



Groam House Museum Strategic Plan (2024)

This strategic plan has been developed in close collaboration with Groam House Museum's trustees and stakeholders. Feedback from ongoing discussions has been incorporated to ensure the museum's growth is informed by shared expertise, addressing both immediate priorities and long-term goals.

1. Strategic Context

National and International Alignment: Groam House Museum aligns its activities with the [Scottish Government's National Performance Framework](#), the [Scottish Government's Culture Strategy](#), and the [United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). These frameworks emphasise inclusivity, diversity, sustainability, and community engagement—principles that guide our mission and practices.

Local and International Relevance: Located in Rosemarkie, the museum is at the heart of a local community but has also successfully extended its reach to international audiences, particularly through its enhanced online presence. This strategy is designed to be a living document, continuously updated to adapt to emerging opportunities, challenges, and feedback from stakeholders, including funders and community members. Continuous feedback mechanisms will ensure this document remains responsive to external and internal needs.

2. Vision, Mission, Purpose, and Values

Vision: To become a recognised centre for cultural education, community engagement, and heritage preservation in the Highlands and a key resource in the Pictish and Celtic art communities, recognised for our commitment to inclusivity, sustainability, and innovation.

Mission: To inspire engagement, wonder, and enjoyment in the heritage of our local area, and to continue developing the culture and creativity it has fostered.

Purpose: Groam House Museum cares for collections of local history, Pictish stones, and the George Bain Collection. We aim to work with people of all backgrounds and ages in our communities to realise the potential of our collections and heritage and to act as a resource for both the present and future development of individuals and communities.

Values:

- **Inclusivity:** Welcoming and engaging all people, reflecting community diversity.
- **Sustainability:** Commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainable practices.
- **Innovation:** Embracing new ideas and technologies to enhance our offerings.
- **Collaboration:** Valuing partnerships that extend our reach beyond the museum walls.



3. Who we are

Groam House Museum is the custodian of invaluable cultural collections, including the iconic Rosemarkie cross-slab and other Pictish fragments, as well as the George Bain Collection. We serve a diverse audience, welcoming around 4,000 visitors annually post-pandemic, from local, national, and international regions.

Our Team and Operations

Our dedicated team of trustees, volunteers, and a part-time manager ensures the smooth running of the museum. With 120 members, Groam House maintains a robust community presence and continues to expand its reach through digital platforms. However, operational sustainability requires strategic planning to manage future growth and ensure we meet the needs of all our audiences.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

Financial Sustainability: Rising operational costs threaten the museum's stability. To ensure long-term sustainability, we must increase visitor donations, secure more grants, and explore new retail opportunities. Digital platforms offer potential for crowdfunding and attracting international donations.

Community and International Engagement: Local participation and global recognition are both priorities, necessitating tailored programming for each audience segment.

Capacity and Space Constraints: Space and accessibility remain major issues. The relocation of storage and office space helps, but we must address long-term challenges:

- **Accessibility:** The two-floor layout without lifts limits access for visitors with mobility issues.
- **Group and Bus Tours:** The current setup restricts larger groups, missing out on potential revenue.
- **Future Expansion:** A larger expansion is essential to solve accessibility challenges, accommodate more visitors, and enhance engagement. Feasibility studies and funding partnerships will be the next steps.

A larger-scale expansion is key to fully addressing these challenges, ensuring financial growth and greater visitor engagement.

4. Strategic Objectives

Over the next five years, Groam House Museum is committed to strengthening its position as a key cultural institution by focusing on four core areas: **People, Collection, Museum Community, and Resilience and Sustainability**. Our objectives are designed to build upon our rich heritage and community engagement, ensuring the long-term viability and growth of the museum.



A) Our People

Aim: Foster a strong, engaged, and well-supported team of staff, volunteers, and trustees that reflects the diversity and talent of the community. We aim to create a positive culture of continuous learning, inclusivity, and well-being for all those involved in the museum.

Objective #1: Increase Volunteer and Staff Engagement

- **Expand Volunteer Base:** Grow the volunteer team from 12 to 20 by the end of 2025 through targeted local community outreach, partnership with local organisations, and online promotion of more flexible and accessible volunteering opportunities.
- **Remote Volunteering:** Establish remote volunteer roles such as digital archiving and social media management to broaden the scope of engagement.
- **Diverse Volunteer Programmes:** Engage with national programmes such as *Make Your Mark* to recruit a diverse pool of volunteers from different backgrounds, ensuring the team reflects the broader community.
- **Partnerships with Educational Institutions:** Develop internship programs with local universities and colleges to engage students, particularly those interested in museum work, history, and Celtic art.
- **Explore Paid Roles:** As operational needs grow, explore opportunities for paid project-based roles, focusing on museum development & funding and collection management.

