

Inverness City Heritage Trust

Strategic Plan 2024-2026



Foreword

Inverness City Heritage Trust (ICHT) is a registered Scottish Charity and company limited by guarantee, whose objective is to promote and encourage, either on its own or in conjunction with others, the preservation of the city's historical, architectural and landscape heritage for public benefit. Since its establishment in 2004, ICHT has provided grant support and advice to over 250 projects to conserve the historic environment of Inverness distributing £2.7million of Historic Environment Scotland (HES) grant funding to capital projects. Alongside this, ICHT has worked to raise awareness and inform the public of urban conservation issues and promote the development of traditional building skills. From 2015-2021, ICHT was instrumental in delivery of the Academy Street Townscape Heritage scheme in partnership with The Highland Council during which grants of £1.75 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, HES and The Highland Council levered a total investment in excess of £4.3 million in city centre regeneration.

Inverness is the administrative and service centre for the Highlands and accommodates almost a third of the region's population. It is a city which is distinctive and attractive not in small part due to its built heritage. This includes three designated conservation areas encompassing much of the city centre, traditional neighbourhoods and key open spaces along the River Ness, and at Clachnaharry on the Caledonian Canal. Over 150 Listed Buildings lie within the conservation areas alone, reflecting its architectural and social history significance.

ICHT strategy for 2024-2026 takes account of both Historic Environment Scotland's national priorities on heritage, and of The Highland Council's strategic priorities including the evolving Inverness city centre masterplan. The local authority supports the on-going regeneration of the city's historic centre as the focal point of economic, social and civic interaction and maximising the potential of the Ness riverfront. Its vision for a vibrant, prosperous and unique city centre on the river, well connected, accessible, and valued is shared by ICHT. For this to be achieved, partners across the city need to support activities which contribute to this vision including bringing investment into city centre, and supporting vacant and neglected buildings back to sustainable use and good repair.

ICHT Strategic Vision

ICHT will work to protect, promote and enhance the social, environmental and economic benefits of the historic built environment of Inverness.

ICHT Objectives

ICHT will seek to:

1. Improve the condition, appearance and use of the historic built environment of Inverness.
2. Promote learning and engagement in the historic environment of Inverness to a diverse audience to develop the community's understanding and enjoyment of the city.
3. Invest in projects which contribute to the economic resilience of Inverness and strengthen its distinctive sense of place.
4. Promote best practice in the management, maintenance and adaptation of the historic environment of Inverness to support its sustainable future and resilience to climate change.
5. Provide resources to develop new skills related to the historic environment to encourage young people to enter the heritage sector and support those working in the sector to continue to develop their skills base.
6. Advocate for the historic environment and work in partnership to influence and identify strategic priorities and projects in Inverness and to amplify the impact of wider city initiatives.
7. Support local community groups working in the historic built environment to enable them to explore opportunities.

ICHT Values

Collaborative: develop relationships and share research with a wide range of stakeholders to add value and meet shared objectives.

Innovative: be open to new methods and aware of cross sector initiatives to support delivery of ICHT objectives.

Sustainable: promote sustainability in its broadest sense in all activities and operations including to mitigate climate change and build community resilience.

Transparent: make robust and clear decisions in all ICHT work including in strategy, grant giving and operational procedures.

Our Grants Priorities

During 2024-2026 ICHT will support projects which tackle the following themes:

Awareness: Increase understanding of and engagement with the historic environment of Inverness.

Place & Community: Contribute to placemaking, increase the communities' use and capacity to look after the historic environment.

Resilience: Strengthen the resilience of the historic environment of Inverness.

Climate: Tackle climate change.

Skills: Offer opportunities for training in traditional skills.

Economy: Increase economic benefits from the historic environment in a sustainable and inclusive way.

ICHT Strategic Plan

In consultation with local and national stakeholders, ICHT has sought to identify current needs, opportunities and challenges relating to the both the tangible and intangible heritage of Inverness. The resulting ICHT Activities Plan aims to protect the city's historic places and support key outcomes on placemaking, well-being, the climate emergency and traditional skills.

