

Scottish Community Heritage Alliance Roadshows
External Evaluation Report
March 2026



'We're not alone...'

***Frequent feedback form comment from
Scottish Community Heritage Alliance roadshow programme
2025/2026***

***Image depicts the annual Stonehaven Fireballs event – a participant organisation which
provided a speaker at the SCHA roadshow in Banchory, Aberdeenshire.***

1. Methodology

As the appointed independent evaluators for this project, we recognise the importance of monitoring and evaluating a community heritage project of this kind. We have worked with SCHA from the outset to collect **baseline data** with which we have been able to compare and contrast different forms of evaluatory material as the project progressed, including into its extension period into the spring of 2026 with the **six Grassroots Gatherings online discussion sessions and three online training sessions** (which were separate from and in addition to the online discussion sessions). We attended one on heritage tourism.

We began by working with the roadshow project manager to strengthen the **baseline feedback form** issued to all roadshow attendees. This data-gathering exercise allowed a degree of comparability between roadshows across the country, although, in reality, external factors – winter weather conditions for example – meant that like for like comparison between events would prove more difficult than one might think.

Not everyone completed a paper form (44 were returned in total) but this was sufficient to make the exercise worthwhile.

Baseline data collected for each attendee include information on age, gender, ethnicity, and membership of heritage organisations. A sample feedback form can be seen in Appendix A.

We held several **update discussions with the Project Manager** via Zoom – mutually useful and relevant exchanges of information - and it was good to see her confidence in the role grow as the project unfolded.

We also kept an eye on **promotional material** issued, including press releases, newsletters, social media output and website content for the project.

We undertook a small number of **1:1 telephone surveys** selected at random from project participants who had already returned feedback forms in order to dig deeper into the impact of the project in terms of its intended outcomes,

We issued an **interim evaluation report** which was intended to help shape the project in its later stages and have included relevant observations from it within this expanded report.

We attended **roadshow events** in Banchory and in Highland (see Appendix C).

We undertook an **independent analysis of the overall roadshow feedback forms (Appendix B)** which had already been successfully analysed by the roadshow manager in order to implement ongoing change from roadshow to roadshow.

We (virtually) attended both **island roadshows** and one **post-roadshow Grassroots discussion** event.

We also issued an **online survey on SurveyMonkey** towards the end of the project in 2025, before we knew that the project would be extended into the spring of 2026. in order to capture information regarding the project's outcomes and in particular its potential for sustainability.

2. Overview of outcome achievement

- *Heritage will be in a better condition*

Better management of heritage sites means that their ongoing maintenance is likely to be improved. We noted that through group discussions in particular many participants made new contacts who could provide assistance with maintenance issues, either practically or with advice.

'Good to chat to folk with the same issues!' – comment from Borders roadshow

- *Heritage will be identified and better explained*

Roadshow presentations often included transferable advice on heritage identification and interpretation. Tabletop displays and informal discussions with participants are the best way of showing what sites offer and their approaches to interpretation, and even better if followed up with a field trip or exchange of visits so that learning can continue. Participants are amateurs, not professionals, and these SCHA events will over time foster greater confidence in those attending.

'We are organising a team day trip to one of the local organisations we met today!' – comment from Southwest roadshow

- *People will have developed skills*

Our observation at the one roadshow we attended in person suggested that sharing and training in additional skills, particularly in terms of practicalities in running a grass-roots heritage organisation, were a strong motivator in attending and deeply appreciated.

'It was really useful to network with other organisations and share ideas!' – comment from Edinburgh roadshow

- *People will have learned about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions*

Our observation at the one roadshow we attended in person and subsequent survey responses strongly suggest that sharing good practice was key element to the day and people left with fresh ideas and new approaches to try out.

'Had a lovely day meeting and chatting with others' – comment from Western Isles hybrid roadshow

- *People will have greater wellbeing*

The informal, social side to the roadshows certainly enhance wellbeing and could be more firmly enshrined as an essential outcome within future roadshows. Running small heritage sites and organisations can be isolating but these roadshows encourage a feeling of camaraderie

'We're not alone...' - a positive comment repeated in shock, wonder, and delight across several roadshows

- *The funded organisation will be more resilient*

Money is at the forefront of many organisations' list of concerns. It is greatly beneficial to have a mix of organisations, large and small, well-established and new, so that experience can be shared in a non-judgemental way.

