click on the link.

• ACKNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT GRASSROOTS CONTRIBUTIONS TO HERITAGE AND REGENERATION

Local volunteers are critical to sustaining Scotland's heritage and regeneration, and our goal is to celebrate their contribution, as well as provide support, advice, and a voice for them at a national strategic level.

We are responsible for well over a third of heritage volunteering opportunities in Scotland and support a network of grassroots organisations across the country. We run two annual awards events to celebrate the achievements of volunteers and their impact on regeneration. We aim to develop these awards further, and to provide more opportunities for peer-to-peer learning through regional events and an enhanced online presence.

CASE STUDY: HERITAGE HOOLEYS

We held Heritage Hooleys in Inverness and Linlithgow in 2019 to give our members the opportunity to build relationships with other groups and stakeholders in a relaxed setting. These informal gatherings have proved extremely popular and have helped us to gain a very strong sense of the issues on the ground within the sector.



Image (top)
© Donald MacLeod



• MONITOR AND COMMENT ON PLANNING ISSUES OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

An impartial view of both the decisions and strategic direction of the planning sector is crucial to protecting and enhancing our built environment.

The Scottish Civic Trust has always played an active role in monitoring planning issues. Our Technical Committee meets frequently, and we comment on a substantial number of planning applications on a monthly basis. We also respond on issues of a strategic nature. We intend to use our monitoring data to track ongoing issues with planning at a local level, with a view to offering comparative data indicating where the built environment sector may need additional support.

CASE STUDY: PLANNING ISSUES

We are working to create an efficient solution for monitoring and commenting on nationally significant planning applications across Scotland's 32 local authority areas as well as our two national parks. We have found that a great deal of key data related to conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, Buildings at Risk etc. is not "joined-up" across the 34 different online planning portals. The efforts of the Scottish Civic Trust, other national heritage bodies, and local heritage interests are much hampered by this: the challenge is therefore to present our own user friendly, unified source for matters of national significance.

Our Chair has actively relationships with the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland, Edinburgh World Heritage Trust and the Cockburn Association, to provide a unified view of highly controversial called-in proposals for the Royal High School in Edinburgh. Director Susan O'Connor's letter to *The Times* (Scotland) was published, expressing our extreme concern about demolition of a historic building in Glasgow's Sauchiehall Street. Our volunteer caseworkers made effective representations on many proposals including in Banff, Eaglesham, the Isle of Coll, Mauchline and North Berwick.

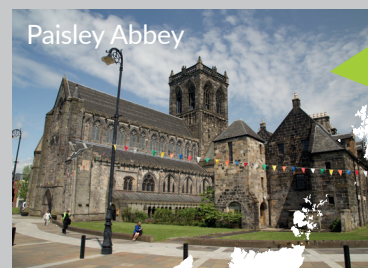
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• LEAD THINKING AND ACTION IN IMPROVING THE DIVERSITY OF SCOTLAND'S HERITAGE



Heritage is often seen as the preserve of white middle-class able-bodied Scots. However, we believe that our culture is enriched by the contributions of a broader range of people.

We have engaged a Diverse Heritage Officer whose remit is to encourage and empower minority and under-represented groups to become leaders in heritage. At the request of the Council of Europe, we have undertaken a pilot study on the engagement of ethnic minorities in heritage. We are also working with access and intersectional groups on ways to help them to claim Scotland's heritage as their own. We look forward to expanding and developing this area of work over the next couple of years.



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CASE STUDY: IMPROVING ACCESS TO HERITAGE, PAISLEY

On 3 December 2018 – International Day of Persons with Disabilities – we hosted a lecture and roundtable discussion in Paisley on the theme of improving access to heritage. The event was co-designed and co-delivered with Les Fernie, Managing Director of Walking Tours on Wheels, and attracted 37 participants aged from 34-84, with 70% self-identifying as having some level of disability.

