

## Scotland's Urban Past

### The organisation

Scotland's Urban Past (SUP) are a team of seven people based in Historic Environment Scotland (HES) to deliver a five year Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) funded project. SUP staff support community projects for groups who want to research their urban environment and its history.

The interviewee was the Digital Resources Officer who is officially responsible for digital training and monitoring content from crowd-sourcing volunteers and community groups.

SUP cover the whole of Scotland and have been tasked with working with 60 project groups in five years. This is broken down into 20 projects with young people, up to 24 years old, 20 projects with heritage groups and 20 with harder to reach or seldom heard audiences.

### Types of Volunteering

The volunteers that have been involved with Scotland's Urban Past include:

- Existing groups that are trained in survey and sketching and are adding to the national historical record.
- Crowdsourcing 'urban detectives' – see more below.
- Youth Forum – see below
- Glasgow Disability Alliance – see below.
- 'traditional' volunteers – The one they involved at the time of interview did research and wrote blog posts for the website.



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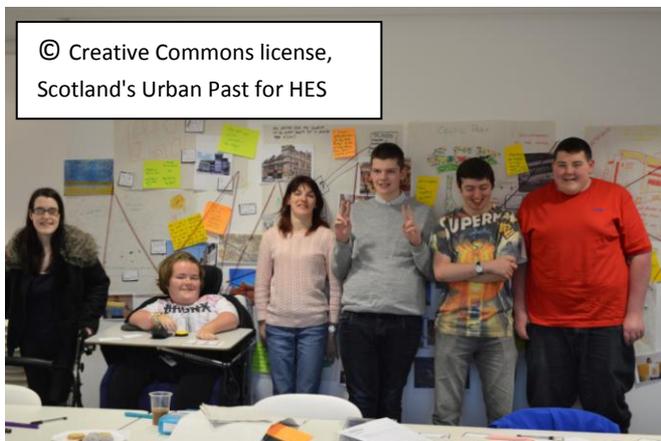
### Innovative opportunities

Crowdsourcing 'urban detectives' – SUP have recently rolled out a crowdsourcing campaign which allows people to put direct entries into the National Record of the Historic Environment.

"There is a field in the national record which is for classification of what a site is. For example, is it a church, factory site or tenement building. We're going to allow the public to classify the records for us. As the rule is for urban detectives, it has to be in settlements of over 3000 people. SUP will moderate what is coming in. If 3 people give a building the same classification then it'll go through automatically but there could also be changes of use over time so different entries might also be valid. We'll be providing podcasts online about how to complete the records. We can also look at areas that are not well represented in the National Record such as Dumfries and the public can suggest sites for things not currently recorded and from there they can add text, photographs and information about the sites."

Youth Forum – Each year a group of young people (16-24 yrs) are recruited to be an advisory group on what sorts of activities are good to help bring young people into heritage. The call for new youth forum members will be in April and the role runs from September to May. Volunteers come from all over Scotland and in 2015 were between 17 and 24.

“The Youth Forum’s aim is to advise SUP on our activities for young people and to lead the annual youth led event. The Youth Forum is completely youth led and we wanted the forum to be mutually beneficial. Therefore there is a programme of training for the volunteers, based on what training they want, CV workshop, again that they requested, opportunities to take part in SUP projects and events as well as led their own event. This year they chose to celebrate 100 years of youth culture through music. This event is called *Dancing Through The Decades* and will take place on Monday 25th April at Electric Circus. In 2015 we recruited 20 young people from across Scotland but we will be only recruiting 10 volunteers going forwards as this is more manageable. All youth forum members have their travel reimbursed up to £30 and after their session as Youth Forum members ends they are invited to join the SUP advisory board.”



See more: <https://vimeo.com/scoturbanpast/videos>

Glasgow Disability Alliance – The group of young people at GDA made a film about their favourite places in Glasgow, with some focus on disability access. “We have trained the young people in taking oral histories and if they get the funding then they’re going to speak to the group of older people at GDA and find out about what disabled access was like in Glasgow when they were growing up.”

### **Critical Success Factors**

“We’re coming at it from the volunteers perspective, volunteers are getting something themselves whereas a more traditional organisation might prioritise their delivery needs. Research Scotland has been doing our evaluation and has had nothing negative to report.”

### **Benefits of involving volunteers**

Youth forum:

“The young people have had a huge amount out of it:

- Training was created based on what they requested – historical research skills, conservation skills, event/ project management training and careers and CV workshop
- It is mutually beneficial as they assist in the delivery, offer feedback on activities for young people as well as gain hands on skills for their own careers
- We have taken young volunteers on schools training which was great for us as we needed help with delivery.

- They also worked with the GDA (above) which has given them exposure to diverse groups and they were also an extra help for us.
- Youth-led event – experience in running an event, risk assessments, working with designers and venues, photography, teamwork, etc.
- They have also taken part in other heritage based projects such as Digit!2015, Skin and Stone event and Made in My Toon film event.”

Traditional volunteer: “They researched architectural terms and put details along with some great sketches online. It was great for their CV and helped with their coursework. It gave us some great online content.”

Glasgow Disability Alliance: “They will benefit from passing on the knowledge they’ve gained from the group of young people to the next group.”

Other volunteers:

As a result of SUP projects, there were unexpected volunteer benefits. For example project participants from Tain and Ayr have attended heritage events and conferences and spoken about their projects. This not only communicates information about their projects, but helps to publicise SUP as a whole. A young person from the Vennie Skatepark, and the centre co-ordinator attended the *Diversity in Heritage* conference, and facilitated group discussions. “A group of young people made a film about their Skatepark in Livingston, which they helped to build by raising funds. This helped change perspectives about the skatepark’s users in the local community.”

### **Challenges of involving volunteers**

SUP have found that people would like to volunteer but they don’t have the time. SUP expect that the new crowdsourcing opportunity will allow people to dip-in in their own time and do it in manageable chunks. It’s important to ensure that volunteers expenses are paid promptly and systems are easy for volunteers to use. This could be a barrier for some volunteers.

“I think we’re lucky because Scotland’s Urban Past sounds less heritagy which helps our remit. Our Google analytics tells us that the people looking at our site tend to be under 34. The challenge is that the wider heritage sector is seen as not for them. It’s a challenge getting a spread of volunteers that represent society.”

### **External Policy & the future of volunteering**

Most of the challenges identified were around systems and processes, some of which were outwith the control of SUP. “Challenges with IT have had an impact on how early crowdsourcing volunteers could be recruited to the project. So sometimes influences beyond our control affect project delivery. We need a clear mechanism for reimbursing volunteers. A robust organisational Volunteer Policy would help.”

Looking towards the future, staff said; “We want volunteering to be very community and volunteer lead. We’d like to have a good number contributing from the crowdsourcing project and we’re aiming for 4000 public contributors as stated in our implementation plan submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund. I think it will be sustainable and future proof.

I hope our volunteers who contribute to the national record will gain confidence and skills and in the future they could train and recruit other new volunteers. The resources will be available on our website so they could create their own training if they want to.”

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