CLIMATE CHANGE AND HES GRANTS: GUIDANCE (v.2026)

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

Contents

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Our historic environment is on the frontline of climate change through heavier winter rainfall, more frequent extreme weather, rising temperatures, and rising sea levels.

We all have a role to play in responding to climate change. We need to work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming, but we must also adapt to the current and future impacts as the climate continues to change.

All public bodies in Scotland are required by law to play their part by reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. The Scottish Government's Programme for Government sets out that funding from bodies such as Historic Environment Scotland (HES) should help to unlock wider benefits such as the just transition to a net zero economy.

Historic Environment Scotland is committed to preserving and enhancing Scotland's historic environment. We want to support projects that contribute to the improved resilience of historic sites to the impacts of climate change.

What do we expect from our applicants?

In your grant application, we expect you to tell us what measures you have included in your project to adapt to climate change and/or reduce emissions. Depending on the size of your project, these might be limited in scope, but we do expect consideration of environmental impact to have played a role in developing your application, whatever you are planning to do.

This might include thinking of your project in terms of **climate change mitigation** (the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions) and **climate change adaptation** (adapting to the present and future impacts of climate change).

More information, including specific examples, is provided in Annex A: Mitigation and Adaptation.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Comparison

Aspect	Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation
Focus	Actions taken to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere	Actions taken to respond to and managing the impacts of climate change
Goal	Prevent further climate change	Protect and adapt heritage to withstand climate change impacts
Timeframe	Immediate and long-term	Immediate and long-term
Benefit	Prioritises sustainability while preserving integrity	Ensures resilience to climate change impacts, including flooding, storms, or heatwaves etc.,

We will also ask you to fill out our carbon calculator as part of our Conditions of Grant. For most of our grantees, we will only ask you to do this once, however if you receive funding through our Partnership Fund, you will be asked to fill out our carbon calculator at the end of each financial year that we fund you. This calculator provides us with a better understanding of the environmental

impact of our funding and what steps you are taking to reduce this impact. Please contact ourpastourfuture@hes.scot to request a copy of our carbon calculator.

If you have received funding for physical works (i.e. construction works) and you have produced a Whole Life Carbon Assessment as part of developing your project, we would appreciate if you could provide us with the information, however this is not essential.

Climate Change Measures and Cultural Significance

Preparing your application to HES is a good opportunity to assess your organisation's and/or your project's ability to be climate change ready. You should also consider what measures to mitigate the effects of climate change you could undertake that would not harm the significance of any historic fabric you will be working with as part of your HES-funded project.

If you think the measures, you are considering may affect places of cultural significance, you should try to avoid or minimise any adverse impact. The Historic Environment Policy for Scotland outlines policies and principles to consider when making decisions about changes to the historic environment. Our Managing Change guidance notes set out how to consider impacts on cultural significance.

What will we support?

Any projects we fund must align with our Grants priorities, and meet the broader criteria and eligibility requirements of our Historic Environment Grants (HEG) fund. If you have any queries relating to what we will and will not fund, please email us at grants@hes.scot, or submit an Expression of Interest through our website for more detailed advice.

We support projects that demonstrate that climate change adaptation and mitigation measures have been considered in developing the project, appropriate to its scale and scope.

Examples of projects we might fund include, but are by no means limited to:

- Projects focussed on works to improve or enhance the performance or climate resilience of historic fabric using traditional materials and methods of repair where the nature of the construction permits.
- Appropriate repair and consolidation works for ancient monuments such as new shelters, structural support, and ground consolidation.
- Education and engagement projects that develop historic environment sector knowledge and expertise in managing the impacts of climate change.

If you are considering a project involving historic fabric, the HES Short Guide 11: Climate Change Adaptation for Traditional Buildings, the HES Guide to Energy Retrofit of Traditional Buildings and the HES Short Guide 15: Air Source Heat Pumps in Traditional Buildings outline more information about possible measures.

Annex B Key Resources lists further resources that can help you identify how climate change can be included in your application.

What won't we support?

