

For
The Old High Inverness SCIO



Old High, Inverness: Future Redevelopment

Strategic Outline Case

Draft 4

By
Creative Services (Scotland) Ltd



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“This building has looked after us for centuries, now it’s our turn to look after it”

This simple statement captures the emotional and spiritual attachment that many feel for the Old High, and which led to the creation of The Old High Inverness SCIO (TOHI) and its subsequent successful mobilisation of public support. This process continues now with this next phase of development, identifying the support of potential users, partners, operators, and funders.

This work has been commissioned by TOHI as an independent analysis of the options and feasibility of the future development of the Old High.

It is based on a series of consultation meetings with potential stakeholders and partners from the public, private, and third sectors – we are hugely grateful to the time and experience that was shared freely by so many.

This Strategic Outline Case has been prepared by Creative Services (Scotland) Ltd, an associate of the Project Design Team being led by LDN Architects.



LDN Architects

Note:

Architectural Design and Condition Reports will be prepared in parallel with this document and should be considered as essential aspects of the Business Case.

Preface

In many respects, the story of the Old High and the ground on which it sits, is the story of Inverness itself. It reflects and sometimes actively leads the town's story, from the point at which the settlement began its growth from a small regional outpost to today's busy city.

The one constant throughout the site's 1,500-year history is that it has been a spiritual place, and not just in a religious sense (although it has been home to several religions). It continues to be a place of reflection, of calm.

It's no surprise then to find a contemporary outpouring of support for the future of the "town's kirk" from the community, as expressed through the success of The Old High Inverness (TOHI) in raising both awareness and funding for the redevelopment of the Old High. The site represents that community and its history vividly and there is understandable and justifiable desire that it maintain its 1.5 millenium-long role as a mirror of the city and its people.

This document looks at what that ongoing role could be and assesses the practical aspects of fulfilling it. There is a tendency in business cases to focus on the financial and economic sustainability and benefits. These are certainly a large part of the consideration of this report, but equal if not greater weight is given to what the role of the Old High should be, and how its 21st century mission can draw from the lessons and direction of travel of its previous incarnations.

A Centre of and for Community

A defining moment in the history of the Highlands, and of Inverness, took place on the site in the 6th century, when **St Columba met King Brude**, the Pictish ruler of the north. It was a meeting of cultures, beliefs and worldviews; an encounter that still resonates in a city that remains a crossroads of ideas and identities. The Old High stands at the symbolic threshold where early Christianity, Pictish sovereignty, and Highland cultural memory intersect.

As the medieval burgh took shape, the site became home to the parish church of **St Mary**, anchoring the emerging town both spiritually and civically. Its bells marked the rhythm of everyday life; its kirkyard became the resting place of generations; its "sang school" traditions nourished literacy, music and communal expression. The Old High was the people's church in the truest sense—a gathering space for worship, schooling, clan alliances, guilds, market days and town government.

In the mid-18th century, after the Battle of Culloden, the hill took on a darker role. The Old High and its surrounding kirkyard were pressed into service as a **prison and execution ground** for defeated Jacobites. Musket scars on the tower and stories carried through families and archives bear witness to a moment when the site became a stage for national trauma. Even today, the kirkyard retains a sense of solemnity that commands respect: a place where history was not only lived, but suffered.

During the Victorian era and throughout the 20th century, the Old High evolved again—this time as a place of **remembrance and civic pride**. It became closely associated with the Cameron Highlanders and the service and sacrifice of local people during global conflicts. Its

memorials, regimental colours and annual ceremonies root Inverness's modern identity in acts of collective memory, gratitude and sorrow. Weddings, baptisms, funerals, concerts, and civic services continued to fill the building, intertwining the Old High with the life stories of countless Highland families.

Today, although regular worship has ended, the Old High remains one of the most resonant places in Inverness. It is the city's oldest surviving building, a masterpiece of Highland ecclesiastical architecture, and a focal point for shared memory. But it is more than that: it is a platform on which the city has repeatedly reimagined itself. It has been a sacred hill, a parish church, a civic forum, a garrison, a school of song, a regimental shrine, and a place of welcome and quiet contemplation. In every era, it has adapted to meet the needs of the community around it.

This Strategic Outline Case is an invitation to imagine the next chapter. It recognises that the Old High is not merely a historic structure to be preserved, but a **living asset** that can once again play an active role in the cultural, civic and communal fabric of Inverness. It proposes a future where the building's many layers - spiritual, historical, artistic and emotional - are honoured and made accessible; where the site's stories are shared widely; and where new stories can unfold in ways that contribute to the wellbeing and vibrancy of the city.

As Inverness continues to grow and redefine its place in the Highlands and in Scotland, the Old High can once again become a guiding landmark—not just in its skyline presence, but in the community life it supports. This Strategic Outline Case sets out a credible, respectful and imaginative pathway to ensure that the hill of St Michael's Mount remains a place of encounter, creativity and reflection for generations to come.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Overview

The Old High in Inverness is one of Scotland's most historically significant ecclesiastical buildings: a Category A listed landmark on St Michael's Mount overlooking the River Ness, associated with Columba and King Brude, centuries of civic life, Jacobite history, military remembrance, and generations of community identity. Since the cessation of regular worship in 2022, the building has remained largely unused, with no clear operating model, limited public access, and growing risks to its fabric and future.

This Strategic Outline Case outlines a **strategic, phased and financially realistic plan** to secure the Old High as a **vibrant, multi-use civic, cultural and spiritual hub**, complementing the major investment at Inverness Castle and other city centre projects, and strengthening the cultural heart of the city.

The Strategic Outline Case has been prepared in accordance with the **HM Treasury Green Book** and is suitable for use with major funders, partners and stakeholders.

Vision

To conserve and revitalise the Old High as a **living gateway to the story of Inverness**, a centre for interpretation, performance, remembrance, learning and community life, operating sustainably and respectfully within the building's ecclesiastical, heritage and spiritual character.

Strategic Rationale

The need for intervention is clear and pressing:

- The Old High is **underused and at risk** following the end of regular congregational life.
- The building requires **significant conservation and systems upgrades** to remain safe and viable.
- The absence of daily activity means the site generates **minimal cultural, social or economic value** despite its unparalleled history and location.
- Without intervention, the building faces potential **market failure**, deterioration, and long-term loss to public life.

The project aligns strongly with national and local strategies for:

- Heritage-led regeneration
- Town centre revitalisation
- Cultural participation and wellbeing
- Creative industries growth
- Tourism diversification and place-making
- Net zero and climate adaptation through re-use

There is a unique opportunity to create a northern anchor on Church Street that balances Inverness Castle, adds depth to the city's cultural offer, and strengthens Inverness as a visitor destination.

Proposed Approach

The Business Case proposes a **phased approach**:

Phase 1 – Immediate Stabilisation

Essential enabling works to secure safe access, mitigate urgent fabric risks, and support early public use.

