

Review: Celebrate, Take Action, Advocate

2019-
2024



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About the Scottish Civic Trust

The Scottish Civic Trust was established 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.

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 compliment 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.

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

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

Background: Celebrate, Take Action, Advocate

In 2019, our Board of Trustees agreed three work streams as a focus for the Trust's work over five years to December 2024. These areas of activity were developed to align with the original aspirations of the Trust when first established.

Celebrate

Our Celebrate stream included events such as Doors Open Days, the My Place Awards and the Scottish Heritage Angel Awards. It also included 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.

Take action

Our Take Action stream covered 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 were also included within this stream.

Advocate

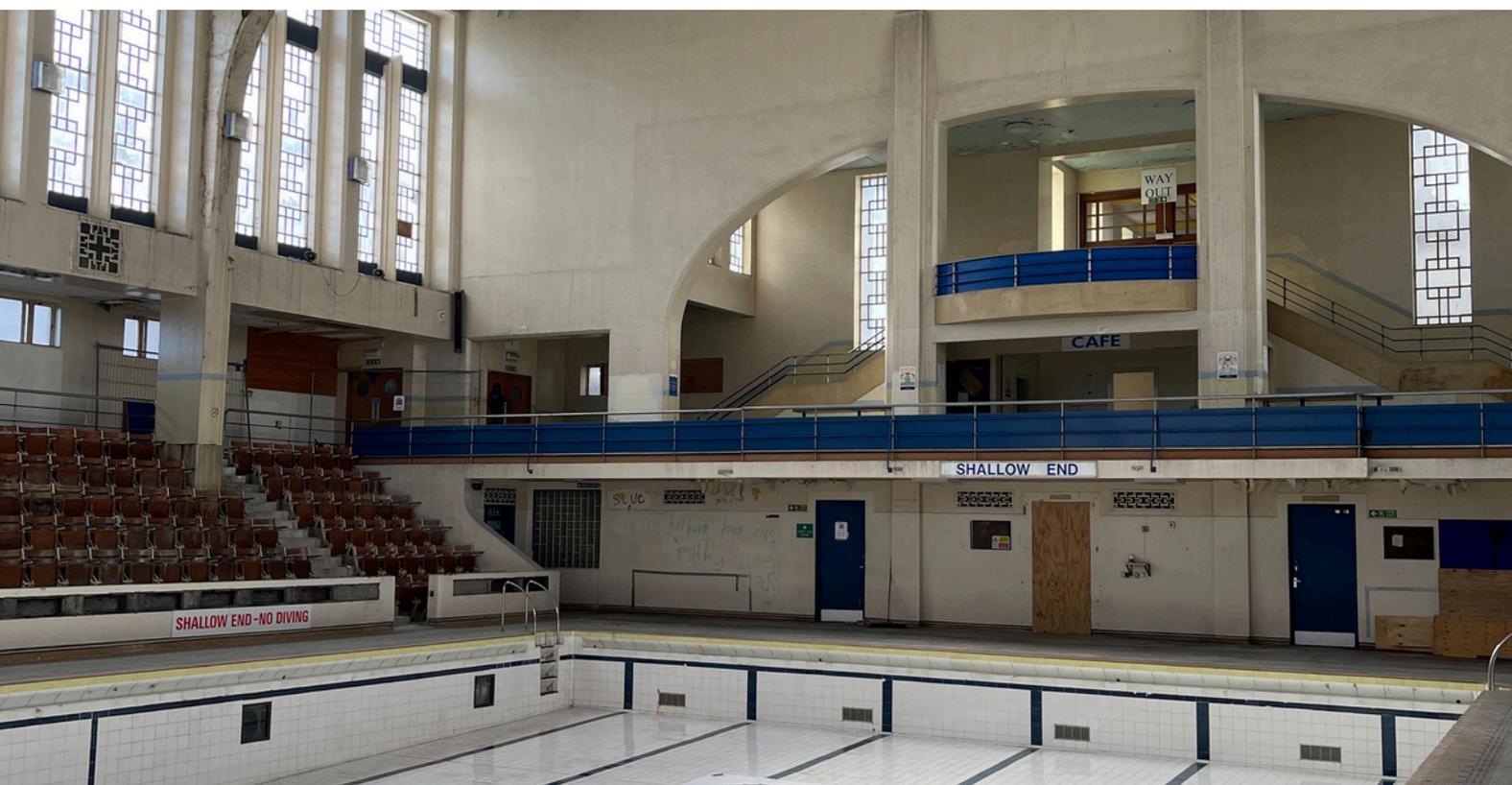
Our Advocate stream represented our high-profile work in supporting community voices within the planning process. Work within this category included commenting on planning issues and applications, advocating for civic amenity groups' concerns in national forums at a strategic level, and leading on a fairer, more inclusive and diverse view of our heritage.

