

Strategy 2020-23

Communities Transforming their Heritage



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Who We Are & What We Do

The AHF was founded in 1976 to promote the conservation and sustainable re-use of historic buildings.

Today we support communities with finding enterprising new ways to revitalise the historic buildings they love. We help them through the provision of advice, grants and loans.

External Context

The impact of our work, particularly over the past few years, has meant a greater number of communities have been given the skills and investment to help them transform their villages, towns and cities through the regeneration of heritage assets.

Our funding and advice has assisted a large range of charities and social enterprises, including our long-standing partners in the building preservation trust movement, to turn problem buildings and spaces into new opportunities. As well as saving many historic buildings by bringing them into community ownership and long-term use, the organisations we have supported have often helped to sustain much needed services and assets, many of which were under threat by funding cuts or changes within local economies.

However, problems persist in many places and in many they are becoming more acute, with individual buildings, high streets and streetscapes undergoing profound changes: some driven by the way we shop, by funding cuts or by changes in demography.

This is causing not only problems for the long-term future of historic buildings, but also for community cohesion and civic

identity. The feeling of things ‘getting worse’ or of communities ‘left behind’ is felt more acutely in places where there is a feeling of powerlessness about the loss of unique heritage buildings – shops, mills, libraries, town halls or churches – that are often vital to that community’s identity and sense of prosperity.

In many places, with the reduction in the role of the local authority and significant changes within the economy, it is increasingly falling to civil society to make a meaningful contribution to creating vibrant, cohesive and attractive places – as well as finding new ways of delivering services that were once the preserve of the public or private sectors. Despite the challenges, this is bringing about new and successful partnerships, ones that both regenerate historic buildings and places and deliver much needed uses and activities, whether housing, retail, workspaces use or the delivery of health and well-being services.

Opportunities & Challenges

The AHF is an experienced funder with a team of experts, working across the UK.

Our main resources are our funds for lending and the grant funding we raise that supports specific programmes, much of which comes from fundraising from Government and trusts and foundations. The expertise of our team is an invaluable asset, not only to the AHF but also to the wider heritage sector.

The evaluation of our previous strategy confirmed that there was an ongoing need for much of the AHF's current support offer and a number of specific elements were cited by clients and funders as particularly valuable:

- **Our advice and grant funding**, particularly during the early stages of projects, often acts as a catalyst for regeneration and reuse projects. **Our early-stage funding** helps to generate momentum and confidence in a project, in time bringing other funders on board.
- **Our loan finance** provides flexible funding to projects, often at stages when other funders will not, or cannot, fund projects. **Our flexibility and willingness to take risks** is unique in the funding environment.



Kelvingrove Bandstand and Amphitheatre, Andrew Lee



We have secured a significant sum for the 'Heritage Impact Fund' (HIF). This is a new loan fund consisting of an initial £7m of investment, including contributions from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England, Cadw, the Department of Communities Northern Ireland and Historic Environment Scotland. The HIF is the first partnership loan fund dedicated to assisting charities and social enterprises with investment in historic building projects; we hope it will provide a permanent vehicle for the pooling and investment of funds across the UK.

Alongside the Heritage Impact Fund, we have received funding to pilot a new business support service - RePlan, for charities and social enterprises managing heritage assets. Business support for heritage projects is a significant gap that we and our partners have identified – we will specifically focus our support on those organisations that need assistance to change or adapt their business plans, helping them become more resilient.

We have also secured significant grant funding to support specific priorities in different parts of the UK. This includes funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport that will support town centre and high street regeneration. This funding will help us invest in charities and social enterprises delivering new uses for historic assets, ones that help to reimagine town centres for the 21st century. It also includes funding from Historic Environment Scotland for a new Support Officer role.

Recognising the financial and capacity constraints that exist, we will seek to work in partnership with a range of organisations, inside and outside the heritage sector, to help us deliver our strategy.

This will include developing projects alongside our key funders and partners, including ones to address particular needs or priorities. We will continue to look to support a broad range of heritage projects, but we will also look to focus on projects that address specific themes and challenges, or support wider strategic initiatives, including:

- Projects that will potentially offer viable new uses for disused **high street or town centre properties** and assets;

- **Innovative reuse proposals** which offer the potential to be ‘demonstrator’ projects – i.e. replicated for similar building types in other locations;

- Projects that will contribute to place-based programmes, including **Heritage Action Zones, Towns Fund** and the **UK-Shared Prosperity Fund**.

- Projects that protect **shared spaces and community assets** within communities, e.g. pubs or libraries.

