COLLABORATING FOR COMMUNITIES: COMMUNITY HERITAGE RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Collaborating for Communities* programme has explored how Scotland's historic environment sector can better support and work alongside community heritage organisations to strengthen resilience, participation, collaboration and influence. Drawing on workshop discussions, stakeholder contributions, mapping of existing activity, and evidence from recent *Our Past, Our Future* (OPOF) publications, this report highlights both the significant strengths of Scotland's community heritage landscape and the opportunities to strengthen collective action.

A key finding is that Scotland already benefits from a substantial and diverse community heritage support ecosystem. Across the country, organisations provide expertise, funding, training, mentoring, governance support, conservation advice, place-based initiatives and opportunities for learning and collaboration. Communities themselves play an important role as owners, custodians, advocates and decision-makers within the historic environment, while heritage assets contribute to wider outcomes including wellbeing, regeneration and tourism.

The challenges identified through engagement are therefore not primarily about a lack of activity. Instead, they relate to how existing support is coordinated, accessed, communicated and sustained. Communities often find the landscape difficult to navigate, struggle to access specialist expertise and long-term support, and face continuing challenges around capacity, volunteer sustainability, funding and influence in decision-making.

Four interconnected priorities emerged from the evidence:

1. **Strengthening Community Leadership and Capacity** by building skills, confidence, organisational resilience, access to expertise and peer support.
2. **Strengthening Sustainable Funding and Evidence** through improved impact measurement, advocacy, accessible funding and long-term sustainability support.
3. **Improving Navigation, Communication and Shared Learning** to make support easier to find and learning opportunities more visible and connected.
4. **Strengthening Place-Based and Cross-Sector Working, Participation and Influence** to ensure heritage contributes to wider local priorities and that communities have a stronger role in shaping decisions affecting their places.

The report concludes that the next phase should focus less on creating new structures and more on better connecting and enhancing what already exists. By improving coordination, strengthening community influence, increasing the visibility of support, sharing learning and building long-term resilience, the sector can create a more accessible, inclusive and sustainable framework for community heritage. This will help realise the ambitions of *Our*

Past, Our Future and enable communities to play an even greater role in shaping, caring for and benefiting from Scotland's historic environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

POLICY CONTEXT

The current national policy context in Scotland is strongly supportive of community empowerment, participation and community-led development.

Policy developments, including the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2025 and the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Act 2026, have strengthened expectations that communities should play a greater role in shaping the future of the places in which they live. They also create important opportunities for community heritage activity to contribute to wider ambitions relating to community ownership, local economic development, participation, wellbeing, regeneration and place-making.

OUR PAST, OUR FUTURE CONTEXT

Within the historic environment sector, *Our Past, Our Future: The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment* (OPOF) places a strong emphasis on participation, empowerment and collaboration.

In particular, this work contributes to the delivery of:

- **Outcome 4**: Organisations that care for the historic environment have the right skills and are more resilient.
- **Outcome 5**: Communities have more opportunities to participate in decision-making about the historic environment.
- **Outcome 6**: The historic environment is more diverse and inclusive.
- **Outcome 9**: Increased engagement with the historic environment, with a focus on activities that enhance wellbeing.

The *Collaborating for Communities* programme sits within this wider strategic context and seeks to explore how Scotland's historic environment sector can work alongside communities to strengthen participation, stewardship, leadership and decision-making in relation to the historic environment. It is recognised that communities already make a significant contribution to caring for, managing, interpreting and championing Scotland's historic environment. The role of the sector is not simply to support communities to participate, but increasingly to work alongside communities as partners, leaders, owners and decision-makers.

This report captures what we heard through the *Collaborating for Communities* workshop and engagement process, what organisations told us they are already doing, and how wider

evidence gathered through *Our Past, Our Future* (OPOF) helps refine our understanding of both existing strengths and remaining challenges.

HOW THIS WORK HAS EVOLVED

The development of this recommendations report has taken place in three stages.

