

# TRADITIONAL BUILDINGS HEALTH CHECK

## Pilot Project Review



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD  
EACHDRAIDHEIL  
ALBA





This publication describes a 5-year pilot project set up to support and encourage owners of traditional buildings to undertake proactive repair and preventive maintenance.







# WELCOME

Scotland has a rich and diverse heritage of traditional buildings; many have stood for hundreds of years.

Despite the resilience of these buildings, the need for a pro-active approach to their care has never been greater. The impacts of climate change combined with a legacy of poor maintenance are putting increasing pressure on traditionally constructed buildings.

The Traditional Buildings Health Check was the first pilot of its kind in Scotland; members invested nearly £1.3 million in repairs to their buildings over the course of the scheme. The pilot showed that there is a clear appetite for a national mechanism that helps building owners to forward plan repairs and maintenance and allocate their money more effectively.

I'm delighted that the *Traditional Buildings Health Check* continues to be delivered as a core service by the team at Stirling City Heritage Trust who have been our committed partners throughout the pilot.

**DR. DAVID MITCHELL**  
DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION  
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND



Stirling, with its blend of tenements and villas and mixed tenure, proved to be a perfect location to host the 5-year Traditional Buildings Health Check pilot.

The impact on the City of Stirling has been significant; almost 300 building owners benefited from the pilot. The scheme offers impartial advice, reassurance and guidance to building owners who are sometimes confused about where to turn for help. Through their TBHC membership, building owners in Stirling have learned about their traditional buildings; about how to prioritise repairs; why the use of certain materials is important; and why regular maintenance is essential. Those living in tenements have also worked better with their neighbours to undertake repairs.

The Traditional Buildings Health Check has been a great success and seeing it develop in other areas of Scotland would be a fitting legacy of the scheme.

**DAVID BLACK**  
CHAIRMAN  
STIRLING CITY HERITAGE TRUST



# THE PROBLEM

Scotland has an estimated 488,000 traditionally constructed pre-1919 dwellings, representing 20% of Scotland's total housing stock.

The 2010 *Scottish House Condition Survey* (SHCS)<sup>1</sup> found that three quarters of pre-1919 dwellings needed repairs to critical elements. These are components that keep a building wind and watertight and structurally sound. National statistics on commercial and public buildings are not collected but these buildings are thought to share similar levels of disrepair.

## Potential impacts of disrepair can affect:

- 🏠 Public safety from falling material
- 🏠 Resilience to climate change (increased rainfall and severe weather events)
- 🏠 Energy efficiency which is reduced if the external building fabric is not in good repair
- 🏠 Fuel poverty which is directly related to reduced energy efficiency
- 🏠 Wellbeing of building occupants (in damp, cold buildings)
- 🏠 Our traditional built environment, physically, socially and economically less attractive

An awareness of these problems and their potential solution is nothing new. In 2006, an advisory report for Scottish Ministers highlighted the issues of widespread disrepair<sup>2</sup>.



Three quarters of pre-1919 dwellings need repairs to critical elements

The report recommended that some form of proactive maintenance scheme should be established for traditional building owners.

The growing evidence demonstrated a clear need for a mechanism to help building owners take a more proactive approach to building repair and maintenance.

<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government. *Scottish Housing Condition Survey Key Findings 2010*, Nov. 2011: 46.

<sup>2</sup> Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland, 2006, *Report and recommendations on the availability of adequate and appropriate traditional materials and professional and craft skills to meet the needs of the built heritage*







THE GROWING EVIDENCE  
DEMONSTRATED A CLEAR NEED  
FOR A MECHANISM TO HELP BUILDING  
OWNERS TAKE A MORE PROACTIVE  
APPROACH TO BUILDING REPAIR  
AND MAINTENANCE.



# A SOLUTION FOR SCOTLAND



In 2012, Stirling City Heritage Trust produced a Scoping Study report for Historic Scotland which set out compelling evidence of the need for a maintenance scheme in Scotland.



As a result of this report, Historic Scotland commissioned a 5-year *Traditional Buildings Health Check* (TBHC) pilot in 2013. The pilot was funded in partnership with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) Scotland. It was designed and delivered by Stirling City Heritage Trust between April 2013 and March 2018.