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

The duration of this strategy also covers the pandemic period. Data during this period, of necessity, represents a diminishment in engagement, however The Scottish Civic Trust continued to work and engage online.

Aims and impact of the strategy

1 Empower communities to become more active participants in heritage and the built environment.



Aim

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.

1 Empower communities to become more active participants in heritage and the built environment.

Impact

Our My Place Mentoring programme ran from 2019 – 2022 and worked with community groups across Scotland to build their skills, knowledge and connections. There was a particular focus on working with groups in remote, rural or economically disadvantaged areas. The programme initially ran on a face-to-face basis and then pivoted to hybrid delivery for the remainder of the project.

Groups were given a variety of support depending on their circumstances, such as governance, financial management, business planning, fundraising, communications and project management. Following the pandemic, there was an emphasis on virtual connectivity, volunteer re-engagement and digital communications.

Following the end of the Mentoring programme, we have trialled in-person and online My Place Marketplaces, which are bespoke advice sessions for local civic and heritage groups across Scotland. In total, these sessions have supported 10 local groups with securing funding, reaching new audiences, changing organisational culture and general issues with day-to-day operations.

We will look to develop our support offer for local groups in our new strategy.

At-a-glance



2

Celebrate Scotland's places and buildings.



Aim

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.

2 Celebrate Scotland's places and buildings.

Impact

The thirtieth anniversary of Doors Open Days in 2019 was launched by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon at the Govanhill Baths in Glasgow, helping to raise the profile of the festival. In addition to the usual programme of open buildings and events across Scotland, the 2019 festival also featured a suite of one-off projects delivered by the Trust, including putting on refugee-led, multi-lingual tours of Glasgow City Chambers, distributing small-scale grants to increase access to sites and more.

The 2020 festival went entirely online due to the impacts of COVID-19. Despite the challenging circumstances, 604 online events and activities were accessed by 184,000 virtual visitors from around the globe.

The intervening years have seen the delivery of a hybrid in-person and online festival. In 2024, The National Doors Open Day Festival achieved 159,000 visitors to 843 sites across all of the 32 Local Authority Areas of Scotland, generating an estimated £1.6 million for local economies. For the first time, the Doors Open Days website was visited more than a million times. Volunteers are a key component to the success of Scotland's largest free heritage festival, and they donated more than 23,000 hours during September 2024.

Throughout the life of the strategy, the national festival saw more than 337,000 visits to 4,000 local sites of interest and generated 2,676,747 website views, as well as a social media reach of 1.2 million people. The festival generated more than £4.6 million to local economies and involved 74,500 volunteer hours.

At-a-glance

337k

Doors Open Days
visitors

£4.6m

contributed to local
economies

74k

volunteer hours
supporting the festival

3 Acknowledge and support grassroots contributions to heritage and regeneration.



Aim

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.

3 Acknowledge and support grassroots contributions to heritage and regeneration.

Impact

Over the course of the strategy, The Scottish Civic Trust has engaged with volunteers across Scotland. The Scottish Civic Trust hosts the Make Your Mark Campaign, which aims increase the number and diversity of heritage volunteers in Scotland. Since the campaign’s launch in 2020, 42 events have been held nationally, with over 1,200 attendees. The project also has a social media presence reaching 523,700 people.

The My Place Award scheme, which celebrates community-led placemaking projects across Scotland, has also strengthened, with 84 entries over the strategy period. While the Heritage Angels funding from the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation was withdrawn in 2019, our 2024 partnership with Urban Union saw the introduction of the My Place Community Champion Award, which celebrates volunteers who have positively impacted their local places.

Our schools-based My Place Photography Competition has had over 2000 entries over the past five years.

In 2024, The Scottish Civic Trust introduced the My Place Workshops, which work with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to create community networks and explore their local place and Scotland’s unique built heritage. Through our My Place programmes we reach over 100,000 people on social media.

