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Culture and heritage bodies urged to take climate change action
Arts, culture, heritage and climate leaders gather in Edinburgh for launch of new Climate Heritage Network

Organisations across the arts, culture and heritage sector are being called on to take urgent action against climate change as a new international network launches in Edinburgh today (Thursday 24 Oct) at an event hosted by Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

The Climate Heritage Network, which was conceived at the Global Climate Action Summit hosted by the State of California in 2018, will provide a platform for the sector to unite to tackle climate change, one of the most significant and fastest-growing threats to global cultural heritage.

Worldwide rising sea levels, soaring temperatures and increasing extreme weather events place cultural heritage on the frontline of climate change.

Iconic historic places – from archaeological and prehistoric sites, such as Skara Brae in Orkney, to coastal cities like Venice, Italy and Saint-Louis, Senegal – are extremely vulnerable to these impacts, which also put cultural collections, such as archives, artworks and artefacts, at risk. Intangible heritage, such as languages and oral traditions, also face a fight for survival as climate change threatens to displace communities.

As well as highlighting the severity of the climate change threat to historic sites worldwide, the Climate Heritage Network will also seek to inspire individuals, organisations and communities to take climate action. It will emphasise how cultural heritage offers immense and virtually untapped potential to drive climate action and support just and equitable transitions by communities towards low carbon, climate resilient futures.

Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop said: “The Climate Heritage Network is a sector coming together to take effective, collective action against climate change.

“There is a significant role for everyone in society to support the change required to meet our ambitious new targets and this is exactly the type of global, connected response we need to see.

“Scotland is well known throughout the world for its rich cultural heritage and we must protect our historic sites for future generations. I am proud to see Historic Environment Scotland leading the way and collaborating with partners across the globe.”

Ewan Hyslop, Head of Technical Research & Science at HES, and Co-Chair of the Climate Heritage Network Global Launch, said: “We’re delighted that Scotland was chosen as the host nation for the global launch of the Climate Heritage Network, reflecting the country’s strong leadership on climate action.

“Scotland has some of the most ambitious climate change targets in the world, and at HES we’re proud to play a lead role in supporting these through our innovative programmes of research, education and training.

“Successfully transitioning to a low-carbon future and adapting to environmental changes underway requires individuals, organisations, governments and communities to work together. The Climate Heritage Network is an important opportunity to develop new and creative partnerships, strengthen those that already exist and pool expertise and knowledge from all corners of the world.

“For HES, it is also an opportunity to demonstrate what meaningful climate action looks like, and we hope to inspire many others to join us.”

Julianne Polanco, Director of the California Office of Historic Preservation and Co-Chair of the Launch, said: “There are significant cultural heritage dimensions to every aspect of climate action covered by the Paris Agreement, including heightening ambition to address climate change, mitigating greenhouse gases, enhancing adaptive capacity, and planning for loss and damage.

“For instance, historic and existing buildings represent an important source of embodied carbon, and their reuse is a key strategy in many regions for avoiding future emissions associated with new building construction.”

“Cultural heritage supports climate adaptation in a variety of ways, including learning from past social adaptability to environmental change and leveraging pride of place and social values to guide contemporary resilience planning,” said Andrew Potts of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), which is initially staffing the new network.

Founding members of the Climate Heritage Network include governmental bodies such as Historic England, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Dutch National Heritage Academy (NL); NGOs such as the Petra Trust (Jordan) and the Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage; international organisations like United Cities and Local Governments, the International Institute of Conservators and the International Federation of Libraries; universities like the University of Essex and Pratt Institute in New York and businesses like Wessex Archaeology and Heritage Strategies International.

Over the course of the two-day event to launch the Climate Heritage Network, an action plan will be developed setting out the priorities for the Network moving forward and how best it can increase engagement and wider awareness with climate change issues across the cultural heritage sector. These actions will then be presented as part of the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit (COP25), which takes place in Santiago, Chile from 2-13 December. It will also lay the foundation for cultural heritage at COP26, which will take place in Glasgow next year.

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Notes to Editors

About the Climate Heritage Network

The Climate Heritage Network was first conceived at the 2018 Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco. It is a voluntary, mutual support network of local and city, state/provincial and regional, indigenous and tribal, and national arts, culture and

heritage governmental and quasi-governmental boards, offices, ministries and site management agencies as well as NGOs, universities, businesses and other organizations committed to aiding their communities in tackling climate change and achieving the ambitions of the Paris Agreement. The focus of the network is providing support to organizations from jurisdictions that have made concrete climate action pledges such as those in the [Under 2 Coalition](#) and the [Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy](#).

Interested agencies, organizations and businesses can join by [signing or endorsing the Climate Heritage Network MOU](#) (Memorandum of Understanding). The MOU will not introduce new legal constraints on participants but will demonstrate clear commitment to support mobilization of the cultural heritage sector for climate action.

For further information on the Climate Heritage Network, visit <https://www.climateheritage.org>.

About Historic Environment Scotland

1. [Historic Environment Scotland](#) (HES) is the lead public body charged with caring for, protecting and promoting the historic environment. HES is also the lead on delivering Scotland's first strategy for the historic environment, *Our Place in Time*.
 - Historic Scotland, Scran, Canmore, The National Collection of Aerial Photography (NCAP), The Engine Shed, Stirling Castle and Edinburgh Castle are sub-brands of Historic Environment Scotland.
2. Historic Environment Scotland is a registered Scottish Charity. Scottish Charity No. SC045925
3. You can keep up to date with news from Historic Environment Scotland and register for media release email alerts [here](#). If you wish to unsubscribe, please [contact us](#).
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About the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

The [International Council on Monuments and Sites](#) (ICOMOS) works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places. It is the only global non-government organization of this kind, which is dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques to the conservation of the architectural and archaeological heritage.

ICOMOS is a network of experts that benefits from the interdisciplinary exchange of its members, among which are architects, historians, archaeologists, art historians, geographers, anthropologists, engineers and town planners.

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