The Traditional Buildings Health Check is based on the European *Monumentenwacht* model. *Monumentenwacht* has been operating for a number of decades in the Netherlands and Flanders and has made a significant impact on the condition of the historic built environment. The Scottish pilot adapted the European model to suit the physical and cultural context of the Scotland's built heritage.

## Why Stirling?

Stirling was selected as the location for the pilot. It is a small city and historic royal burgh with a good representation of traditional building types. Its size made it manageable for a small team, and the range and condition of buildings were also likely to be representative of the findings of the 2010 Scottish House Condition Survey.

Stirling City Heritage Trust had a well established network of local contacts and knowledge of the traditional building stock. Historic Environment Scotland also had a strong presence in Stirling, including Stirling Castle, a works depot, and from 2016, *The Engine Shed*, Scotland's building conservation centre.



Providing impartial, expert advice to building owners

## Aims of the pilot

### Historic Environment Scotland wanted to find out:

- 🏠 If Scottish building owners would participate in a membership-based service
- 🏠 If owners would become more proactive in their approach to building maintenance
- 🏠 What impact the service would have on the condition of the historic environment

### Key aims of the pilot were to:

- 🏠 Promote regular maintenance of traditional buildings
- 🏠 Provide a hands-on approach to building inspection
- 🏠 Promote private investment in the traditional built heritage
- 🏠 Generate work for the construction industry and professional sector
- 🏠 Provide a potential model for delivery in other areas across Scotland



STIRLING IS A SMALL CITY AND HISTORIC ROYAL BURGH WITH A GOOD REPRESENTATION OF TRADITIONAL BUILDING TYPES.



# THE SERVICE

The Traditional Buildings Health Check Pilot was open to any traditional building, home or business, public or community building, within the Stirling city boundary.

HES wanted to improve understanding of the historic built environment by creating a service that was available to all traditional building owners - not just listed buildings or conservation areas.

For a modest annual membership fee (typically £45), building owners could access the following benefits:

- Year-round support and impartial expert advice
- Affordable comprehensive external building inspection (typically £150)

- An easy-to-understand condition report with priority tasks for the next 12 months
- A free follow-up meeting with the inspector
- Educational events, newsletters and dedicated members' website with tips and advice
- From 2015, a small grant for eligible external repairs





# DESIGN AND DELIVERY

---

## The Team

SCHT led on the design and delivery supported by a Steering Group composed of SCHT, HES and CITB. The aim was to create a friendly service, with a focus on building trust and maintaining relationships. The SCHT team combined expertise and experience from heritage, traditional skills and service development and support.

## Membership

Monumentenwacht recommended a membership-based approach. This led owners to acknowledge responsibility for the care of their buildings. Membership fees contributed towards the cost of the pilot which was run on a not-for-profit basis.

## Inspections

SCHT aimed to provide safe and cost-effective ways to access high-level areas of buildings, with the possibility to carry out maintenance and minor repair tasks. However this proved challenging due to the nature of Stirling's building stock. Such tasks were limited to where safe access was possible and time allowed.

## Inspection Report

SCHT developed a clear, concise condition report that could be easily understood by the average building owner. The design evolved with members' feedback, using a simple 'traffic light' system to highlight priority areas for repair.

## Educational support

SCHT delivered a programme of educational events to support property owners to undertake repairs and maintenance. A dedicated members' area on the TBHC website, and year-round advice, were provided to improve the members' understanding of traditional buildings.

## Grants

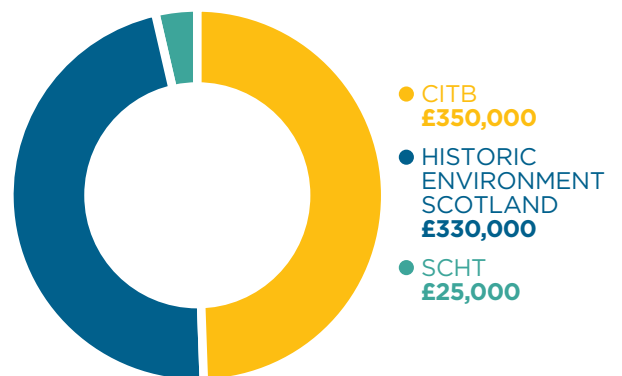
From 2015, Stirling City Heritage Trust used its core funding to offer small grants up to a maximum of £5,000 to support and encourage repairs identified in the reports.