- **Stage 1: Identifying Challenges and Opportunities** – a dedicated *Collaborating for Communities* workshop was held in March 2026 and summarised in the post-event summary report. Discussion highlighted a number of recurring themes including:
    - community leadership, capacity and capability
    - value of cross-sector learning
    - need for clearer signposting and sector navigation
    - place-based working
    - access to support and expertise
    - improved communication and opportunities for collaboration
    - participation and influence
    - evidence and sustainability

- **Stage 2: Mapping existing activity,** before, during and immediately after the *Collaborating for Communities* event. The picture that emerged was not one of limited activity, but of substantial activity that is often not fully visible or connected.
- **Stage 3: Reviewing OPOF evidence from recently published reports**, including the OPOF Midpoint Report, the OPOF Baseline Refresh and the OPOF Delivery Plan 2026-2028. This additional evidence has provided an opportunity to revisit the original recommendations and consider how priorities might best be refined for the remainder of the OPOF strategy period.

2. WHAT WE LEARNED

SCOTLAND HAS A SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY HERITAGE SUPPORT ECOSYSTEM

One of the clearest messages emerging from this work is that Scotland already benefits from a substantial community heritage support system.

Organisations across Scotland are providing support through:

- organisational and governance advice
- training, skills development and learning resources
- community ownership and asset transfer support
- conservation and heritage expertise
- archives and collections support
- volunteering programmes and advice

- community development initiatives
- mentoring and peer networks
- place-based initiatives
- research and evidence gathering
- grant funding and investment support

The contributions captured through this work demonstrate both the breadth of activity already taking place and the willingness of organisations to work collaboratively in support of communities. It is clear that many of the challenges identified through engagement are not the result of a lack of activity. Rather, they relate to how existing activity is coordinated, accessed, shared and sustained.

COMMUNITIES PLAY A KEY ROLE IN CARING FOR HERITAGE

The wider OPOF evidence base, as reflected in the OPOF Baseline Refresh (published September 2026), demonstrates that communities are increasingly central to the stewardship of Scotland's historic environment. Community ownership has continued to grow, and communities now care for a substantial number of historic environment assets.

Communities are also contributing through:

- volunteering
- local research and heritage projects
- community archives
- heritage-led regeneration
- place-based planning
- local tourism and economic activity

Increasingly, communities are not simply participants within the historic environment. They are partners, custodians, advocates and decision-makers.

HERITAGE CONTRIBUTES TO WIDER COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

Stakeholder feedback and recent evidence also reinforce a growing understanding that community heritage contributes to wider ambitions including:

- wellbeing
- social connection
- local identity and pride
- learning and skills development
- economy and tourism
- place-making
- community resilience
- Community Wealth Building

This creates significant opportunities for stronger alignment between community heritage and other local and national priorities.

3. EMERGING THEMES

Reviewing the original recommendations alongside post-event organisational contributions and wider OPOF evidence highlighted four interconnected priority areas.

These priorities broadly reflect the original themes identified through the Collaborating for Communities process while incorporating new evidence and learning gathered since that work began.

PRIORITY 1: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY

Communities require the confidence, skills, leadership and support needed to care for, manage and make decisions about their heritage. Participants highlighted the importance of:

- Community capacity and capability building (including leadership and governance)
- volunteer sustainability
- access to technical expertise and support
- mentoring and peer learning

PRIORITY 2: STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABLE FUNDING AND EVIDENCE

Long-term sustainability emerged as a recurring theme throughout engagement. Participants highlighted the importance of:

- proportionate evidence gathering
- long-term impact measurement and celebration of value
- accessible funding
- valuing community expertise
- sustainable organisational models
- long-term support beyond project delivery

PRIORITY 3: IMPROVING NAVIGATION, COMMUNICATION AND SHARED LEARNING

Communities frequently reported difficulties understanding what support exists and where to access it. Participants highlighted opportunities to improve:

- communication
- system clarity and signposting
- clearer and more consistent language

- sharing of learning
- collaboration between organisations

PRIORITY 4: STRENGTHENING PLACE-BASED AND CROSS-SECTOR WORKING, PARTICIPATION AND INFLUENCE

Community heritage takes place within wider community, social and economic contexts. Participants highlighted opportunities to:

- support place-based approaches
- strengthen local, regional and cross-sector learning and partnerships
- connect heritage with regeneration and Community Wealth Building agendas
- increase community influence and representation
- encourage co-production and shared decision-making

4. AREAS FOR ACTION

The next phase of this work seeks to move beyond identifying recommendations and towards developing a shared understanding of how the sector might collectively respond to the opportunities and challenges identified. Actions would require collective input, effort and collaboration, and the framework is not intended to assign ownership or prescribe delivery. Rather, it provides a shared picture of the current landscape and identifies where future effort may be most effectively focused.

