

**Glasgow Canal
Cultural Heritage and Arts Strategy**

Summary Report draftv1

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The full report is available to view [online](#)

The Glasgow Canal Regeneration Partnership and Glasgow Canal Co-op commissioned Kevin Murray Associates to lead the team with Lesley Kerr Historic Buildings Consultant, Barry Neeson Art, Two Roads Planning (Paul Ede) and Prof. John Lennon of the Moffat Institute in Tourism Research and Development to undertake this work during 2019.



A cultural heritage and arts strategy for Glasgow’s Canal

Glasgow City Council submitted a successful Partnership bid on behalf of the Glasgow Canal Regeneration Partnership to the Heritage Lottery Great Places Fund.

This funding has 10 approved activities, one of which is the development of this **cultural heritage and arts strategy**. The objectives of this strategy process are as follows:

- *set the vision for the area’s regeneration, with heritage embedded at the core.*
- *captures the strong cultural identity and sense of place that is engrained within communities lying along the edge of the canal or those that live, worked and enjoyed the canal through generations.*
- *develop the canal’s identity as a creative destination, acting as a catalyst for attracting visitors and businesses.*
- *innovative and strategic in its scope and provides a platform to link together the existing work in the area and has the potential to attract external funding.*

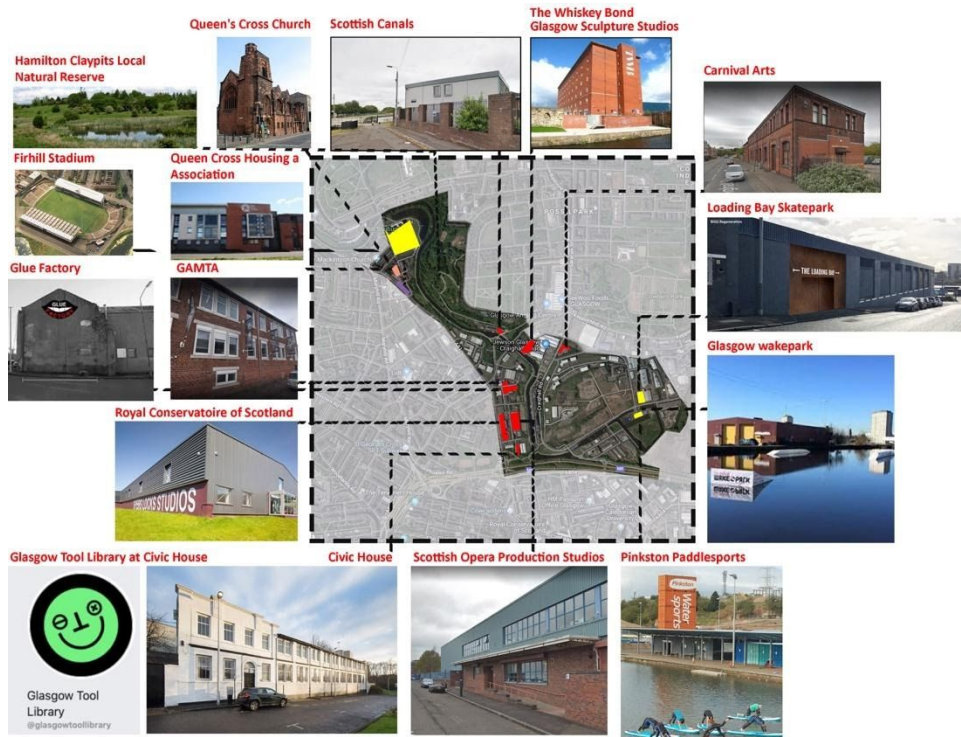
This summary report captures the main outputs from a study that had many contributions from members of the Glasgow Canal Coop, the local community and visitors to the area.

This strategy aims to excite and chime with aspirations in the area. It creates a framework for an open programme for activity where people can be creative and (re)generative. It suggests and

promotes creating and getting the right infrastructure and place-making

building blocks in place to facilitate innovation based upon the authentic elements of cultural heritage and the arts in the locality. It features heritage and the regenerated post-industrial green space at its core and the base that everything else can build from. This place is not starting from ‘zero’ – a lot has already been done, and is being done to take the place forwards. This strategy helps to create further synergy and give a way forward that can take the canal and the organisations here to the next level.

Cultural Heritage and Arts Strategy – Glasgow’s Canal



What is the area of focus?