- Projects that develop **community-led housing**

- **Partnership projects** between building preservation trusts or other heritage organisations and local organisations working to protect important heritage buildings and retain vital local services.

Jubilee Pool, Penzance, Simon Maycock / Alamy Stock Photo



We will also look to work on the development and delivery of projects, wherever possible, with cross-sector partners such as the Heritage Trust Network or specialist social enterprise organisations.

Our main endowment will remain a key source of loan finance for the sector. This will continue to have a clear focus on the reuse of heritage buildings and will also be one that we can take measured risks with, particularly to help fund projects we think might be transformative or innovative.

Underpinning all these efforts will be the need to ensure that the AHF remains a relevant and effective organisation, delivering value for funders and clients alike. We will be ambitious in our aims and plans but will ensure we remain focused on delivering the greatest impact. We will be clear on our specific role and the strengths and experience we can bring to projects. This will also mean continuing to review and update our systems and processes, ensuring that our governance remains effective and representative, and that our finances support the delivery of our aims and the impact we are seeking to achieve.

Our Aims

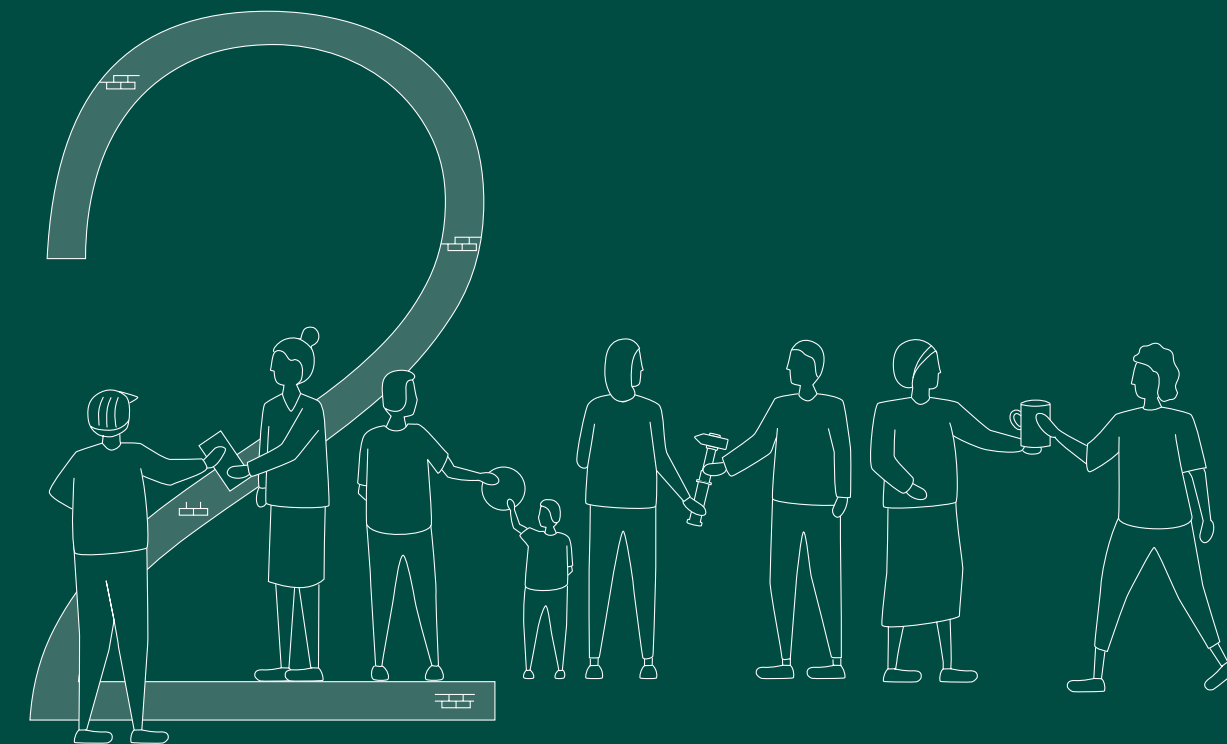
Over the next three years the AHF's strategic aims will be to:



Generate and distribute increased levels of investment and funding to support the sustainable reuse of historic buildings.

