



## STRATEGY STEERING GROUP

5 November 2025, 14:00 - 16:00

HYBRID: In person at Longmore House, Edinburgh and on MS Teams

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Allan Lindsay (AL), Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, Angus Robertson MSP (AR), Alison Turnbull (AT), Callum Grigor (CG), Caroline Clark (CC), Emma Berry (EB), Gavin MacGregor (GM), Hazel Johnson (HJ), Isobel Hillard (IH), Jonathan Hunt (JH), Kate Gwynn (KG), Lucy Casot (LC), Margaret McSporran (MM), Mark Geddes (MG), Peter Rawcliffe (PR), Philip Long (PL), Rob Dickson (RD), Tony McCaffery (TM), Catherine Cartmell (CCart), Jilly Burns (JB), Kirsty Haslam (KH), Marjorie Perotto (MP)

### **DELEGATES:**

Jamie MacDougall (JM) for Kenneth Hogg, Paul Zealey (PZ) for Chris Brodie

**Apologies:** James Fowlie, Ian Freeman, Adam Jackson

### **1. WELCOME**

Alison Turnbull (AT) welcomed attendees to the fifth meeting of the National Strategy Steering Group

### **2. ADDRESS FROM CABINET SECRETARY**

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, Angus Robertson MSP (AR) addressed the meeting, reflecting on the importance of collaboration and working in partnership to meet national challenges. AR highlighted areas in which solutions are emerging, specifically noting the opportunity for skills development offered by the investment in Lock 16: Scotland's centre of excellence for canals and traditional skills. AR acknowledged the Scottish Government's commitment to the delivery of the National Strategy and the important role of the Steering Group in fostering and supporting a collaborative, partnership-focused approach.

### **3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and will be published on the Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) website.

All actions from the previous meeting were noted as completed or ongoing.

### **4. PROGRAMME MANAGER REPORT**

Jilly Burns (JB), National Strategy Programme Manager, provided an overview of delivery progress since the previous meeting, noting good progress across all workstreams except for Outcome 2: 'The historic environment is more climate resilient'. However, JB noted mitigation efforts are underway to address the delays in delivery of Outcome 2 and bring the work back on track by April 2026.

The Steering Group noted that they would also like to see activity about Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) reflected in future national strategy reporting.

## **5. RECENT OPOF EVENT SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

JB detailed two recent workshops, *Re-imagining heritage futures: Embedding EDI in the historic environment* and *Data & Evidence in the historic environment sector*, progressed in response to Scotland's Historic Environment Forum (SHEF) 2025 and the priorities instructed post-event by the Steering Group. JB presented recommendations for both areas of work and requested input from the Steering Group as to what actions should be taken forward, in what priority and how.

The Steering Group noted the importance of sector collaboration on Data and the need for a form of centralised resource but through a system that builds from existing initiatives. There was also an acknowledged need to consider how EDI activity can be embedded beyond what is often existing project models. The Steering Group agreed that both initiatives were of strategic importance to the sector and provided broad and important benefits across OPOF's outcomes. It was recognised that there was a first stage need for the OPOF team to scope the activity required to design the architecture, governance and resourcing to initiate both activities, including providing important clarity on the role and resourcing Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and others can provide to achieve both.

RD offered to share learnings regarding data sharing agreements from Visit Scotland.

JB asked for sponsors for activity from Steering Group: LC, TM, GM, HJ, MM and PL all offered support to champion EDI activity. CG noted support from data colleagues within Scottish Government to continue ongoing conversations on Data Hub.

**Action 1:** National Strategy team will work with HES to clarify their resourcing commitments for identified national strategic development priorities

**Action 2:** National Strategy team will scope next steps for EDI Forum and Data Hub, sharing updates as relevant to identified Steering Group sponsors

**Action 3:** National Strategy team will engage with RD to learn from Visit Scotland data-sharing approach

## **6. SKILLS INVESTMENT PLAN UPDATE**

Catherine Cartmell (CCart), Skills Investment Plan Manager, provided a summary of skills activity, noting a particular challenge of development pathways through further and higher education establishments.

The Steering Group provided advice on advocating for heritage skills, focused on the need for additional data and showcasing more enticing narratives for heritage skills that are relevant to specific audiences, in particular young people and businesses. Solutions to support more effective advocacy included a focus on improving communication/messaging narratives, leveraging procurement and grant-funding opportunities, and providing events to encourage collaboration.

