

Evaluation Strategy 2020



Contents

What is our Evaluation Strategy? _____	3
Evaluation Framework _____	9
Inputs and Activities: What we do _____	11
Outputs _____	13
Logic model _____	14
Additional Programme-Level Evaluation _____	16
Longitudinal Survey _____	17
Case studies _____	18
Annual Review _____	18
Impact Report _____	19

What is our Evaluation Strategy?

What is our Evaluation Strategy?

Our evaluation strategy sets out how we will measure the delivery of our aims and mission, as set out in our Strategy 2020-23. Our Strategy can be accessed [here](#).

Over the next three years, the AHF's Strategic Aims are to:

1. Generate and distribute increased levels of investment and funding to support the sustainable reuse of historic buildings.

2. Support community-led heritage regeneration by assisting charities and social enterprises to take ownership of, develop and sustain new uses for historic buildings.

3. Promote the impact and benefits of community-led regeneration and ownership of historic buildings, to Government, communities and funders.

4. Increase the effectiveness and impact of the AHF, ensuring we continue to deliver value for funders and the organisations and projects we invest in.

Our overarching Evaluation Strategy shows our approach to:

- embedded monitoring of impact at organisational and programme levels;

- longitudinal evaluation to understand our impact on the lifecycle of projects we fund; and

- our internal evaluation to scrutinise and improve AHF support processes.

Why a new Evaluation Strategy?



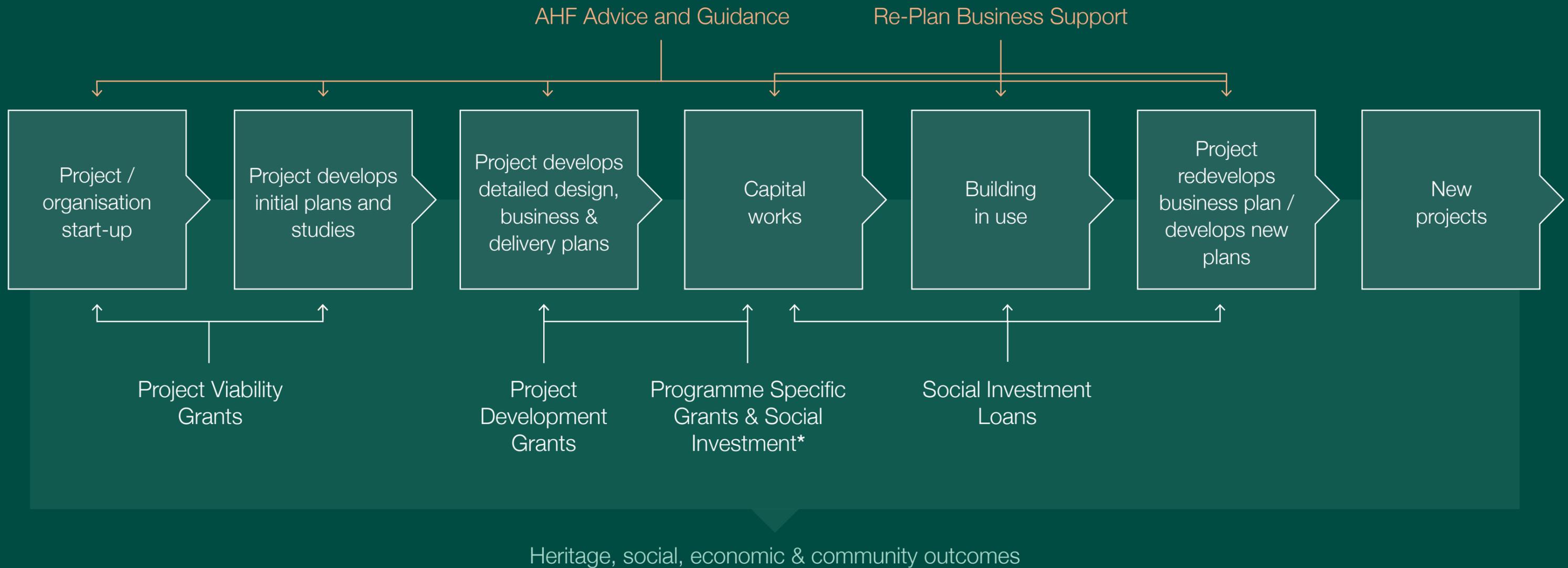
As a direct project-level funder, the AHF is well positioned to analyse and evidence the impact of funding to charities and social enterprises leading heritage-led regeneration projects. We believe that historic buildings and places play an essential role in our everyday lives, our cultural identity and our economy. Where these buildings can be reused to provide for community needs, their adaptation brings many and varied benefits. **We want to ensure our funders and the sectors we work within and across have clear and ready access to data that can help demonstrate the impact these projects are having on communities and our heritage.**