ICHT's six activity areas for the period 2024-2026 are:

1. Research on the historic environment
2. Built heritage grants
3. Building maintenance and climate resilience
4. Traditional skills
5. Community engagement
6. Heritage voice

ICHT will take cognisance of how to achieve the greatest impact and value for its funding. Its role will be as Adviser - Advocate – Educator – Facilitator - Grant-giver, and may include:

- Advocating for heritage assets that would be beyond or not eligible for grant aid from ICHT but would benefit from a 'heritage voice'.
- Supporting community groups to take forward their own heritage projects in Inverness.
- Assisting in training or other educational outreach to support a historic building or area-based project.
- Providing support and/or grant in project development, and grants to fund conservation repairs or enhancement works.

These activities are summarised below and described in more detail in the ICHT Business Plan 2024-2026.

ICHT Activity 1

Research on the historic environment

Built Heritage Analysis

Data on the historic environment and heritage of Inverness is limited and spread across various organisations. ICHT wish to commission a report on the city of Inverness which would collate information on building types and uses, condition, materials, skills and significance alongside other relevant datasets. This analysis would identify risks and threats to the city's historic environment in a robust and transparent way and support prioritisation in future programmes for the heritage. Gaps in information which offer opportunities for further research will be identified. The report would establish a baseline for the measurement of progress in the preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and public engagement, and be shared with local and national stakeholders to evidence challenges and inform opportunities.

Buildings at Risk review

Historic Environment Scotland operate the formal Buildings at Risk Register. A comprehensive review of buildings at risk in Inverness has not taken place for some years. As part of the [Built Heritage Analysis](#), ICHT will include a review of historic buildings at risk in the city and work with HES to update the register and other key stakeholders including The Highland Council. This review can inform future prioritisation and actions on individual buildings in a Buildings at Risk Action Plan. Activities in the Action Plan could vary from monitoring or interpretation, to opportunities for community involvement and supporting physical repair and reuse.

ICHT Activity 2

Built heritage grants

ICHT-led projects

ICHT will explore priority projects identified in its Business Plan 2024-2026 with owners and stakeholders. This will include the potential for repair and enhancement of priority buildings in the city centre, focusing on those streets and spaces which will support city centre policy to improve the historic environment for the benefit of active travel and city centre investment.

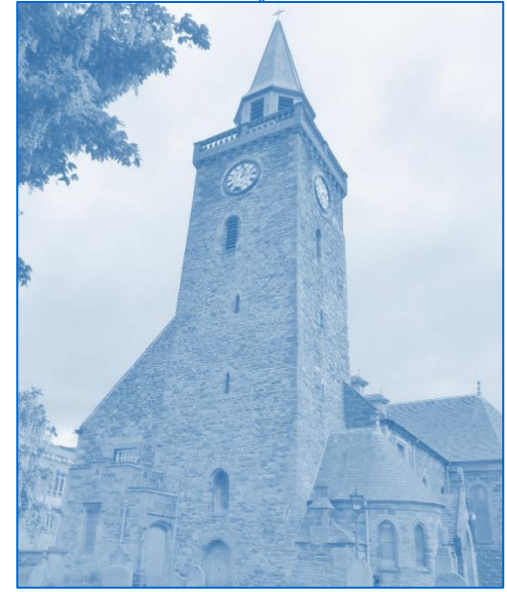
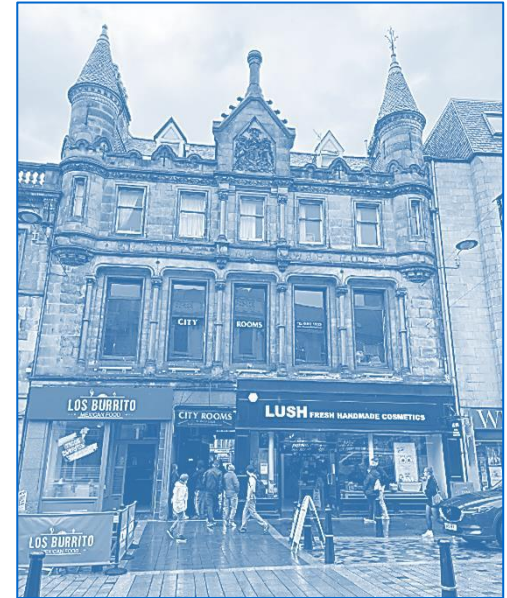
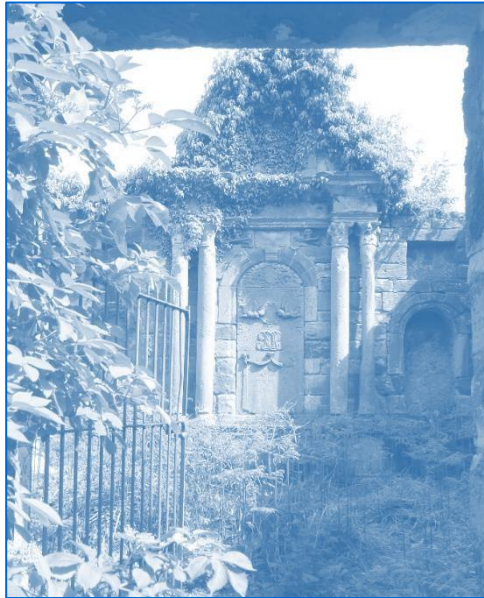
Community-led projects

