



Scotland's Places, People, and their Stories

Strategic Plan 2025 - 2030

The Strategy for
The Scottish Civic Trust



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Foreword

Welcome all to The Scottish Civic Trust's (SCT's) new five-year strategy Scotland's Places, People, and their Stories (2025-2030).

Building on the success of Celebrate, Take Action, Advocate, SCT's Strategic Plan 2019-24, this strategy takes the organisation forward in new and exciting ways.

In 2023, Scottish Civic Trust's staff began an extensive national consultation with community groups to understand their concerns and aspirations. In addition, through social media we posed vox pop questions to gauge individual's thoughts around issues such as the climate emergency, sense of belonging, feelings of safety and representation.

Our critical friend organisations also provided key feedback on our past performance and future areas of growth. Thanks to all the organisations and individuals who gave their time to help us.

In addition to consultation, this strategy has also been informed by an extensive research and policy review.

To help us deliver this strategy, we recognise that we need to work in partnership with other national and specialist organisations from Scotland and beyond; resources are becoming

increasingly scarce and the sharing of knowledge and capacity, however this is described, benefits all of the communities with which we work and helps us all learn from each other.

As the national voice for Scotland's grassroots civic and heritage groups, we aim to represent the concerns of, and exploit the opportunities for, our constituency and affiliate membership.

We aim to empower all communities to celebrate the uniqueness of their Place, whether this is expressed through buildings, landscape, stories, festivals – this list goes on! In turn, our Places combine to form the rich national heritage and identity of Scotland: we neglect our local historic and built environment at our peril.

Scotland's Places, People, and their Stories outlines how The Scottish Civic Trust will help Scotland's grassroots community and civic groups celebrate their Place. We commend this strategy to you and look forward to hearing how we can help further.

Joe Traynor, Director



About the Scottish Civic Trust

The Scottish Civic Trust is the national voice for Scotland's civic and heritage groups.

Founded in 1967 to help people connect to their built heritage and countryside, preserve the uniqueness of their locality and appreciate how this connects to the wider unique character of Scotland, we 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 founding aims were to encourage and promote:

- Attractive, healthy and stimulating conditions of life and work
- High standards of architectural planning
- The preservation of buildings and features of artistic merit or historical interest
- The protection of the countryside
- Excellence in architectural design
- A sense of civic pride in all of our communities
- An appreciation of the beauty, history, and character of Scotland

While the intervening years has seen the Trust develop in new ways, we are still working towards the same objectives today, as can be seen by the Vision for our organisation, which is to help create:



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

We will do this by:



Working in partnership with all communities to preserve the uniqueness of their Place, promoting access to the historic environment and its stories to ensure its relevance in contemporary Scotland.



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 support community groups in looking after their localities



We lead thinking on Scotland's civic spaces



We actively support the Scottish Government Fair Work Principles in our own work and the work we commission



We collaborate across the heritage sector and beyond to develop ideas that tackle exclusion

We are proud to represent Scotland's civic sector and strive to ensure that our grassroots groups are active and empowered to make a difference in their locality.

Our Priorities

The Scottish Civic Trust has developed four priorities for our strategy over the next five years to 2030 based on the extensive consultation exercise described in the Foreword and supported by policy and academic research.

These are:

Community



Access



Wellbeing



Learning & Skills



Activities relating to these themes will be grouped into our current work programmes wherever possible to ensure that our familiar brands remain strong and recognisable:

The National Doors Open Days Festival

My Place

Diverse Heritage

Underlying these four themes is a recognition that The Scottish Civic Trust needs to revisit our offer to our Affiliate Members to ensure that our membership benefits are clear and valued.

This offer will be reviewed continuously as we deliver Scotland's Places, People, and their Stories. We aim to provide clear information to members for the new financial year in April 2025.

Climate

The Climate Emergency is an existential crisis for the world's communities. In Scotland, many communities and homeowners are aware that Scotland has become warmer and wetter over the last sixty years, but are not sure what action to take to adapt to or mitigate the effects of Climate Change. The Scottish Civic Trust will work with other national partners to share knowledge and expertise with our communities, providing practical advice and training on best practise approaches to help mitigate climate impacts.