In addition, and because we know that successful projects often require many funding partners, **we want to better understand the particular benefit AHF's participation (whether through funding or advice and guidance) in a project brings.** The AHF is an established specialist funder and advisor, particularly in early-stage grant funding and lending to projects at critical points in a project's life cycle. Ultimately, we hope to learn more about the role that our funding and wrap-around support at these stages plays in the projects' ongoing development and ultimate success.

We are, though, a relatively small organisation with limited funds: so our Evaluation Strategy has been designed to set out our approach in light of the available resources we have for gathering evidence on the projects we invest in. We accept it will not be able to evaluate all the impacts our projects will be achieving.

AHF's Investment and Support System

* We have specific grants and other types of investment available in some countries. Please read the country programme guides for more details.



The Logic Chain

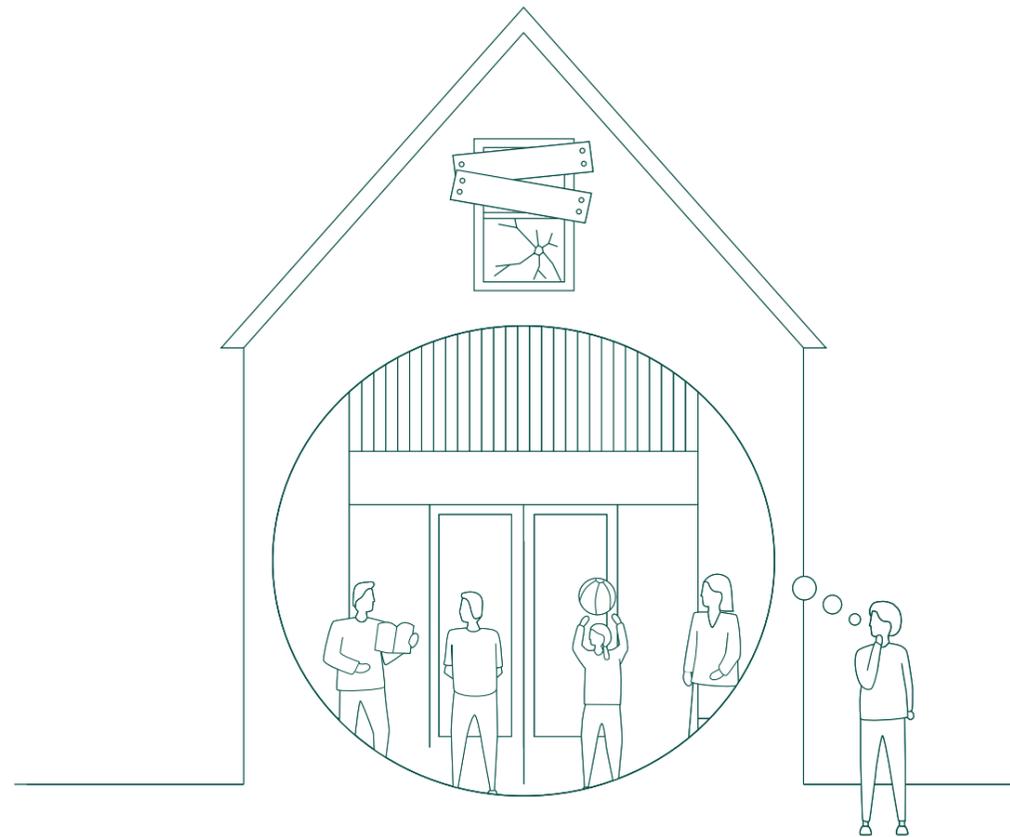


The concept of a Logic Chain is implicit in most monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This is a useful organising framework for thinking about interventions at a strategic, programme and project level and enables us to understand the impacts an intervention is having in the context of the baseline conditions that it is designed to influence. The core elements are summarised in a simplified form in the diagram opposite.

The cornerstone of evaluation is identifying indicators that can be used to measure performance. These can include the following types:

- Inputs are the resources required to deliver the intervention (e.g. staff time, funding);
- Activities are what is actually delivered using these resources (e.g. specific projects, building restoration, repair, etc);
- Outputs are a quantitative measure of what is achieved with these activities (e.g. sqm floorspace restored, number of volunteers, number of events);
