Tasglann nan Eilean

Archive

Tasglann nan Eilean

Forward Plan 2024-2028

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

1. Introduction

This Forward Plan sets out the strategic objectives of Tasglann nan Eilean for the period October 2024 – April 2028. It will be reviewed regularly but a full update will take place within at least four years. Objectives will be reviewed and set annually to take account of the financial and resourcing situation of the service and in response to any new developments.

The plan has been developed following discussions with colleagues and taking account of the following:

- Mission, vision and values of Tasglann nan Eilean
- Museum nan Eilean Forward Plan 2023-2028
- Feedback from independent survey of service users/ non-users carried out in 2022
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Corporate Strategy and Values
- Wider sector strategies and priorities
- Impact of cyber attack of November 2023

Archives hold the unique and irreplaceable story of organisations, businesses, communities and individuals. As such they represent an invaluable resource for all, providing an insight into the historical development of the Outer Hebrides and the events which have shaped the islands.

Our Mission

We safeguard and promote the value of the written heritage of the Outer Hebrides by identifying, collecting, documenting and preserving archives in order to make them accessible as a record for present and future generations.

Our Vision

The documented past of the Outer Hebrides is valued, preserved, shared and enjoyed as a key asset, with the necessary investment and professional skills, enabling it to grow sustainably and ethically, so that our collections, Gaelic culture and intangible heritage will enrich, educate, challenge, inspire and reflect diverse audiences.

Our Values

Our values are at the heart of our service and underpin all that we do. They define who we are, how we work and what we stand for and closely align with those of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

- **We are inclusive** by promoting fairness and equality and being welcoming, relevant and accessible to all
- **We are ambitious and strive for excellence** by being professional, ethical, accountable and meeting sector standards
- **We support learning** through engagement, access, partnership working and innovation
- **We promote community wellbeing and support citizenship** by providing information in support of democratic processes, responding to users in an open and transparent manner and opening up archives for research, education and enjoyment
- **We are efficient** through the adoption of good record keeping/ professional practices
- We are committed to **reducing our impact on the environment**

2. Background and statutory position

Tasglann nan Eilean is the archive service of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. The service has a remit for a variety of archive-related functions:

- As record-keeper to the Comhairle, ensuring that its corporate memory is preserved and organised and that access is provided to the records
- As an information resource providing access to data from the records for a wide variety of users, including internal
- As custodian of the written heritage of the Outer Hebrides, providing a safe place of deposit for historical records, thereby ensuring their preservation for the future and a starting point for the study and promotion of the history and culture of the islands
- As an educational resource underpinning the study of history at all levels from primary to postgraduate academic study, attracting researchers from around the world
- As a resource for local people and visitors wishing to research aspects of the history of the Outer Hebrides, those in the creative industries/ media and anyone who requires to use the information or resources contained in the archive

To summarise, the **purpose** of Tasglann nan Eilean is to identify, collect and permanently preserve:

(i) the records of the Comhairle and its predecessor bodies which need to be retained permanently for legal or historical reasons

(ii) the archives of organisations, businesses, estates or individuals connected to the Outer Hebrides which have been gifted or deposited

and to make these accessible to the widest extent possible for research, education or enjoyment.

The service manages the historical records which have been entrusted to its care to professional standards to ensure they are documented and preserved for future generations.

Section 1(2)(b)(iii) of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 requires Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, as a public body, to make provision for the permanent preservation of those of its records which are of enduring value through transfer to an appropriate archive repository[1]. Tasglann nan Eilean supports the Comhairle in meeting its statutory duties under this Act and other legislation relevant to local government records.

Tasglann nan Eilean is part of the Comhairle's Heritage Service along with Museum nan Eilean and the Archaeology Service. The Heritage Service in turn is part of the Heritage and Culture Unit within the Chief Executive's department, reporting to the Sustainable Development Committee.

Under the Scheme of Administration the Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for the Comhairle's functions in maintaining its own archives and those of the demitting authorities, and monitoring of compliance with duties under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011.

The Archive Service started as the 3-year Tasglann nan Eilean Siar project in 2010, funded by the European Regional Development Fund and Comunn na Gàidhlig, and staffed by an Archivist and two archive assistants. In 2013 it was subsumed into the Heritage Service. A purpose-built archive store and reading room were created as part of the HLF-funded Lews Castle Museum and Archive which opened in 2016. By this stage only the Archivist and 1 part-time assistant posts remained.

[1] An 'appropriate archive repository' is defined by the National Records of Scotland in the PRSA 'Supplementary Guidance on Proper Arrangements for Archiving Public Records': https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/record-keeping/public-records-act/supplementary-guidance-on-proper-arrangements-for-archiving-public-records.pdf

3. Review of previous Forward Plan and Key Achievements

The first Forward Plan was approved by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in 2017 to cover the three years to 2020. The strategic objectives identified were contingent on the Archive Service, and wider Heritage Service, continuing to be resourced at the same level. Due to a number of factors and unforeseen challenges the objectives have only been partially achieved.