Existing activity is indicative based on discussions before, during and immediately after the *Collaborating for Communities* workshop. The National Strategy team welcomes approaches to highlight other activity that is going on in these areas.

PRIORITY 1: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY

Strategic Aim: Enable community groups to confidently lead heritage activity by strengthening skills, organisational resilience and technical understanding.

COLLECTIVE FOCUS FOR 2027–2029

1. Better understand community capacity and support needs
2. Improve access to technical expertise
3. Strengthen volunteer leadership and succession planning
4. Expand mentoring and peer-to-peer support opportunities

GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Focus Area	Key Gaps Identified	Opportunities for Collective Action	Existing activity and support	What Success Looks Like
1.1 Community capacity and readiness	Lack of a consistent approach to understanding different levels of community capacity, including leadership, governance and organisational development needs, limits the ability to target support and investment	Explore shared approaches to needs assessment, organisational health checks and benchmarking	Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) has an organisational health checker tool for museums to identify development needs. Comann Dualchas Innse Gall (CDIG) is undertaking work in this area for members	Communities receive support and investment that is aligned to their needs, resulting in increased capacity and confidence.

1.2 Volunteer Sustainability	Limited support for volunteer succession planning and leadership development. Concerns about long-term capacity of existing volunteer base on whom many community heritage organisations rely	Develop leadership pathways, volunteer development opportunities and succession planning resources	Make Your Mark provides support resources for volunteer managers, as well as advertising heritage volunteering opportunities. Non-heritage support provided by Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), Volunteer Scotland and Third Sector Interfaces (TSI's)	Organisations demonstrate stronger leadership resilience and volunteer retention, with reduced vulnerability to burnout, leadership gaps and loss of capacity.
1.3 Access to technical expertise & support	Although technical support exists, communities can struggle to identify and access it. Need to identify and address gaps in specialist provision (e.g. governance, insurance, surveying, climate/carbon)	Improve visibility, navigation and referral pathways to specialist support	Range of advice provided by a variety of organisations (including Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF), City Heritage Trusts, Archaeology Scotland, Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS), Community Enterprise, Heritage Network, Scottish Community Heritage Alliance (SCHA), Scottish Civic Trust, Scottish Council on Archives, Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS), Historic Environment Scotland (HES))	Communities can easily access the specialist advice they need, supporting informed decision-making and stronger organisational resilience.
1.4 Mentoring & Peer-to-Peer Learning	Current mentoring opportunities are inconsistent and fragmented.	Strengthen peer-to-peer support, organisational matchmaking and mentoring opportunities	Scottish Council on Archives support Community Archives and Heritage Group Scotland as a network for mutual support for community archives groups, including hosting training workshop. Scotland's Community Heritage Conversations (SCHC) provides a platform to share experiences. Heritage Network Step on Board initiative. TRACS deliver Traditional Arts mentoring.	Increased opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and mentoring, resulting in stronger networks, greater collaboration and enhanced organisational confidence.

PRIORITY 2: STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABLE FUNDING AND EVIDENCE

Strategic Aim: Strengthen long-term resilience through sustainable funding, proportionate evidence gathering and improved understanding of community heritage impact.

COLLECTIVE FOCUS FOR 2027–2029

1. Develop shared approaches to evidence and impact
2. Improve understanding of long-term outcomes
3. Improve advocacy and awareness
4. Improve accessibility of funding support
5. Strengthen long-term sustainability

GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Focus Area	Key Gaps	Opportunities for Collective Action	Existing activity and support	What success would look like
2.1 Proportionate evidence reporting	Lack of shared indicators and common reporting frameworks means evidence gathering can be fragmented, burdensome and difficult to use collectively.	Develop a shared, light-touch evidence framework with common indicators, templates and guidance, supported by greater clarity about why evidence is collected and support for implementation if needed	Many organisations gather impact and programme data; organisations like National Trust for Scotland and programmes like Research in Action on Church Heritage are developing expertise in approaches linked to social value methodologies.	More consistent and proportionate evidence collection across the sector, with greater opportunities to align community heritage evidence with wider OPOF evidence developments.
2.2 Evidencing long-term impact of community heritage activity	Reporting and investment decisions often focus on short-term outputs, while longer-term outcomes and impacts are not consistently measured, evidenced or shared.	Strengthen cross-sector approaches to impact reporting to focus on social value, wellbeing, climate, place, Community Wealth Building and resilience outcomes over longer timescales.	Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB) climate-related evidence. OPOF Baseline Refresh and Strategic Evidence Statements. Place-based research and wellbeing evidence being developed across the sector.	Increased evidence and a stronger understanding of heritage's longer-term contribution to communities and places.