- Outcomes generally capture the effects on the beneficiaries/recipients of the activities (e.g. increased wellbeing of end users, improved confidence, access to arts and culture). This also includes potential negative effects of the intervention; and
- Impacts capture the full effects for the relevant economic geography (e.g. net additional GVA, Full-Time Equivalent jobs (FTE) created within the local economy, increased pride/belonging/quality of life outcomes in local community).

Baseline conditions: Heritage at Risk and underused by communities



Historic buildings across the UK are unique, often fragile and non-renewable assets. They contribute to the cultural essence of regions and localities, and their loss erodes local physical and historical identity and community memory. They also offer often untapped opportunities to deliver tangible economic, environmental and social benefits through reuse. But too many of these buildings, in hollowed-out town centres and villages, lie vacant or underused, blighting neighbourhoods they could instead be reviving.

The scale of the challenge is clear. In 2019, Historic England recorded 5,073 entries on their [Heritage at Risk Register](#). In Scotland, 2,313 buildings are included in Historic Environment Scotland's 2019 list of [threatened structures](#). In Wales, Cadw's [most recent survey of listed buildings](#) identified 2,646 at risk. The Department for Communities in Northern Ireland has recorded 487 on its [Risk Register](#).

These registers identify the most significant sites most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. But there are other buildings that are not listed (for example in a conservation area or locally listed) that are vacant and potentially at risk of dereliction. For example, in 2019, it was found that 16% of shop units were vacant in England. In summary, there is significant issue with at risk and vacant properties, many of which are listed or architecturally significant, across the UK. However, many communities have ideas for these buildings that they want to realise.