The Historic Environment Grant fund does not support new-build work. This includes general building adaptation, extension, or alteration except in the case of agreed climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

If you aren't sure if your project would be eligible for our funding, please check with us at grants@hes.scot or submit an Expression of Interest through our website for more detailed advice.

CASE STUDIES

The examples below highlight a selection of projects which have successfully included climate change adaptation and mitigation measures that we have funded in the past.

St Kilda Church and Schoolroom

This project received £89,905 for essential wind and watertight repairs to the Church, dating from 1827, designed by Robert Stevenson, located within the St Kilda village Scheduled Monument and World Heritage Site.

Works addressed serious deterioration to the external envelope, including re-slating the extensively damaged roofs and replacing expired rainwater goods which had become detached, the primary causes of water ingress and subsequent damage to interiors. Repairs prioritised re-use of existing materials given their proven longevity, such as salvageable slates and retaining sound render, the latter of which still bears the scars of U-boat shelling in 1918.

Resilience measures incorporated traditional robust nailing patterns to fix the slate, guarding against future loss during increasingly extreme storms. Rainwater good arrangements and details were reviewed, not only ensure adequate capacity, but also to support easier maintenance. Improved leadwork to the chimney and reinstated windowsill details further reduced moisture received by the external walls, thus halting associated decay, whilst making the building drier and warmer, and a more comfortable space to occupy.

St Kilda Church and Schoolroom. Photo Credit: The National Trust for Scotland

Gracemount Mansion

HES awarded £50,000 for interim emergency works to halt the worst water ingress ahead of a programme of wider repairs. Our interim emergency works guidance allows Grants to support standards of materials and workmanship which may be less substantial than full repair works, allowing flexibility in arresting deterioration and thus reducing loss of fabric and lessening the future repairs.

The delivered works included patch repairs to leadwork, widening of a valley gutter to increase capacity, altering gutter details to reduce pinch points to concealed gutters, localised slate repairs including replacement of inferior quality examples, new temporary hip flashings, repointing masonry joints in particular to skyward facing elements where rainwater was permeating, and repairs to the deteriorated timbers resulting from saturated masonry. The works have addressed ongoing water ingress and halted consequential decay until the full funding package is secured by the trust for permanent works, making the building more resilient in the short-term and reducing the embodied carbon of future repairs.

Gracemount Mansion. © Historic Environment Scotland

Clackmannan Tolbooth

The tolbooth, dating to 1592, of which the west gable and adjoining tower remain, was awarded £125,761 to repair and preserve one of the few surviving tolbooths from the 16th century.

The focus of the project was to reinstate original details alongside improving the resilience of the structure, adopting traditional materials and techniques, utilising sustainable natural materials. This embodies a low carbon approach to building, mitigating the effects of climate change. In the case of the roof covering, a modern synthetic polymer membrane was replaced by lead sheeting, with an expected lifespan 4 times that of the previous material and eminently recyclable at expiry.

Resilience measures funded included a new lead flashing where moisture was penetrating the masonry, and reinstatement of harl to the tower, which had been previously lost. The rubble walls are built from a soft buff sandstone, and without the protective harl and limewash finish, the stone was degrading from the exposure- rubble or rough stonework was meant to be covered, and the harling and limewash serve to do just that, as well as the decorative effect. These sacrificial layers protect the underlying stone, which can be routinely topped up, avoiding costly and more carbon-intensive repairs to the stone.

Clackmannan Tolbooth. Photo Credit: John Summers Photography

Rethatch of Tigh Curstaig

HES awarded £7,500 to re-thatch Tigh Curstaig in the local style, using locally sourced marram grass. Thatched buildings in Scotland can be traced back to prehistoric times, though these have been gradually replaced with stone slates or tiles from the mid-17th century. In a 2015 SPAB survey, there were only 336 thatched buildings recorded, with only 221 retaining their thatch. By repairing and encouraging maintenance of the thatch, supported by a cyclical maintenance routine, this project ensures the longevity of the material, protecting a rare example of a vernacular building, as well as supporting the associated traditional skills. These are inherently low carbon approaches to building adopting naturally grown materials with almost negligible transport emissions, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. Additionally, there ongoing studies by Historic Environment Scotland alongside NatureScot to understand the effect of harvesting marram and the potential benefits to the wider ecosystem.