7 / ACHIEVING OUR GOALS

The Scottish Civic Trust is committed to operating in a manner that is both professional and appropriate for an organisation with charitable outcomes. We are committed to ensuring the following conditions are met and developed in the running of the organisation for the period of the Strategic Plan:

Knowledgeable, Skilled and Available Trustees

We have a Board of ten Trustees, who meet quarterly with the Director to discuss the work of the Trust. Outside of these quarterly meetings, the following committees meet, on at least a quarterly basis:

- *Finance and Audit* – Budgeting and legal requirements
- *Strategy and Communications* – Strategic direction and communications planning
- *Technical* – Planning responses at local and strategic levels and the Tobacco Merchant's House

The Director and a relevant staff member attends each of the committee meetings, where the Trust's strategy in each area is discussed.

Outside of the committee meetings, the Chair offers frequent ad hoc advice and support to the Director.

This structure ensures the direction of the Trust in line with the strategy agreed by the Trustees. The nature and number of the committees is discussed annually by the Trustees and adjusted where appropriate.



Images above & opposite
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Appropriate and Effective Staff

We are a small, skilled team with experience across our various work streams, and led by a full-time Director. Modern work practices have meant that we have been able to reduce our administrative requirements significantly in recent years. This has allowed us to reorganise our staff compliment around operational priorities and meet a greater and more diverse audience. We now employ a Diverse Heritage Officer, whose role is to promote heritage beyond our traditional networks, and a Communications and Events Officer, who ensures that our messages are broadcast across traditional and social media.

Our team works across a wide variety of subject areas within heritage and inevitably there are

significant areas of crossover. We have put in place working practices that allow staff to work across all our areas of operation, and we anticipate that Doors Open Days – our key annual event – will increasingly represent the fruits of these interactions across work streams.

Our staff have access to a training budget to support relevant learning and take part in annual team-building activities. Staff members have weekly one-to-one meetings with the Director to discuss progress and any issues relating to wellbeing. With the exception of the Director, all staff are offered time off in lieu for any additional hours worked, and are encouraged to keep within their contracted office hours as far as possible.



Sustainable and Diverse Funding Sources

We have been fortunate to receive the support of Historic Environment Scotland as our core funder for a long period of time, and this has given us considerable security as an organisation. However, we are aware that it is unsustainable to rely on the support of one major funder forever, and to that end we have begun to diversify our portfolio of support. We are pleased to have added the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the William Grant Foundation, and the Council of Europe as new funders this year and are developing a strategy for corporate support that we hope to roll out over the next couple of years.



Monitoring Our Progress

Our staff produce reports for the Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis. We also produce an annual report that reflects on our progress within our work streams, and we carry out periodic consultation exercises with our member groups to develop our work streams and establish our impacts. Our strategy for 2025-30 will include a summary of progress made towards our strategic priorities.



Looking Forward

We believe that the next five years will see great change within the civic sector as land ownership and planning reform alter the structures of decision making about places and spaces in a radical way. Alongside this will be a need to ensure that communities are properly informed and resourced to take up the new opportunities, challenges and responsibilities offered to them. As a result, we expect our role to become more focussed on how our historic places and spaces can better support Scotland's communities. Our work will include the following:

- Promoting and supporting a fairer and more diverse heritage for Scotland
- Facilitating a stronger network of grassroots heritage and built environment organisations
- Providing expert and impartial planning commentary on a national scale
- Celebrating the contributions of volunteers in the built environment sector
- Leading thinking on civic engagement with the built environment in Scotland, generating and testing new ideas as well as following international initiatives

We will measure our success towards the following outcomes on an annual basis:

- **Increasing the diversity of people engaged with heritage in Scotland.** We will work to include more under-represented communities, including disabled persons' organisations, BME and LGBTQI+ groups
- **Increasing overall participation in the built environment and heritage volunteering in particular,** through diverse opportunities for all ages in our Doors Open Days and our My Place Mentoring initiatives
- **Helping community-based heritage capital projects to progress** through our My Place Mentoring initiative
- **Positively influencing planning decisions** for the sustainable preservation and regeneration of our built environment
- **Bringing new thinking to the sector,** through new initiatives, disseminating our own expertise, and adopting internationally proven schemes for implementation in Scotland