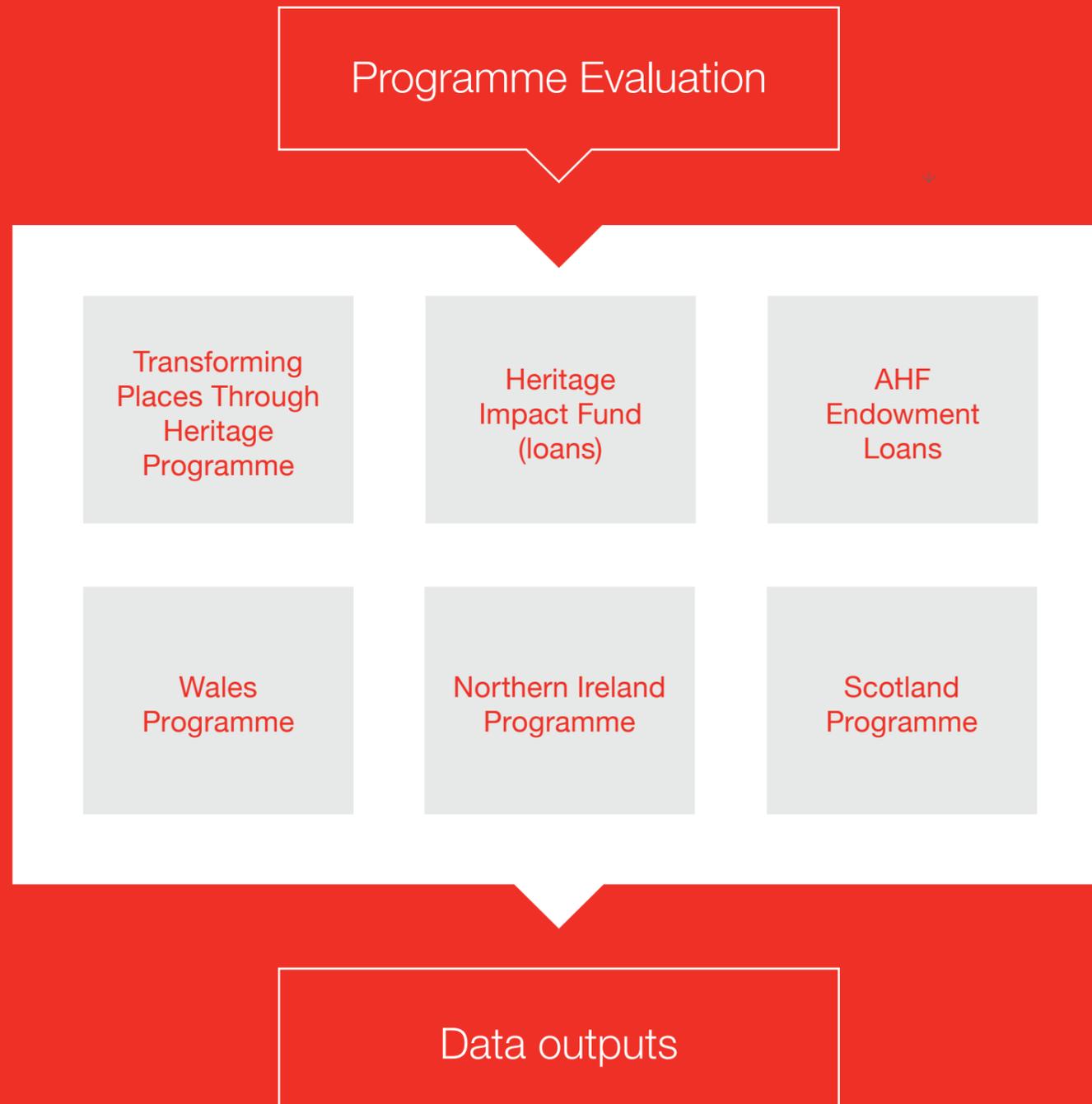
Since 1976, the AHF has worked with groups not only to preserve vulnerable or at risk buildings but to support communities to find new uses for them. The organisations we support range from heritage-specialist building preservation trusts to volunteer-run community groups and start-up social enterprises, to regional and national charities delivering a range of services through historic buildings.

Evaluation Framework

AHF Evaluation Framework



Inputs and Activities: What we do



Coded **red** in our Evaluation Framework, we organise our Activities and Inputs through our country-specific grant programmes, and our two loan programmes, AHF Endowment Fund loans and Heritage Impact Fund loans.

The AHF is unique in that, through these programmes, we are able to offer support to local communities at every point in the life-cycle of a project – from start-up advice and grants for early development work and project planning, through to loans for acquisition and as working capital for project delivery. An evaluation undertaken by Ruth Flood Associates in 2018, found that for many projects led by charities and social enterprises we are often the first point of contact when seeking to rescue and reuse historic buildings ‘at risk’. At the same time, through our lending activities we are also often the remaining funding body left in many projects, long after some of the initial capital grant funders have ceased actively monitoring projects. One aim of this new Evaluation Framework will be to gather transparent data on when in the project development lifecycle projects are coming to us. This will help us to understand more fully our own contribution to the health of the sector.

