

STRATEGY STEERING GROUP

22 April 2026, 14:00 - 16:00

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Alison Turnbull (AT) - Historic Environment Scotland (HES), Callum Grigor (CG) - Scottish Government – Sponsorship and Historic Environment, Caroline Clark (CC) - National Lottery Heritage Fund, Gavin MacGregor (GM) - Archaeology Scotland, Jonathan Hunt (JH) - Historic Houses, Lucy Casot (LC) - Museums Galleries Scotland, Margaret McSporran (MM) - Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Mark Geddes (MG) - South of Scotland Enterprise, Rob Dickson (RD) - Visit Scotland, James Fowlie (JF) - COSLA, Bruce Mann (BM) - ALGAO: Scotland, David Martin (DM) - Lead on HES Cultural Review; Catherine Cartmell (CCart) - HES, Jilly Burns (JB) - HES, Kirsty Haslam (KH) - HES, Marjorie Perotto (MP) - HES, Adam Jackson (AJ) - HES.

DELEGATES:

Diarmid Hearn (DH) for Phillip Long – National Trust for Scotland

Apologies: Allan Lindsay, Ian Freeman, Emma Berry, Hazel Johnson, Peter Rawcliffe, Stephen Uphill, Steven Mackie, Tony McCaffery (notes provided and contributions fed into discussion by Adam Jackson)

1. WELCOME

Alison Turnbull (AT), Director of External Relations and Partnerships (Historic Environment Scotland – HES) welcomed all attendees to the sixth meeting of the National Strategy Steering Group and noted the attendance of David Martin, leading on the Cultural Review of HES, in an observational capacity.

Members introduced themselves.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

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.

3. PROGRAMME MANAGER REPORT

JB provided an overview of delivery progress and the revised RAG report. Five National Strategy outcomes remain on track, with Outcomes 2, 4, 6 and 9 flagged as at risk. All at-risk outcomes have mitigating activity underway.

Strategy Steering Group members discussed the risks in more depth, noting that while core team resourcing and funding remain key challenges, the most significant risk relates to the sector's ability to influence adjacent sectors and cross-portfolio government priorities. Members emphasised the need to strengthen the historic environment's role in climate resilience, energy efficiency and retrofit, education reform and skills, land use and agriculture, data and evidence, and embedding EDI across systems.

There was strong support for a more focused role for the Strategy Steering Group, particularly in shaping a clear and compelling sector "ask" aligned to the next Programme for Government, and in identifying how the Group can actively support delivery.

JF highlighted opportunities for deeper partnership between the historic environment sector and local government, with discussion around whether a joint approach or manifesto-style positioning could strengthen influence.

TM's written feedback highlighted the impact of ongoing budgetary pressures on progress with the EDI Forum. It was suggested that, as a minimum, the original group be reconvened to agree priorities and consider alternative delivery mechanisms.

DM suggested the need to look beyond existing HES grant routes and to improve how the sector articulates its value, with the Group's suggestions including clearer communication of economic impact, place-based outcomes and the "so what", supported by stronger use of data and evidence. Members noted the importance of compelling storytelling and a clearer collective voice.

CC queried how critical risks relating to funding dependency (Outcomes 6, 8 and 9) would be progressed. JB confirmed that OPOF does not currently have a dedicated funding framework for this activity. AT noted that alignment with OPOF was considered as part of HES Grants Reform, but that overall funding remains a live budget issue, reinforcing the need for wider system-level consideration.

ACTION 1: JB to arrange a discussion with JF and BM to explore opportunities for joint historic environment and local government positioning.

4. SKILLS UPDATE

Catherine Cartmell (CCart), Skills Investment Plan Manager presented an update on the Skills Investment Plan (SIP). She sought approval from the Strategy Steering Group to establish a short-term taskforce to consider the recent research which

looked at developing a 'hub-and-spoke' model for skills and to provide additional insight in three areas-advocacy, financial models and reviewing the evidence base.

The taskforce would complement the role of the Skills & Expertise group which oversees delivery of the SIP by providing fresh thinking and additional focus in areas of challenge.