Objective #2: Foster Diversity and Well-being

- **Volunteer and Staff Support:** Create an inclusive, supportive work environment with regular feedback, training, and professional development opportunities.
- **Fair and Inclusive Practices:** Implement fair practices in recruitment, pay, and contracts, ensuring transparency and equity in all roles, as well as a diverse team.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Embed anti-racism, anti-ableism, and anti-discrimination practices within the Groam House Museum community. This will include regular training and review of policies to ensure inclusivity.

Objective #3: Ensure Robust Governance and Succession Planning

- **Expand the Board of Trustees:** Increase the number of trustees to eight by 2025 to reflect a broader skill set, ensuring recruitment is transparent and inclusive.
- **Succession Planning:** Implement a succession plan to ensure continuity in leadership and institutional knowledge.
- **Governance Best Practices:** Regularly review governance structures, ensuring they meet the highest standards and respond to the changing needs of the museum and its audiences.



B) Our Museum Community

Aim: Develop meaningful, mutually beneficial relationships with local communities, visitors, and online audiences. We aim to ensure that Groam House Museum's programming is relevant, accessible, and reflective of the community's needs and interests, with a focus on education and wellbeing.

Objective #4: Enhance Visitor Experience and Grow Satisfaction

- **Feedback-Driven Exhibitions and Interpretation:** Regularly collect and analyse visitor feedback to inform updates to our exhibits and programs. Introduce more interactive and digital elements to the museum experience.
- **Community-Centred Programming:** Work with local schools, groups, and artisans to develop co-created programs and exhibitions that reflect local culture and history. Ensure that these programs are accessible and inclusive.
- **Volunteer Docent Program:** Develop a trained volunteer docent program to offer guided tours and create an engaging learning experience for visitors.
- **Cultural Inclusion Programs:** Address barriers to participation by recognising the negative impacts of exclusion. Develop programs to redress these, making the museum more accessible to a wider audience and fostering a sense of belonging.

Objective #5: Expand Engagement Through Partnerships

- **Collaborations with Educational Institutions:** Strengthen ties with local schools, colleges, and universities through outreach initiatives. Given the current space limitations for school visits, focus on bringing museum content to schools through workshops, presentations, and loan boxes. Dedicate a museum space to showcase student projects and collaborations, integrating their work into exhibitions.
- **Update and Expand School Loan Boxes:** Modernise and expand the museum's school loan boxes to align with current educational standards. These portable resources will provide hands-on learning, connecting students to the museum's collections and offering flexibility for schools unable to visit in person.
- **Inclusive Curriculum Development:** Collaborate with teachers to support anti-racist and inclusive education, embedding decolonised perspectives into museum programming. Highlight the legacies of empire, colonialism, and slavery as they relate to the Pictish and Celtic art collections, fostering a deeper, more inclusive understanding of local heritage.
- **Cultural Heritage and Craft Preservation:** Partner with artisans to preserve traditional skills and cultural practices. Groam House Museum can become a hub for these efforts by hosting workshops, demonstrations, and exhibitions, ensuring that these valuable practices are celebrated and passed down to future generations.
- **Place-Based Initiatives:** Engage with community sustainability and carbon reduction efforts. Incorporate local environmental themes into exhibitions and



programs, fostering a connection between traditional local values and contemporary environmental challenges, while promoting a sense of place and responsibility among visitors.

Objective #6: Build Stronger Relationships with Tourists

- **Increase Tourist Engagement:** Develop strategies to enhance the museum's appeal to tourists and actively engage in travel-trade to collaborate with tourism operators to offer exclusive museum experiences.
- **Boost Online Visibility:** Build on the museum's recent successes with virtual lectures and online platforms to engage a global audience. Use these tools, as well as social media, to drive traffic to the museum, increase awareness, and generate donations.
- **Improve Visitor Satisfaction:** Collect and analyse visitor feedback to ensure continuous improvements in the visitor experience, with a goal of maintaining a 4-star rating or higher on platforms such as Google and Tripadvisor.

Objective #7: Improve Accessibility and Provide an Inclusive Experience

- **Physical Accessibility Improvements:** While the long-term goal is to construct an extension with a bathroom and lift, addressing current accessibility challenges is a priority. In the interim, we will explore temporary solutions such as providing portable seating and accessible information. These measures aim to ensure that visitors with mobility impairments can engage with the collections to the fullest extent possible.
- **Expand Public Access to Collections:** Increase opportunities for visitors to access the museum's stored collections through guided tours and special exhibitions.
- **Multilingual and Multi-Format Content:** Enhance inclusivity by offering exhibit materials, signage, and visitor guides in multiple languages and accessible formats, such as large print and audio guides. Ensure that all online resources meet accessibility standards for individuals with visual or hearing impairments..
- **Digital Access and Online Engagement:** Expand the museum's digital presence by offering virtual tours, online exhibitions, and interactive lectures. These initiatives will broaden the museum's reach to global audiences and help mitigate the limitations posed by the physical space, ensuring ongoing engagement with diverse groups.
- **Audience Research and Outreach:** Conduct demographic research to better understand current visitor profiles and identify under-represented groups. Develop targeted outreach programs that invite and include these communities, ensuring that the museum becomes accessible to a more diverse audience.