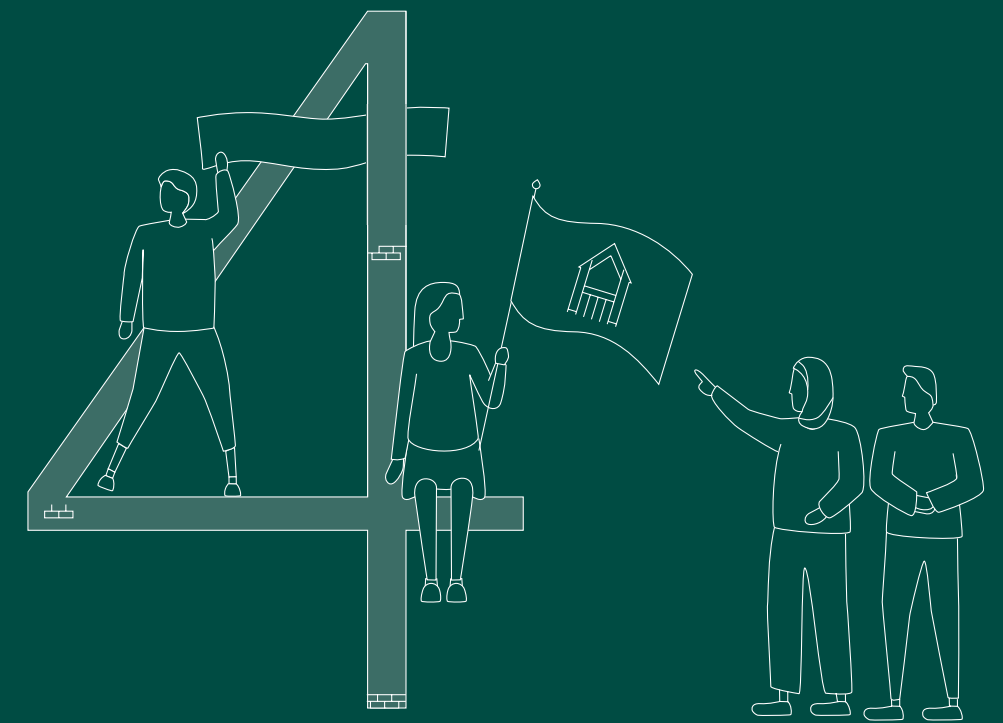


Support community-led heritage regeneration by assisting charities and social enterprises to take ownership of, develop and sustain new uses for historic buildings.



Increase the effectiveness and impact of the AHF, ensuring we continue to deliver value for funders and the organisations and projects we invest in.

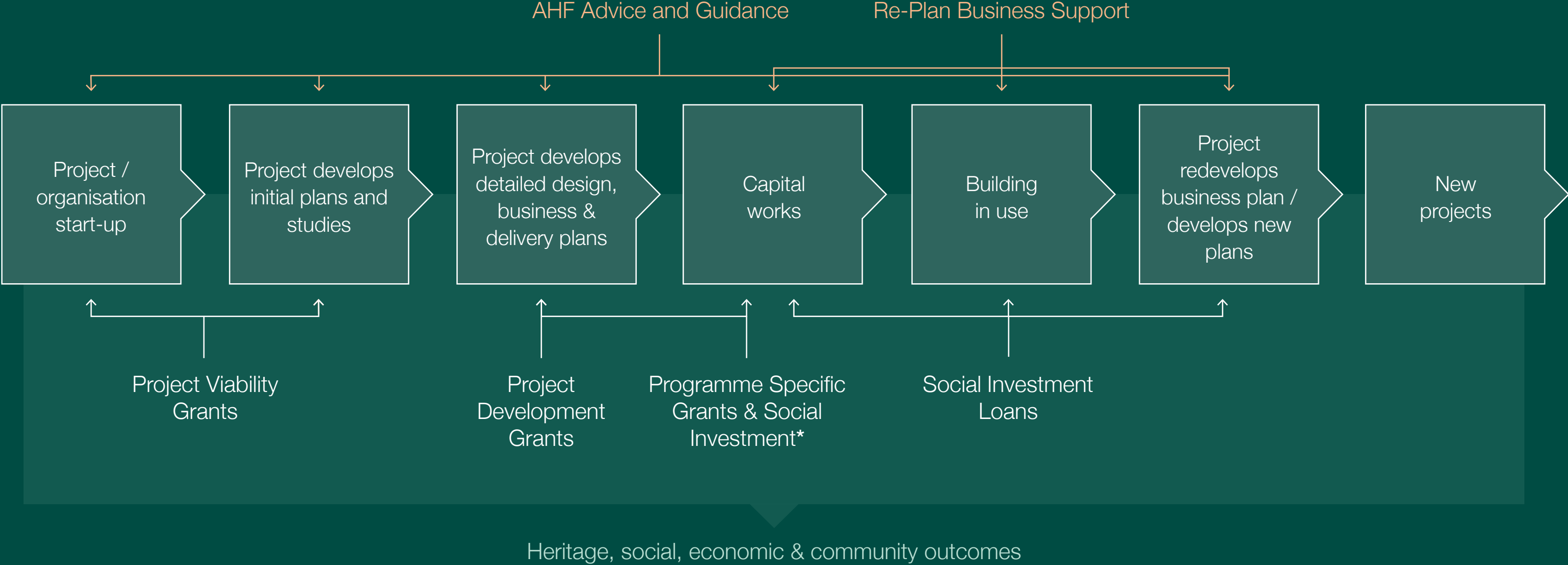
Promote the impact and benefits of community-led regeneration and ownership of historic buildings, to Government, communities and funders.