Planning and Policy

We will monitor all planning applications involving listed buildings, conservation areas and ancient or historical monuments to aid Scotland's communities in preserving their historic built environment and unique sense of Place.

Our historic environment needs to function as a community asset, and we will work in partnership to ensure sympathetic adaption and development in relation to the Climate Emergency and the requirements of modern living. Our work will involve direct communication with local policy makers and communities to ensure that by working together unique or valued local Place Markers can be saved and developed for community benefit. Nationally, we will campaign for and work with partners to raise the quality of new homes and their environments, including connectivity to local services and community life, not only to improve the quality and Placemaking aspects of new development but also to ensure that new homes are genuinely accessible to those with health, aging or other needs as well as those who are under-represented communities in civic life.

Knowledge Hub

Using our expert knowledge and experience, we will create updated guidance for communities around issues which fall within our remit. Bespoke advice will be available for SCT affiliate members.

Using our convening power, we will work with experts to share knowledge around issues concerning communities, including The Climate Emergency and preparing Scotland's pre-1919 houses and tenements for the future.

Our advocacy work will continue to represent the concerns, interests and ideas of our membership to The Scottish Government.





Make Your Mark

As the host of the Make Your Mark campaign, we will apply the learning and policy which has been developed to benefit civic and heritage community groups including addressing sustainability concerns which have been raised by the sector.

Civic Forums/Network Meetings

Representation and support are at the core of our work. Over the strategy period we will work with civic societies to establish forums across Scotland to ensure that our advocacy and support reflects the concerns of our constituent grassroots organisations. We will also work with smaller community groups to engage them in geographical network meetings, a more informal approach to engagement and support.

How we will deliver:

- Review all planning applications prioritising A Listed buildings, Conservation Areas and Ancient Schedule Monuments to ensure that they are preserved and, where appropriate, adapted sympathetically for community benefit
- Engage with both local authorities and Elected Members to advocate for our historic environment
- Develop a strategic position around new housing development and their relationship to existing buildings and advocate at a national level
- Continue to host Make Your Mark and use experience from this project to address sustainability issues within our constituency
- Pilot direct engagement with civic and community groups through civic forums and Place based heritage meetings to ensure that we are supporting and delivering for, and with, our affiliate membership

National Doors Open Days Festival

Managed by The Scottish Civic Trust, this is Scotland's largest free heritage festival. With more than 800 venues regularly taking part each September, over a million website visits in the festival period and 160,000 in person visits, the festival allows free access to Scotland's unique heritage venues and the stories which they tell.

The Trust is piloting a new approach to support and retain Regional Co-ordinators through awarding a bursary for the time spent organising venues and volunteers as well as uploading venues to the National Doors Open Days website and encouraging evaluation. This pilot also involves providing selected venues with financial support to diversify their audiences during the festival, forming sustainable relationships and templates for others to follow. This will continue over the duration of the strategy, if successful.





Diverse Heritage

Our Diverse Heritage programme, initiated in 2018, was and still remains an example of excellence for the historic environment sector. Over the course of the project, we have worked with more than 1000 people from under-represented communities in civic life. Through our work we aim to increase belonging, ensuring that all Scots feel part of their local and national community, whether they come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, refugee and migrant communities, BAME communities or those who identify as LGBTQI+.



SCT is also aware of the gender imbalance present in both the governance structures of community organisations and participation in activities concerning the historic environment and the celebration of community Place Anchors and will work with all genders to break down these barriers.

We will continue our work to increase the relevance of Place to people and groups through exploration and curiosity, bringing communities together for the benefit of their locality. Our programme will also establish networks of support and peer learning and will facilitate work with more established community groups and organisations to improve community cohesion, participation and sustainability.