## Stakeholder engagement

The Trust identified and targeted key stakeholders to help promote the scheme. Trust staff presented at conferences, ran seminars, and spoke directly to national and local sector groups. These included architect chapters, landlords, property agents and key departments in Stirling Council.

## Training

Training seminars and workshops for building professionals and contractors were co-ordinated by Historic Environment Scotland. The aim was to improve baseline skills and knowledge in the local heritage and construction sectors. Course fees were kept low to encourage attendance.



The TBHC was funded by **CITB**, **Historic Environment Scotland** and **SCHT** (from TBHC membership income).

---



# PILOT FINDINGS

## Condition of traditional buildings

The TBHC team found that disrepair was not solely the result of natural deterioration of the original building fabric, or a lack of timely repair and maintenance. It also found significant levels of accelerated and hidden disrepair from poor quality or inappropriate interventions.

The Traditional Buildings Health Check inspection data corroborated the picture across Scotland identified by the SHCS. The team compared Priority 1 defects in the inspection report with the *Disrepair to Critical Elements* data in the *Scottish House Condition Survey*. TBHC found that virtually all buildings inspected in Stirling had some elements in need of repair, with 88% requiring work in the next 12 months.

## Identifying additional causes of disrepair

Through engaging with members, the team identified additional causes of disrepair. These included a lack of property owner knowledge and insufficient numbers of skilled contractors. The result was a mix of inactivity in dealing with defects and low quality, poorly executed repairs.

TBHC members regularly asked for a list of contractors qualified to work on traditional buildings. However, this was out with the scope of the pilot. Although the project team hoped to address this, the issue of how to maintain a list of contractors, with robust and fair acceptance criteria remained unresolved.

## Improving knowledge

The service found that providing easy-to-understand, prioritised building inspection reports was one of the most effective ways of improving property owner knowledge. This was supplemented by a series of informative members' seminars. Property owners felt more confident commissioning repair work once they fully understood the condition of their property.

## Tackling owner inactivity

The Traditional Buildings Health Check service was effective in tackling property owner inactivity. The scheme acted as a catalyst for repair intervention, improving owner confidence and understanding by providing advice and support.







## Key achievements

### Impact



**300**

Nearly 300 members joined



**137**

buildings inspected



**194**

membership renewals



**120**

properties had repairs commissioned

### Traditional Building Health check member's survey 2017



**70%**

of those surveyed had maintained and repaired their buildings since joining



**44%**

joined to find out if there were problems they were unaware of



**39%**

were aware of issues but wanted professional advice

### The inspection report



**35%**

said the report supported them to carry out repairs appropriately



**29%**

had done additional work as a result of the report



# CONCLUSIONS

The Traditional Buildings Health Check pilot was reviewed by Stirling City Heritage Trust and by an independent consultant (Jura Consultants).

Both reviews concluded that the pilot was a success and had achieved the key aims set out at the beginning of the pilot:

- 🏠 Promote regular maintenance of traditional buildings: 300 members recruited
- 🏠 Provide a hands-on approach to building inspection: 137 buildings inspected
- 🏠 Promote private investment in the traditional built heritage: £1.3 million estimated spend by owners on their properties
- 🏠 Generate work for the construction industry and professional sector: Repair works commissioned for an estimated 120 member properties
- 🏠 Provide proof of concept and a potential model for delivery in other areas across Scotland: the Traditional Buildings Health Check is now a core function of Stirling City Heritage Trust

The pilot Traditional Buildings Health Check showed that a proactive membership-based service could have a significant impact on the condition of the historic environment. The service was also able to support owners of a wider cross-section of traditional buildings.