Phase 2 – Two-Year Activation and Testing Programme

A structured programme of:

- Music performances, choral workshops and a 21st-century “sang scuil”
- Heritage-focused exhibitions and interpretation pilots (“Layers of Inverness”)
- Markets, pop-ups, community events and schools’ programmes
- Light-touch retail and hospitality trials

This phase generates real data on:

- Audience demand
- Income potential
- Operational requirements
- Community expectations

It provides a low-risk, evidence-led foundation for longer-term decisions and builds public and funder confidence.

Phase 3 – Capital Investment and Adaptation

Subject to a successful activation period and funding, the building will undergo:

- Conservation of roof, stonework, windows and interiors
- Upgraded heating, lighting, electricals and digital infrastructure
- Improved accessibility and WCs
- Permanent interpretive installations and flexible furniture solutions
- Enhancements to support events, learning and performance

Phase 4 – Steady-State Operation

A sustainable, multi-use cultural hub with:

- Interpretation and welcoming daily access
- Regular performance and choral activity
- Events, weddings and private hires
- A modest, carefully managed hospitality partner
- Ongoing community participation, learning and volunteering
- A balanced financial model supported by earned income, grants and philanthropy

Preferred Way Forward

The emerging preferred option is a **balanced multi-use model** (closest to Option 2 in the Options Appraisal):

- **Core interpretation and storytelling** centred on the “Layers of Inverness” narrative.
- **Performance and music**, with a strong choral/vocal identity building on the building’s acoustic excellence and organ heritage.

- **Community and civic use**, including remembrance, accessible quiet space, schools' activity, and public ceremonies.
- **Light-touch hospitality and retail**, delivered through partnerships and designed to complement rather than dominate the building's ethos.
- **Selective weddings and private events**, providing vital supplementary income within clear guidelines.

This mixed portfolio spreads risk, maximises impact, and respects the building's sacred and memorial roles.

Economic and Financial Case

The project offers substantial cultural, economic and social value:

- Increased visitor footfall and dwell time along Church Street.
- New job opportunities in culture, heritage, hospitality and events.
- Strengthening of Inverness as a year-round cultural destination.
- Major benefits for creative careers, community wellbeing, education and intergenerational engagement.

The operating model is designed as a **social enterprise** with diverse income streams:

- Admissions, tours and learning
- Ticketed performance and event partnerships
- Weddings and venue hire
- Retail and hospitality concessions
- Donations, philanthropy and Friends schemes
- Ongoing grant-funded programming

The Business Case assumes that **core costs can be covered by earned income and consistent but modest grant/philanthropic support**, in line with comparable heritage cultural venues.

Costs for the capital refurbishment and repair, and for its operation, are summarised in the table below across the various phases of development:

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Capital (£'000)</i>	<i>Revenue (£'000)</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
0	354		354
1	497	44.5	541.5
2	793	26	819
3	-		
Total	1,644	70.5	£1,714.5

Capital funding is expected to come from a blend of:

- Heritage funders
- Regeneration and tourism funds
- Creative and community funders
- Trusts, foundations and philanthropy
- Community fundraising

- Possible social investment or borrowing if appropriate

The two-year activation phase significantly reduces risk by building evidence, visibility and partnership momentum before major capital decisions.

Management & Delivery

The project will be delivered by:

- A **Project Sponsor** (anticipated to be a community-based trust/SCIO).
- An experienced **Project Board** representing heritage, culture, community, finance, legal, conservation and local authority interests.
- A **professional delivery team** led by a Business and Design Team, supported by QS, engineers and specialist consultants.
- A **Project Manager** responsible for integrated programme and risk management.
- A **Stakeholder Advisory Group** providing wider community and partner input.

A comprehensive risk-management framework, clear programme structure, and strong governance arrangements underpin the project's deliverability.

Conclusion

The Old High project offers a **generational opportunity** to secure a nationally important building and create a new cultural landmark for Inverness and the Highlands.

The Business Case demonstrates:

- Clear strategic need
- A well-defined, phased approach
- Strong community, cultural and economic benefits
- A viable operating model
- A credible delivery and governance framework

Approval of this Strategic Outline Case will enable the project to progress to the activation phase and the preparation of the Outline Business Case, ensuring that the Old High can be revitalised as a **living asset for the next century**.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Strategic Outline Case

- 1.1.1 This Strategic Outline Case (SOC) sets out the case for intervention at the Old High, Inverness, and provides a structured, evidence-based framework for exploring its future as a sustainable civic, cultural, and spiritual asset for the city and the wider Highlands.
- 1.1.2 The SOC is designed to function both as:
- An initial **5-year business planning framework**, and
 - A **formally structured Green Book–style case**, capable of evolving into an Outline Business Case (OBC) and, in due course, a Full / Final Business Case (FBC).
- 1.1.3 It will:
- Define the **strategic rationale** for repurposing the Old High.
 - Describe the **historic and cultural significance** of the site and the risks of inaction.
 - Present an **initial longlist and emerging shortlist of use options** (including mixed-use configurations).
 - Outline a **two-year “test and learn” activation phase** to explore demand and refine the operating model.
 - Provide a **high-level economic, financial, and social value narrative** to inform public, charitable, and private investment.
 - Identify **potential governance and operating models** appropriate to the building’s heritage, faith history, and community role.
- 1.1.4 The document is written in accessible prose so that it can act as a **prospectus** for potential funders, partners, stakeholders and the wider public, while still aligning with the expectations of public sector decision-makers.

1.2 Background and Commission

- 1.2.1 The Old High (Old High St Stephen’s) is the **oldest church in Inverness** and occupies a prominent position on St Michael’s Mount overlooking the River Ness. Much of the present building dates from [1769–72](#), with a tower whose lower stages go back to the 14th century and upper works to the later 16th–17th centuries. It is recognised as a **Category A listed [building of national importance](#)**.
- 1.2.2 Regular worship at the [Old High](#) ended in 2022 as part of wider Church of Scotland rationalisation. The building has since been closed to routine congregational use, with high ongoing maintenance needs and no established long-term operating model. In parallel, there has been **significant community concern** and mobilisation around the future of the building, alongside an [evolving campaign](#) to secure it for public benefit.
- 1.2.3 Creative Services, working with LDN Architects and other specialist advisers, has been commissioned to assist in:
- Assessing the **feasibility of early use**,

- Identifying **medium- and longer-term options** for the building and its kirkyard, and
- Preparing this **Strategic Outline Case** as a foundation for further decision-making and investment.

1.2.4 The SOC sits alongside detailed architectural, conservation, structural, and costing work being undertaken as part of the wider commission.

1.3 Methodology and Green Book Alignment

1.3.1 The SOC is structured in line with **HM Treasury's Green Book** and the standard Five-Case Model, scaled appropriately to this early strategic stage. It includes:

- **Strategic Case** – articulating why intervention is needed, the objectives, and policy alignment.
- **Economic Case (initial)** – setting out the longlist/shortlist of options and the rationale for a preferred way forward.
- **Commercial and Financial Case (high-level)** – indicating how the project might be funded, procured and sustained financially.
- **Management Case (outline)** – describing the delivery, governance, and risk management approach.

