

Manifesto 2026



Building Foundations for a better Scotland

This is a Manifesto produced by [Built Environment Forum Scotland \(BEFS\)](#) in advance of the 2026 elections to the Scottish Parliament. As a strategic intermediary body for Scotland's historic and built environment sector, BEFS draws together extensive expertise and knowledge in a [membership led forum](#).

BEFS Manifesto calls on the next Scottish Government to create the conditions for a well-resourced, dynamic and effective built and historic environment sector.

This will deliver strong value for public money and substantial progress across multiple public policy portfolios, from environmental sustainability, skills and economic development, to housing, poverty and health.

Without recognising and leveraging the benefits brought by sustainable use of Scotland's historic built asset, climate and wellbeing targets will not be met.

Our resilient and innovative sector is willing and ready to work together, to unlock the value and potential of our built heritage; towards warmer homes, local employment, thriving town centres and more.

BEFS Manifesto features **15** practical policy recommendations for the Scottish Government to take forward in the 2026-31 term of Parliament, to set foundations for the decades to come. These investments will help build a better Scotland.

Interconnected - The Benefits to People and Places

The built and historic environment, rural and urban, contributes vastly to the quality and character of Scotland's places, its economy, and the wellbeing of its people.

It has been shaped by human and natural processes over thousands of years and encompasses our buildings and public spaces: ancient monuments; sites and landscapes; historic buildings; townscapes; parks; battlefields; gardens and designed landscapes; and our marine heritage.

It is diverse, influencing - and influenced by - many of the public policy areas under the Scottish Government's control.

With public finances under increasing pressure, the need for preventative spend and systems thinking is greater than ever.

BEFS five main Manifesto policy areas are designed to demonstrate how joined up and strategic investment will contribute materially towards the long-term benefit of Scotland's people and places. The diagram below shows how these can be read against Scotland's national outcomes.



Demonstrating the Value and Contribution of Scotland's Existing Built and Historic Environment Across the National Performance Framework

- Adaptation/managing loss
- Biodiversity reservoirs
- Embodied energy
- Reuse and regeneration of existing buildings
- Stewardship of resources and assets
- Positive contributions towards net zero

- Wellbeing
- Social prescribing
- Identity and belonging
- Greenspace
- Healthy Buildings
- Air quality and toxicity

- Positive destinations
- Job creation
- Property maintenance
- Fuel poverty/energy efficiency
- Education opportunities

- Place and Identity
- Local jobs
- Resilience
- Stability
- Local Communities and Communities of interest

- Skills development
- Volunteering
- STEM and Education
- Apprentices

- Lifelong learning
- Platform for education opportunities
- Cross curriculum
- Skills development and training opportunity
- Apprentices

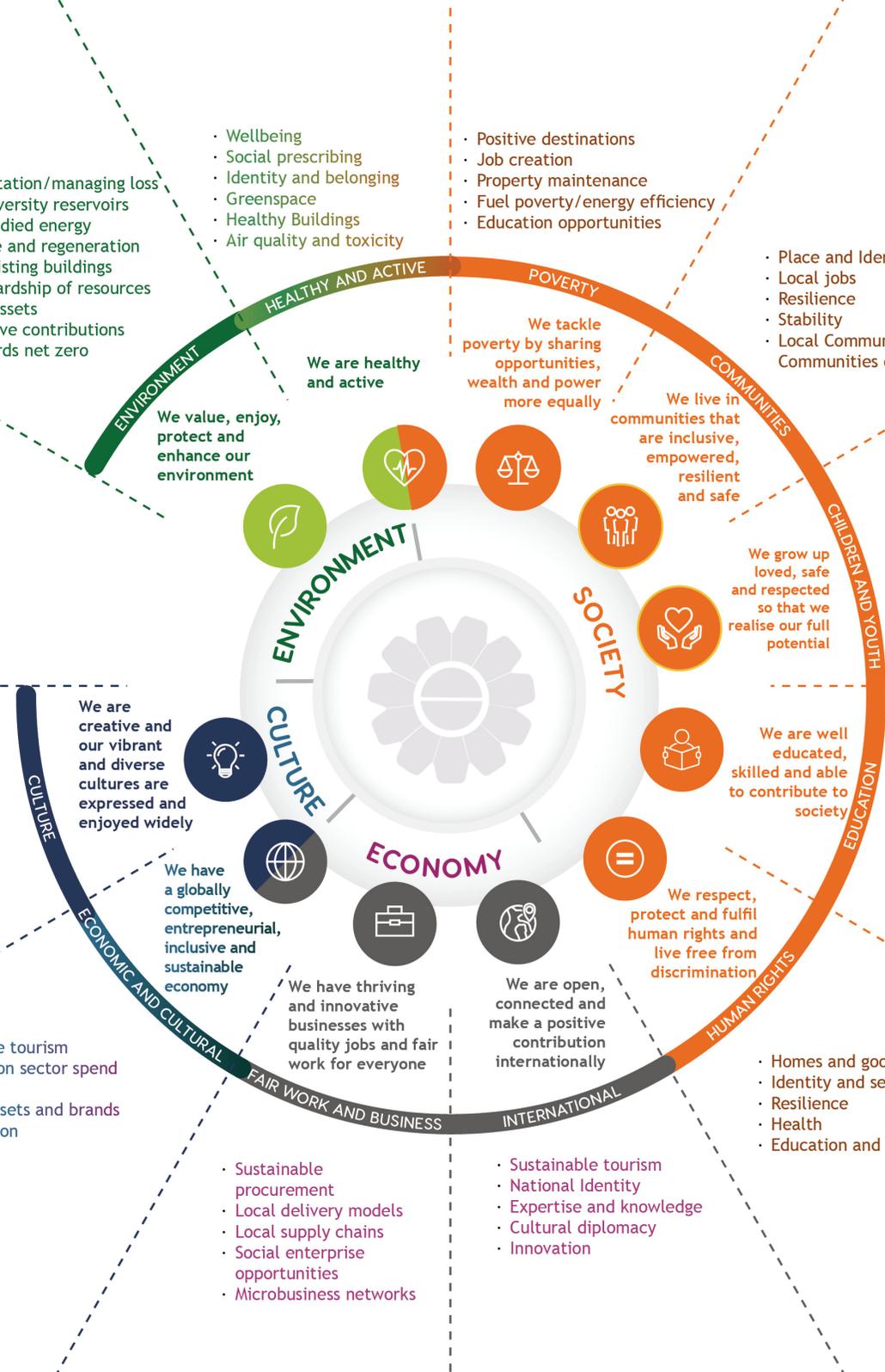
- Homes and good places
- Identity and security
- Resilience
- Health
- Education and skills