Challenges which arose in the period 2017-2020 included:

- Staffing reductions to the Heritage Service as a whole, which left the Archive Service being run virtually single-handedly for much of the period from June 2018-June 2022
- Departure of Heritage Manager in March 2019 which put additional pressures on the Archivist thereby impacting on delivery of objectives previously identified
- Covid pandemic which altered priorities and made most aspects of usual service delivery impossible. It also became important at this time to support the comainn eachdraidh through regular Heritage Forum meetings, a duty undertaken by the Archivist and Museum Development Officer in the absence of a Heritage Manager
- Funding applications: as there was no Heritage Manager in post, the Archivist and Museum Development Officer took forward funding bids for the Heritage Service and sector which detracted from core service delivery
- Projects which had been the responsibility of the Heritage Manager had to be picked up by Archivist, Museum Development Officer and Heritage Service team (e.g. Great Place Project/ Heritage Asset Audit, Between Islands Project, Hebridean Connections Project)
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar organisational reviews and restructures which created uncertainty

As a result of these circumstances the update of the previous Forward Plan has been delayed until now. Progress or achievement against the strategic aims identified in 2017 is as follows:

Strategic aim	**Comment on progress**
1) Attain Archive Service accreditation https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/archive-service-accreditation/	The service adheres to relevant professional standards through our policies and procedures, but currently it is not realistic to apply for Archive Accreditation, as is not possible to meet the standard required without more staff, an adequate budget for the Archive Service and the existence of a Records Management function in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar as a whole. It is therefore impossible to proceed as the service does not meet basic 'Organisational Health' criteria. The detrimental effect of the cyber attack on our data and information systems, which underpin everything we do as a service, also makes accreditation unrealistic at this time.
2) Extend Archive Service to Uist in order to preserve and provide improved access to pertinent archives	Archivist is working with Museum nan Eilean colleagues to explore this as part of the feasibility study for new museum resource centres. Although this has been a priority project for the Heritage Service for the last ten years, it was only recently identified as a priority within the Great Place Strategy and has subsequently gained wider support.

3) Develop digital preservation capability (as part of wider digital records management programme)	Archivist researched best practice and drafted a specification but has not yet progressed to implementation. The recent cyber attack on Comhairle nan Eilean Siar highlighted the critical importance of sound digital preservation practices. The Archivist is working with colleagues in IT to ascertain progress on data recovery following the cyber attack, and will agree a way forward for DP processes as part of this.

Appendix 1 contains detailed information on progress against objectives specified in the previous Forward Plan, and commentary on the impact of the cyber attack.

Key Achievements over last five years (2018-2023):

2018
• Delivery of the Harris Tweed Authority Archive Project funded by The National Archives National Cataloguing Grants Programme and the HTA Educational Trust. The aims of this 15-month project were to transfer the HTA material previously held by Highland Archive to Tasglann nan Eilean (bringing the whole collection together), catalogue the material to item level and make the catalogue available online in searchable format for research, education, exhibition and other purposes, digitise some of the collection highlights and deliver outreach activities to highlight the collection to the community • Pròiseact an Fhìor-Àite (the Great Place Project) funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund launched November 2018. Led by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and partners including Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Outer Hebrides Heritage Forum and a range of local and national partners from across heritage, arts and tourism sectors. The purpose of the project was to develop a place-based Heritage Strategy for the Outer Hebrides with a ten year vision and an accompanying Action Plan. Central to the work was identifying strategic approaches to support and deliver appropriate heritage-led economic development, infrastructure requirements and priorities.
2019
• The Iolaire 100 Years Project - a partnership between CnES Heritage Service, Acair and An Lanntair, funded by Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS). As part of this a special exhibition - 'An Iolaire | The Iolaire' - was curated in-house by staff of Museum & Tasglann nan Eilean to commemorate the disaster. Material from Tasglann nan Eilean was also used by various comainn eachdraidh, artists and others, and by the BBC, for research and commemorative projects.
2020
• Mass transcription project undertaken during the Covid lockdown when the archive was closed to the public and the Archivist was working from home. Almost 800 letters and documents from the Gibson Collection were digitised by MnE Visitor Services Officer and transcribed by various staff members, co-ordinated by Archivist. Documents were being shared weekly on our blog and social media pages: most of this work currently inaccessible due to cyber attack • 'Between Islands' partnership project with Shetland Museum and Orkney Museum to create new exhibitions, funded by Leader Programme and led by Alex MacDonald of An Lanntair. Due to Covid this pivoted to three online exhibitions, launched in 2020.

2021
• Heritage Asset Audit report delivered as part of Great Place Strategy to create a strong evidence base to further inform the evolution and delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan • Tasglann nan Eilean participated in a pilot partnership project with the Scottish Council on Archives - *Voices: The Hebridean Story*. The aim of this was to interview, publish and archive a snapshot of the experiences of people living in the Hebrides during the Covid-19 pandemic.
2022
• New bilingual Heritage Services website developed and launched (funded by Museums Galleries Scotland) to improve information about services and collections, and to make this more easily accessible for users and visitors • Tasglann nan Eilean worked in partnership with the Scottish Council on Archives to contribute to a national project, *Voices: The Community Story* as part of Scotland's Year of Stories 2022. The project focussed on people who have migrated to Scotland, to give voice to their stories, and enable some of these to be preserved as part of our archive collections. • The Hebridean Connections digital community archive project reverted to management by Hebridean Connections Ltd, subsequent to project administration by CnES Heritage Service from 2016 onwards (latterly managed by the Archivist). During this time significant technical review was achieved, along with the delivery of an in-demand public research service, data cleaning plus development of extensive volunteer training resources. The reversal of administration allowed for reallocation of staff resource from this project to Tasglann nan Eilean.
2023
• Cinema Sgìre Project delivered in partnership with National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive: aimed to digitise around 100 video recordings in an obsolete format, catalogue and make them accessible online, as well as undertake a programme of community engagement events to share highlights; funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig • Support provided to author of The Nicolson Institute 150th anniversary publication and to BBC for commemorative programme. Assistance to publication included provision of access to archives (which necessitated digitising some material during Covid lockdown), comments on drafts as book was in development, sourcing of images, hosting of Nicolson Institute 'Vignettes' on blog, with associated editing/ image sourcing. (latter not currently accessible as a result of cyber attack) • Assisted with delivery of heritage-related activities programme to provide creative opportunities for the community and creative practitioners, funded by Creative Scotland Covid Recovery scheme • Launch of *Dualchas do Dhaoine | Heritage for People* (Great Place Strategy) • Successful funding bid to Art Fund to enable two members of the Heritage Team to undertake a research trip to Nova Scotia in advance of Hebridean Homecoming exhibition and conference

4. Current context

4.1 Cyber attack, November 2023

The cyber attack on the Comhairle has had devastating consequences for the Archive Service as we are reliant on the information and data which was saved on the affected network drives to establish the provenance and content of our collections, and to manage the collections holistically.