2.3 Advocacy and Recognition	No shared advocacy narrative or coordinated approach to communicating collective impact. This means that community heritage is often under-recognised.	Develop stronger sector-wide advocacy and communications to consistently communicate the value of community heritage through evidence, case studies and storytelling, to demonstrate the value of community heritage	OPOF Midpoint Review evidence and sector data. KSB case studies and blogs. MGS Community Stories Programme. Scottish Civic Trust My Place Awards. Local and regional advocacy activity.	Community heritage is more visible, recognised and valued, supported by consistent advocacy messages, shared evidence and coordinated communications across the sector.
2.4 Accessible funding	Funding routes can be complex and difficult to navigate with processes potentially excluding smaller or volunteer-led groups.	Improve funding guidance, accessibility and support to ensure funding processes, language and reporting requirements reflect the realities of community-led organisations.	Tailored support offered by several funders i.e. AHF development support; MGS Community Catalysts and community-facing funding approaches; HES grants programmes with community relevance.	More communities can identify, access and manage funding opportunities with confidence, supported by clear guidance and appropriate support.
2.5 Support for long-term sustainability	Significant sustainability challenges remain, particularly for volunteer-led organisations managing assets. Reliance on short-term funding can undermine resilience, and there is currently no coordinated post-project support offer.	Develop support options beyond project completion, including troubleshooting assistance, income diversification and organisational resilience planning.	MGS Museum Futures programme. Community Enterprise Crisis and Resilience Service. Scottish Community Tourism (SCOTO) support for community tourism and revenue generation. AHF and DTAS organisational support. Informal support already exists through networks and relationships across the sector.	Organisations have stronger long-term sustainability and greater capacity to plan for the future.

PRIORITY 3: IMPROVING NAVIGATION, COMMUNICATION AND SHARED LEARNING

Strategic Aim: Make the community heritage support landscape easier to navigate and ensure learning, expertise and opportunities are more visible and accessible.

COLLECTIVE FOCUS FOR 2027–2029

1. Create clearer pathways through the support system
2. Improve visibility of existing resources and opportunities
3. Develop a more consistent language for community heritage

GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Focus Area	Key Gaps	Opportunities for Collective Action	Existing activity and support	What success would look like
3.1 System clarity	No shared overview of the community heritage support landscape. Communities and advisers often struggle to identify where to start or who can help.	Develop clear and simple tools and shared referral pathways that explain support routes, responsibilities and available support across organisations, funders and public bodies.	AHF routinely signposts projects to specialist support and funding. DTAS has developed route maps for Asset Transfer, Community Right to Buy and church ownership. Community Enterprise Social Enterprise Support map helps community groups, third sector organisations and social enterprises navigate available support. MGS regularly reviews guidance and application material to improve accessibility and clarity.	Communities can identify, access and navigate appropriate support quickly and confidently.

3.2 Consistent language	There is no agreed sector-wide language or messaging while technical language can create barriers and reinforce perceptions that heritage. Gap between what support organisations may see as non-technical language and accessibility to non-specialist audiences.	Promote inclusive, accessible and consistent language when communicating about heritage, participation and community development.	Organisations, including AHF and MGS, consider the accessibility of the language they use	A shared language and narrative help communities understand available opportunities, recognise the relevance of heritage to their interests and priorities, and engage more confidently with support and funding.
3.3 Shared learning offer	Learning opportunities and resources exist but can be fragmented and difficult to discover.	Improve visibility and coordination of learning opportunities, resources, case studies and development support, while creating opportunities for communities to share practical experiences and lessons learned alongside examples of success.	Existing guidance and resources across multiple organisations. KSB Certificate in Cultural Heritage. Archaeology Scotland learning resources. TRACS training and workshops. National Trust for Scotland exploring learning opportunities. CDIG facilitates member learning. SCHC provides opportunities for exchange. AHF regularly supports groups experiencing project challenges.	Communities can easily access relevant learning opportunities, develop confidence and skills, strengthen practice, and avoid duplication of effort through shared learning and honest exchange.