Working through our team of regionally-located Investment, Programme and Support Officers, we provide funding for:

- **Viability testing:** Project Viability Grants (PVGs) provide funding for project ideas that require further exploration and testing to see whether they will work; up to £15,000 value.

- **Project development:** Project Development Grants (PDGs) provide funding for a project where the feasibility and viability has already been completed, but more detailed work is required to develop plans and secure capital funding; up to £100,000 value.

- **Capital redevelopment and start-up support:** Our AHF and Heritage Impact Fund loans provide necessary access to cash for capital redevelopment and start-up costs as organisations move into being operational. In addition, some of our programmes may offer Capital grants; these grants can range from £40,000-£350,000.

- **Revenue funding:** As a pilot initiative within Transforming Places through Heritage, we are trialling Heritage Development Trust grants to offer revenue funding for organisations dedicated to heritage-led regeneration projects. Funding of up to £50,000 per annum. Our cash flow loans also provide revenue funding to organisations.

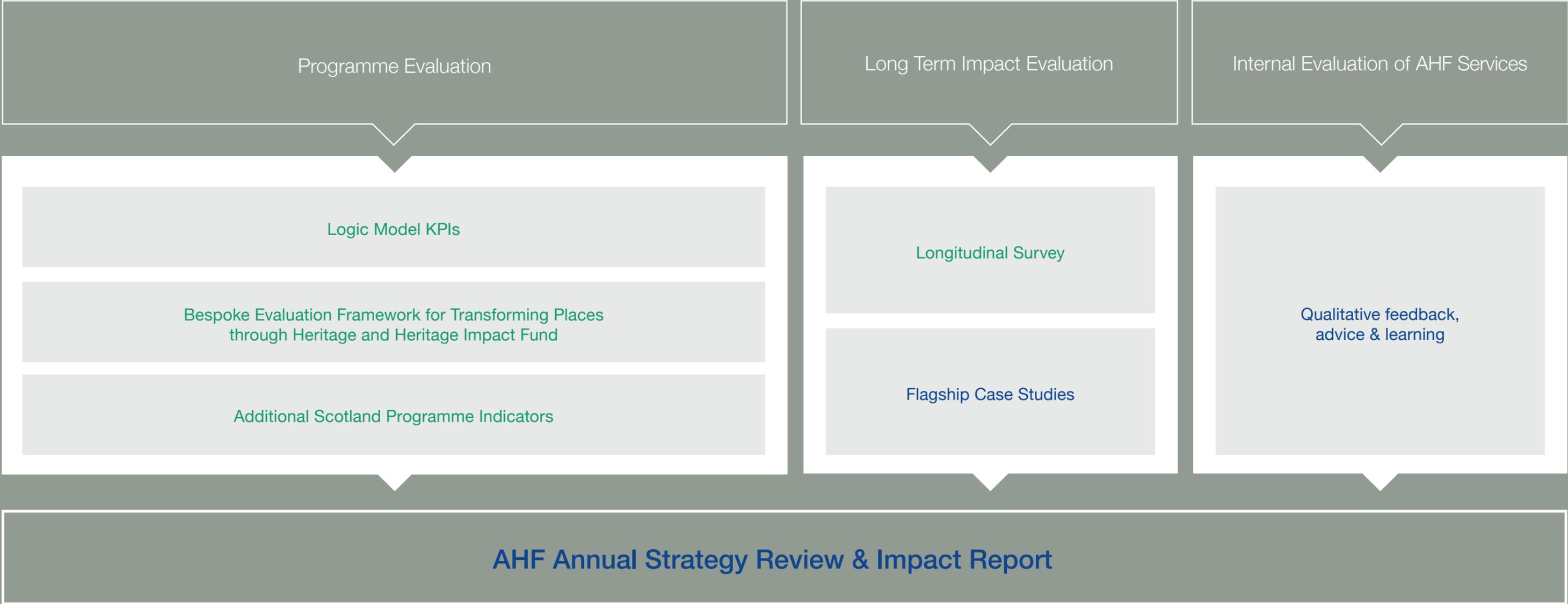
At application and on making their final payment claim, all grantees and loan clients will be asked a series of questions designed to measure the specific contribution that our grant and advice has made in their project's development. In addition, we will also be assessing the role our advice has played in assisting projects using our RePlan service.