The bulk of the collections management data was stored in databases or networked documents and spreadsheets which are now not available.

Although we have paper records as back-ups for a small part of the documentation, without the digital versions we are not able to easily search and discover archives relevant to particular research interests in response to users' enquiries or our own needs. It is also difficult to properly manage collections. For example, we do not currently have access to data on previous conservation assessments, treatments or preservation measures undertaken, or prioritisation, as this information was recorded either in the collections database or on the shared network drive as is standard practice, to enable searchability, on the assumption that the network was being regularly backed up.

We have also lost most of the digitised versions of original archive material scanned since 2010. This means that items are having to be re-scanned piecemeal in response to enquiries or exhibition requests, as we don't have the resource to undertake large-scale digitisation projects.

The amount of data which we do not currently have access to represents decades of work. Recovery of this data has to be our priority, but it is extremely challenging to address this alongside ongoing service delivery. This situation results in a vicious circle as research enquiries take longer to address due to loss of documentation, thus eroding staff time available for recovery/recreation of data.

4.2 Staffing

Tasglann nan Eilean is currently allocated the following core staff:

- Archivist (1 FTE)
- Archives Officer (0.8 FTE)
- Collections Assistant (0.4 FTE*)

(*On establishment as 0.4 FTE but hours cut to 0.2FTE at request of post-holder)

The service works closely with Museum nan Eilean, current staffing of which is as follows:

- Museum Development Officer (1 FTE based in Uist)
- Museum Collections Officer (0.8 FTE)
- Conservation Officer (0.9 FTE)
- Visitor Services Officer (1 FTE)
- Visitor Assistants (3.5FTE)

The Heritage Service is/ has been without the following posts during the period covered by the previous Forward Plan:

- Heritage Manager (vacant since March 2019)
- Conservation Officer (vacant May 2019-April 2023; refilled as 0.9 FTE)
- Heritage Officers x 2 Gaelic-essential posts (based in Stornoway and Uist)- posts cut in September 2019 due to expiry of HLF funding

The effect of these cuts significantly impacted the resilience and delivery of the Heritage Service as a whole, as they represented a reduction of 50% in the professional staff of Museum & Tasglann nan Eilean from May 2019 until March 2023. In addition to this the archive Collections Assistant

post has only been sporadically filled for most of the period since the last Forward Plan was approved, and the Archives Officer post (0.8 FTE) only came onto the establishment in July 2022. Due to the overall lack of duty officers, archive staff often have to prioritise front of house issues in the museum, further detracting from archive duties. Delivery of the Archive Service to its full potential has therefore been severely hampered.

4.3 Management

The Heritage Service - consisting of museum, archives and archaeology - is part of the Chief Executive's Department and reports to the Team Leader for Heritage and Culture, who in turn reports to the Chief Officer Economic & Community Regeneration.

The post of Heritage Manager which would sit under the Team Leader is currently vacant but remains on the establishment. There is an ambition to have it refilled on a permanent basis if funding can be identified.

4.4 Finance

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has been subject to significant and relentless budget cuts over the last number of years. It should be noted that Tasglann nan Eilean does not have a separate budget line. The resource available for delivery of the Archive Service is:

- salary and staffing costs for 1xArchivist, 0.8FTE Archives Officer and 0.4FTE Collections Assistant
- costs associated with specialist database (Axiell CALM)- an essential tool to enable service delivery (but currently not accessible due to the cyber attack)

The allocated budget as above sits within Museum nan Eilean's cost centre.

Additional Museum nan Eilean resources used to support the Archive Service include:

- Travel budget – allowing Archivist to travel to Uist & Barra plus any mainland travel required to collect/ transfer archival materials
- Supplies – paper, printing, telephones, IT equipment
- Conservation supplies – boxes, folders, stands etc
- Training budget to enable attendance at CPD conferences and events

The single most important asset to the service is skilled, professional and knowledgeable staff. We remain committed to delivering the best service possible within these very tight constraints.

Through the efforts of the Archivist and Museum Development Officer additional funding has been brought in for specific projects over the last five years. This has helped to create additional capacity in the team to enable extra engagement and other activities to take place which would otherwise not have been possible, particularly in light of the loss of the two Heritage Officer posts in September 2019.

Additional external funding brought into Heritage Service

2019	Dualchas na Mara Project (Year of Coasts & Waters)	£25,000 £ 5,000	Bòrd na Gàidhlig Museums Galleries Scotland
2020	Covid Adaption Grant	£ 7,500	Museums Galleries Scotland
2020	Sònraichte Archaeology Project	£39,851	Museums Galleries Scotland
2021	Marketing Strategy, User Survey & new Website	£38,766	Museums Galleries Scotland

2021	Cruinneachaidhean Foillsichte (Transcription of oral recordings & translation for new website)	£20,400	Bòrd na Gàidhlig
2021	Summer at Museum nan Eilean	£ 6,506	Museums Galleries Scotland
2021	Didseatach – digital	£40,000	Art Fund
2021	Grant for conservation of Barra school records	£1,600	National Manuscripts Conservation Trust
2022	Archaeology Awakened	£45,000	Museums Galleries Scotland
2022	Covid Recovery Fund for Cultural Organisations	£15,000	Creative Scotland
2022	Hebridean Digital Stories	£46,000	Art Fund
	Total	**£290,623**	

4.5 Climate change and environmental sustainability

Climate change, resource efficiency, and the environmental impact of operations across all services are an increasingly important concern. As an organisation responsible for the permanent preservation of assets, the Heritage Service is committed to the adoption of sustainable, responsible, eco-friendly practices to proactively address the issues, minimising our impact on the environment and supporting Net Zero targets.