There is a need to be clear about the geographic focus of the emergent Cultural Heritage and Arts (CHA) Strategy, given that the linear extent of canal in the city is very extensive. The approach of this strategy is about understanding the connectivity the Canal network offers between leisure, art, culture and local organisations. It is as much about connection as it is about connectivity. The natural regenerative ecology of this post-industrial corridor creates a context for work and leisure that can contribute significantly to wellbeing, sense of place and excitement.

As a ‘contour canal’, rather than ‘valley canal’, it contributes to Glasgow’s balcony overlooking the city. The canal area offers a

unique opportunity within the city, with views, wild parkland, outdoor space for events, and home to cultural, production, making and sports activities.

The area of this study, as established by the Partners, is focused between Firhill Basin to Port Dundas. However, in developing the approach it is clear that there is wider applicability further along the canal corridor, for instance towards Stockingfield Junction at Maryhill, and beyond. However, at this point the agreed spatial context between Firhill and Port Dundas is what we and the communities and stakeholders have engaged with

Who is in the area, what activities are taking place?

Within the Strategy area there are a number of groups, organisations, venues, networks and individuals who are relevant to the content and direction of the CHA Strategy and are in a position to help develop and evolve it, as well as contribute to its implementation.

The organisations that have located in this area form a “progressive cultural production campus”, several of which are internationally renowned, and the clustering effect and benefits are being harnessed through the establishment of the Glasgow Canal Coop. The presence and activity of these organisations (both inward and outward facing) is key to the character of the area. Just as the canal was established to facilitate industrial production, the area now hosts cultural

production. This is a meaningful development, providing a narrative thread through time, and a hook that communities, small businesses, cultural and heritage organisations and social enterprises (to name a few) can participate in the growth of the area.

There is a huge effort and work underway by the organisations in the area to not just develop and sustain their own work, but to also promote the area as a destination, to engage with the local community and put on events, exhibitions and other innovative projects. They engage with a wide variety of audiences, and have a scope ranging from the local to national.

Overarching Vision and Strategy

The following overarching vision has been evolved as a provisional statement of purpose, based on contributions received:

The Firhill to Port Dundas Canal area is a city destination that has a growing number of regional, national and international visitors that come for the natural and cultural heritage, the unique location and the creative responses to this expressed through art, events and sport.

Its attraction is rooted in its distinctive heritage assets, post-industrial ecology and people, giving it an authenticity and quality that sets it apart. The opportunities which this unique heritage destination opens up to the city, linking to a World Heritage Site, the medieval high street and River Clyde will begin to tell the story of the evolution of Glasgow and where it is heading in the future.

Organisations embedded within the area work co-operatively to deliver projects across creative mediums and activities that are accessible to all, particularly to the immediate communities but looking to widen that access. Tapping into all of this creates an area that supports a canal community and place of increased well-being and sustainability.

This document has several functions:

1. **For organisations/stakeholders in the area** - this strategy should support activity and provide a basis for funding applications. The strategy aims to be permissive and not narrow down the types of activities that can or should take place along the canal corridor.
2. **For new initiatives** - the strategy aims to be generative and inspire/excite new activity in the area, creating a framework of “permission”, an open programme, for activity and action.
3. **For communities** - the strategy supports the stories we have been told and the need around creating new perceptions and a positive narrative for the place. There is much to be celebrated and we hope that the strategy enables communities to unlock this.
4. **For developers** - add value to the area by participating in its character and identity. Involve communities, they really care about their place and want high quality work to be done in the area. Use the strategy to consider how you can add heritage interpretation through a variety of creative mediums to your development.
5. **For funders** - this strategy has consulted with near on 500 people in an area that in recent history was sparse of people. This exercise in itself demonstrates (as does all the good work done in the area by organisations that live and breathe the area) that there has been a marked stepchange, but this needs to be supported for it to sustain, for the communities in the vicinity to really benefit and for the area to become a place of note, not just for what it has become but also because of the story and energy that has been poured into it to get there.

Strategic Principles

The purpose of these principles is to give a common baseline across the delivery themes, embedding the principles in projects and development throughout the area.

Involvement and Ownership

People who live and work around the canal, and Canal Coop members and local organisations should all feel involved and empowered in shaping the canal’s change and use. Creative interventions and events should be recognisable to the local community and organisations because at some level they have been involved and feel a sense of ownership over what is happening. This shouldn’t restrict activity to be delivered by only those in the area, city wide and national organisations are encouraged to come to the area too and embed this principle.