Tigh Curstaig. Photo Credit: Esther MacDonald

If you have any further queries about climate change measures and HES funding, please get in touch through grants@hes.scot. In addition, Annex B: Other Resources gives further information on the resources available to help you develop your climate change measures when planning your application to HES.

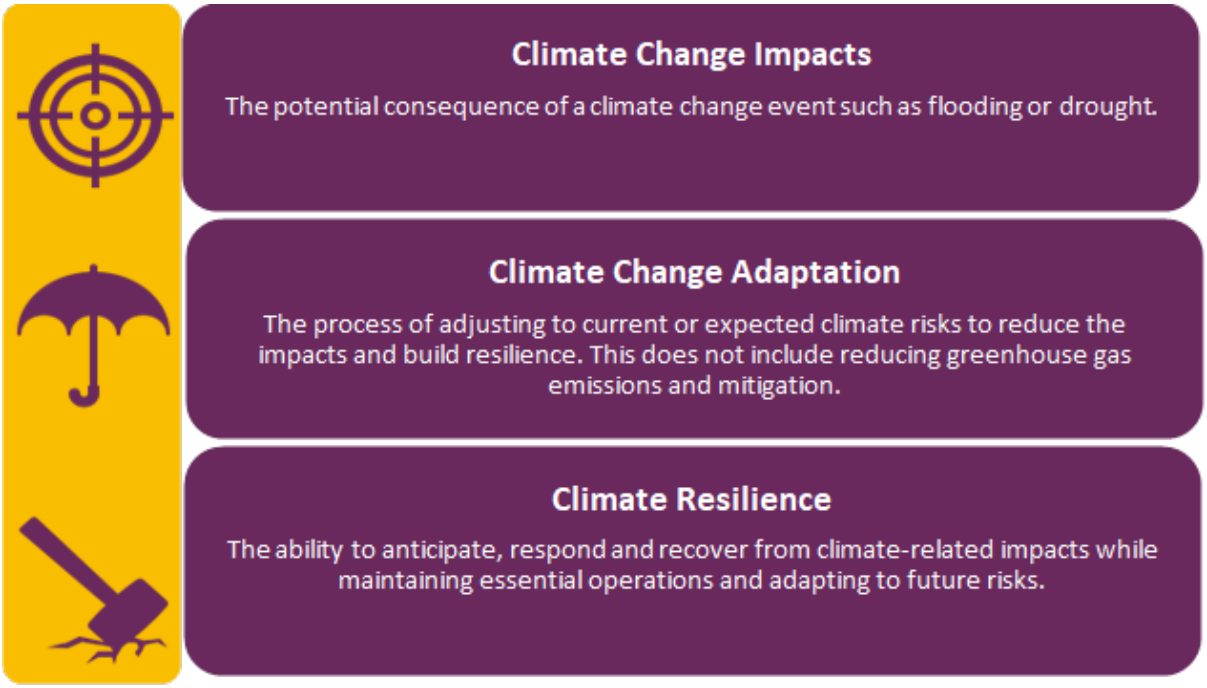
ANNEX A: MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

Climate Change Mitigation

Climate change mitigation activities aim to reduce or prevent the causes of climate change by lowering greenhouse gas emissions or enhancing carbon storage. In the historic environment, mitigation often focuses on improving the sustainability and energy efficiency of heritage assets while maintaining their character and significance. For example:

- Avoiding demolition by repurposing heritage buildings, which preserves the embodied carbon within historic fabric
- Repairing and reusing materials where possible or choosing locally sourced, low-carbon, and compatible materials for conservation work (e.g., lime mortar or reclaimed stone)
- Following a fabric first approach to retrofitting historic buildings by prioritising repairs and upgrades to the building's fabric, such as the windows, roof and walls.
- Installing energy-efficient systems like LED lighting
- Installing renewable energy equipment, such as solar PV panels and air source heat pumps