'The work we have done is valuable' – comment from Western Isles hybrid roadshow

- *The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit*

It was clear that only ¼ of those attending knew any of the other people present in the room, even though sites were not particularly distant from one another. Heritage work can be hard, all-consuming and isolating without events like the SCHA roadshows to encourage new thinking and creative connections.

'There's much more happening locally than I realised!' – comment from Glasgow to North Ayrshire roadshow

- *The local economy will be boosted*

There is no question but that SCHA roadshows, over time, contribute to the local economy. The Highland Heritage Fair, an event established some years ago which has inspired this programme of roadshows, and which has had time to 'bed in' as an annual event, has become a familiar and fondly anticipated part of the Highland heritage calendar.

People meet up with old friends and make new connections, and what is new at each site is celebrated, shared and disseminated. Roadshows also encourage self-reflection as an organisation, a moment to consider how an organisation that may work in isolation sits within the local heritage landscape.

That self-reflection certainly adds value to the economy of Scotland in the longer term, because it creates a genuine and newsworthy buzz around heritage generally.

'We tend to be so busy we don't often think of how other organisations view us' – comment from Highland roadshow.

Section 3. Detailed Feedback on Grassroots Heritage Roadshow in Banchory (Aberdeen and Moray)

This was the only roadshow the evaluation team attended in person. It was held at a highly suitable and central venue for the area, which was accessible by public transport (we travelled there by bus, as did two of the speakers).

Project managing these events can be stressful and this venue's on-site staff did not, sadly, prove especially supportive on the day (more used to hosting society weddings, perhaps). The surprisingly limited number of tables available were in very poor condition. This kind of detailed information is almost impossible for any project manager to secure in advance when the information given by the venue is vague or flawed.

In future, using local participants' advice on venue hire will become more practicable.

There were a number of no-shows on the day, but even bearing that in mind, there were rather too many chairs present for the number of attendees expected. Having to add chairs to an inadequate number is always better than rows of chairs sitting empty as it creates an illusion of capacity which can impact on how people recall the event afterwards (participants commented on low attendance at some events as a disappointment, even though this is to be expected from a first-time roadshow of this kind).

The timings, set up 10h – 11h and departure 15h.15 – 16h were good. The venue was easy to find, had ample parking and was warm and comfortable. With more positive support on site it would have been ideal.

The speakers were well selected for contrast: they included

- Neil Smith, Kincardineshire Association and Stonehaven Tolbooth Museum
- Gillian Simison, Head of Museum Development, Museums Galleries Scotland
- David Fayle, Independent Researcher and SCHA Board Member
- Martin Sim, Stonehaven Fireballs Association

It was a slight pity to have two speakers from the same town, Stonehaven, but they spoke about very different areas of the town's heritage.

It was a shame that Gillian Simison's MGS presentation was aimed more at registered museums. When I asked how many of the sites present were registered museums at the end of her talk, none were. Museums Galleries Scotland could usefully create a presentation which helps smaller sites to understand, step by step, how they might one day attain the heady heights of museum registration. Some present already consider their lack of registration to be a benefit rather than a disadvantage because they are freer to do what they wish.

Avoiding the use of acronyms (such as ICH - Intangible Cultural Heritage) without definition in full is to be encouraged in all presentations and could perhaps be communicated to speakers in advance.

It was also perhaps a little pointless to discuss decolonisation of collections and inclusivity of participation with a very much white, middle-class and elderly audience, many of whom have no collection per se and do not have much choice in volunteer selection. Again, this was aimed at a registered-museum audience who were simply not present. There needed to be a clearer reason provided, with examples, as to why these issues were also relevant to small, grassroots-level heritage sites.