We will take action to reduce or mitigate our impact on the environment in the following ways:

- **Supply chain:** in procuring goods and services we will adhere to relevant sustainable and ethical environmental standards, for example by ensuring products are made from recycled materials where possible

- **Buildings:**
    - We will actively monitor Building Environment Management Systems to maintain a stable environment to preserve our collections, reduce energy usage and create appropriate working environments
    - We will pursue the creation of new resource centres which meet environmental sustainability design standards through the use of PassivHaus techniques, or similar, to reduce energy consumption through the complete lifecycle of the building, in place of old, inefficient buildings

- **Travel:** we will minimise business travel by holding meetings or events virtually where practicable and planning travel efficiently to reduce our carbon footprint

- **Waste disposal:**
    - we will manage our resources effectively to reduce waste to a minimum, reusing resources where possible
    - we will dispose of waste by recycling as much as possible in line with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar standard practices

- **Education:** we will use our remit as a local authority heritage service to educate audiences about climate change and its impacts whenever possible through our collecting, exhibition and activity programmes

- **Record-keeping:** we will support Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in being transparent on climate change targets and commitments by collecting, documenting and preserving relevant records and making these publicly accessible as part of our local authority archive remit.

4.6 Wider sector strategies

This plan has been developed in the context of, and aligns with, the following local government and national sector strategies:

- **Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Corporate Strategy 2024-2027**
https://cne-siar.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Corporate-Strategy-2024-2027-Approved.pdf

The **Vision** of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is for socially and economically thriving communities with a focus on sustaining our quality of life, natural heritage, and Gaelic language and culture.

The **Mission** of the Comhairle is to deliver quality, customer-focused services with an emphasis on community empowerment and partnership working to ensure that the islands maintain their social cohesion and have a strong and sustainable natural and economic environment.

Tasglann nan Eilean has the potential to contribute to or support implementation of this Vision and Mission.

The Archive Service also potentially contributes to three out of four of the Comhairles's strategic priorities which are to:

- strengthen the local economy
- support children, families and young people
- support caring, resilient communities and quality of life.

- **Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2017-27**
https://cne-siar.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/oh-cpp-local-outcomes-improvement-plan-2017-27.pdf

  The Vision • Our vision is to promote and realise the full potential of the Outer Hebrides as a prosperous, well-educated and healthy community enjoying a good quality of life, fully realising the benefits of our natural environment and cultural values

- **Dualchas do Dhaoine Outer Hebrides Great Place Strategy 2023-2033**
https://www.ohheritageforum.com/post/dualchas-do-dhaoine-ten-year-strategy-for-heritage-launched
  Vision • Bringing our heritage to life through inter-island partnerships to secure the future of our communities | ***Priorities*** • Connecting young people to their heritage • Collaborative programming • Networked community heritage • People, Place & Land • Gaelic •Partnerships & collective action • Skills & capacity • Academia • Infrastructure • Entrepreneurship

- **Scottish Council on Archives Strategy 2023-2026**
https://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/SCA-Strategic-Plan-2023-26-Final.pdf
  Vision • Scotland's documented past is valued, understood and shared | **Values** • By working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders we strive to inspire the highest standards in collection management and service delivery

- **Bòrd na Gàidhlig National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-2028**
https://www.gaidhlig.scot/en/gaelic-language-plans/the-national-gaelic-language-plan/

Vision • A measurable increase in the numbers of people, speaking, learning, using and supporting Gaelic. **Main Aim:** Increase the use and learning of Gaelic

- **Heritage 2033** – National Lottery Heritage Fund
  https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/about/heritage-2033-our-10-year-strategy
  Investment Principles • Saving heritage - Conserving and valuing heritage, for now and the future • Protecting the environment - Supporting nature recovery and environmental sustainability • Inclusion, access and participation - Supporting greater inclusion, diversity, access and participation in heritage.

Figure 1 CnES Corporate Values

5. SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
• **Qualified, experienced and knowledgeable staff** • **Breadth of collections** • **New website & branding** • **Good teamwork within Heritage Service** • **Strong relationship with comainn eachdraidh/ community heritage sector** • **Good relationships with sector partners and organisations** • **Good support from other Comhairle teams (Finance, Assets/ Premises, IT)**	• **Heritage Manager vacancy affects resilience of service and detrimentally impacts on core duties of other officers being delivered** • **Recent cyber attack has resulted in loss of access to databases, information resources, digitised archive material and blog all of which are essential to underpin service delivery – resolution to this not yet clear** • **Lack of staff limits access to archive, ability to promote service through outreach/ engagement/ marketing, ability to respond to emergencies and opportunities** • **Potential for co-operation between Tasglann, Museum, and Archaeology not maximised due to lack of staff resource** • **No succession planning** • **Very limited budget for Archive Service**

Opportunities	Threats
• **Partnerships with other institutions – regional, national & international** • **Local partnerships - Heritage Forum/ community archives** • **New website provides strong platform for awareness raising / information provision** • **Skills sharing and inter-service co-operation within the Heritage Team** • **Potential for archives to be used for wide range of research** • **Interest in use of archive collections for researching history, Gaelic language and culture from local, national and international perspectives** • **Potential for archives to be used in support of education, lifelong learning, creative industries and skills development**	• **Cyber security threats** • **Continued pressure on local government finances** • **Loss of key members of staff who have in-depth knowledge of collections** • **Climate change** • **Lack of affordable housing could affect recruitment if we do attract funding for additional staff** • **Post-Brexit recruitment difficulties** • **Lack of resourcing of Records Management as a CnES function** • **Potential for reputational damage or loss of confidence by public/ funders due to cyber attack**

6. What feedback have we received?

ScotInform were commissioned in 2022 to undertake an independent User and Non-User Survey for Museum & Tasglann nan Eilean, funded by Museum Galleries Scotland.