How we will deliver our aims

AHF's Investment and Support System

* We have specific grants and other types of investment available in some countries. Please read the country programme guides for more details.

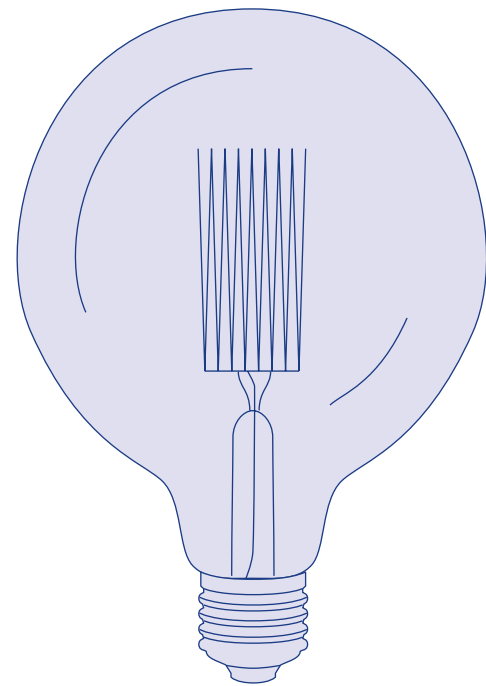


Our Values

Our values help define our principles as an organisation and how we work with clients, both in supporting them and their projects

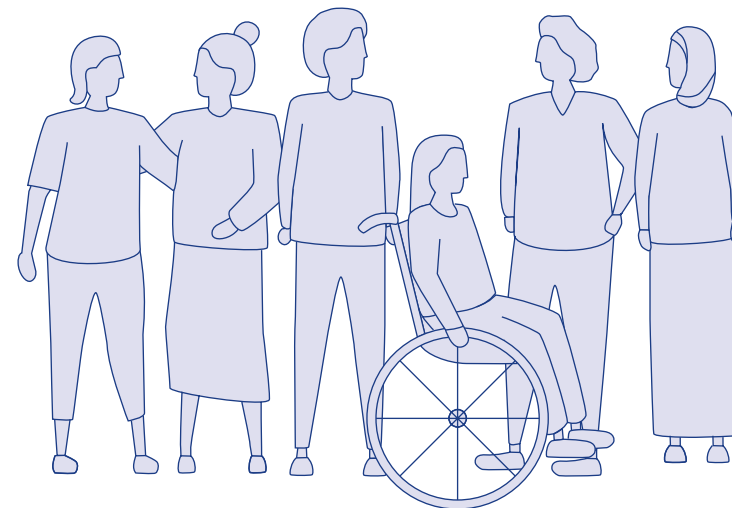
Investing in risk and new ideas

We have particular expertise as an early-stage investor and believe that to help fund potentially transformative projects we need to take considered risks with our investments, both for the benefit of heritage buildings and the enterprises we support.