1.3.2 Evidence is drawn from:

- [Documentary and archival research](#) on the building's history and significance.
- Analysis of heritage, tourism, cultural policy and city-centre regeneration strategies.
- [Market and audience intelligence](#) relating to Inverness and the wider Highlands.
- Early discussions with key stakeholders and [community representatives](#) (to be continued and expanded in later phases).

1.3.3 The SOC does **not** predetermine a single fixed outcome; instead, it establishes a **clear strategic framework** and an **evidence-based menu of options**, to be refined through the proposed two-year activation and testing programme.

1.4 Relationship to Future Stages (OBC and FBC)

1.4.1 This SOC is the **first formal step** in a staged decision-making journey. It will:

- Inform an **Outline Business Case (OBC)** once there is clearer evidence from test uses, market engagement and design development.
- Provide the basis for a **Full/Final Business Case (FBC)** once a preferred option, funding package, and delivery structure are agreed.

1.4.2 Key outputs that will be taken forward and deepened at later stages include:

- A **refined business plan** with detailed 10-year financial projections.
- A fully costed **capital project** (phased if appropriate).
- A clearly defined **governance and operating model** (e.g. SCIO/charitable trust, lease, joint venture).
- A robust **monitoring and evaluation framework** demonstrating heritage, economic, social and environmental outcomes.

1.4.3 The SOC thus serves as both a **decision document** and a **shared reference point** for future fundraising, design, consultation, and partnership development.

1.5 Geographic and Civic Context

1.5.1 The Old High stands on **St Michael's Mount**, a low hill rising above the east bank of the River Ness, at the north end of Church Street. It occupies a critical position in the **historic core of Inverness**, forming a visual landmark in views along the river and across the city.

1.5.2 Its context includes:

- The **River Ness corridor**, a key pedestrian and visitor route linking the city centre to the Ness Islands and wider green spaces.
- The **Inverness Castle** redevelopment to the south, set to become a major new visitor attraction and interpretive gateway to the Highlands.
- The **Church Street spine**, historically a focus of civic, commercial, and religious life, now a key part of the city centre regeneration agenda.
- Nearby **cultural, hospitality, and retail assets** that can benefit from increased footfall and dwell time generated by a revitalised Old High.

1.5.3 The redevelopment of the Old High is therefore not an isolated heritage project; it is a **strategic intervention in the urban fabric and identity** of Inverness, providing a **northern counterweight** to Inverness Castle and helping to animate the full length of Church Street.

2. Historic and Cultural Context

2.1 Overview: A Site of Deep Time

2.1.1 The Old High site is layered with over a millennium of religious, civic, and military history. It is:

- **The oldest church site in Inverness**, with worship on the hilltop likely dating back to the early [medieval period](#);
- Traditionally associated with [St Columba's 6th-century visit](#) to the Pictish court of King Brude;
- The location where **Jacobite prisoners were held after the Battle of Culloden**, some being executed within the kirkyard itself;
- The historic [town church of Inverness](#), long at the heart of civic governance, remembrance, and communal rites of passage.

2.1.2 This concentration of narratives – sacred and secular, local and national, historical and legendary – makes the Old High one of the most **symbolically charged sites in the Highlands**.

2.2 Architectural and Heritage Significance

2.2.1 The Old High is recognised as a [Category A listed building](#), denoting national or international importance. Its significance is multi-layered:

- **The Tower and Fabric**
 - The **lower stages of the west tower** are thought to date from the 14th century, with substantial upper works from the late 16th century, making it the **oldest standing structure in Inverness**.
 - The tower houses the **city (old burgh) clock** and **curfew bell**, the latter (until comparatively recently) still ringing daily under the auspices of Highland Council, maintaining a living connection between the building and civic time-keeping.
- **The 18th-Century Church**
 - The main body of the church was rebuilt between **1769–72** to designs by **George Fraser of Edinburgh**, replacing earlier medieval fabric while retaining the historic footprint on St Michael's Mount.
 - The interior is characterised by a large, light nave with galleries, reflecting the priorities of Reformed worship.
- **Victorian and Later Additions**
 - In 1891, the architectural practice **Ross & Macbeth** added porches, an apse and a chancel arch, reshaping the south elevation and providing a more liturgically focused sanctuary.
 - Further internal alterations were carried out in the late 19th century and again in the 20th century, including pews and gallery reconfigurations.
- **Interior Features and Memorials**
 - The [church](#) contains a significant **Father Willis organ**, restored in 2010, representing an important example of Victorian organ-building and contributing to the building's acoustic and musical reputation.

- The interior and kirkyard hold **War Memorial plaques, regimental colours (including Cameron Highlanders links) and rolls of honour**, emphasising the building’s role in military remembrance.
 - **Kirkyard and Setting**
 - The surrounding **kirkyard**, with its dense collection of headstones, monuments and mausolea, forms an integral part of the listed setting and contains gravestones directly associated with the post-Culloden executions.
 - The elevated site offers sweeping views across the River Ness and city, contributing to its strong townscape presence and sense of place.
- 2.2.2 Taken together, these elements give the Old High a **high level of architectural, historic, and townscape value**, justifying the protections associated with Category A listing and the expectation of sensitive, conservation-led re-use.

2.3 Early Christian and Medieval Layers: Columba, Brude and St Michael’s Mount

- 2.3.1 Long before the current stone building, St Michael’s Mount was already a **sacred and strategic site**.
- **Columba and King Brude**
Tradition holds that this is the place where **St Columba**, the Irish monk from Iona, met and eventually converted **Brude, King of the Picts**, around 565 AD. Even if the precise location cannot be archaeologically proven, the association has been **embedded in local tradition and city identity** for centuries, giving the site national importance in narratives of the Christianisation of northern Scotland.
 - **Medieval Parish Church of St Mary**
By at least the 12th century, the site was home to the **parish church of Inverness**, dedicated to St Mary, serving the spiritual needs of the burgh and its hinterland.
- 2.3.2 The medieval church would have been a focal point for:
- Parish worship and sacraments
 - Local guilds and confraternities
 - Early forms of schooling and literacy (including traditions of “**sang schools**” or choral instruction typically associated with town kirks).
- 2.3.4 These early layers anchor the Old High not merely as a fine historic building, but as a **continuously sacred hill** – a place where spiritual, political and cultural power have overlapped for more than a millennium.

2.4 Reformation, Civic Role and the “Town Church”

- 2.4.1 Following the Reformation, the Old High emerged as the **principal parish and civic church of Inverness**. Key themes of this period include:
- **Civic Governance and Identity**
 - The church functioned as the **spiritual heart of the burgh**, closely linked to the Town Council, justice system and local elite.
 - Important proclamations, civic services and commemorations took place here, reinforcing its status as the “town church”.