The best speaker was reserved for the end, a wise move: Martin Sim led us through a breathtaking account of how to turn a near-disaster into a huge success story. He described how the collapse of the committee running the Stonehaven Fireballs event, lack of budget and any health and safety leading to near misses decided him to get involved. Counter to received wisdom, he advocates a large committee to diffuse potential conflict – within his committee of 12 people there are different subgroupings which mean that everyone has their own responsibility. He keeps meticulous records so that the names of 'swingers' of the traditional fireballs are carried forward year on year and it becomes ever more deeply embedded into the history of the town. Swingers have to undertake community work in order to earn the right to swing: introducing that rule stopped the health and safety risk overnight. He has found that other groups get pulled into the event naturally: the local Lions Club, the Beerfest, the Rotary etc. There are now 45 marshals, 45 swingers, and there is an active schools programme (with fake fireballs!) bringing on the next generation of swingers. They refuse corporate sponsorship from outside the town.

Martin has a gift for a fine soundbite too:

- 'It's stronger because it's local.'
- 'The more you do (form-filling and fundraising) the more you get.'

The only thing missing from this exemplary presentation was a demonstration of swinging the fireball itself, we were all itching to have a go – and practical participatory activities could be an additional event draw, as well as providing a good photo opportunity for local media. One practical come-and-try element to the day might increase attendance and engagement at future roadshows.

Good speakers like Martin could be invited to contribute to a library of 'best practice' podcasts and other documentation held within the SCHA website.

Better amplification and some training support for public speaking would have benefited some of the less experienced speakers.

Lunch was ample and appreciated, and the project manager should be commended for providing the catering herself rather than buying in caterers, allowing a small economy which could be productively repurposed.

The discussion groups which took place during the afternoon all required rather stronger chairing, and this is one of very few criticisms of the roadshow programme overall. Training in this essential role would be advantageous for board members and the project manager. Local heritage organisations can be run by quite strident people, who can dominate discussion without even realising they are doing so which can have a negative impact on other participants who give up contributing themselves.

In future, perhaps worth earmarking a facilitator role for anyone who falls into this category. Listening and attempting to chair means that they cannot then dominate the floor to quite such a degree.

There was a useful and wide-ranging discussion on **funding** which covered:

- encouraging legacies
- tapping local trusts
- the time it takes to apply for grants and obligations which come with that
- how hard it is to secure funding for revenue costs like upkeep and heating as against shiny-new-project capital costs
- in-person donations always being higher than virtual ones
- Common Good funds
- Annual photo competitions as a community fundraiser
- Recovering from the withdrawal of regular funding

There was an equally wide-ranging discussion on **volunteering** which covered:

- Poor coverage of local history and archaeology in primary schools

- Braemar Castle consciously connects with local schools to bring more pupils in
- Foreign students would love to take part but cannot find accommodation
- Field walking a good reward for voluntary digging
- Committee age range
- Does volunteering teach transferable skills?

A third discussion on **marketing** was no less interesting but had to be cut short due to time constraints – one topic too many in the programme. It is better to discuss two topics thoroughly than three and not complete the discussion.

- Communication is tricky
- Traditional forms of promotion must not be overlooked, word of mouth, posters on lamp-post, local paper press releases
- Social media is more effective if combined with traditional methods
- Promotion between groups and organisations is great, whether themed or based on location

Section 4. Promotion of new and established roadshow events

The project manager worked hard to promote the roadshow programme and engagement and attendance steadily grew. If the programme were established for three years, for example, then the planning for the next year could begin almost as soon as the last programme had finished, keeping the momentum going.

Promotion targeted both **the public and the heritage community**. In addition to the posters displayed locally, the roadshows were promoted on SCHA's Facebook page, local heritage Facebook pages, local events Facebook sites, local events listing websites (e.g. Dumfries & Galloway What's Going On, Information Oban, etc.). I also had the roadshows featured in local heritage organisations' newsletters and I sent press releases to all the local online and in print newspapers.

This was a brand new initiative. The low attendance, especially at the earlier roadshows, is clearly not due to lack of promotion, but more likely due to adverse weather conditions, a lack of interest from the general public and overwhelm/fatigue or lack of time or capacity on the part of the Grassroots heritage groups. SCHA is after all a relatively unknown organisation at this point in time, but the indications were that this was already changing as the roadshows unrolled. Future programmes of this nature will be an easier 'sell'.

Section 5. Observations on Grassroots discussion/training events online

We were able to attend two of these enjoyable events, one on heritage training and one on heritage tourism (the first as a participant, wearing a different hat, and discussing skills for interpretive writing, the second purely as an evaluator).