Climate Change Adaptation



Climate change adaptation activities focus on adjusting to the impacts of climate change to protect heritage assets and ensure their resilience to future climate conditions. Adaptation acknowledges that some degree of climate change is inevitable and aims instead to minimise the risks to heritage sites and collections. Adaptation activities might include:

- Identifying what climate change impacts are increasing the vulnerability of your asset. There are many free resources that highlight how climate change is impacting your local area, including the Met Office's Local Authority Climate Explorer.
- Maintaining and upgrading rainwater goods and soakaways to manage heavy rainfall.
- Improving drainage around the site and ensure landscaping plans are designed for flood alleviation.
- Reinstating or repairing functional details that were intended to protect an asset from the weather, shed rainwater or manage internal temperature and humidity.
- Improving protective weathering details, such as additional fastenings to ridges and slates and appropriate traditional external coatings
- Using materials compatible with traditional building techniques to avoid damage from higher humidity or temperature fluctuations
- Conducting regular inspections and repairs to address vulnerabilities, such as cracks or leaks, before they escalate due to extreme weather events

Mitigation and adaptation activities are not mutually exclusive; they work together to safeguard the historic environment:

- Mitigation actions, like energy-efficient retrofits, can enhance adaptation by making buildings more resilient to temperature extremes.
- The impacts of climate change may change the energy use and demand of buildings. Adaptation measures, like increasing the size of rain gutters and drainpipe capacity to cope with increased rainfall will help ensure the building remains watertight. This will help the building retain heat and prevent damage to climate change mitigation measures, like insultation.
- Adaptation measures can protect sites from damage, helping ensure that emissions reduction efforts (e.g., preservation of embodied carbon) are not undone by climate impacts.

A Guide to Climate Change Impacts outlines how climate change is impacting the historic environment and provides further examples of appropriate climate change adaptation measures.

ANNEX B: OTHER RESOURCES

This section provides several free and easily accessible guidance, tools, and expertise which may be helpful to support your climate resilience efforts.

The following guides provide broad general guidance on climate change and cultural assets:

- Cultural Adaptations Adapting Our Culture Toolkit
- Creative Carbon Scotland's Guide to Adapting to Climate Change

Historic Environment Scotland Guidance

HES is committed to understanding and mitigating the impacts of climate change on Scotland's historic environment and maximising the contribution heritage can make to climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation. HES provides guidance on how climate change affects historic sites and technical advice for adaptation and resilience.

- Managing Change Guidance: a series of guides about managing change in the historic environment, including guidance notes to support, promote and enable the continued use, reuse and adaptation of listed buildings.
- A Guide to Climate Change Impacts: a guide for identifying many of the risks and hazards of climate change that are facing Scotland's historic environment, offering routes to take action, to implement adaptation measures and enhance resilience to climate change.
- Traditional Building Advice: advice on maintaining and making changes to traditional buildings, including how to make an older property more energy efficient.
- INFORM guides: introductions to building conservation issues and how to address them, many relevant to climate change.
- Refurbishment Case Studies: a series of refurbishment examples on different types of historic properties, including retrofit and adaptation measures.
- Climate Change and Scotland's History: a series of videos about climate change impacts on Scotland's historic environment and how we can respond.
- Climate Change Adaptation Manual for Heritage Tourism: practical guidance for the heritage tourism to understand the impacts of climate change to their assets and plan how to respond to them. This was developed in partnership with Visit Scotland.

VisitScotland

VisitScotland promotes sustainable tourism practices across the country and provides guidance on how tourism businesses, including heritage sites, can adopt sustainable practices to minimise their environmental impact.

- Climate Action Workbook: a free climate action workbook gives organisations the tools to easily measure their business emissions and select actions to reduce them over time.
- Reduce your climate impact guide: support for organisations to create and manage a climate action plan.

- Energy monitoring and maintenance: advice on how to track and maintain energy usage.