ICHT will look to facilitate community groups, social enterprises and third sector organisations to develop their projects for key built heritage assets at risk. This may include granting seed funding for feasibility and project development, including to redundant churches in Inverness which are seeking community ownership and appropriate reuse. Individual projects will be

assessed for eligibility. Some projects may advance more quickly than others, and may subsequently be considered for ICHT repair grant during the business plan period.

Future regeneration

Building on the successful project development of the Academy Street Townscape Heritage scheme, ICHT will consider research and stakeholder discussion on the need and potential of future regeneration of target areas of the city centre or opportunities to support local neighbourhood renewal. This would provide the foundation for future conservation interventions and regeneration investment, and could lead to application by a stakeholder partnership to area-based initiatives (HES Heritage & Place Programme and NLHF area-based grant funding) for further capital investment, skills training and community resilience activities.



ICHT Activity 3

Building maintenance and climate resilience

Promotion of better maintenance and management of the historic built environment of Inverness will be a core ICHT message to build traditional buildings resilience to climate change and raise awareness of the 'fabric first' approach, i.e. maintain and repair before retrofit. How best to collate and signpost information resources on building maintenance will form part of review and development of the ICHT website.

Gutter Clear Initiative

ICHT is aware of the positive impact of physical maintenance exercises, on a street basis, often undertaken by local authorities for reasons of public safety and to raise awareness of building owner responsibilities. ICHT will explore opportunities with The Highland Council and Inverness BID to pilot a gutter clear initiative in Inverness city centre, with a view to making this self-financing in the future. As well as clearing

gutters, where possible the exercise would allow for removal of high level vegetation and seagull nests, alongside high level inspections and photographic recording.

National Maintenance Week event

As part of its community engagement activities, and to coincide with National Maintenance Week, ICHT will design an outreach event on the repair and maintenance of built heritage with demonstrations and specialist advice. ICHT will look to work alongside The Highland Council, SPAB and Under One Roof in delivery of the event.

In addition, Highland specific 'hot-topic' lectures would focus on current issues such as retrofit and co-ownership matters in order to raise awareness of wider Scottish Government strategy and developing legislation. The ICHT website will be developed to allow in-person events and lectures to subsequently be hosted online to expand their availability to a broad audience.

ICHT Activity 4

Traditional skills

ICHT has discussed the best approach to future traditional skills delivery with key national stakeholders including HES, Skills Development Scotland, the Scottish Traditional Buildings Forum and UHI Inverness. This has informed its traditional skills strategy for 2024-26 which will focus on young people at secondary school, alongside reinvigorating the Highlands & Islands Traditional Buildings Forum and an audit of local materials and contractor skills.