An element within the AHF's Heritage Impact Fund, **RePlan** makes available to both new and existing borrowers access to capacity-building support. This service is funded by the AHF, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland and Historic England.

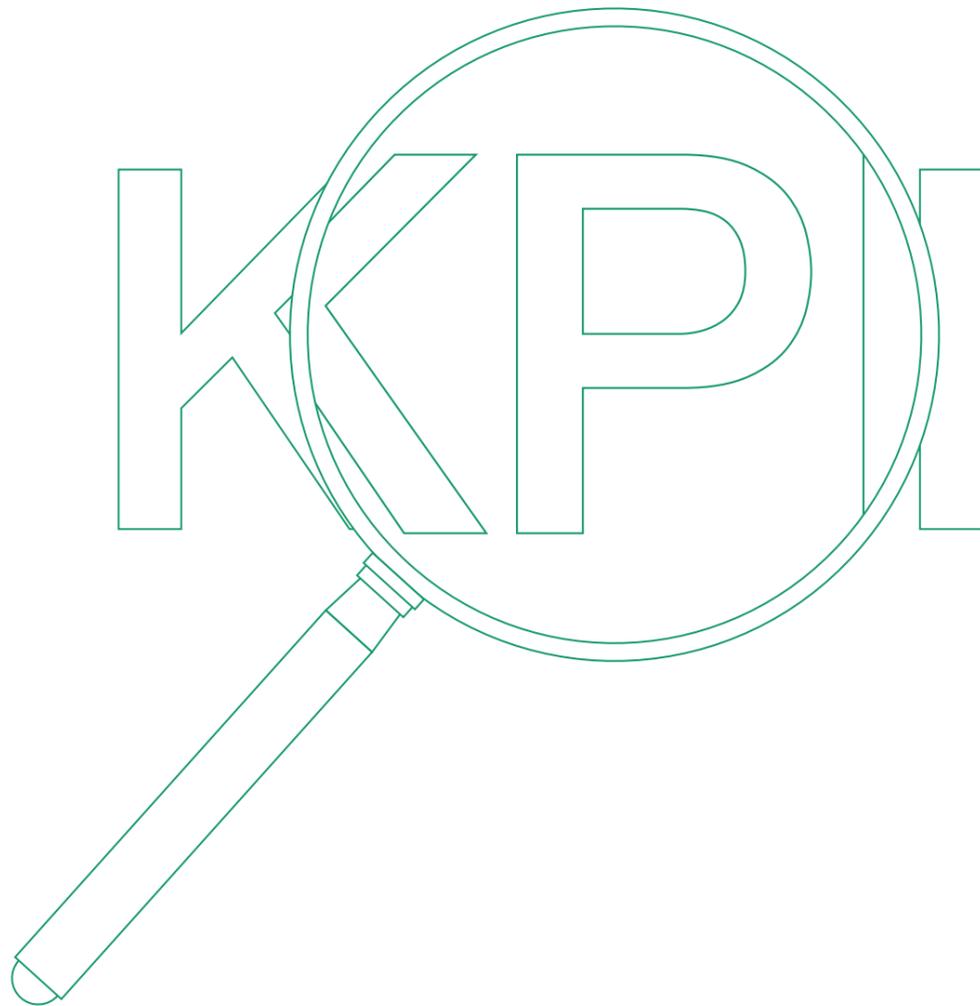
At the heart of RePlan is the provision of a health check or Diagnostic, available in three areas: Business Health Diagnostic, Financial Health Diagnostic, Impact Diagnostic. These enable the AHF to identify and provide further support and bespoke interventions to eligible borrowers to support their long-term sustainability.