- **Education and Song**
 - Like many Scottish burgh churches, the Old High was historically associated with **education and music**, including communal psalm-singing and choral traditions. While specific archival evidence for a formally constituted “sang school” on the site is [still being researched](#), the wider pattern of **church-based musical training** forms a strong precedent for the proposed 21st-century “sang scuil” concept – re-imagining the church as a base for vocal and choral practice, community choirs and music education.
- **Burgh Life and Rites of Passage**
 - For centuries, the Old High has been the location for **baptisms, marriages, funerals, civic thanksgivings and days of mourning**, embedding it deeply in the emotional and genealogical history of Inverness families.

2.4.23 In this phase, the building is best understood as a **fusion of church and town hall functions**, where faith, governance and public ceremony were closely entwined.

2.5 Jacobite History, Culloden and the Kirkyard Executions

2.5.1 The Old High is also a key site in the story of the **1745–46 Jacobite Rising** and the aftermath of the **Battle of Culloden**.

- **Prison and Garrison**
After Culloden (April 1746), the church served as a **makeshift prison and garrison** for Hanoverian troops and captured Jacobite soldiers.
- **Executions in the Kirkyard**
Some prisoners were executed in the **kirkyard**, where a particular gravestone is traditionally said to have been used as a rest for soldiers’ muskets while prisoners were forced to stand or sit against another stone. Musket-ball scars on the church tower and certain stones in the graveyard are still interpreted as physical traces of these events.
- **Memory, Trauma and Representation**
These episodes add a layer of **military and political violence** to the site, making it a place of **contested memory and mourning** for descendants of Jacobite communities and Highland regiments alike. In contemporary culture, this history has gained renewed visibility through **heritage tourism and popular media** – including links drawn between the site, Culloden, and the global success of historical dramas such as *Outlander*.

2.5.2 For any future use, it would be appropriate for the kirkyard and church interior to be curated as a **respectful landscape of memory**, where interpretation can handle both the romance and the brutality of Jacobite history with sensitivity.

2.6 Nineteenth & Twentieth Centuries: Ross & Macbeth, Regiments and Remembrance

2.6.1 The 19th and early 20th centuries saw the Old High continue to evolve architecturally and symbolically.

- **Victorian Architectural Enrichment**
 - Additions by **Ross & Macbeth** in 1891 – the apse, chancel arch and porches – reflected Victorian liturgical tastes and the desire to emphasise the sanctuary.
- **Highland Regiments and War Memorials**
 - The church became closely associated with **Highland regiments**, notably the **Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders**, with regimental colours and memorials housed within.
 - After the First and Second World Wars, the church took on an increasingly important role as a **site of remembrance**, hosting annual services and hosting plaques and rolls of honour for local men and women who served and died.
- **Music and the Organ**
 - The installation and later restoration of the **Father Willis organ** (restored c.2010) consolidated the Old High’s reputation as a **centre of musical excellence**, particularly for organ recitals, choral performances and high-quality liturgical music.

2.6.2 Through this period, the Old High remained a **living parish church**, but one increasingly weighted with **heritage value and commemorative function**, bridging everyday worship and national memorialisation with continued civic significance, with events such as the Kirking of the Council.

2.7 Recent History: Closure, Uncertainty and Community Mobilisation

2.7.1 In the 21st century, wider trends – declining congregational numbers, rising maintenance costs, and Church of Scotland rationalisation – culminated in the decision to **end regular worship at the Old High** and place the building on the market.

2.7.2 Key recent milestones include:

- **2022–2023** – Last regular services held; the property is formally marketed for sale as a Category A listed church with potential for alternative uses (subject to consents).
- **Community and Campaign Responses** – Formation of campaigning and “Friends” groups to explore how the building might be secured for community and heritage purposes, including the emergence of **Save Old High Inverness (SOHI)** and its subsequent development into a SCIO with ambitions to purchase and repurpose the building.
- **Ongoing Public Interest and Media Attention** – Regular coverage in [local](#) and national media reflecting concern about fabric deterioration, uncertainty about new ownership and use, and strong emotional attachments to the building.

2.7.3 This context underlines both the **urgency** and the **opportunity** that the SOC seeks to address:

- Urgency, because a prolonged period of vacancy risks physical degradation, reputational damage, and the loss of public access.

- Opportunity, because there is currently a **window of alignment** between community energy, heritage and cultural policy priorities, and the major capital investment at Inverness Castle.

2.8 “Layers of Inverness”: A Framework for Interpretation

2.8.1 One possible approach to the interpretation of the historic and cultural context of the Old High is not as a single story but a **stratigraphy (the study of layers) of narratives**, each representing a different “layer” of Inverness:

1. **Sacred Hill and Pictish Capital** – Columba and Brude; early Christianity; pre-Reformation worship.
2. **Medieval Burgh and Parish Life** – St Mary’s church; guilds; local saints and devotional practices.
3. **Reformation and Civic Church** – town governance; schooling and song; public ceremony.
4. **Jacobite Conflict and Military Power** – prisoners and executions; Hanoverian garrison; trauma and memory.
5. **Victorian Confidence and Empire** – architectural enrichment; regimental connections; growing city status.
6. **Modern War and Welfare State** – war memorialisation; social care; 20th-century civic rituals.
7. **Contemporary Transformations** – de-churching; heritage tourism; community ownership and creative re-use.

2.8.2 These layers provide a **ready-made narrative spine** for interpretation, programming and design. Future redevelopment can:

- Use the **kirkyard and interior as “time-fields”**, where visitors and residents move through stories of the city’s evolution.
- Connect the Old High to **Inverness Castle, Culloden, Loch Ness and other Highland sites**, telling a joined-up story rather than isolated episodes.
- Support **creative commissions, immersive installations and community storytelling projects** that respond to each layer – including, for example, a contemporary “sang scuil” that links historical choral traditions to today’s diverse musical cultures.

2.8.3 Framed this way, the Old High becomes not simply a preserved monument, but a **living engine of narrative, creativity and reconciliation** – a place where the many histories and identities of Inverness can be explored, debated, and re-imagined together. A detailed illustrative Interpretation and Storytelling Concept based on the “Layers” theme is outlined in Appendix A.

2.9 Consultation Ideas

2.9.1 During conversations with several potential stakeholders and partners of the Old High, various potential opportunities, ideas, and suggestions arose that may be worth future consideration. They are presented here not as recommendations, but as an illustration of some of the potential ways in which the redevelopment may be realised:

- Long term loan of a self-contained **360° immersive film pod** from *High Life Highland* – this could be used to screen commissioned films about the site and the building and its heritage. A potential income source
- A display of **antiquarian and rare books about Inverness** from *Leakeys*.
- Large scale **sculpture of Brude's conversion** to Christianity by sculptor *Leonie Gibbs*, whose work was previously the centrepiece of the Eastgate Centre
- Long term loan of the **Kirk Sessions Library** from *High Life Highland* -a remarkable artefact of historical record of the city, its people, and the church
- Removal of some of the balcony to allow **full view of the stained-glass windows** to be restored
- Re-introduce the **sang-scuil** (song school) – a platform for choral singing in Scots and Gaelic – with *Brian o H'eadra's* embryonic Gaelic choral ensemble
- A performance **venue for the classical repertoire**, featuring *Coronach, Musick Fyne, and the Mahler Players*
- Develop direct links with **Culloden**
- Exploit the current and ongoing interest in **Outlander**
- **Open up the Tower** to visitors – could become one of the must-do visitor things
- Bring the **regimental colours** back
- Bring some of the **artefacts of the church** back
- **Open up the outside Tower room** where the Jacobite prisoners were held for interpretation
- Reveal the **altars to the saints** (at least 5 of them)
- Have an onsite **archaeological dig** to ascertain more of the site's history – rediscover where some of the original chapels were situated
- Make sure **all aspects of the building's history** are represented – an alms house, where the Guilds met, Council business
- Link to the *Highland Archive Centre* with talks, tours, and events – develop a genealogical “exchange” with HARC
- Bring **street food vendors** onto the site
- Ensure **markets** take place there – craft, vintage, and food – a good source of income
- Make it one of the best **wedding venues** – very good financial return for one-off hire, who bring in outside catering
- Work with *MacGregors* to use their licence to host **larger scale music events** like their “Island Flings”
- **Overnight rental of churches** is a thing for those who believe the building will retain spirits of the past
- Work with the drama students at *Inverness College Drama Course* to have a series of **recreation of events**, such as the Jacobite executions and Brude/Columba
- Work in partnership with *Culturlann, Inverness Town House, and Inverness Castle Experience* as part of the **essential Inverness city centre tour**
- Arrange a **joint ticketing package** with the existing operators, mentioned above
- With *Spectrum Centre* closure there is an opportunity to pick up some of their **community bookings**
- Link with the *Inverness Creative Academy* to **sell local art**
- Invite *Café 1668* or *Artysans* to provide the **food and beverage** offer

- Return the **glass panel etched with soldiers** from *Ness Bank Church*
- Take on a **Building Manager** to actively let/lease part of the building, possibly through *Inverness Community Heritage Trust (ICHT)*
- Base a new **Academy of Traditional Skills** in the building, in conjunction with *ICHT*
- Consider **flooring over the balcony**, perhaps on two levels, to create space for exhibitions, markets, and meetings
- Could some of the *Inverness Museum* artefacts in storage be on display in the Old High as an **Inverness Museum**
- Keep some of the **religious celebrations**, such as services at Easter and Christmas
- Introduce some public realm to the kirkyard – a **viewing point over the river**
- Look at bringing an existing producer such as *Dougie Brown (Belladrum)* or *MacGregors* to **programme the music schedule**
- *Am Baile* will be able to provide **historic images** to help with the interpretation
- Would the *National Trust for Scotland* be interested in taking it on as one of their venues
- *Historic Environment Scotland* may be interested, through *ICHT*, in funding larger-scale **transformational projects**
- Potential as the key site for and AR/AI project on the **Story of Inverness**, orienting people around the city, with *ICHT*
- TOHI could secure funding then **pass it on to others to operate** or lease out
- **Lease out parts of the building**, or time slots to different users, on a turnkey basis

3. Strategic Case

3.1 Strategic Vision

- 3.1.1 To secure the Old High as a **living civic, cultural and spiritual landmark** – conserving its exceptional heritage while repurposing it as a financially sustainable hub for interpretation, performance, learning, remembrance and community gathering, complementing Inverness Castle and strengthening the cultural heart of the city.

3.2 Statement of Need

Underuse and Risk to Fabric

- 3.2.1 Since regular worship ceased in 2022, the Old High has been largely closed to routine public use, with only occasional access. This combination of **vacancy and high maintenance burden** places the building at risk:
- Deterioration of stonework, roof, interior finishes and services.
 - Increased vulnerability to vandalism, theft or inappropriate ad hoc adaptations.
 - Loss of visibility and relevance in the life of the city.
- 3.2.2 Without an economically and operationally viable new use, the building could face prolonged decline, piecemeal adaptation or disposal in ways that compromise its heritage value and community access.

Lost Cultural, Social and Economic Value

- 3.2.3 While unused, the Old High is not generating:
- **Cultural value** – through performances, exhibitions, creative learning and interpretation.
 - **Social value** – as a shared space for gathering, remembrance, mutual support and wellbeing.
 - **Economic value** – via visitor spend, employment, and supply-chain opportunities.
- 3.2.4 The building’s riverside and city-centre location means that every year of underuse represents **lost opportunities** in the wider regeneration of Church Street and the Ness corridor.

Market Failure and Conservation Constraints

- 3.2.5 The Old High is an archetypal case of **market failure** in heritage:
- Commercial redevelopment is constrained by **Category A listing** and restrictions on use of the kirkyard.
 - Conservation works and specialist adaptation costs are likely to be high, with potential long payback periods.
 - The “public good” benefits (identity, memory, educational, spiritual, civic) are not captured in conventional property values.
- 3.2.6 Public, philanthropic and community intervention is therefore justified to prevent loss and unlock these wider benefits.

3.3 Strategic Objectives

3.3.1 The project's objectives over a 5-10 year horizon are:

1. **Conservation and Protection**

- Stabilise, repair and conserve the Old High and kirkyard in line with best-practice conservation standards.
- Ensure the building's ecclesiastical and memorial character is respected within any new use.

2. **Sustainable Multi-Use Operation**

- Develop a **financially sustainable operating model** based on a balanced portfolio of uses (interpretation, performance, venue hire, learning, food and beverage, retail, community activity).
- Achieve a realistic balance between commercial income and public/charitable support.

3. **Cultural and Civic Impact**

- Establish the Old High as a **flagship civic and cultural space** for Inverness, known for its high-quality programming in music, storytelling, visual arts, and heritage.
- Act as a **counterpoint and complement** to Inverness Castle, encouraging visitors to explore the full length of Church Street and the riverside.

4. **Community Ownership, Participation and Wellbeing**

- Enable local people to **shape, co-create, and feel genuine ownership** of the building's future.
- Use the space to support mental health, social connection, and intergenerational dialogue.

5. **Education, Interpretation and Research**

- Make the Old High a **centre for learning** about the "Layers of Inverness", Jacobite and regimental history, faith and secularisation, music and civic life.
- Support schools, universities and independent researchers with access, resources and opportunities.

6. **Environmental Responsibility and Climate Adaptation**

- Minimise operational carbon emissions and embed climate resilience in building adaptation (e.g. efficient services, sensitive upgrades).
- Use the site and its river context to engage the public with themes of climate, water, and environmental change.

3.4 Policy and Strategy Alignment

3.4.1 The project aligns strongly with a range of national and regional priorities, some of which are outlined below:

• **National Planning Framework / Town Centre First**

- Reuse rather than replacement of existing assets; focusing activity and investment in town centres and along key public transport corridors.

• **Scottish Government Culture Strategy**

- Culture as a central part of community wellbeing, participation and fair work; protecting and enhancing tangible and intangible heritage.