Educational taster sessions

ICHT will continue its discussion on the best way to deliver traditional skills taster sessions to secondary school pupils in Inverness with local partners and national organisations. This could include providing sessions with UHI Inverness as part of its existing Foundation Apprenticeship, and adapting existing models used by the Scottish Traditional Buildings Forum,

Developing the Young Workforce, and other City Heritage Trusts.

Highlands & Islands Traditional Buildings Forum

In support of the local heritage sector, ICHT will seek to reinvigorate the local Traditional Buildings Forum. This partnership was highly successful in the past in delivery of traditional skills and conservation outreach.

Skills audit

As part of the [Built Heritage Analysis](#) ICHT will collate data on local materials and the current skills profile of those involved in the conservation and physical repair of traditional buildings in Inverness. Contractors working in the historic environment of Inverness often cover the broader geographical area of Highland and extending into Morayshire, and ICHT will seek and share information with others in the wider region.



ICHT Activity 5

Community engagement

ICHT plans a number of activities in support of increased and varied opportunities for local community engagement in the heritage of Inverness.

Local heritage event sponsorship

ICHT will continue to support local community groups with their projects and research whenever possible by providing a small sponsorship fund for heritage events that others may wish to organise in Inverness.

Story of Inverness

Based on the success of the Academy Street heritage project and ICHT's heritage trail leaflet, ICHT will develop an educational project which would aim to raise awareness of the Story of Inverness, its history and the people behind its built environment for local people, businesses and visitors alike. Of course, telling the Story of Inverness is a large project and will require to be researched and delivered in stages. In the first

instance, ICHT will develop a project outline, consider a project to record oral histories, and explore opportunities to pilot part of the project in partnership with the Inverness BID.

Heritage lecture series

In addition to lectures focused on built heritage taking place in National Maintenance Week, ICHT will establish a broader heritage lecture series targeting a diverse local audience.

Chapel Yard Cemetery

The Chapel Yard Cemetery in Inverness city centre has been identified as an opportunity for both repair of significant historic fabric and community involvement. The cemetery offers opportunities for educational outreach with the local community around social history and the archaeological heritage of the city. The Highland Council would be supportive of projects which enhance the visitor experience in support of its active travel objectives for improved access to greenspace in the city.

ICHT Activity 6

Heritage voice

In challenging times, and in a sector where economic and human resourcing has been impacted in recent years, Inverness needs a strong independent voice capable of advocating for initiatives that enhance the city's built heritage.

As part of the ICHT strategic review, a process of mapping the local heritage sector was commenced. This identified organisations in the city and wider Highland region, their roles, priorities and capacity, and where gaps in heritage services may lie. The exercise revealed that very few of the local heritage organisations are staffed, which in turn indicates those that can undertake delivery and proactive work with any capacity.

The exercise confirmed that ICHT is essential to provide a strong 'heritage voice', supporting heritage assets large and small, from public buildings that would be beyond or not eligible for grant aid from ICHT, to small 'everyday' buildings that form the backdrop of the city's historic environment. This includes being available to comment and contribute time and expertise on other heritage initiatives that may be led by The Highland Council.

ICHT will also continue to sit on the Inverness Design Review Panel to input to larger redevelopment proposals for key sites in the city.

ICHT has sought advice from the Historic Churches Scotland Trust on how best to support local churches and community groups seeking to take on church buildings. ICHT will act as a conduit to sector activity and knowledge, provide independent advice and encourage broad community engagement.

Museums and Galleries Scotland has recently been supportive in setting up geographical forums for cultural heritage. Whilst these forums are open to a wide range of heritage, the membership so far is mainly local museums and heritage centres. ICHT will consider if a forum for the historic built environment may be helpful to bring together a number of the local heritage organisations, or whether ICHT could work in partnership with Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands (ARCH) to better support built heritage within the current offer.



Inverness City Heritage Trust is supported by



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