The challenge of Scotland's geography for skills provision and training was also acknowledged, and the need for a flexible approach that embedded specific training opportunities within broader training courses, adapted for individual skill demand, and utilising digital opportunities was noted, as was the 'hub and spoke' model approach already aligned with Lock 16: Scotland's centre of excellence for canals and traditional skills. The opportunity to link directly to improving communications aligned to achievement of national targets, work with existing accredited training providers, and to collaborate with creative and natural heritage sectors, was also highlighted.

**Action 4:** CCart to engage with PZ on visibility of heritage skills within Skills Development Scotland activity

**Action 5:** CCart to note keen interest of all Steering Group in supporting ongoing work to improve communications, advocacy and advance the 'hub and spoke' model and provide ongoing communication on progress.

## **7. SHEF 2026**

JB noted provisional date and venue for SHEF 2026. Steering Group showed interest in a place-based and action-orientated, strategic approach for the event, with increased opportunities for collaboration with business interests, including creative and tourist sectors.

CG, TM, CC, HJ all offered to support development of event. EB and RD offered support with connections to wider audiences via their existing networks.

**Action 6:** National Strategy team to engage SHEF Steering Group supporters in early 2026 as event planning develops

**Action 7:** National Strategy team to follow up with EB and RD regarding scoping additional attendees

## **8. NATIONAL STRATEGY DELIVERY PRIORITIES**

JB noted that the mid-point of the strategy is approaching and, while there is good progress across all outcomes and increasing clarity on strategic gaps, the National Strategy team is seeking input of Steering Group to steer prioritisation within the resource available. She also noted an upcoming report to HES Executive Leadership Team to confirm HES role in supporting OPOF gap areas (see Action 1 above).

The Steering Group recognised that there are a significant number of priorities, although all continue to be supported and are often interconnected. Steering Group members advocated strongly for the prioritisation of data activity and EDI alongside SHEF 2026 as best examples of that wider interconnected benefit.

CC noted the ongoing need to understand the wider resourcing opportunities available to support the delivery of the National Strategy and welcomed HES commitment to review where it could provide support.

RD built on this point and a recognition of the role of the strategy in providing a meaningful national investment framework. He suggested there was perhaps now more need to be robust in our reporting on which organisations are delivering on what to ensure sustainability and clarity of resourcing.

**Action 8:** National Strategy team to provide a report on which organisations are delivering and what against OPOF outcomes, where remaining gaps exist and a summary of the support being provided by HES.

## **9. AOB**

James Fowlie has requested Bruce Mann, Senior Historic Environment Officer with Aberdeenshire Council and Chair of Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO), to be invited to join Steering Group to support COSLA's representation of local authorities. It was recognised that additional support to represent a needed expertise in local authorities on the Steering Group would be welcomed.

The next Steering Group meeting will be scheduled for spring, with a further meeting next November and ad-hoc smaller / additional meetings on specific topics if required.

**POST MEETING NOTE:** JH raised the potential for additional private sector engagement / representation. To be added to agenda for next meeting.

**Action 9:** Add Steering Group representation for discussion to agenda for next meeting

## ACTION LOG

| Action   | Assigned to                | Deadline   |
|--|----------------------------|------------|
| 1. National Strategy team to meet with IF to consider learnings on adaption  | National Strategy team, IF | March 2026 |
| 2. MP to follow-up with RD to explore alignment of data and evidence between STPS and OPOF   | MP                         | Jan 2026   |
| 3. National Strategy team will work with HES to clarify their resourcing commitments for identified national strategic development priorities  | National Strategy team     | March 2026 |
| 4. National Strategy team will scope next steps for EDI Forum and Data Hub, sharing updates as relevant to identified Steering Group sponsors  | National Strategy team     | March 2026 |
| 5. National Strategy team will engage with RD to learn from Visit Scotland data-sharing approach   | National Strategy team     | Jan 2026   |
| 6. CCart to engage with PZ on visibility of heritage skills within Skills Development Scotland activity  | CCart                      | Jan 2026   |
| 7. CCart to note keen interest of all Steering Group in supporting ongoing work to improve communications, advocacy and advance the 'hub and spoke' model and provide ongoing communication on progress. | CCart                      | March 2026 |
| 8. National Strategy team to engage SHEF Steering Group supporters as event planning develops  | National Strategy team     | March 2026 |
| 9. National Strategy team to follow up with EB and RD regarding scoping additional attendees   | National Strategy team     | Feb 2026   |
| 10. National Strategy team to provide a report on which organisations are delivering and what against OPOF outcomes, where remaining gaps exist and a summary of the support being provided by HES.      | National Strategy team     | June 2026  |
| 11. Add Steering Group representation for discussion to agenda for next meeting  | National Strategy team     | March 2026 |