

Scotland's Urban Past is new RCHAMS project

☒ People living in towns and cities across Scotland will get involved in investigating and telling the history of their own communities through a project that's just received a £1.65m Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant.

RCAHMS has been awarded the funding by the HLF for a five-year project, Scotland's Urban Past (SUP).

The project builds on the success of the Scotland's Rural Past (SRP) a community archaeology project which trained hundreds of volunteers in 60 local groups across Scotland, in recording historic settlements.

Now Scotland's Urban Past (SUP) will focus on the urban built environment, working with 60 communities the length and breadth of Scotland, to explore the rich architectural, social and personal histories of their urban environments and to study how they have changed over time.

A call for participants and interested groups will be launched in spring 2015.

Commenting on the success of RCAHMS' bid to for funding, Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs said: "It is easy to overlook the histories of our towns and cities as we go about our everyday lives. Now thanks to this significant grant, RCAHMS will be able to engage people the length and breadth of the country in telling the fascinating stories of the places where eight in 10 of us now live."

Speaking about the project, which will be taken forward by the merged RCAHMS and Historic Scotland body – Historic Environment Scotland (HES) – Rebecca Bailey, RCAHMS Head of Education and Outreach, said: "Social, economic and

technological forces have shaped our towns and cities in profound ways. We want to directly connect communities with the place they live in, by getting them to explore the history that is quite literally, right on our own doorsteps.

“The scale of each project will range from investigations of a building, street or neighbourhood, to an entire urban area. We’ll train some people in survey and recording techniques while others may explore the personal histories of buildings and areas by gathering photographs, documents and oral histories from local residents.”

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, added: “HLF is delighted to give our support to a project which provides opportunities for people to learn new skills while building a detailed history of Scotland’s towns and villages. It builds on the earlier, highly successful Scotland’s Rural Past project which inspired people across Scotland to get involved in their community’s heritage for the first time.”

SUP will

- offer training courses in building investigation, photography, oral history recording and historical document research run by RCAHMS’ expert staff
- Encourage participants to actively research, record and promote awareness of their urban past.
- take information and personal memories gathered by participants into the RCAHMS Canmore website – the online database of Scotland’s national collection of the built environment
- run events and hands-on activities to encourage people to get involved
- help people of all ages to learn about the urban past

'Crowd-sourcing' activities will connect the wider public with their urban heritage and a website will enable people to upload information and access detailed architectural notes via mobile devices.

Some of the projects – particularly those targeting new audiences and young people – will involve creative input from artists, musicians, writers, actors and digital designers.