- **Tourism and Visitor Economy**
 - Strengthening Inverness as a **gateway to the Highlands**, adding depth to the visitor offer and encouraging longer stays and higher spend.
- **Heritage and Conservation Policy**
 - Conservation-led regeneration; community involvement in the stewardship of nationally important heritage assets.
- **Net Zero and Climate Adaptation**
 - Aligning fabric interventions and services upgrades with improved energy performance, while exemplifying low-carbon cultural infrastructure.

3.4.2 Collectively, these frameworks provide a supportive policy environment and a rationale for multi-source public investment. Specifically, the redevelopment of the Old High directly will support the core aims of the **Inverness City Centre Strategy** by transforming one of the city’s most significant historic landmarks into a vibrant, accessible and multi-purpose cultural asset.

3.4.3 The project will strengthen the **economic vitality** of the city centre by attracting new and repeat footfall, increasing dwell time, and generating spend across local hospitality, retail and creative businesses. Positioned at the northern end of Church Street, the Old High will act as a counterbalance to the new Inverness Castle Experience, helping establish a cultural spine that links key destinations and encourages movement throughout the town.

3.4.4 The project can advance **heritage-led regeneration** by conserving a nationally important building and bringing it back into meaningful public use through interpretation, performance, learning, and community activity. It enhances the **cultural life of Inverness** by creating a distinctive venue for music, choral activity, exhibitions, festivals and storytelling - activities that reinforce the city’s role as the cultural capital of the Highlands.

3.4.5 The Old High can support **social inclusion and community wellbeing** by offering accessible spaces for participation, remembrance, volunteering and quiet reflection, while showcasing the layers of Inverness’s history in ways that build pride and belonging. Improvements to access, interpretation and wayfinding strengthen connectivity along the River Ness and through the city centre.

3.4.6 Finally, the project could contribute to **sustainability goals** by prioritising adaptive re-use of existing heritage fabric, improving energy efficiency, and promoting walkability and low-carbon travel. In combination, these outcomes ensure the Old High becomes a catalyst for a more vibrant, liveable, culturally rich and economically resilient Inverness city centre. A more detailed outline of how the redevelopment of the Old High contributes to the Inverness City Centre Strategy is contained in Appendix A.

3.5 Stakeholders and Partnership Potential

3.5.1 The Old High’s significance and location create **extremely strong partnership potential** across sectors.

- **Public Sector**
 - Highland Council (city centre regeneration, culture, tourism, planning, common good).
 - Historic Environment Scotland (advice, grants, designation).
 - VisitScotland and Highlands & Islands Enterprise (tourism and place development).
- **Heritage and Culture**
 - National Lottery Heritage Fund, Museums Galleries Scotland, Creative Scotland.
 - Culloden Battlefield / National Trust for Scotland, regimental museums, Inverness Museum and Art Gallery.
- **Community and Faith**
 - Local community councils, heritage groups, schools, Inverness College, and UHI.
 - Former congregations and faith communities wishing to see the **spiritual dignity** of the site preserved.
- **Creative and Events Sector**
 - Local and regional arts organisations, festivals, choirs, musicians and creative practitioners such as Coronach, Music Fyne, and the Mahler Players.
 - Event promoters, markets, wedding and conference organisers.
- **Business and Philanthropy**
 - City-centre BID and local businesses who benefit from increased footfall.
 - Individual donors, family trusts and corporate sponsors with links to Inverness, the Highlands or the regiments.

3.5.2 Additionally, the Old High enjoys a good relationship with its immediate and near **neighbours**, such as Leakeys, MacGregors, Café 1668, and The Walrus and Corkscrew – these relationships can be developed in practical ways during an ‘activation’ period (see below) to trial possible sharing of services, provision of services, co-programming, and such like. This extends to other potential partners in the city such as Cultarlann (Gaelic cultural centre in Inverness East church), Eden Court, the Town House, Highland Archive Centre (HARC), and Inverness castle Experience.

3.5.3 The SOC will map these stakeholders and identify specific **roles and benefits** (governance, programming, funding, volunteering, in-kind support).

3.6 Two-Year Activation and “Proof of Concept”

3.6.1 A key strategic innovation for the Old High redevelopment is the proposal for a **two-year testing period** before committing to a major capital scheme.

Purposes of the Activation Phase

3.6.2 The Activation Phase is the initial phase comprising:

- **Evidence Gathering** – Generate real data on audiences, demand, income potential and operational costs.

- **Market Positioning** – Begin to articulate and test the Old High’s brand and distinctiveness within the Inverness offer.
- **Partnership Building** – Pilot joint events, co-productions and shared marketing with key partners.
- **Community Confidence** – Demonstrate early wins to residents and funders, reducing perceived risk.

Types of Test Uses

3.6.3 Aligned with the interpretation concept, the activation phase will trial:

- **Music and Performance**
 - Choral and instrumental concerts, organ recitals, spoken word, small-scale theatre, “sang scuil” workshops.
- **Markets, Fairs and Pop-Ups**
 - Craft and book markets, local food producers, small fairs with careful management of the kirkyard and interior.
- **Exhibitions and Installations**
 - Pilot “Layers of Inverness” displays, Jacobite and regimental stories, artist residencies.
- **Food and Beverage**
 - Pop-up café / wine bar in collaboration with local operators, testing demand, dwell time and suitability.
- **Retail**
 - Heritage and locally made goods, music and books tied to the interpretive themes.
- **Civic and Community Use**
 - Remembrance services, civic ceremonies, community meetings, school programmes.

3.6.4 The lessons from this period will feed directly into the OBC and the refinement of the preferred option(s).

3.7 The Strategic Rationale for Intervention Now

3.7.1 Bringing the threads together:

- The Old High is a **nationally significant, Category A listed** asset with exceptional historical, architectural and symbolic value.
- It sits at a pivotal point in the **city’s physical and narrative geography**, capable of balancing and amplifying the major investment at Inverness Castle.
- The building is currently **underused and at risk**, generating limited cultural, social or economic value.
- There is an unprecedented convergence of:
 - Community energy and advocacy,
 - Policy support for town-centre heritage reuse, and
 - A clear development concept (multi-use cultural hub with rich interpretation and performance offer).

3.7.2 Delaying intervention risks:

- Fabric deterioration and escalating capital costs.
- Loss of public trust and community momentum.
- Potential disposal scenarios that fragment or diminish public access and heritage value.

3.7.3 By contrast, moving forward with the SOC, two-year activation, and subsequent OBC/FBC offers:

- A **manageable, phased pathway** to a sustainable future use.
- A compelling narrative for funders, investors and partners.
- Tangible, near-term benefits for Inverness’s residents, businesses and visitors.

3.8 The Case For Change

3.8.1 The Case for Change summarises some of the arguments for development, above, and sets out **why intervention at the Old High is necessary, why now, and what will happen if no action is taken**. It forms the foundation of the Strategic Case and underpins the value of the preferred way forward.

A Building of National Significance at a Critical Moment

3.8.2 The Old High is the oldest ecclesiastical site in Inverness and a Category A listed landmark of exceptional historic, civic and spiritual importance. It is associated with:

- The encounter between Columba and King Brude;
- Medieval worship on St Michael’s Mount;
- The Jacobite aftermath and Culloden executions;
- Centuries of civic life, remembrance and communal rites;
- Music, organ and choral traditions;
- Deep genealogical significance for families across the Highlands.