How we will deliver:

- Continue to manage and promote the National Doors Open Day Festival
- Build on our pilot scheme, if successful, to target and diversify audiences and support Regional Coordinators
- Expand our groundbreaking Diverse Heritage programme to other geographical areas of Scotland
- Encourage grassroots organisations to become more sustainable through working with under-represented communities
- Establish networks of practise for existing community organisations and networks of support for under-represented communities



Paul Sweeney MSP with Director, Joe Traynor



Wellbeing

This strategy presents a renewed focus on how The Scottish Civic Trust will work with all communities to increase wellbeing and promote lifelong learning. It is a cross-cutting theme across all our work, reflecting the impact of Place and the historic environment on the everyday lives of communities across Scotland.

Planning

Our Planning advocacy will campaign for Liveable Neighbourhoods in our cities, towns and villages, ensuring that community hubs, cycling and public transport infrastructure, and green and blue space (including parks and growing spaces) are included in new developments and regeneration schemes. Poor quality environments are known to disproportionately affect those from lower socio-economic backgrounds; communities which, for many historic reasons, are disempowered and lack the agency to campaign for these amenities which have been shown to increase health, wellbeing and promote community relationships thereby reducing loneliness and isolation.

My Place Workshops

Our My Place Workshops engage with partners, refugee and migrant communities to enable New Scots to explore Scotland's unique history and historic environment, creating an understanding of their new home and a sense of belonging.

Through this programme of work, we help New Scots to access existing or form new support networks, increasing a sense of belonging and aiding increasing social cohesion. We will build on our success, involving more participants from communities across Scotland.

Industry Taster Sessions

Thanks to our partners at Urban Union, The Scottish Civic Trust has been able to offer 'taster sessions' and visits to Urban Union's construction sites across the country for the migrant and refugee communities involved in the My Place Workshops. The Scottish Civic Trust aims to continue this work, introducing more under-represented communities to training and employment opportunities and breaking down barriers to career pathways within the construction sector.

Civic Space

Many of our historic buildings have wonderful outdoor spaces. Access to these has been proven to help people feel healthier and has increased their sense of wellbeing. Historic green spaces such as parks, cemeteries and woodlands are also valued as Place Anchors by communities across Scotland. These are buildings and spaces which encapsulate the uniqueness of the area where people live.

The Scottish Civic Trust will work in partnership with other organisations and services to improve community access to these spaces, seeking to promote health and wellbeing outcomes across Scotland's unique civic and historic environment.



How we will deliver:



Develop our strategic position on wellbeing and the built environment and a subsequent advocacy plan



Continue to deliver and, where possible, expand the My Place Workshop programme



Work across Scotland with partners interested in promoting built environment roles to under-represented demographics



Pilot landscape wellbeing projects at built heritage sites and evaluate them

Learning and Skills



Learning and Skills

Young people are an under-represented audience in the historic environment, and Place-making in general. We aim to continue our work to promote the relevance of Place and community through the following programmes.

My Place Photography Competition

Our My Place Photography Competition for young people has a strong track record over a number of years. The Scottish Civic Trust work with over 200 schools across Scotland per year to enable young people to explore and celebrate the unique places which they call home.

Our programme promotes a sense of community, belonging and ownership of the rich diversity of Scotland's villages, towns and cities, aiming to inspire the next generation of civic and heritage activists. It also contributes strongly to the Experiences and Outcomes of the Curriculum for Excellence.

Skills and Apprenticeships

Scotland's traditional building skills are under threat as specialist skills have declined. There is also a distinct lack of diversity in Scotland's heritage workforce and a current lack of Scottish research into demographics and barriers to the sector.

Working through national partnerships and our diverse heritage communities, The Scottish Civic Trust aims to create best practice guidance for the sector by piloting new pathways for under-represented demographics to access careers in the heritage sector.

We will work to recruit and fund apprenticeships, including vocational training, which will increase workforce diversity, illustrate best practice and empower under-represented communities.



