



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

Scottish Government: Scottish climate change adaptation programme 2019-2024: consultation draft

Icon response

8 April 2019

The Institute of Conservation, Icon, welcomes the Scottish Government's consultation on the draft [Scottish climate change adaptation programme 2019-2024](#) and fully supports measures to prepare for the impacts of climate change. We believe the cultural heritage conservation sector holds considerable potential to inform and encourage action to address the effects of a changing climate.

Icon is a registered charity and the professional body for the conservation of our cultural heritage. Icon raises awareness of the cultural, social and economic value of caring for heritage and champions high standards of conservation. We represent nearly 3,000 individuals and organisations comprising professional conservators, heritage scientists and many others who share a commitment to improving understanding of and access to our cultural heritage.

Consultation Questions

Q1. Do you agree with our outcome-based approach to adaptation in Scotland?

Yes.

Q2. Do you agree that a National Forum on Adaptation should be established to facilitate discussion on climate change adaptation?

Yes. Icon agrees with a holistic approach to climate change adaptation that encourages collaboration across sectors on cross-cutting issues. The cultural heritage conservation sector has a broad range of expertise and knowledge that can be applied to many priorities for climate change action, for example:

1. Communication

Heritage can be an accessible resource for understanding and communicating the impact of climate change and adaptation strategies. Collections data can provide a benchmark for monitoring change, help make informed predictions and analyse the consequences of climate change. Natural history collections help scientists to draft future scenarios by forecasting whether and how organisms will be vulnerable to environmental change. Notebooks compiled by past naturalists are being used to map changes in the progress of seasons, temperatures and in species. Heritage can also enable messages on climate change to resonate with a broader audience. Records, archives and paintings describing past landscapes can effectively engage the public in understanding changes in the environment and convince even the most sceptical of the realities and urgency of climate change. These sources also help to demonstrate that people, plants and animals have been in a process of continual adaptation in response to the changing climate over the last few millennia. Using evidence from collections to tell stories about how we have managed to adapt successfully in the past might be a useful tool to give people confidence in our ability to adapt to current challenges.

The UK heritage sector has a wealth of good practice examples employing a holistic approach to climate change. For example, Climate Museum UK is a mobile museum creatively inspiring responses to climate change. Julie's Bicycle is a charity aiming to equip cultural professionals and artists with the knowledge and

Radisson Court, Unit 2
219, Long Lane
London SE1 4PR

020 3142 6799

www.icon.org.uk

confidence to speak out and together on climate change, using their creativity to influence one another, audiences, and the wider movement. The Fit for the Future network aims to support its members to become climate friendly, adaptive and resilient through improved communication and collaboration. The network supports over 100 charities, heritage organisations and cultural venues to share best practice and practical solutions.

2. Mitigation and adaptation

Conservator-restorers and heritage scientists are well-placed to be involved in measures to make heritage and communities more resilient. These professionals possess the skills to identify and monitor effects of climate change as they understand the chemical and physical properties of materials and recognise evidence and causes of change. Their appreciation of the various values of heritage means they can ensure mitigation and adaptation measures are sympathetic to the significance of heritage.

The heritage sector has potential to support safe, resilient and environmentally sustainable homes and places through its traditional and craft skills and expertise. Traditional building methods can boost the long-term resilience of homes and infrastructure. Research indicates that traditional materials and techniques may be more resilient and recover more quickly from effects of climate change, such as flooding. Traditionally constructed buildings can also cope well under a warming climate. Craft practice is rooted in the idea of longevity and lasting quality and often uses traditional materials, which have a track record of being durable and having a low carbon footprint. Employing traditional and craft skills can result in products that are more robust and easier to maintain and repair. Furthermore, as conservation is based on the aim of conserving rather than replacing heritage assets, the discipline naturally promotes sustainable behaviours. It can be used to reinforce the idea of the careful stewardship of materials and resources and discourage throw-away culture.

Q3. Do you agree that climate change adaptation behaviours should be included in the Programme?

Yes. Icon supports the provision of examples and suggested actions for people and organisations as a useful starting point to mobilising greater levels of engagement at all levels of society. The Programme could present case studies of people and organisations demonstrating desired behaviours to inspire and inform others to change their behaviour.

Q4. Do you agree that an integrated approach should be taken to monitoring and evaluation?

Yes

Q5. Do you agree with our long-term vision for adapting to climate change in Scotland?

Yes

Q6. Does the Programme identify the right outcomes for Scotland over the next five years?

Cultural heritage is noticeably absent from the programme's current main outcomes. While the built environment is listed as a sub-outcome (1.2) to "our communities are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe," we believe cultural heritage should feature more prominently within the principal outcomes. This would be in line with the Adaptation Plans for other UK nations. "People and the built environment" is a central theme of the Adaptation Plan for England, while the draft Adaptation Plan for Wales includes actions under the main heading "caring for the historic environment."

Icon also recommends a broader definition of the historic environment that recognises the risk that a changing climate poses on moveable heritage and makes use of the opportunity to employ collections and their conservators in helping communities to adapt to climate change. Many heritage buildings derive an element of their significance from their contents, whether they are museums, galleries, historic houses, cathedrals or churches. Similarly, sites, landscapes and gardens may owe some of their significance to outdoor sculptures. While built heritage is inherently more exposed to climatic changes, collections and objects housed indoors are also vulnerable. Extremes and fluctuations in temperature and humidity, increased rain, drought and flood risk, stronger levels of light and pollutants, new pests and physical forces can risk heritage assets by impacting the interiors in which they are stored or displayed.

Accordingly, we encourage a broader view of heritage that acknowledges risk to both immovable and moveable heritage is incorporated into the plan. We are pleased that the Our Place in Time Climate Change working group has considered collections within its listing of climate change impacts on the historic environment. Icon hopes Scotland's National Adaptation Programme will take a similar all-inclusive view and feature the protection and resilience of our cultural heritage as a principal outcome.

Links to further information:

Icon website <https://icon.org.uk/>