Members highlighted the opportunities presented by the next Programme for Government and ongoing education reform.

It was emphasised that this work should connect more strongly into wider policy conversations and other activity, with a request for a Strategy Steering Group sponsor to support development of the taskforce brief and invitees, ensuring a focused and impactful outcome.

Members expressed support for the proposal and were invited to suggest potential contacts to participate in the taskforce.

ACTION 2: CCart to discuss with LC potential role as sponsor in the Skills taskforce

ACTION 3: Steering Group members to propose Skills taskforce members by 01/05/2026

5. SHEF 2026

Kirsty Haslam (KH), National Strategy Coordinator, provided an update on planning for Scotland's Historic Environment Forum (SHEF) 2026, to be held on 10 June at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. She thanked the members of the Steering Group who have supported the development of the event (CG, HJ, TM, CC) and noted specific asks for Steering Group involvement on the day.

ACTION 4: RD to confirm availability for Welcome & Housekeeping session by 08/05/2026. If RD unavailable, alternative Steering Group support will be requested.

ACTION 5: KH to circulate list of organisations invited, with Steering Group members to provide additional suggestions by 01/05/2026

ACTION 6: Steering Group members to propose suggestions for inspiration plenary speakers by 01/05/2026

6. NATIONAL STRATEGY GOVERNANCE DISCUSSION

AT introduced an early-stage discussion on the future governance of the National Strategy and the role of the Strategy Steering Group. Members expressed strong support for the quality and progress of the National Strategy team's work, and recognised the key role of HES in leading, supporting and enabling delivery of the Strategy, including its direct relationship with the team.

A range of governance options were considered, including independent chairing, joint chairing arrangements, or maintaining the current structure. While alternative

models were discussed, there was general agreement that continued chairing by HES was likely to be the preferred option at this stage.

Members emphasised the need to refresh the Strategy Steering Group Terms of Reference, with clearer articulation of the Group's purpose, priorities, focus and reporting arrangements, as well as its relationship with Scottish Government, including feedback and influence mechanisms. There was strong interest in strengthening ministerial engagement and the Group's outward-facing influence.

Opportunities were noted to enhance the effectiveness of the Group through co-option of independent expertise or the use of invited contributors at specific meetings to provide challenge and broaden perspectives. Interest was raised about increased representation from the private sector. Members also highlighted the need to consider how the Group's focus may evolve to support priorities such as community wealth building, expansion of the current sponsor team interests to include community, and alignment with relevant Scottish Government policy teams.

It was agreed that governance arrangements would be revisited at a future meeting, informed by this discussion and following the Scottish Parliamentary election and the HES Cultural Review.

ACTION 7: KH to circulate Terms of Reference with request for comment by 08/05/2026.

ACTION 8: KH to set a further meeting date between July – September 2026 after the HES Culture Review reports.

7. AOB

JB noted that an Event Report & Recommendations from the OPOF *Collaborating for Communities* workshop, would shortly be circulated as correspondence.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Optional opportunity to share feedback and discuss recommendations from SHEF on Wednesday 24 June. The date of the next full meeting TBC.

ACTION LOG

Action	Assigned to	Deadline
JB to arrange a discussion with JF and BM to explore opportunities for joint historic environment and local government positioning.	JB	May 2026
CCart to discuss with LC potential role as sponsor in Skills Taskforce	CCart	May 2026
Steering Group members to propose Skills taskforce members	ALL	04/05/2026

RD to confirm availability for Welcome & Housekeeping session. If RD unavailable, alternative Steering Group support will be requested.	RD	08/05/2026
KH to circulate list of organisations invited to SHEF 2026, with Steering Group members to provide additional suggestions.	ALL	04/05/2026
Steering Group members to propose suggestions for inspiration plenary speakers	ALL	04/05/2026
KH to circulate Terms of Reference with request for comment by 08/05/2026.	ALL	11/05/2026
KH to set a further meeting date between July – September 2026.	KH	30/09/2026