How we will deliver:

- Continue to deliver the My Place Photography Competition each year, expanding our reach where possible through partnerships
- Pilot partnership approaches to creating career pathways into the heritage sector for under-represented demographics, addressing the traditional skills gap
- Develop training opportunities with partners to increase awareness of the Climate Emergency and mitigation measures for grassroots civic groups
- Roll out training for sector groups on engaging with under-represented audiences
- Pilot work with historic building organisations, forming links with local school clusters to produce Curriculum for Excellence based resources which can then be adapted as templates for other venues
- Maximise the capacity for intergenerational learning through our activities, ensuring that our intangible cultural heritage is celebrated and preserved

Place Anchor Learning

Our Place Anchors, together with people and the stories they tell, are what makes our communities unique. Place Anchors might be historic buildings, parks, gardens, churches, museums or other civic amenities which local communities value as contributing to their sense of 'home.'

Research has shown that involving young people in these local and often unique Place Anchors, and promoting understanding of them, increases ownership, breaks down barriers of access, and enriches the education, and lives, of children and young people through Out of School Learning.

The Scottish Civic Trust will pilot the building of links between Place Anchors and local school clusters to promote these outcomes and provide best practice examples which can be adapted across Scotland.

Achieving Our Aims



The Scottish Civic Trust is committed to operating in a way that is both professional and appropriate for an organisation with charitable outcomes. Maximising resource through partnership working will be integral to how we deliver, with local community organisations, as well as at a national and policy level. We are also committed to ensuring the following conditions are met and developed in the management and oversight of the organisation for the period of the Strategic Plan.

Knowledgeable, Skilled and Engaged Trustees

Our Board of Trustees meets quarterly with the Director and staff to monitor and discuss the work of the Trust. Outside of these quarterly meetings, the following committees meet, on at least a quarterly basis:

- Finance and Audit – budget performance and risk
- Strategy and Communications – strategic direction and communications planning
- Planning and Architecture – planning responses at local and strategic levels and the Tobacco Merchant's House

The Director and relevant staff attend each of the committee meetings, where the Trust's strategy in each area is discussed. Outside of the committee meetings, the Chair and Trustees offer ad hoc specialist advice and support to the Director. This structure ensures the direction of the Trust is in line with the strategy agreed by the Trustees.

We will review our committees and their remits as part of the implementation of our new strategy.

Skilled and Empowered Workforce

We are a small, skilled team with experience across our various work streams led by our Executive Director. Our team works across a wide variety of subject areas within heritage and civic practice and the Director and Trustees work hard to ensure that our workforce is supported, valued and empowered. We have fully adopted The Scottish Government's Fair Work Framework.

Sustainable and Diverse Funding Sources

The Scottish Civic Trust has been fortunate to receive the support of Historic Environment Scotland for rolling three-year funded programmes. However, we are aware that the funding climate in Scotland and the UK in general is challenging. The expansion of our programmes will rely on SCT generating additional funding and we are working hard to diversify our funding, private sponsorship and other income, to support the invaluable work we do. Partnerships with other organisations will be key to the delivery of services to our communities as we progress with this strategy: shared resource and knowledge enables the most effective delivery for our members and communities.



The Tobacco Merchant's House

The Category A listed Tobacco Merchant's House, owned and operated by The Scottish Civic Trust, is the last surviving Virginia tobacco merchant's house in Glasgow and one of the few surviving Palladian Georgian buildings in the City. Built by John Craig in 1775, our building will celebrate 250 years in 2025.

To mark this event, The Scottish Civic Trust is working to undertake remedial work to the exterior of the building, ensuring its preservation for future generations. At the same time we are also working to acknowledge the history of the building and its associations with exploitation.

As a landlord, we will ensure full occupancy of the building to provide core income to the trust and work with tenants to ensure a happy and welcoming environment.

Monitoring Our Progress

Our progress will be outlined in our Annual Reports, published in the second half of each year of the strategy while The Scottish Civic Trust Board will monitor our actions on a quarterly basis. A final report will on the delivery of Scotland's Places, People, and their Stories will be published in 2030.



Get in touch with the Scottish Civic Trust



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