The aims of the research were:

- To understand the profile of current visitors and users of each of the services
- To understand their motivations for engagement
- To understand patterns of engagement and levels of satisfaction with the experience
- To identify barriers to engagement with the services
- To identify how these might be overcome to generate repeat or new visits

This research took place towards the end of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

6.1 Methodology

An online survey was designed by Scotinform with input from Heritage Service staff. Respondents had the option to complete the survey in English or in Gaelic. A link to the survey was shared across networks within the local area and a poster containing a QR code that linked to the survey was shared across the community, with organisations asked to display it on notice boards. The survey was also advertised on the museum social media channels and on the Comhairle's website.

6.2 Responses

- Survey ran from 12 April until 23 May 2022
- 390 responses received
- 42 respondents completed survey in Gaelic
- Sample size for Tasglann nan Eilean only was relatively small (89 respondents)

- Where percentages do not total 100% this is due to multiple responses, non-response or rounding

6.3 Conclusions

Excellent feedback was received regarding the Archive Service in general, but the following aspects were thought to be in need of improvement:

- Awareness of the service and its offering through effective marketing including regular use of social media and blog
- Improved online offering through dedicated website providing information about the service, the collections, how to access the archives and events
- Improved online catalogue
- Programmes of talks, events and educational visits highlighting the potential of the archives for research
- Staffing of the service

More detail on the survey responses in respect of the Archive Service is provided in **Appendix 2**. It should be noted that a new Heritage Service website - https://www.outerhebridesheritage.org.uk/ - has been delivered since the survey was conducted which addresses many of the suggested improvements. However other aspects have taken a step backwards due to the cyber attack.

7. Where do we want to be in four years' time?

Our Mission – we do this…
We safeguard and promote the value of the written heritage of the Outer Hebrides by identifying, collecting, documenting and preserving archives in order to make them accessible as a record for present and future generations.

Our Vision – so that ….
The documented past of the Outer Hebrides is valued, preserved, shared and enjoyed as a key asset, with the necessary investment and professional skills, enabling it to grow sustainably and ethically, so that our collections, Gaelic culture and intangible heritage will enrich, educate, challenge, inspire and reflect diverse audiences.

7.1 Tasglann nan Eilean Strategic Aims 2024-2028

Tasglann nan Eilean will:

1. Address the impact of the cyber attack by working with IT and others to recover the data needed to underpin delivery of an effective Archive Service
2. Promote the benefits and potential of archives through sharing collections and delivering activities that enrich and inspire the lives of more people, supporting greater inclusion, diversity, access and participation. This will include addressing issues of decolonisation and inclusive practice in collecting, describing, presenting, and engaging with content in archive collections.
3. Preserve and develop our collections in line with policies and national standards ensuring their full unique potential is realised for the benefit of communities locally, nationally and internationally
4. Work to ensure a secure and sustainable future for the Archive Service to enable it to remain adaptive in a changing and challenging environment which includes social, digital and AI developments

5. Raise awareness of the archive and wider Heritage Service
6. Collaborate with funders, partners and communities to create ambitious, innovative, engaging projects that will stretch boundaries and develop the Archive & Museum Service and the wider Outer Hebrides heritage sector
7. Contribute to safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Gaelic language of the Outer Hebrides for the benefit of present and future generations

7.2 Tasglann nan Eilean Strategic Objectives 2024-2028

1. **Address the impact of the cyber attack by working with IT and others to recover the data needed to underpin delivery of an effective Archive Service**
   1.1 Establish the extent of data it is possible to recover to enable firm data recovery plan to be created
   1.2 Continue to rebuild information resources on Sharepoint in the interim where possible, drawing on available data
   1.3 Re-establish access to Axiell CALM catalogue system for archive staff and investigate migration of CALM to cloud-based system
   1.4 Assess extent of catalogue data to be imported or recreated in CALM, including data currently in legacy systems and create Documentation Plan to address
   1.5 Investigate most effective method of making archive catalogues available online
   1.6 Re-establish reading room library database by recreating catalogue records in Excel as an interim solution
   1.7 Establish processes for digital preservation to ensure permanent preservation of archives in digital format

2. **Share archive collections and deliver activities that enrich and inspire the lives of more people, supporting greater inclusion, diversity, access and participation. This will include addressing issues of decolonisation and inclusive practice in collecting, describing, presenting, and engaging with content in archive collections.**
   2.1 Continue to deliver enquiries and reading room service to ensure people can access information and advice about sources relevant to their interests
   2.2 Ensure information about the Archive Service and its collections is available in online national directories and maintain top-level information about collections on website
   2.3 Share archive collections through exhibitions, website, social media, events, presentations or talks, articles, projects and education activities as and when possible
   2.4 Digitise archive material in response to particular enquiries or projects and share digitised content online
   2.5 Participate in Museum nan Eilean Special Exhibitions programme to ensure that material from archive collections is included for selection where relevant
   2.6 Work to overcome barriers to engagement from under-represented individuals or groups by identifying opportunities for community outreach activities, partnerships or projects
   2.7 Support refresh of Museum nan Eilean core galleries with new content from Tasglann nan Eilean collections where relevant
   2.8 Continue to maintain and update Heritage Service website