3.8.3 Despite this, the building is now **largely closed**, with diminishing resources, increasing fabric risks and no sustainable operating model. This combination of **high heritage value** and **lack of current use** represents a classic instance of market failure.

Risks of Inaction

3.8.4 Without intervention, the following risks are likely:

Fabric Deterioration

- Water ingress, stone decay and declining interior conditions will worsen.
- Deferred maintenance will escalate future costs.
- Certain heritage features (organ, memorials, stained glass) face preventable deterioration.

Loss of Public Access and Value

- The building will remain inaccessible to residents, visitors and heritage audiences.
- Opportunities for learning, remembrance, creativity and wellbeing will be lost.
- Inverness risks losing one of its defining historic assets.

Economic Opportunity Cost

- No contribution to city-centre regeneration or evening economy.
- No income from tourism, performance or events.

- Weakening of the city's wider cultural offer and its complementarity with Inverness Castle.

Reputational Risk

- The prolonged closure of such an iconic building sends negative signals about stewardship, ambition and cultural vitality.
- Community confidence and goodwill may erode.

Strategic Misalignment

- Inaction would contradict local and national priorities for heritage reuse, cultural participation, climate adaptation and city-centre revitalisation.

3.8.5 In summary: **doing nothing is not a neutral option**. It risks irreversible loss, growing costs and diminishing public value.

Drivers for Change (Why Now?)

3.8.6 Several converging factors make this an optimal moment for action:

1. Cessation of Regular Worship

- The end of congregational use creates a once-in-a-generation opportunity to repurpose the building for wider public benefit.

2. Imminent Fabric Needs

- Early intervention can prevent more costly problems later; delaying increases financial and heritage risk.

3. City Regeneration Opportunity

- With the redevelopment of Inverness Castle, there is a strategic need for a **northern anchor** at the other end of Church Street.

4. Community Momentum

- Local groups, former congregations and residents have mobilised to secure the building's future; this goodwill must be harnessed while it remains strong.

5. Favourable Policy Climate

- Strong alignment with Scottish Government priorities for culture, place-making, wellbeing, climate adaptation and re-use.

6. Cultural and Tourist Demand

- Visitors seek authentic, story-rich experiences; locals want high-quality cultural spaces. The Old High meets both needs.

7. Feasible, Phased Approach

- A two-year activation phase reduces risk and builds evidence before major capital investment.

What Change Will Deliver

3.8.7 Intervention will:

- **Secure and conserve** a nationally important building.
- **Unlock a new civic and cultural hub**, with interpretation, performance, remembrance and community activity.
- **Increase visitor numbers and footfall** along the city centre spine.
- **Boost the local economy** through events, hospitality, retail and employment.
- **Strengthen community cohesion**, wellbeing and creative participation.
- **Support education** and learning across all ages.

- **Provide a platform** for creative and heritage organisations to collaborate.
- **Enhance Inverness’s identity and profile** regionally, nationally and internationally.

3.8.8 The Old High stands at a pivotal moment. The Case for Change is compelling: **the status quo is unsustainable**, the risks of inaction are significant, and the opportunity for positive transformation—culturally, socially and economically—is substantial. The project offers a credible, phased, community-rooted and strategically aligned pathway to unlock the full public value of one of Scotland’s most important heritage sites.

3.9 Summary

3.9.1 The strategic case for redeveloping the Old High is **strong, urgent and coherent**. The project:

- Addresses a clear need (underuse, risk, market failure).
- Aligns closely with national and local strategies.
- Offers distinctive, high-impact cultural and civic outcomes.
- Is underpinned by a realistic, evidence-led approach to testing and phasing.

3.9.2 On this basis, it is recommended that stakeholders support the progression of the Old High project through the SOC stage and into the proposed activation phase, as a critical step towards securing its long-term future as a vibrant, sustainable and much-loved civic and cultural hub for 21st-century Inverness.

4. Baseline Analysis

4.1 Current Condition and Capacity

Building Fabric and Systems (High-Level)

4.1.1 A detailed condition survey and conservation statement will sit alongside this SOC; at a strategic level, the baseline is:

- **External Envelope**
 - Masonry: Historic stonework shows signs of age-related weathering, open joints and localised erosion. Areas of past repair are visible; some will require consolidation and better detailing to ensure long-term performance.
 - Roofs and Rainwater Goods: Roof coverings, flashings, gutters and downpipes are of mixed age and quality. Their condition is critical for managing water ingress; proactive renewal and repair will be central to any capital scheme.
 - Windows and Doors: Historic windows (including stained and leaded glass) and external doors contribute strongly to character but may have poor thermal performance and require repair, overhaul and discreet upgrading (e.g. draft-proofing, secondary glazing where acceptable).
- **Interiors**
 - The main volume is architecturally impressive, with galleries, pews, timber finishes and the Father Willis organ as key heritage features. Any adaptive reuse must work *with* the existing spatial hierarchy rather than against it.
 - Surfaces and finishes show signs of wear, with localised water staining and minor damage, reflecting the impact of age and intermittent heating.
- **Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (MEP)**
 - Heating and electrical systems have been configured for intermittent congregational use rather than continuous public/cultural operation. They are likely to require substantial renewal to meet modern efficiency, comfort, safety and technical needs (including performance lighting, audio-visual, IT).
 - Toilet provision and ancillary services are limited and need enhancement to support higher and more varied footfall (including accessible WCs, possibly showers for performers or staff in the long term).

4.1.2 In capacity terms, the building offers:

- A large flexible **nave volume** capable (with sensitive adaptation) of accommodating **200-400 people** depending on seating layout and event type.
- Some limited **ancillary spaces** that can be developed to support back-of-house, storage, technical and small-group activities.
- A **large balcony area** with current capacity in pews of c.400. There are no, or restricted, sightlines for all seat in this area.
- A historic **church tower** that begins at ground level with an area used as a prison for Jacobites, and extends into a clock and bell tower with potential visitor appeal.
- Significant **external capacity in the kirkyard** for carefully managed events, trails and reflective spaces.

- 4.1.3 A key baseline conclusion is that **the physical shell is fundamentally sound and of high quality**, but **systems and services are not yet fit for a modern multi-use cultural operation** and will require targeted investment.
- 4.1.4 One of the building's **greatest potential visitor assets/attractions is the clock/bell tower** – assessing the accessibility of this for the public will be undertaken as part of the structural and design review.