Outputs

Our outputs can be divided into two principle categories:
Data Outputs (coded **Green**) and Report Outputs (coded **Blue**).



Logic Model



Chief among our data outputs is the AHF Logic Model: our method of collecting and reporting against our Key Performance Indicators. Our ten key Indicators have been chosen as the most effective to enable us to measure the delivery of Strategic Aims 1 and 2. They focus on the immediate impact AHF's support makes.

The KPI data is compiled via applications and exit surveys (for grants) and quarterly check-in (for loans). The indicators are assessed monthly by the Senior Management Team, with quarterly and annual reports provided to Trustees and our key stakeholders. The structure of the Logic Model enables it to provide both an overall national/organisational summary and programme/country-level breakdowns.

The first year of our Strategy will be focused on providing benchmark figures for each of the indicators. In subsequent years, we will set targets, where appropriate, to understand the direction of travel and help provide staff, trustees and funders with visibility in terms of the overall impact of the AHF. Updates will be covered in our annual Impact Report.

There are some areas where we know we still need to improve evidence gathering, including understanding how our funding is reaching a broad and diverse range of organisations; and how those organisations themselves are engaging and supporting broad and diverse communities. We are continuing work to improve the Model. The Logic Model and its modes of data gathering are described in the table on the following page.

Logic Model

STRATEGIC AIMS

01

Generate and distribute increased levels of investment and funding to support the sustainable reuse of historic buildings;

02

Support community led heritage regeneration by assisting charities and social enterprises to take ownership of, develop and sustain new uses for historic buildings

OUTCOME

01

Funds for lending

02

Funds for grant making

03

Funds for support service

04

People and organisations enabled to take ownership of historic assets/acquire long term rights a key milestone in AHF Investment and Support System lifecycle

05

Organisations able to attract investment/access support from other funders

06

Number of projects supported through stages of AHF investment and Support System

07

Organisations are financially resilient and sustainable

08

Historic assets are appropriately repaired and adapted for new sustainable uses

09

New community enterprises are enabled to start up and grow and use historic buildings and places for public benefit

10

Vacant spaces and buildings are effectively repurposed and reused to support thriving places

INDICATORS

Available funds for lending (£)

Available funds for grant making (£)

Available funds for support service (£)

Number or % of charities and social enterprises helped to secure/take ownership of/acquire long-term rights to historic

Amount of funding (£) secured by projects from other funders

Projects moved forward to the next stage of development: Viability, Development, Capital, Operational

No. or % of organisations who consider themselves to be financially resilient/sustainable

No. of buildings being repaired or repaired/reused in total

No. of charities and social enterprises and small businesses using restored historic buildings for public benefit

Final use of restored building; no. units created; m² of floor space safeguarded

Additional Programme-Level Evaluation

Our KPIs have been designed to report on our key outcomes and fit the reporting requirements of our funders to provide a consistent approach to monitoring. In some cases, however, individual funders require the monitoring of Additional Programme-Level Indicators for their own and more specific programme level data purposes, and we are separately gathering data related to those.

Historic Environment Scotland

In addition to our KPIs, in Scotland we will be monitoring and reporting against the following indicators:

-
- Climate change: number of projects incorporating energy efficiency measures, or otherwise responding proactively to climate change;
-
- Deprivation: number of applications from areas defined as 'Deprived' using Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Data;
-
- Sector Capacity Building: number of projects that are or become members of the Heritage Trust Network in Scotland; and number of projects applying for funding to build their capacity to deliver capital projects.
-

DCMS: Transforming Places through Heritage

A bespoke framework has been developed to measure the impact of *Transforming places through Heritage*, due to the programme's connection to wider high street and town centre programmes in England. This framework will utilise our KPI structure, but will also add additional indicators to evaluate the social and economic outcomes within local areas supported by the programme.

Heritage Impact Fund

The fund aims to achieve the twin goals of sustainable futures for historic buildings and the delivery of Social/Community/Local Economic Impact. Applicants are therefore required to provide a measurable social impact framework outlining outcome areas, activities, specific measures and expected targets.