The initial impression after logging in was one of community, of people who knew each other. People were on first name terms and greeted each other warmly as they logged in. Attendees included the project manager, SCHA Board members, external organisations and participant Grassroots heritage sites.

It has been hard all along to secure good speakers for roadshows, and these follow-up training events were no different.

It would be good for SCHA to turn a challenge into an opportunity and begin to build a library of Grassroots best practice heritage speakers who would be willing to share expertise or support a training session. A small fee (either to the individual or to the organisation) might sweeten the possibility of taking part. The Scottish Book Trust authors' scheme might be a good model to examine for this.

The only issue to be flagged is that of stronger facilitation, so that over-dominant voices can be tactfully muted to give others a chance to speak.

Overall, however, these were well run, positive sessions between SCHA and participants which encouraged a productive deepening of some relationships established during the course of the roadshows.

If future funding can be secured it will be interesting to see what grows from these fledgling friendships and connections in years to come.

Section 6. Analysis of Surveymonkey detailed post-attendance responses

This survey was run by and for the evaluation team and eight responses were submitted. Some were followed up by 1:1 phone calls afterwards.

Q1: What made you, personally, attend the roadshow?

50% of respondees said that came along because they received an email about the event.

A strong e-list which is kept updated is clearly important to future SCHA Roadshow organisation. At the same time, dependence on the e-list alone and no other form of promotion would see a rapid decline in attendance through some aging out of participation and others changing post.

85% of respondees came along because they thought it might help their organisation connect with others running similar organisations or activities. Our in-person surveying showed that this did not necessarily mean those in the same area. Thematic connection is important too.

Those who attended came because they specifically chose to do so. None were sent by someone else within the organisation. Younger respondees thought it might enhance their career progression. Others made comments like *'it's always me who does these things'*.

Many small grass-roots organisations have one-person or very small teams. There has to be a clear outcome for them to add to their workload or responsibilities by attending an event of this nature.

Comments:

- *'Jane Harris, St John's Kirk - Walls Heritage, Orkney. I live in the Black Isle but am a trustee/secretary for this organisation. I've been involved for over two years and have not so far found any forum for raising questions/sharing ideas and experience. On a couple of occasions, I've directly approached similar organisations in Orkney and elsewhere with varying levels of success from very helpful replies to no answer at all. I hoped that this day might give access to networks. I am booked to attend the Orkney event, online.'*
- *'Remembering the accused witches of Scotland - we attended as we are a new small charity and look at opportunities like that as a must for our wee team to grow and learn.'*

- ‘Angela Watt - Resonate Together - heard about it last minute and was asked to make contact and offer to speak.’
- ‘Anthony Newton, Secretary Peebles Civic Society. We were running a project titled the The Mills of Tweeddale which was funded by the Scottish Borders Council Neighbourhood Support Fund. The Roadshow was an excellent opportunity to present our project and also to mix and meet others in the Scottish Borders who were undertaking similar heritage projects or with similar interests.’
- Faith Hillier, Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere
- Jim Mackay, Chair of the Kirkmichael Trust in the Black Isle. Very keen to encourage and assist and train community action in the heritage sector, and events such as these have proven to be very beneficial in helping and sustaining community groups.

Q2. 10 SCHA Roadshows took place over the past 12 months (NB we did not include the two Western Isles and Northern Isles hybrid in person/online Roadshows in this survey) in the following areas (all were listed). Respondees were invited to select which they had attended.

Glasgow and North Ayrshire, Highland, and Borders showed the greatest number of participation responses, with other responses coming in from Southwest, Clyde Valley (surprisingly, as badly disrupted by weather), Dundee & Fife and Central.

Q3. Were you aware at the time of attending that your roadshow was one of 12 planned for this year?

75% were, 25% were not. The national contextualising of the roadshows improved as the project manager gained experience in managing the roadshows as programme unfolded.

Q4. Given the chance, would you have chosen to attend another roadshow, as well as or instead of the one you booked?

25% stated that they would have attended other roadshows if they had been aware of them, possibly instead of the one attended. This is likely to relate to the desire for thematic rather than geographical area connections between heritage sites and

organisations (so a restored church group might consciously attend an event where they knew other restored churches to be present).