Quality and Authenticity

Events, installations, engagement from the local area are all renowned for the quality of research, interpretation, fabrication, installation and participation. The participation has resulted in products that are embedded in the heritage, people and place, creating authentic responses.

Health and Wellbeing

A place that offers opportunities for improvement in terms of mental and physical wellbeing through access to open blue and

greenspace, and participation in cultural heritage, creativity and social activity.

Environment and Sustainability

Creating a place that celebrates its intangible and tangible history, enhances the environment and provides a city and nation-wide exemplar for sustainable urban development. From building refurbishment, water drainage, energy use and generation, nature conservation and how events look to minimise impact.

Curation and Coordination

Stitching it all together and creating a coherent narrative about this distinctive place. This does not mean that there is a homogeneity to the place, but that there is a clear interpretive narrative, acknowledging its past celebrating, its richness and positive evolution and not simply a continuous ad hoc approach to creative interventions or developments.

Sense of Place

The two common threads of heritage and post-industrial ecology and nature create the sense of place in the canal corridor. The heritage of the place provides a narrative thread that is physically present in the canal, but also there in the stories and communities along it that can be further understood through historical research. The other part of this thread is a thrilling discover in an urban environment – the post-industrial ecology and environmental recovery along the corridor can be engaged with and responded to

in many ways. Drawing this out through creative engagement, activity and projects helps further embed that sense of place and character

Strategic Delivery Themes

To realise the vision, 7 delivery themes have been identified. By undertaking projects or work programmes in these themes, the area will work evenly towards becoming a that city destination, rooted in its cultural, community and ecological identity. The full report has a series of projects within each theme.

SD Theme 1: Access and Gateways

Growing the number of people who use the canal corridor will need improved and increased ease of access. In addition to this, knowledge of the existence of the canal, and what is possible around it is necessary for its growth.

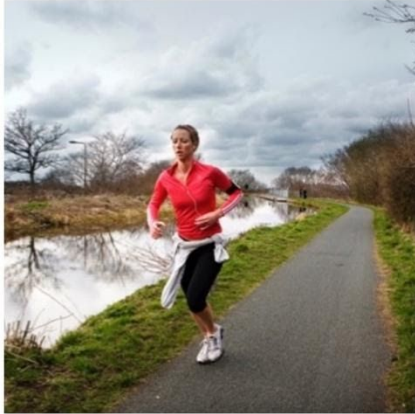
create objects, performances and other interventions in the area. Authentic places are attractive, and this plays well into making the canal a destination for visitors.

SD Theme 2: Celebration, Events & Performance

The canal corridor has changed immensely over the last decade, but there is still work needed to shift perceptions of the place, particularly around changing the narrative of the place for local people. Giving them outlets for expression are an important way to shift this to authentically celebrate their place and community. Celebrations, events and performances can draw people into the area, to enjoy the place and the unique experiences that can be created here.

SD Theme 3: Memory & Artefacts

Tapping into the lived heritage of the canal corridor can play a huge role in letting communities’ author the place narrative. The authenticity of the place will be borne out when the memories of those that live there are used to



SD Theme 4: Nature & Place

Accessible greenspace is a key building block of a vibrant community and place. The intention of the place was not necessarily that it would become this green-blue asset, but as it has it can now play an essential role in developing this vibrancy of place and community. With a huge role to play in improving health and wellbeing, and a unique urban ecology, this place deserves protection, enhancement and extension.

SD Theme 5: Production & Making

The heritage assets in the area constantly remind anyone in the place of its background as an industrial area, from the artefacts to the place names (Timber Basin). The narrative of the canal from industrial to creative production may not be apparent, but this connection has always been strong, the two strands working together in innovation and industry. There is an opportunity to revisit this relationship and further develop the area’s unique character.

SD Theme 6: Water & Light

Great places utilise waterside settings in a way that attracts people to visit and stick in a place. This is not just about waterside seating, but about creating an atmosphere that is inviting and refreshing. Water is not just a passive asset in the strategy, but an active part of the place. Pinkston Basin is a hub for urban watersports and this idea of activity on the water is one that people find exciting and attractive, even just to watch, and would welcome an extension of this all along the canal to Firhill.

SD Theme 7: Urban Play & Urban Rest

Activity in a place makes it dynamic and somewhere to go. Creating opportunities for active fun could draw people up to the area for reasons that they do not currently have and opportunities that it would normally take travelling out of Glasgow to get, such as watersports or engagement with ecology and nature. Similarly, the opportunity for peace and tranquillity minutes from the busiest of urban areas is too good an opportunity not to tap into.