Museums Galleries Scotland

Museums Galleries Scotland supports museums and galleries in Scotland by providing resources and guidance on various topics, including climate change. MGS has a range of climate action resources, including case studies and toolkits, tailored for cultural heritage organisations, museums and galleries.

- Climate Action resources: advice and tips on how museums and galleries can improve their sustainability and engage with audiences on climate action.

Culture for Climate Scotland

Culture for Climate Scotland works with individuals, organisations and strategic bodies across the culture and sustainability sectors to harness the role of culture in tackling the climate crisis.

- Guidance, resources and toolkit: a range of resources, practical toolkits and ideas available to help organisations embed environmental sustainability into their working practices.
- Carbon Management guidance: guidance on measuring, monitoring, and reduction of carbon emissions.
- Carbon Management tools: a set of four spreadsheet-based tools for measuring and monitoring emissions, including a quick carbon management calculator.
- Green Arts Initiative: a peer network of Scottish arts and cultural organisations working to reduce their impact on the climate and environment through the sharing of relevant knowledge, ideas and experience.

Business Energy Scotland

Managed by Energy Saving Trust, Business Energy Scotland offers practical advice, guidance and support for small and medium-sized enterprises (including charities) in Scotland looking to improve their business premises.

- Business Energy Advisor: register for free support and an energy saving report from a dedicated Business Energy Advisor.
- Energy usage tracker: practical guidance on how to audit your business energy consumption through a free energy usage tracker and checklist.
- Guidance and support: variety of tools and resources to support SMEs in Scotland.

Adaptation Scotland

Adaptation Scotland is a programme funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by the sustainability charity Verture. A team of adaptation experts offers advice, and link organisations, businesses and communities to tools, resources and projects that can help with adapting to climate change.

- The Guide to Strategic Climate Change Risk Assessments: a step-by-step guide to carrying out a strategic climate change risk assessment. It provides details of the different tasks involved in developing, completing and using a strategic climate change risk assessment at an organisational level.
- Climate Change Projections for Scotland - Summary: download a booklet, produced in partnership with HES, with a summary of the latest Met Office projections for temperature, rainfall, drought and sea level change.
- Resources and webinars: a variety of resources and recorded webinars which focus on building resilience to climate change impacts.

Keep Scotland Beautiful

Keep Scotland Beautiful offer Climate Literacy and Climate Emergency Training to help organisations, communities and individuals across Scotland understand the Climate Emergency and respond to the risks, responsibilities and opportunities ahead. Check their website for details of upcoming programmes.

Growing Climate Confidence

Growing Climate Confidence provide help for third sector organisations in Scotland to reduce emissions and engage their community.

- Net Zero checkup: a tool for organisations to assess how they're doing across different areas.

Climate Springboard

A free online programme helping Scottish businesses prepare for net zero designed by the Climate Partnerships team at Edinburgh Climate Change Institute. The programme is open to Scotland-based businesses in any sector with a turnover between £1m and £25m.

Scottish Communities Climate Action Network

Scottish Communities Climate Action Network offers training and resources for communities and regional networks.

- Scottish Communities Climate Action Network: a peer network which supports community-led action in Scotland to address the climate and nature emergency.

Carbon Trust

The Carbon Trust focuses on providing guidance and support to businesses, governments, and organisations on sustainability and efficiency, helping entities reduce their carbon emissions and energy consumption.

- Energy efficiency guide for Hospitality: practical tips and energy efficiency advice for hotels and the hospitality industry, including pubs and restaurants.

- Energy efficiency guide for Retail : energy efficiency advice and top tips for retail businesses.
- SME Carbon Footprint Calculator: a free tool that allows SME businesses to estimate their carbon footprint based on their energy use, travel, and other activities.
- The journey to Net Zero for SMEs: a PDF guide with options and advice for SMEs beginning their Net Zero journey.

Zero Waste Scotland

Zero Waste Scotland are a public body that focuses on helping Scotland transition to a circular economy, they have a wealth of resources for businesses and communities.

- Design out Waste in Construction: advice and tools to reduce waste in construction.