The main roadshows which would have been attended in addition to the roadshow attended were Clyde Valley, Central and Northern Isles.

Q5. If future roadshows needed to be merged into three or four instead of 12, how would you do this and where might you hold them (i.e. in which town/city rather than in which venue)?

The likeliest targets for merging are Clyde Valley into Glasgow, and Central merged with Edinburgh or Fife (because Central covered Stirling, Falkirk and Perth, so close to the other two). This was not poor planning, more the result of where suitable venue within the area covered could be secured.

Few of the responses offered concrete suggestions for alternative venues.

Comments:

- 'There is no easy answer for the north of Scotland. I would travel north of Inverness, eg to Brora or Wick/Thurso. I'll see how online works, but I'm not convinced.'
- 'By reducing the number of events, opportunities to build connections will be lost. It is all very well to travel some distance to events, but if delegates are planning to bring flyers/pull ups and other items, this makes it a greater consideration. I would suggest asking members if they would be able to host an event as part of their normal programme of events, eg. IHN hosts an annual heritage fair which could be extended to a second day or we could look at hosting in a larger venue. Local area groups could rotate and share the administration and would be more likely to publicise events.'
- 'I would look at the patterns of community that are saying they need support - where the data says support is needed and ensure there was public transport options close by.'
- 'Not sure. The Borders event was ideal for us, but we would also be happy to be involved in a roadshow that covered a wider geographical area. Not sure we would want to organise one though.'
- 'The South West roadshow could be held more centrally for Dumfries and Galloway, South and East Ayrshire. For example in St John's Town of Dalry.'

- There are common issues running through most community groups, but there are particular ones relevant to those in the less-densely populated areas of the Highlands and Islands, and a grouping comprising Highland Region, Argyll, the Islands and Moray would be logical, although not ideal for the Islands if attending in person (and meeting in person for these sorts of events is much more stimulating than Zoom or Teams). For convenience in terms of travel and access (train, air, car) Inverness is the logical choice for a very wide area. At the same time, varying the location where people come together might help to keep meetings fresh. Groupings need not necessarily be geographically based. Thematic ones might be equally effective - I have helped organise meetings of "Friends of..." Graveyard Groups from right across the country which have proven very effective given the same sorts of issues are faced by such groups (although there are interesting regional/urban/rural variations).

Q6. Which would be the best time of year to hold future roadshows for your organisation?

February was by far (67%) the most popular month for future roadshows, the second most popular months being (equally) October and November, then (equally) March, May, and finally April, September and December.

February has its merits in terms of workload, but it can be a tough month weatherwise. October and November can often be when volunteers and staff are tired at the end of the season and looking forward to a break. Spring can have better energy for a roadshow. May was surprisingly popular, tapping into the slight lull between Easter and the main summer season.

Perhaps future roadshows could be offered on a 'pick one of three dates' basis with the majority deciding it?

- 'After the tourist season would be easier. It would be good to then have time to reflect on the season that's gone and/or gear up for the new year. I would have preferred not to have a September event as there is too much else on for me at least. It may also be worth considering a weekday?'
- 'Spring and summer are very busy times of year for us.'
- 'May - for a combined road show and IHN fair October - some distance from our fair and a couple of months before Christmas; most activities that break for summer are up and running again and the weather is still not too cold.'

- 'With the increased and overwhelming pressures on volunteers and community groups, there is not a month of 'ease' any more - so I picked May as we may still have energy then, some may have just been funded and feel up beat etc.'
- 'I have suggested the spring and autumn as being good times, as people tend to be less available in the summer and probably it's more difficult to travel in the middle of winter.'
- 'We are very busy with events at other times of the year.'
- 'Personally, I don't have any preference, but I can see that for many folk avoiding travel in the most inclement periods is important, particularly in the Highlands.'

Q7. Would you have preferred the roadshow to be in person or on Zoom?