3. **Preserve and develop our collections in line with policies and national standards ensuring their full unique potential is realised for the benefit of communities locally, nationally and internationally**

3.1 Ensure procedures on all aspects of collections care are in place including routine preservation measures, condition surveys, emergency plan, reading room rules and conservation treatment programme

3.2 Continue to collect archive material in line with Collections Development Policy in order to increase the range and depth of the collections held to ensure that records of enduring value documenting the Outer Hebrides - including material relating to communities, subjects or activities which are under-represented in our collections - are secured for public benefit

3.3 Work with Comhairle departments and officers, and others, to identify public records of enduring value which should be transferred to the archive, in compliance with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011

3.4 Work with Museum nan Eilean colleagues on Collections Resource Centres Project including potential extension of the Archive Service to Uist in order to preserve and provide improved access to pertinent archives

4. **Work to ensure a secure and sustainable future for the Archive Service to enable it to remain adaptive in a changing and challenging environment**

4.1 Build more resilience into Archive Service by advocating for the recruitment of additional staff with the requisite skills, knowledge and experience to enable effective succession planning

4.2 Investigate funding opportunities to secure project posts

4.3 Ensure staff have sufficient training and opportunities for continuous professional development to keep up to date with sector standards and issues

4.4 Establish regular feedback methods to enable evaluation of the service in order to inform future developments

5. **Raise awareness of the archive and wider Heritage Service**

5.1 Review marketing plan and implement measures relating to archives which can be delivered within existing resource

5.2 Identify opportunities for publicity and promotion in the course of delivery of projects or activities

5.3 Investigate feasibility of reinstating Heritage Service blog

5.4 Recruit Archive or Heritage Service ambassadors

6. **Collaborate with funders, partners and communities to create ambitious, innovative, engaging projects that will stretch boundaries and develop the archive and museum service and the wider Outer Hebrides heritage sector**

6.1 Hebridean Homecoming – international project to deliver Emigration Exhibition and Conference in 2025

6.2 Islands Immigration & Migration project 2026

6.3 Collections Resource Centre projects 2023-2027

6.4 Support and work with Heritage Trails Development and Comann Dualchas Innse Gall to assist delivery of strategic projects to benefit community heritage sector

6.5 Be open to new ideas and partnerships

7. **Contribute to safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Gaelic language of the Outer Hebrides for the benefit of present and future generations**

7.1 Promote the richness of Gaelic language and culture within collections, activities and exhibitions to foster feelings of pride in our heritage

7.2 Deliver Archive Service in line with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Plan
7.3 Encourage staff to learn more Gaelic and to use more Gaelic in their working day
7.4 Identify opportunities to collect, document, promote or support Intangible Cultural Heritage
7.5 Support and work with Comann Dualchas Innse Gall / the community heritage sector where possible

8. Next Steps

This Forward Plan lays out the Strategic Aims and Objectives of Tasglann nan Eilean to guide delivery of the Archive Service for the next four years. It is put forward to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar for formal approval.

REVIEW DATE
This Forward Plan will be reviewed in 2028.

APPENDIX 1 Detailed information on progress against Objectives specified in Forward Plan 2017-2020

Objective as per previous plan	***Achievements***
1.1 Work with Legal Services and Chief Executive's Office on implementation of PRSA and the creation of a Records Management Plan	• Archivist produced the Records Management Plan and associated Policies in consultation with Senior Solicitor. The RMP was submitted to the National Records of Scotland by the required deadline • Archivist undertook further work with the Senior Solicitor to strengthen/ clarify aspects of the RMP, following feedback, to enable it to be approved by the Keeper of the Records of Scotland on an improvement model basis • Progress on implementation has been limited since 2020 due to non-replacement of Records Manager when Senior Solicitor retired; recent cyber attack has set this work back
1.2 Create or update the required policies to cover all aspects of the Archive Service	• Policies on Collections Management covering Collections Development, Collections Care, and Collections Information were written; policy on Access & Engagement was updated and all policies were formally approved in June 2017
1.3 Collections preservation and digitisation	• Procedures on all aspects of collections care in place • Conservation condition assessments carried out periodically • Retrospective freezing programme undertaken on advice of Conservation Officer and is almost complete (stalled during Covid) • Programme of conservation treatment of priority items by external specialist in place, prioritised according to results of condition surveys; some conservation work has been grant-funded. • Preservation tasks on specific collections undertaken by Archive staff as items accessioned or on ad hoc basis, as resources permit • Archives have been digitised as resources permit or in response to enquiries/ exhibition requirements. Most of these digital assets currently inaccessible due to cyber attack
1.4 Collections Information	• Collections section created on new Heritage Services website to provide top-level information about archive collections to researchers or potential researchers • Guide for Family History sources produced • Procedures for Accessioning and Cataloguing written to ensure documentation/ data entry is done consistently to relevant standards • Harris Tweed Authority Archive cataloguing project delivered following successful funding application to The National Archives (UK) to enable employment of a Project Archivist. The catalogue as it stood at June 2018 is available via UK Archive Hub website. Later enhancements currently inaccessible due to cyber attack • 153 accessions of archive material documented between January 2017 and December 2023 (an accession can be 1 item or hundreds of items), most of which on CALM database: all of the detailed information currently inaccessible due to cyber attack • CALM Database project: all accessions imported or entered into database up to June 2023; all collection-level catalogue records as at 2022 imported or created; GD collections to item level imported/ completed to item level for most holdings in this category: all of this work currently inaccessible due to cyber attack – we are presently