**BOTH REVIEWS CONCLUDED THAT THE PILOT WAS A SUCCESS AND HAD ACHIEVED THE KEY AIMS.**

## Key conclusions

**Disrepair:** the Traditional Buildings Health Check pilot corroborated the level of disrepair of Scotland's traditional buildings. Whilst the original key messages focused on 'maintaining your building', the pilot found that its principal efforts were to encourage proactive appropriate repair.

**Poor quality repair:** the extent of inadequate and inappropriate repair suggests a lack of suitably trained contractors skilled in the use of traditional materials and methods. This includes specialisms such as lead work and use of lime mortars.

**Willingness to repair:** an estimated £1.3 million of private investment was made by Traditional Buildings Health Check members over the pilot. This was a tangible benefit to the traditional building stock of Stirling and the local economy. This investment suggests that the owners' willingness to repair is higher than first presumed. Other factors such as owners' confidence and the availability of competent contractors were contributory factors.

## The Traditional Buildings Health Check service:

The pilot established that both owners and contractors may not have the skills to undertake suitable repair and maintenance. In addition, it found that there was often no professional involvement from an architect or surveyor.

The pilot project demonstrated that there is a valid and verified role for the Traditional Buildings Health Check service to provide impartial expert advice to building owners to ensure that they can make timely and informed decisions.



## Key achievements

---



**£1.3 million**

The amount invested by members on repairs<sup>3</sup>

---



**£705,000**

The cost of the pilot to deliver

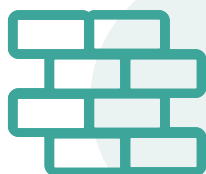
---



**£45,000**

The amount generated in member fees

---



**£52,000**

The amount invested in skills training

---

<sup>3</sup> Between October 2014 and March 2018.





# THE FUTURE

The Traditional Buildings Health Check is now a core part of Stirling City Heritage Trust's operational delivery, supported by Historic Environment Scotland.


At the time of writing, Historic Environment Scotland had commissioned an Options Appraisal to consider delivery of the Traditional Buildings Health Check service in three additional areas: Fife, Perth and Kinross; and Falkirk.

As climate change accelerates the rate of deterioration of Scotland's traditional buildings, so the need for a service which supports property owners to care for their buildings will intensify over the coming decades. The resilience of traditional buildings to future climate change will be determined by their condition and the effectiveness of their maintenance. The best way of protecting and maintaining buildings is to undertake systematic planned maintenance.

The Traditional Buildings Health Check has proven to be an effective way of promoting good quality, effective repairs that improve buildings' resilience to the challenges ahead.



The scheme improved member confidence and knowledge



SMALL MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR ISSUES THAT ARE IDENTIFIED AND DEALT WITH QUICKLY THROUGH A PROACTIVE, PLANNED APPROACH PREVENT LARGER PROBLEMS DEVELOPING IN THE FUTURE.



Historic Environment Scotland is the lead public body established to investigate, care for and promote Scotland's historic environment.

We lead and enable Scotland's first historic environment strategy Our Place in Time, which sets out how our historic environment will be managed. It ensures our historic environment is cared for, valued and enhanced, both now and for future generations.



This report is dedicated to the memory of Richard Groom. During his time working with CITB, Richard was a vociferous advocate, sponsor and developer of the TBHC. He went on to become an inspector with the scheme he worked so hard to make happen. Richard continued to work tirelessly, with his SCHAT colleagues and others across the sector, to ensure its success, right up to his untimely death in 2019.



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD  
EACHDRAIDHEIL  
ALBA

#### Historic Environment Scotland

Longmore House, Salisbury Place  
Edinburgh EH9 1SH

0131 668 8600

[historicenvironment.scot](http://historicenvironment.scot)

Historic Environment Scotland - Scottish Charity No. SCO45925

Registered address: Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh EH9 1SH

**OGI** © Historic Environment Scotland 2020. You may re use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the **Open Government Licence v3.0** except where otherwise stated. Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned. All images are copyright Historic Environment Scotland and Stirling City Heritage Trust.



This document is printed on 100 per cent recycled paper. If you no longer need this publication, please pass it on, recycle it or return it to Historic Environment Scotland.