76% of respondees wanted an in-person roadshow, although a few were ambivalent, citing these reasons:

- 'In-person is usually much better for networking e.g. I talked to a couple of people on stands at the Dingwall event that I would not naturally have linked up with otherwise. Serendipity is a great thing. But if it were not for online then I would not be able to attend the Orkney/Northern Isles event where there is perhaps a greater need for making some obvious links. It's a tough one.'
- 'Both have merits. Virtual means can see what others at the opposite end of the country are doing but is less personal; in-person means that personal connections to people, places and events can be made and is a better way of developing a network.'
- 'In person is better for me, I prefer face to face.'
- 'I think in person events work much better - informal discussions are much more productive at these rather than at online ones.'
- 'If it's online there is more opportunity for people to attend and it reduces travel. Perhaps a hybrid meeting is possible.'

- 'I personally get far more out of attending roadshows in person. So much of the benefit comes from meeting and chatting with others at stands or over coffee which is rather lost with virtual get-togethers, although the virtual option would allow many folk to attend who could not otherwise do so.'

Q8. What percentage of roadshow attendees did you already know?

No-one knew everyone, and some knew no-one at all, with roughly a half knowing between 25% and 50% of attendees. Roughly 50% of respondees knew fewer than a quarter of those present, a good argument for the added social content of an in-person roadshow:

- 'Seemed reasonably wide but maybe not so many from north Highlands. I can't really remember who had stands etc.'
- 'It was a great variety of organisations.'
- 'Disappointed by the number and range of organisations represented; almost 1/3 were archaeology based. Unfortunately, the instructions for discussions were not clear so some groups only discussed one topic in depth expecting two more discussion sessions. Other groups discussed all topics but would not have been to any great depth. Don't recall that there was any group feedback from the discussions but could be wrong.'
- 'It was not well attended, but I had sent out to my network and many attended - so we did try to help.'
- 'I did not know anyone else, except from Laura Ferguson who organised the roadshow and I had previous met online at one of the planning meetings.'
- 'There were fewer people attending than I expected but it was good to see community groups as well as heritage organisations and the museums service.'
- A very good range of organisations and representatives, albeit very much on the more elderly side. This presumably reflects the make-up of the voluntary groups who make up much of the attendance. It would be excellent if some younger folk would attend - there must be ways of achieving this!

Q9. From your organisation's viewpoint, which two elements of the roadshow proved the most useful?

88% of respondees put **informal networking** top of their list of benefits from attending an in-person roadshow, while roughly half rated **presentations and talks** and **group discussions** with a facilitator as equally important. Browsing the tabletop displays was considered less significant with a few participants mentioning disappointment at no public presence.

This response underlines the significance of **informal networking as a key outcome**, not just a side benefit from the more formal elements of the day. There needs to be time built into future roadshows for this - perhaps sacrifice a speaking slot to allow for greater informal networking time over lunch and coffee breaks.

Q10. Lastly, we invite you to reflect on the impact of attending the roadshow on your organisation:

- ‘Strathnaver Museum talk was the most inspiring, really liked her emphasis on engaging with local funders and her own enthusiasm and local rootedness. That theme of working with other local groups came across too in the discussion after Ian Leith's talk and gave a few thoughts. I also picked up the names of some potentially useful Highland or Scottish organisations from the facilitator in that group discussion. As a result we made use of a (free) service provided by SCVO. To be honest we have so much to do and so little time (all volunteers, several working full time) that it can all feel very overwhelming. It was good to be reminded that we are not alone and there is a diverse range of assistance available. I'd really like an email group or similar to bounce ideas off, ask questions (as basic as who do you use for insurance?). I've also just seen from my notes that there was a very helpful input on help to develop a strategy for what we are doing. That's something for us to ponder and maybe act on over the winter.’
- ‘We found it very helpful for networking and will be doing events with some of the other organisations spreading the work we are doing with others in the Fife and Dundee area we would look in the future to attend different areas as we are a Scotland wide charity.’
- 1) more stall holders; greater publicity encouraging the general public to visit; have 10 minute flash presentations from all stall holders
2) made contact with and visited Wee Museum of Memory.
- ‘It was good to meet the museum service representatives and find out more about what is happening in terms of heritage in the area. The workshop highlighted the importance of working with heritage organisations and

community groups, and the opportunities that might arise within the GSA Biosphere, particularly in relation to community tourism in small rural communities.'