	relying on paper copies/ scans which does not allow effective searching, and an out of date legacy database • Reading room library: some 3,000 books which are an internal research resource for the Heritage Service, and available for public reference had been entered on our database: currently inaccessible due to cyber attack
1.5 Provide excellent standard of service to archive users or potential users by implementing Procedures and Plans as per Access & Engagement Policy	• Enquiries fully and accurately responded to, within 20 working days, in compliance with Freedom of Information Scotland Act as part of routine service delivery: current situation post cyber-attack makes it difficult to fully and accurately respond • Consultation visits arranged to enable researchers to access archives as part of routine service delivery: current situation post cyber-attack makes it difficult to ensure all relevant sources are being identified/ produced for researchers • Skills for the Future Archives project (HLF-funded) delivered Aug 2016-Feb 2018. As part of this a Community Archives conference was organised at Lews Castle in June 2017 which attracted archive professionals from across the UK. No resource was available to retain the Gaelic-speaking trainee in the archive team at end of traineeship • Sessions on archive sources delivered for Lews Castle College/ UHI history students as requested • Archive staff delivered talks or took part in external events as resources permitted (e.g. Conference to mark centenary of 1919 Land Settlement Act; Faclan Book Festival 2023 etc.) • Training/ advice on on archives care and management provided to comainn eachdraidh/ heritage network partners: sessions were delivered pre-2019 but has not been possible to maintain this level of support due to staffing issues • Displays featuring archive material created in archive display case and in MnE foyer/ long gallery as appropriate; items from archive collections also featured in relevant MnE exhibitions at both Stornoway and Lionacleit
1.6 Develop archive collections to address gaps as per Collections Development Policy to help ensure important historical records are secured	• CnES archive material transferred to Tasglann nan Eilean periodically from various Comhairle locations • Non-CnES material that meets criteria of Collections Development Policy accepted into archive collections either as Gift or Deposit including historical records of hospitals, churches, businesses and individuals

APPENDIX 2 Detailed Feedback from Scotinform Survey

ScotInform were commissioned in 2022 to undertake an independent User and Non-User Survey for both Museum and Tasglann nan Eilean, funded by Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS). Please note that this appendix is an edited synopsis relating to feedback on Tasglann nan Eilean in particular and the full report is available from the Heritage Service. The research took place towards the end of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

The aims of the research were:

- To understand the profile of current visitors and users of each of the services
- To understand their motivations for engagement
- To understand patterns of engagement and levels of satisfaction with the experience
- To identify barriers to engagement with the services
- To identify how these might be overcome to generate repeat or new visits

1 Methodology

An online survey was designed by Scotinform with input from Heritage Service staff. Respondents had the option to complete the survey in English or in Gaelic. A link to the survey was shared across networks within the local area and a poster containing a QR code that linked to the survey was shared across the community, with organisations asked to display it on notice boards. The survey was also advertised on the museum social media channels and on the Comhairle's website.

2 Responses

- Survey ran from 12 April until 23 May 2022
- 390 responses received
- 42 respondents completed survey in Gaelic
- Sample size for Tasglann nan Eilean only was relatively small (89 respondents)
- Where percentages do not total 100% this is due to multiple responses, non-response or rounding

3 Awareness of Archive Service

- 52% of respondents were aware of Tasglann nan Eilean. There would appear to be some 'warm' opportunities to increase awareness of this service in particular; awareness was 62% for residents of Lewis, 61% of Museum nan Eilean (Stornoway) users and 58% for Museum nan Eilean (Uist & Barra) users.

4 Use of service

- 23% of respondents have engaged with Tasglann nan Eilean in the past. Unlike with the museums, the data did not show a relationship between place of residence and prior engagement. 90% of those who have been to Museum nan Eilean (Stornoway) and 36% of those who have visited Museum nan Eilean (Uist & Barra) have engaged with the archive.

5 Use of service for another purpose

- Approximately a quarter of respondents had used the service in a different capacity.
- The most frequent interaction was through the provision of advice to the Comainn Eachdraidh/Historical Societies.

6 Satisfaction with Tasglann nan Eilean

- Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a range of aspects of their experience.
- Satisfaction ratings overall were excellent, with no aspect scoring less than 82% total satisfaction and more than half of respondents being 'very satisfied' across every measure.

- The staff are a major asset, scoring 94% satisfaction for friendliness, 93% for service and 92% for knowledge.
- 88% were satisfied with the ease with which they could access the collections, 86% with being able to find what they were looking for, and 82% with the range of the collections.

7 Suggested Improvements: Tasglann nan Eilean

Respondents who had previously used Tasglann nan Eilean were asked how their experience could have been improved. 42 out of 89 respondents made comments:

- 13 said that nothing could have improved it
- 10 said that the service needed more staff
- 8 that it required better marketing
- 5 would like it to be easier to access the collections (particularly online)
- 5 suggested improvements to the catalogue system

8 Suggested Improvements (2)

- Definitely needs more staff - cannot be run on such a shoestring?
- It was somewhat difficult to learn what sources were available to me until I was actually there. To a certain extent this is always the case in archival research, but in the case of Tasglann nan Eilean, travel is quite expensive. It would be easier for me to receive funding for my research from my university if there was a more representative online catalogue.
- I haven't examined the catalogue in detail, and I am impressed by what is held. I suspect (in some instances I do know) that some records of public bodies that might most appropriately be in Tasglann nan Eilean are held by various Comunn Eachdraidh where they are not as easily accessible as through Tasglann, nor are catalogues readily available.

9 Barriers to engagement

- The main barriers to engagement with the Archive Service are linked to awareness. 44% of those who are aware of it at all don't know what it offers, and 47% don't know how to use it.
- These figures are similar for those who are engaged with the museums; around half of those who have previously visited the museums don't know what the service offers or how to use it.