The AHF's Consultant Project Manager for RePlan, the Social Investment Business, is also delivering a bespoke learning approach for RePlan incorporating both process learnings and impact learnings.

More information on the evaluation of the Heritage Impact Fund can be found [here](#).

Longitudinal Survey

While our KPIs are focused on the immediate impact that our support makes for projects, we recognise that this may not tell the whole story of the impact of projects we support or the specific contribution we make to a project's development – particularly for our grant activity. Since much of our grant funding is early-stage, our KPIs alone cannot demonstrate the impact that projects we support have once they are operational. In order to help us understand this long-term impact of AHF investment and also to learn more about the challenges facing projects, we will conduct Longitudinal Survey work on a sample of projects at 3, 5 and 10 years after the completion of their grant.

Compiled annually, the data-driven Longitudinal Survey will seek to assess:

-
- The length and structure of project lifecycles: How long does it take for projects to move from Enquiry to Viability, Project Development, Capital Redevelopment and finally Operational Stage?
-
- Delivery of outcomes: What outcomes (e.g. number of units, total floorspace) have projects funded by our Viability and Development Grants delivered at 3, 5 and 10 years?
-
- Sector strength and resilience: How have AHF grants impacted on the sustainability, skills level, and resilience of organisations we have funded?
-
- Feedback on the advice and support provided by AHF
-

The Longitudinal Survey will follow 20% of Project Viability and Development Grants, selected to form a representative sample, as well as 100% of Capital Grants and Heritage Development Trust pilot grants.

For more information on the Longitudinal Survey, see [here](#).

Case studies

Reliable data is critical, but we recognise that quantitative reporting alone only provides part of the picture. Therefore, alongside data-driven outputs, we will be preparing a series of qualitative and analytical outputs. The first of these is a series of in-depth Case Studies, which will provide greater detail around the context of our interventions and the social impacts – so hard to bring out quantitatively – realised by projects we have supported.

These case studies will focus on telling the story behind our grants and loans. They will be published primarily on our website and in our Annual Review, where they will help raise the profile of our work, explore the wider impacts of our projects, and inspire prospective grantees and loan clients about the potential for heritage-led regeneration projects to make a difference to communities. The studies will predominately be textual and audio visual in format, and will link through to project websites wherever possible to provide an interactive exploration of featured projects.

We aim for at least six case studies to be developed each quarter to ensure that content remains fresh. You can find the latest case studies [here](#).

Annual Review

The Annual Review is our primary public-facing report, which reviews our activities across the year and progress against our Strategy. The Annual Review seeks to tell the story of our work as an organisation and to highlight exemplar projects we have supported. It features extensive use of Case Studies prepared in the previous year, as well as specially prepared content. The Review also reports our performance in easily accessible infographics, highlights any changes to how we are working based on evidence gathered through this framework and celebrates the projects and organisations we have supported.

The primary audience for the Annual Review is our funders and client base. Each Review is retrospective and covers the previous financial year; it is published online and in print each Autumn.

Our 2018/19 Annual Review is available [here](#).

Impact Report

In addition, we aim to launch a new annual Impact Report in Spring 2021, which will bring together our Logic Model KPIs, Programme-level Indicators, and Longitudinal Survey results to evaluate the overarching impact of our work as an organisation. Largely quantitative in content, the Impact Report will also allow us to break down the outcomes we can measure into Social, Economic, and Environmental impacts.

The aim of the Impact Report will be to provide ground-level data to inform our own funders' thinking, to help shape our sector and to understand trends affecting projects we support. As we expect this Evaluation Framework to provide data-driven insights that enable us to improve our processes and interventions, the Impact Report will also allow us to outline these improvements and their rationale. Its primary audience will be policy makers and our peers as funders of community-led heritage projects. Each Report will be retrospective, covering the previous calendar year; it will be published online only each Spring.

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The Architectural Heritage Fund

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