

Granton Waterfront Heritage and Place Programme

Development Stage: Project Evaluation

1. Introduction

'Linking and restoring the fragmented heritage of Granton Waterfront, Edinburgh' is a community-led Heritage and Place Programme, supported by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

The project is currently in its Development Phase.

Scotinform Ltd is the Evaluation Partner on the project. As well as writing the Evaluation Plan for the Activity Plan, Scotinform has been asked to undertake evaluation of the Development Stage itself.

2. Approach

This paper is a report of an internal project team survey conducted in January 2025 as an end-stage project review.

It contains feedback from five individuals/organisations involved in working on the Development Stage; three from the City of Edinburgh Council and two external consultants (7N Architects, and Scotinform Ltd). Together the responses covered all aspects breadth of Development Stage Activity, with the exception of the Area Character Appraisal and the Area Management Plan:

- Area Action Plan
- Area Partnership Agreement
- Materials Audit
- Skills Audit
- Traditional Skills and Training Plan
- Community Heritage Activities Plan
- Evaluation Plan
- Project budget
- Delivery stage programme

Respondents to the survey were told that their comments and feedback would be confidential and not be reported in a way that could be attributed to them. The findings are therefore reported at an aggregate level.

The process builds on the mid-point evaluation, following the same methodology, that was conducted in December 2023-January 2024.

3. Progress to Time and to Budget

Three of the five respondents reported that their work on this project ran to time. Two respondent said that it did not run to time.

Four respondents reported that their work on this project was running to budget. One reported that it was not running to budget.

4. Project Reflections

4.1 Is there anything about this project that is working particularly well?

All five respondents could identify things that were working well as part of the process.

They all commented on **partnership working** to deliver the project:

A really positive process to engage meaningfully with the community and partners about the project, and ensure we were putting the best project forward for the Delivery Phase.

The preparation of the Traditional Skills Training Plan in conjunction with Edinburgh College went very smoothly.

Fay and Michelle (City of Edinburgh Council) helped facilitate discussion and collaboration with the appropriate stakeholders.

Collaboration and building connections with community partners. Sense of shared purpose within the team.

We have built a good relationship with the client and I hope that this will continue.

Two commented on **the way the team adapted** to changes in the funding landscape and the project scope:

I was very impressed by the resilience of the project team as they responded to changing circumstances in terms of funding opportunities, directions from funders and staff changes. From our point of view I was pleased that we were also able to adapt to these changes to support the team within our budget.

Having an extended period of time to develop the plans helped us to put forward a strong programme of community engagement.

One commented on the **quality of the work produced**:

The professional reports required – the Materials Audit, Skills Audit, and RIBA Stage 3 designs – were all prepared to a high standard.

4.2 Did you and/or the people in your organisation develop new skills as a result of the project?

Three of the five respondents identified learning outcomes; all three were from the City of Edinburgh Council, underlining a learning legacy within the organisation as a result of the application process.

- Three respondents said that they had learned about community engagement
- Two said that they had learned about applying for funding and support
- One had developed a greater understanding of construction project planning

4.3 Were there any outcomes from the Development Phase that you will apply for future projects or ways of working in the future?

The City of Edinburgh Council respondents said that they would apply the learning outlined above, particularly in relation to community engagement and budgeting. Again there are clear legacy impacts for the internal team.

One of the contractors said that they would be advising other clients on the Development Phase pathway that they might need to be flexible and to expect the unexpected, given the current funding environment.

4.4 Is there anything that you have found challenging, would change, or you would do differently next time?

All five respondents answered this question.

Three respondents talked about the complexity of **dealing with the requirements of the funders**, and the team's capacity to accommodate this:

Understanding the requirements of two funders and producing material that met both of their needs. There was a lot of duplication of work to submit two applications on the separate portals. A shared portal or means of applying together would help alleviate this.

The preparation of documents required for the Delivery Phase submission could potentially

have been carried out more systematically.

I felt that this was a complex funding application process (I completely understand why this needs to be the case) but it times it was difficult to navigate.

Two respondents talked about the **mentor** provided to steer them through the application:

It would have been helpful to retain the mentor for the whole development period.

On occasion the feedback provided by the mentor did not seem to reflect the capacity or budget of the applicant, or the characteristics of the project community.

One respondent reflected on the **complexity of the project** itself:

Budgets were tight and we struggled to manage expectations across each project. This was made more manageable once costs between the four projects had been reapportioned to match project scopes more suitably but it was after initial discussions with tenants and stakeholders had occurred. We would suggest a session earlier in the process to collectively define priorities, in order to avoid compromises later in the development.

5. Conclusions

- Based on the responses provided by the project team, the vast majority of the project ran to budget. It was less successful at running to time, with timescales being extended due to changing funding opportunities and project redesign.
- Community engagement and partnership working were identified as strengths of the application process.
- There is evidence that the project team has acquired new skills in terms of community engagement, applying for funding, and construction management, and that these will be applied in future activity. This is a legacy of the development phase.
- The complexity of the project, with several properties and several funders, appears to have put strain on systems and capacity. Successful delivery was achieved by adapting the project scope and priorities, extending the timeframe, and ensuring that the team remained flexible.

Overall, it is clear that this was a challenging process that was impacted by external factors beyond the control of the team. The successful delivery of the phase is down to their flexibility, new skills and partnership working. The capacity (financial and organisational) of the team should be reflected in future plans.