- Sustainable tourism
- National Identity
- Expertise and knowledge
- Cultural diplomacy
- Innovation

- Sustainable procurement
- Local delivery models
- Local supply chains
- Social enterprise opportunities
- Microbusiness networks

- Sustainable tourism
- Construction sector spend and jobs
- Cultural assets and brands
- Regeneration

- History, stories and folklore
- Culturally significant assets
- Crafts and skills
- Places and belonging
- Venues and events





🔗 Scottish Existing Built Environment Policy Map by BEFS Manifesto Themes

-  Culture and Heritage
-  Climate Emergency and Net Zero
-  Repair, Maintenance and Retrofit
-  Training and Skills
-  Planning and Placemaking

All links given are those suggested as most helpful to the reader - some SG documents will lead to Scottish Parliament sites, or to consultation documents as these have the most information for the reader.

Policy Recommendations

BEFS calls on cross-party buy in to these recommendations, towards implementation in the next term of Parliament - and beyond.



Culture and Heritage

- Scale up built environment and heritage investment programmes, leveraging value across portfolios;
- Support Historic Environment Scotland as the lead public body to leverage the benefits of the historic environment for Scotland's people and places;
- Adopt Fair Funding principles set out by [Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations](#) (SCVO).
- Additional investments in historic and built environment data collection and research programmes;



Climate Emergency and Net Zero

- Investigate the international experience with Material Passport schemes and consider adopting a suitable model in Scotland;
- Holistic approach to existing and new climate emergency legislation; ensuring wider policy alignment, and consistent cross-party support beyond parliamentary cycles.



Repair, Maintenance and Retrofit

- Implement all three recommendations from the Tenement Maintenance Working Group: Five Yearly Inspections, Compulsory Owners Associations, and Building Reserve Funds;
- Establish a Ministerial Oversight Group on Retrofit, to devise and deliver a Retrofit Delivery Plan;
- Increase provision of trained specialists to advise planning authorities on sustainability for the existing built environment;



Training and Skills

- Invest in a national programme for training delivery across a variety of traditional building and wider construction skills;
- Invest in preventative spend across built environment specialisms to meet Net Zero, place-making, and heritage targets, and to reverse the decline of essential skills;
- Recognise the cross-cutting benefits of investing both in skills provision and training but also the culture shift required towards greater recognition of these skills as desirable careers.



Planning and Placemaking

- Explore development of the Fourth National Planning Framework into a fully interactive online resource including guidance documents and signposts to linked policy initiatives;
- Commit to investment in and enabling pathways to bring vacant and derelict land and buildings back into use at scale;
- Integrate heritage and tourism activity and aspirations into Community Wealth Building action plans;

More information, including data, evidence and the details of the themes outlined above can be found in BEFS full Manifesto document.

About BEFS

Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) is an umbrella body for organisations working in the built environment in Scotland. Drawing on extensive expertise in a membership-led forum, BEFS informs, debates and advocates on the strategic issues, opportunities and challenges facing Scotland's historic and contemporary built environment.

Our vision is for a strong historic and existing built environment sector in Scotland. One that is informed, that can debate issues in a constructive way, that can demonstrate its impact, that can advocate for good outcomes on the ground.