C) Resilience and Sustainability

Aim: Ensure that Groam House Museum remains financially resilient and environmentally sustainable, with the flexibility to adapt to future challenges and opportunities.

Objective #8: Achieve Financial Resilience and Sustainability

- **Address the Current Financial Deficit:** Review operational expenses to manage rising costs. Focus on boosting income through improved visitor services, shop offerings, and energy efficiency.
 - **Prepare for Financial Break-Even by 2025:** Establish a clear action plan to reach a financial break-even position by the end of the 2025.
- **Revenue Diversification:** Strengthen financial sustainability through diversified income streams, including enhanced retail operations, membership programs, and grants.
 - **Donations and Memberships:** Boost visitor and online donations through visibility enhancements. Review and adjust membership fees, targeting both visitors and non-visitors.
 - **Grants and Fundraising:** Pursue grants aligned with sustainability, cultural preservation, and community engagement. Launch targeted fundraising campaigns, including events, lectures, and online drives.
 - **Increase Visitor Revenue:** Enhance shop offerings, focusing on Pictish and Celtic art to increase revenue. Launch an online store with 10 exclusive products by 2025.
 - **Corporate Sponsorships and Partnerships:** Develop partnerships with local businesses to sponsor events, exhibitions, and programs.
- **Incorporate Arndene No. 19 into the Long-Term Strategy:** Integrate Arndene into long-term plans for exhibitions, workshops, and community events. Assess its role in improving accessibility.
- **Timely and Effective Organisational Planning:** Implement SWOT analysis and scenario planning to address challenges and uncertainties. Improve governance by providing trustee training for stability and strategic foresight.
- **Increase Sustainable Income:** Grow group visits, focusing on international tourists and thematic tours. Explore ticketed special events like exhibitions, behind-the-scenes tours, and lectures. Expand the online lecture series with tiered access for premium content.
- **Advocacy and Communication:** Advocate for the museum's value by communicating its local and cultural contributions to stakeholders. Highlight success stories through social media, newsletters, and outreach to secure ongoing support.

D) Collection

Aim: Ensure that Groam House Museum's collections are preserved, researched, and interpreted in ways that are accessible, engaging, and reflective of the museum's mission.

Objective #9: Meet Museum Responsibilities in Caring for Collections

- **Address Documentation Backlog:** Prioritise the completion of the backlog in collection documentation to ensure all items are properly catalogued and

accessible. This includes a digitization project to ensure the collections are preserved and accessible to all audiences, including remote and global users.

- **Improve Storage and Conservation:** Invest in upgrading storage facilities to meet modern conservation standards. Actively pursue grants and partnerships for conservation work, with a focus on preserving fragile and historically significant items.
- **Sustainable Collection Care:** Relocate collection storage from Rosehaugh to Arndene No. 19, ensuring a secure, accessible, and environmentally sound facility. Implement climate-control solutions to protect sensitive objects and adopt sustainable materials for future needs, aligning collection care with the museum's environmental goals and reducing its carbon footprint.

Objective #10: Enhance and Expand the Collection

- **Strategic Acquisitions:** Explore opportunities to acquire significant local objects and expand the collection in a way that deepens the museum's role as a centre for Pictish art and Celtic heritage. Ensure that acquisitions are supported by a clear policy that aligns with the museum's mission.
- **Human Remains Policy:** Develop and implement a robust policy for the care, display, and ethical management of human remains, with particular attention to sensitive cultural and archaeological contexts.
- **Collection Loans and Exhibitions:** Foster partnerships with museums and cultural institutions to facilitate collection loans and rotating exhibits, offering fresh perspectives on Pictish and Celtic art. These collaborations will enhance the museum's profile and promote greater scholarship and public engagement.
- **Collaborative Research Projects:** Partner with universities and heritage institutions to promote research on the museum's Pictish stones and the George Bain Collection. Results will be used to inform exhibitions and publications.

D) Monitoring and Adaptation

Regular Review Process: Implement a systematic review process to evaluate the effectiveness of the museum's strategy. Conduct annual SWOT analyses to assess internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats, ensuring the museum remains adaptive, relevant, and capable of responding to challenges. This will also provide a framework for continuous improvement in collection care, visitor experience, and community engagement.