10 Tasglann nan Eilean: Increasing Engagement

All respondents were asked what would encourage them to use the Archive Service for a first time, or more often.

- 63% would like more information about how the collections can be used. Nearly half would be interested in talks or events about the archives, perhaps to illustrate this.
- 35% would be interested in subject guides to the collections.
- 39% would be interested in accessing the archive to research a particular subject, person or place connected to the Outer Hebrides, and 20% would be interested in researching family collections.

11 Online Engagement with the Service

- 53% of respondents have engaged with Museum and Archive Service content online.
- Within the Western Isles, online engagement is highest in Lewis; more than half of respondents from outside of Lewis say that they have not engaged.
- The most common platforms for engagement are Facebook and the service's own website, which have both been visited by approximately a third of respondents.
- No other platform accounts for more than 10% of respondents.
- 31% of respondents who had engaged online had done so within the past week and 45% within the past month.
- Generally, more recent engagement (within the past month) was reported by residents of Lewis (52%), respondents living outside Scotland (80%) and users of the Archive Service (52%).

12 Highlights of Online Engagement

- Those who had previously engaged online were asked whether they had found any aspects of the offer particularly useful or interesting.
- The 'Collections Revealed' posts were valued by 29% of respondents, the online exhibitions by 20% and the online catalogues by 17%.
- Respondents who had used the Archive Service also valued the blog (23%).

13 Online Engagement: Suggested Improvements (1)

Respondents who engaged online were asked whether they could suggest any improvements to the offer. 66 respondents made comments:

- 24 said that they couldn't think of anything/they enjoyed it as it was
- 22 suggested greater visibility, more promotion and better links with other relevant bodies/channels
- 6 would like to see more of the collection and the archive digitised
- 5 suggested a better website
- 4 would like to see activities for children
- An improved website would be excellent so we can fully understand the offer, see opening times. Also widening the net for advertising events too
- Better website/ more information about on social media introduce the staff
- I think weekly/fortnightly What's Ons would work, even if this appears to be repetitive - people have a lot in their minds and may loosely remember something they saw previously, but not enough to investigate it properly. Perhaps clear guidance on events suitable for children and those for adults. Engagement is very tricky - I do it in my own work - so I do understand. But many are not aware of what is in the archives and when it is such a unique resource, it should be utilised to the best of the staff's availability
- Promotion! I never know what is happening.

14 Final comments

At the end of the survey respondents were asked whether they would like to make further comments about the service. 82 took the opportunity to do so.

- 42 made a positive comment about the quality of the service.
- 17 said that the service should be better funded.
- 10 said that marketing needed to be improved to do it justice.
- 10 suggested improvements to the service (largely reflected elsewhere in the report).
- Having researched at a number of collections globally for academic research, I can say unequivocally that the time at the Archives was exceptional. The dedicated team ensured that I had access to all necessary materials, worked flexibly with my travel schedule to ensure that I was able to complete the requisite research in time, and made the first-class collection easily accessible with professionalism and kindness. It was a pleasure researching at the Archives and visiting the Museum while on Lewis.
- I have found all of the staff to be really friendly and knowledgeable. Everyone on reception has been really welcoming, the staff in the museum happy to answer any questions, and the staff in the archives super knowledgeable, and really happy to help with any queries, often going above and beyond and using their own knowledge to find material you may not have thought of yourself. It is much appreciated, thank you!
- The only comment I have is to state that the service, as I required it was exemplary. Emails were responded to swiftly and requests for various documents were addressed. While visiting Tasglann nan Eilean I was given a great deal of help to view documents. Staff were professional, friendly and careful about explaining how documents should be handled.
- I am impressed by the service that is offered by a very limited but dedicated staff, and, in the case of both museums, working with quite unsuitable and inadequate storage facilities. Tasglann has

very recently built and impressive storage. The staff numbers seem sadly reduced from the number mentioned in the publicity surrounding the opening of the new building in Stornoway.

- Feel it has been grossly overlooked by the Comhairle as a source of economic regeneration. Staff whittled down and those who remain are unfairly expected to run a prestigious service. Cannot fathom why the service has been so overlooked by the Great Place scheme and the Islands Deal - both of which have veered far too much in the direction of Art - Shame on the Comhairle here. The service offered by the skeleton is amazing where our CE is concerned.
- Museums and Archives staff provide a vibrant and positive service and in the future it would be good to provide them with additional financial and resource support.
- I believe the Museum and Tasglann nan Eilean has faced significant difficulties over the past few years including the effects of the pandemic but also significant cuts in funding. I know the Comhairle has itself faced funding cuts but for the celebration of our culture and heritage to thrive these services must be adequately funded if we are to maximise the potential from the collections and from the increasing number of visitors to our islands.
- Need to be publicised better. I didn’t know the archive existed or how to access it.
- Didn't know we could access the archive. Best kept secret!
- I would love to be able access information and need some guidance as to how to do it
- Excellent, helpful and knowledgeable service received, meeting all my research requests, so I'm not sure how it could be improved. Cannot fault Tasglann in any way...Staff member went beyond my expectations and has always been incredibly helpful and going out of her way to find things for me.
- Working with the Archives has been a highlight of the abroad component of my academic research.

15 Conclusions

- Awareness of all services is low. A marketing strategy to address this should be prioritised, focussing on raising initial awareness and communicating the quality of the offer and of the service
- Opportunities to generate commercial income and to develop partnerships (for example, with colleges or universities to support marketing activity) should be explored
- Satisfaction ratings for all three service strands are excellent, and particularly noteworthy in the archive service. The biggest concern is around the opening hours, which visitors feel should be extended to maximise benefit
- Respondents feel that the online offer could be further enhanced and more links made with other bodies to raise profile