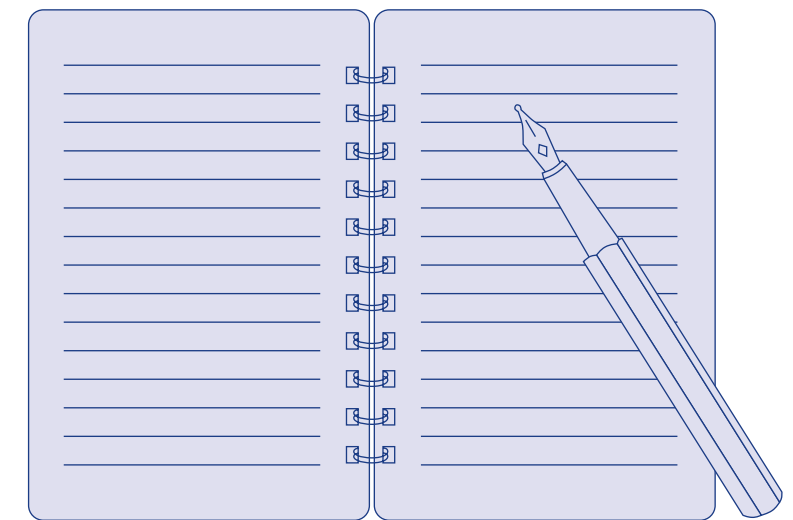
Diversity

We believe that we should strive to represent the diversity of the United Kingdom, through our staff and trustees and the projects we support. We will look to invest in projects across the UK, but particularly in areas of economic disadvantage, believing heritage led regeneration can act as a catalyst for new investment and community well-being.



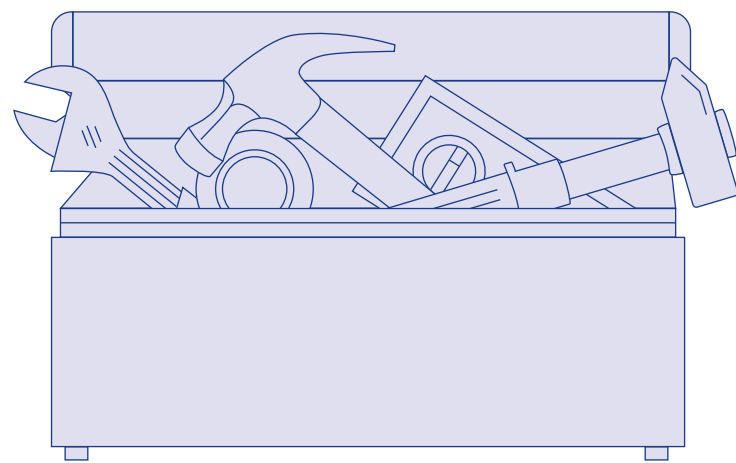
A learning and evidence-focussed organisation

We will learn from our programmes and activities and use evidence to help us reach decisions. We recognise that our resources and that of our clients are limited, so we will target our evidence gathering in a proportionate way to promote the most useful and effective lessons to the sector.



Expert and accessible

We have over 40 years' experience of delivering heritage-led regeneration projects. We will make this knowledge accessible to projects, often by working in partnership to increase the availability of that expertise.



Positive advocates

We will be a positive organisation and team, actively promoting the benefits that the reuse of historic buildings can bring to 21st-century places and communities and working to help places realise their ambitions.



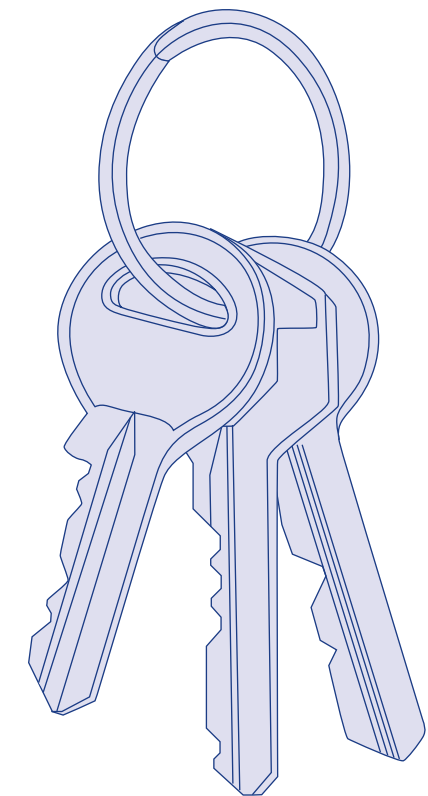
Supportive, challenging and empathetic

We recognise the challenges inherent in complex heritage projects and the demands these can place on organisations, particularly those led by volunteers. We will be supportive of projects during challenging times but, where necessary, challenge projects in their thinking. We will sensitively help draw to a close projects that, for whatever reason, do not have a sustainable future.



Taking ownership

As a small organisation collaboration and taking ownership are a vital part of our organisational culture. We take responsibility across teams and activity areas, looking to own the work of the whole organisation, actively participating in improving and developing it.



The Architectural Heritage Fund

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The Architectural Heritage Fund

Company number: 1150304

Charity number: 266780

Scottish Charity number: SC043840

Financial Services Register number: 707421