- 'I have to say that I leave these events fired with enthusiasm to try out some of the ideas that addressed particular issues affecting our Trust, and while one or two are implemented most of them fade away. It would be nice if there were some way of "checking up" to see if we have run with them! But we have implemented some tips that we heard, relating to managing resources and managing people and keeping the community informed. I always leave with useful contacts which I do follow up. There will be a particular issue about which I heard something interesting in a workshop or over coffee where I'll get the email of the relevant person or group and contact them afterwards. Something to do with funding perhaps, or website management, or some technical issue. And vice versa. I get quite a number of queries afterwards looking for advice on something which the Kirkmichael Trust does. I also get quite a number of requests to come and give a talk to a particular group which can sometimes get out of hand!'

Section 7. Recommendations

- **Given the overall enthusiasm of participants, the hard work of the project manager and the commitment of the Scottish Community Heritage Alliance, to abandon the SCHA roadshow programme after this first year of activity would be wasteful and wrong. Nothing else exists of its kind in Scotland for connecting and supporting grass roots heritage organisations.**
- **We recommend sustaining this programme for another three years, then evaluating it again, by which time some, if not all, of the roadshows will have become self-sustaining, just as the annual Highland Heritage Fair has demonstrated.**
- **Recruiting one identifiable SCHA project manager as point of contact nationally for the roadshows has been key to their success, so this post/role must be sustained.**
- **Make it even plainer to all participants both on the day and in pre/post event promotion that these roadshow events and other associated SCHA activities are part of something big, something national, and something worthwhile: grassroots heritage sites are often the entry point for years of heritage engagement of many different kinds and at many different levels.**

All emails began with this information but a significant number of those interviewed still appear to have missed the national ambitions and remit of this remarkable programme.

This may be a branding issue.

- **During roadshows, dividing participants into those with historic sites and without historic sites may prove beneficial**
- **In post-event feedback and promotion, identify participants post-roadshow with their organisation name but also their roadshow location to heighten the profile of the roadshows.**
- **Consider merging appropriate roadshows as suggested so that attendance can be higher and costs kept a little lower**
- **Continue to encourage attendance at more than one event if of interest to participants – emphasise softer boundaries between SCHA roadshow**

areas, perhaps by sharing the date of neighbouring area roadshows in correspondence.

- **Move away from local area organising committees, a model which has proved hard to sustain. Instead, perhaps invite one organisation in the area to lead on the event locally in partnership with SCHA for one year only, which may result in a beneficial friendly rivalry. This would have greater promotional and networking benefits for that one organisation in the spotlight.**
- **Consider varying the venue where an area has a huge geographical spread (although Dingwall Academy has proved the established successful venue for the Highland roadshow over the years).**
- **Set the roadshow dates and establish speakers as early as possible in the process, promote the speakers' presence as a draw and choose some from outwith the area, but from relevantly themed sites (so Aberdeenshire with its castles of Mar might have a speaker from Blair Castle, for example).**
- **These roadshows were never intended to be a public event, but some participants commented that they had assumed it would be a public event and clearly equate public attendance with value and success. If considered desirable, consider option of running the event over two days, making one public, or adding in a public element to the day, even if by invitation only or for a very short final section of the day.**
- **Incentivise the return of feedback forms with a prize of some kind, and consider a greater range of possible means of feedback – online as well as paper**
- **Offer all project facilitators professional training in chairing and facilitating roadshow activities, particularly on how to lead discussions forward and away from dominant voices**
- **Where possible, check all roadshow technology works well in advance, and provide microphones as standard kit**
- **Overbook speakers to ensure coverage if there are no-shows (SCHA committee members stepped up admirably but the net needs to be spread a bit wider than that)**

- **Where roadshows are hybrid (ie in-person and online) ensure there are two facilitators, one, to handle the technological interface and one to run the event in person**
- **Increase the exposure of SCHA events through basic social media: Facebook and Instagram often have more influence on behaviour than website content alone. Links to web content such as podcasts from social media can be useful**
- **Develop a library of resources derived from this year's activities for future reference and establish a list of suitable speakers for future training and roadshow events, ideally hosted within the new SCHA website currently being completed**
- **Create an elist of 'roadshow supporters' – not just committee members, but local shops and cafes, for example - prepared to print and distribute posters for each roadshow area.**

Vee Walker

Adelaide Walker

March 22nd 2026