PRIORITY 4: STRENGTHENING PLACE-BASED AND CROSS-SECTOR WORKING, PARTICIPATION AND INFLUENCE

Strategic Aim: Strengthen local collaboration and community influence in decision making, ensuring community heritage contributes to wider place-based priorities including wellbeing, regeneration, tourism and Community Wealth Building.

COLLECTIVE FOCUS FOR 2027–2029

1. Strengthen place-based partnerships
2. Increase community influence and representation in local and national decision-making
3. Improve links to Community Wealth Building
4. Strengthen regional collaboration and peer learning
5. Embed heritage more effectively within local priorities
6. Strengthen cross-sector learning and collaboration

GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Ref	Key Gaps	Opportunities for Collective Action	Existing activity and support	What success would look like
4.1 Community influence in decision making	Community expertise and engagement are not consistently reflected in strategic decision-making influence and processes. Community voices can feel undervalued or are only consulted on a limited basis, on national activities.	Strengthen opportunities for co-production and community representation ensuring community priorities inform national funding, programmes and policy	Community engagement, i.e. HES Talking about Heritage, takes place to inform some projects and policy; KSB's Our Heritage, Our Future Community Heritage Action Plans, and SCOTO's Press Pause programme use collaborative community led methodology. MGS's Inscription Surgeries, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Scottish Heritage (EDISH) work and community knowledge exchange. Increasing use of participatory approaches across the sector. Local Place Plans, community planning activity, SCHC, heritage engagement programmes and local consultations.	National funding, programmes and policy are consistently informed by community-led decision-making, priorities and lived experience

4.2 Flexible place-focused collaboration	One-size-fits-all approaches do not reflect Scotland's diversity; existing coverage and capacity vary by location.	Support place-based collaboration that reflects local circumstances, existing partnerships and community priorities.	Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO) network. City Heritage Trusts. MGS Geographic Forums including CDIG. KSB networks. Scottish Archaeological Research Framework regional resources.	Strong local and regional partnerships exist across Scotland, reflecting local priorities and addressing gaps in capacity and support.
4.3 Regional connectivity	Communities often face similar challenges but can struggle to connect with those nearby who may be facing similar issues.	Support regional peer learning, evidence sharing and collaboration between communities to strengthen collaboration, confidence and regional problem-solving.	MGS Geographic Forums; Regional heritage networks and partnerships.	Communities are better connected regionally, with increased opportunities for collaboration and peer learning
4.4 Local authority and public body alignment	Heritage is not always embedded within wider local systems, priorities and planning, and relationships vary significantly across Scotland.	Strengthen links between heritage organisations and local authority functions such as community planning and economic development.	Local authority participation in forums. ALGAO partnerships. Existing collaborations between heritage organisations and local authority teams.	Strengthen engagement with local systems and public bodies to ensure greater representation of heritage within local plans and strategies
4.5 Place-based relevance	Heritage's wider contribution to local outcomes is not always recognised within decision-making processes.	Demonstrate heritage's contribution to Community Wealth Building, wellbeing, regeneration, place-making, tourism and local economic development.	MGS place-based research. Work on museums as anchor institutions. Scotland's Churches Trust regional tourism support. Local regeneration and community place-making initiatives.	Strong evidence and communication demonstrate heritage's contribution to wider social, economic and environmental outcomes, including increased engagement with Community Wealth Building initiatives.

4.6 Cross-sector connectivity	Community heritage can remain disconnected from adjacent sectors. Many organisations already work closely with communities but may not identify their activity as heritage-related	Strengthen relationships with community development, tourism, climate action, economic development and wellbeing sectors, to develop cross-sector learning and collaborations.	MGS has connected heritage networks with Climate Action Hubs. SCOTO delivers networking and peer-learning opportunities. Existing partnerships already connect heritage, climate and community development agendas.	Strengthen cross-sector collaboration and learning with improved recognition among partners of the contribution community heritage makes to wider national priorities.

5. CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

The four priority areas highlight several recurring challenges that require coordinated action across the sector, including leadership, inclusion, evidence, sustainability, navigation, and place-based working. Taken together, these themes suggest that future discussions should focus not only on *what activities are needed*, but also on *how activity is organised, connected and delivered*. The OPOF Midpoint Report, Baseline Refresh and wider evidence programme reinforces many of these findings.

The table below identifies potential opportunities for strategic change that could be explored further with communities, partners, support organisations and funders during the remainder of the *Our Past, Our Future* strategy period. These options are not recommendations. Rather, they present a range of potential approaches that could help meet identified priorities, strengthen collaboration, maximise existing strengths and address persistent challenges across the sector.

Strategic Challenge	Opportunity for Change	Potential Solutions for Stakeholder Discussion
Coordination	Improve how community heritage organisations and support providers work together around shared priorities.	• Community Heritage Collaboration Forum • regular partnership planning sessions • shared work programme • dedicated coordination or convening function.
Navigation and Access to Support	Make it easier for communities to understand what support exists and how to access it.	• Community Heritage Support Map • "Where to Start" guide for communities • shared referral pathways • coordinated online signposting.
Leadership and Succession	Build a stronger pipeline of community leaders and reduce dependence on a small number of individuals.	• Community Heritage Leadership Programme • national mentoring network • succession planning resources • peer-to-peer leadership support.
Equity and Inclusion	Increase access to support, participation and ownership opportunities for underrepresented communities and places.	• Targeted capacity-building support • partnerships with community development organisations • inclusion-focused pilots • shared inclusive practice resources.
Community Influence	Strengthen opportunities for communities to shape decisions affecting heritage, place and investment.	• Community advisory groups • co-design and co-production approaches • community representation within relevant decision-making structures • participatory decision-making pilots.

Learning and Knowledge Exchange	Improve the sharing of experience, resources and good practice across the sector.	• Community Heritage Knowledge Hub • shared case study library • thematic communities of practice • regular learning exchanges and peer events.
Evidence and Impact	Improve understanding and communication of the value and impact of community heritage activity.	• Community Heritage Evidence Framework • shared outcome measures • coordinated collection of community impact stories • alignment with wider OPOF evidence development.
Sustainability and Resilience	Improve the long-term sustainability of community organisations, assets and projects.	• Post-project support programme • organisational resilience support • business planning assistance • peer networks for asset stewardship and management.
Place-Based Working	Increase the contribution of community heritage to local priorities, placemaking and inclusive growth.	• Stronger links to Local Place Plans • Community Wealth Building partnerships • heritage and regeneration partnerships • place-based demonstration projects.

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been developed through the contributions of communities, organisations, practitioners and stakeholders from across Scotland. The willingness of participants to share experiences, challenge assumptions, identify gaps and contribute examples of existing activity has been critical to this work.

Particular thanks are due to those organisations who contributed information about current programmes, support offers, networks, resources and partnerships. Their contributions have helped create a much richer understanding of the existing community heritage support landscape and demonstrate the considerable commitment already being made across Scotland.

The findings presented here reflect a genuinely collaborative process. They provide both a snapshot of what is already happening and a starting point for future discussions about how Scotland can continue to strengthen support for community heritage through the remainder of the *Our Past, Our Future* strategy and beyond.

CONCLUSION

The strongest message emerging from the *Collaborating for Communities* process is not that we need to start from scratch.

Rather, it is that Scotland already possesses a significant community heritage support ecosystem, supported by committed communities, skilled practitioners, active organisations and strong examples of partnership working.

The challenge for the next phase is therefore less about creating entirely new activity and more about ensuring that existing activity is:

- visible
- connected
- accessible
- sustainable
- inclusive
- influential

By building upon existing strengths while collectively addressing identified gaps, there is an opportunity to create a stronger and more resilient framework of support for community heritage, helping communities play an even greater role in shaping, caring for and benefiting from Scotland's historic environment.

Future discussions may therefore wish to focus on which combination of the options above could best support collaboration, strengthen community heritage infrastructure and help realise the ambitions identified through both the *Collaborating for Communities* programme and the wider *Our Past, Our Future* strategy. The National Strategy team will work with stakeholders and funders to try to facilitate these changes.

OPOF National Strategy Team

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