At-a-glance

84

entries to the My Place Awards

2k

entries to My Place Photography

120

members of the Make Your Mark campaign

4

Monitor and comment on planning issues of national significance.



Aim

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.

4 Monitor and comment on planning issues of national significance.

Impact

During the period of the strategy, the Technical Committee was re-named the Planning and Architecture Committee and continued reviewing planning applications of national significance. COVID-19 created a hiatus in planning applications over the period of the pandemic, however The Scottish Civic Trust commented on 213 applications throughout the strategy period. The Committee gave further recommendations to planners on 62 applications and objected to 77.

A national overview of planning applications concerning buildings of national significance continues to be challenging due to the differences in how local authorities present information. Further complications arise as a minority of local authority planning departments refuse to actively engage with The Scottish Civic Trust, which lacks the staff capacity to actively research planning application data. The organisation is addressing this through its new strategy.

At-a-glance

213

planning applications
commented on

62

recommendations
given to planners

77

planning applications
objected to

5 Lead thinking and action in improving the diversity of Scotland's heritage.



Aim

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.

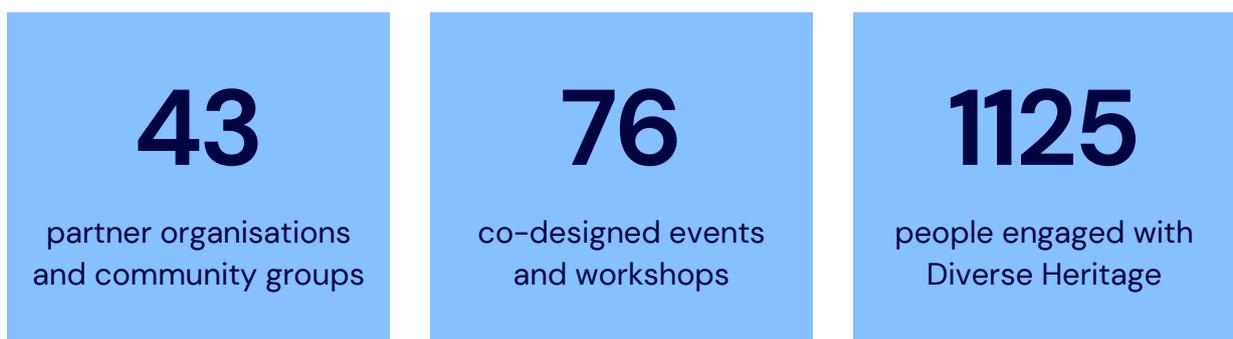
5 Lead thinking and action in improving the diversity of Scotland's heritage.

Impact

Our Diverse Heritage strand of work has been incredibly successful over the strategy period. Employing the equivalent of one full time member of staff, The Scottish Civic Trust have worked with 43 partner organisations from under-represented communities in the heritage and civic sectors. Through this programme, we have engaged with 1125 people and delivered 76 co-designed events and workshops.

Our work to diversify those engaged with Scotland's civic organisations and historic environment continues to grow and expand.

At-a-glance



Summary and next steps

In 2019 – 2024, The Scottish Civic Trust has delivered on its identified priorities, despite increasing funding pressures on its programmes.

The national Doors Open Day festival, My Place projects and Diverse Heritage programme have engaged with more people, communities and organisations than ever before – very nearly 1.5 million people per year. We have particularly expanded our engagement with marginalised and underrepresented audiences.

Our media reach and national advocacy is impressive, with more than two million people engaging with our programmes via social media. In 2024, The Scottish Civic Trust published its first UK Manifesto and contacted key Scottish MPs to advocate for the issues raised within it.

The Director also met with the Planning Minister, who presented awards at our My Place Awards Ceremony and the Minister for Culture who launched the National Doors Open Day Festival.

We have and continue to represent Scotland's grassroots civic and heritage organisations at a national level, empowering communities, increasing access to Scotland's historic environment at all levels and ensuring that the excellent work originating in, and driven by communities across Scotland is identified and celebrated.

We are proud of our achievements, but recognise that our work continues to be relevant and needed as we move forward from Celebrate, Take Action, Advocate. We look forward to engaging with you further in our new strategy, Scotland's Places, People, and their Stories.

Scottish Civic Trust

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