4.2 Current Use, Access and Operations

4.2.1 At present (pre-project):

- **Frequency and Type of Use**
 - Regular worship has ceased; there are occasional services or events (e.g. remembrance, special services, tours or one-off performances), but these are infrequent and ad hoc.
 - The kirkyard is accessible as a historic burial ground and public through-route, but lacks consistent interpretive or event programming.
- **Access Arrangements**
 - Public access to the interior is limited to specific, advertised openings or guided tours; many residents and visitors find it closed when they pass.
 - There is no staffed front-of-house presence on a day-to-day basis; therefore, no “drop-in” offer equivalent to a cathedral or major town church open daily.
- **Management and Staffing**
 - The building is in transition from Church of Scotland (CoS) ownership to a new stewardship model, and **there is no dedicated on-site team** responsible for cultural programming or operations.
 - Maintenance is reactive rather than planned, constrained by limited budgets and organisational uncertainty.
- **Income and Costs**
 - Income from occasional hire, donations and small-scale events has been minimal in recent years.
 - Fixed costs (insurance, basic utilities, minimal maintenance) are significant relative to income, creating a structural deficit. CoS is currently liable for these until the new ownership is confirmed.

- 4.2.2 The baseline is therefore one of **latent potential but low current output**: a nationally significant asset generating limited cultural, social or economic value in its present operating model.

4.3 Market Context, Audience Potential and Competition/Complementarity

Local and Regional Market Context

4.3.1 The Old High sits within:

- A growing **leisure/tourism market** centred on Inverness as a gateway to the Highlands (Loch Ness, Culloden, NC500, etc.).

- A **city centre** in transition, experiencing the familiar mix of retail contraction and efforts to grow the evening and cultural economy.
- A wider Highland culture and events ecology that includes festivals, arts centres, village halls, churches and community venues.

4.3.2 Key broad trends that support the case include:

- Strong and resilient demand for **heritage experiences**, especially those with clear narratives and atmospheric settings.
- A growing appetite for **immersive, participatory and story-led experiences** rather than purely static displays.
- Renewed interest in **music, choral activity and community singing**, both for cultural expression and wellbeing.
- Desire for **distinctive venues** for weddings, small conferences and retreats that offer “a sense of place”.

Audiences and Segments (Indicative)

4.3.3 Potential audience segments include:

1. **Inverness Residents**

- Seeking spaces for community events, cultural participation, quiet reflection and civic occasions.
- Likely to value the building’s role in their own family histories.

2. **Regional Visitors (Highlands)**

- People from surrounding towns and rural areas attending specific events (concerts, festivals, remembrance, civic functions).

3. **Domestic (UK) and International Tourists**

- Visitors attracted by Culloden, Loch Ness and the wider Highlands, looking for half-day experiences in Inverness itself.
- Growing numbers engaging with Jacobite history and “Outlander-related” itineraries.

4. **Schools and Educational Groups**

- Primary and secondary schools (Curriculum for Excellence links in history, RE, social subjects, expressive arts).
- Further and higher education (history, archaeology, heritage management, music, theology).

5. **Special Interest Groups**

- Genealogists and family historians.
- Military history and regimental heritage groups.
- Choirs, music societies, organ enthusiasts.

6. **Weddings and Private Events Clients**

- Couples and families seeking a unique, atmospheric venue with strong photographic appeal.
- Organisations seeking distinctive spaces for dinners, lectures, launches, and receptions.

4.3.4 The baseline position is that **few of these segments currently engage regularly with the Old High**, largely due to its closure/limited opening and lack of structured

programming—meaning that there is **headroom for audience growth** without saturating the local market.

Comparator and Complementary Venues

4.3.5 Within Inverness and the wider Highlands, it will be important to complement rather than duplicate:

- **Inverness Castle Experience** - with a broad Highland story centred on the “Spirit of the Highlands”, high visitor numbers and a strong family offer. Old High can differentiate by focusing on **intimacy, depth, and the “heart of Inverness” story**, and by emphasising quiet, reflection and live performance.
- **Inverness Museum & Art Gallery** which provides collections-based interpretation; Old High can focus on **site-specific narrative and performance**.
- **Inverness Cathedral** which hosts occasional music events featuring local artists similar to those the Old High would seek to attract. Has a similar aesthetic, but perhaps a less impressive acoustic.
- **Eden Court** whose two main stages have capacity of c. 200 and 800 respectively – so Old High could provide a middle ground of 400.
- **Culturlann** – a new city centre space in a former church looking to focus on Gaelic culture, including hosting similar types of music event to the Old High.
- **Inverness Town House** – beautifully refurbished but currently with limited public opening/access. Occasional classical music recitals.
- **Town and village halls / arts centres** – which offer flexible event spaces; Old High brings a **historic, sacred and commemorative atmosphere** that others cannot replicate.

4.3.6 The baseline conclusion is that a **well-positioned Old High offer will complement existing venues**, filling a gap for a **heritage-rich, acoustically excellent, story-led, multi-use space** in the very centre of the city.

4.4 SWOT Analysis

4.4.1 The following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats are identified:

4.4.2 Strengths

- Category A listed building of national importance.
- Iconic skyline and river setting; strong visual identity.
- Deep, multi-layered history (“Layers of Inverness”).
- Excellent acoustics and presence of a major organ.
- Emotional and genealogical significance for local communities.
- Proximity to Inverness Castle and other visitor flows.

4.4.3 Weaknesses

- Currently underused and largely closed.
- Ageing building services; limited WCs and ancillary facilities.
- No current dedicated operational team or established organisation specifically for multi-use cultural operation.

- Accessibility challenges (steps, steep approaches, internal circulation) requiring careful design solutions.

4.4.4 Opportunities

- Two-year test programme to build audiences, refine uses and de-risk investment.
- Strong alignment with cultural, tourism, heritage and town centre strategies.
- Potential to anchor a “Church Street cultural spine” with Inverness Castle.
- Capacity to host a breadth of uses: interpretation, performance, markets, weddings, learning, food and beverage, retail.
- High potential for partnerships (heritage bodies, regiments, festivals, choirs, universities).

4.4.5 Threats

- Further deterioration of fabric if investment is delayed.
- Competition for public funding and philanthropic support.
- Possible community concern over over-commercialisation or inappropriate uses.
- Operational risk if income projections are over-optimistic or governance is weak.
- External shocks: economic downturn, shifts in tourism demand, public health crises.

4.5 Baseline Conclusion

4.5.1 The baseline analysis confirms:

- The **exceptional heritage and locational advantages** of the Old High;
- The **underperformance** of the asset in its current state; and
- The **presence of a realistic market opportunity** to support a sustainable multi-use cultural, interpretive and events hub, if developed and operated strategically.

4.5.2 This provides a clear platform for the options appraisal that follows.

5. Options Appraisal

5.1 Approach and Framework

5.1.1 The options appraisal follows the process of the UK Government's Green Book, considering:

- A **longlist** of potential uses and configurations;
- A filtering and assessment stage using agreed criteria;
- An emerging set of **shortlisted mixed-use options** for further analysis at OBC;
- A phased strategy that includes the **two-year activation/testing period** as part of the option structure.

5.1.2 The goal at SOC stage is **not** to select a single, fully defined scheme, but to:

- Identify **which broad configurations are viable and strategically attractive**, and
- Rule out those which are clearly misaligned with the building or market.

5.2 Longlist of Use Components

5.2.1 Based on consultation, precedent, market analysis and the interpretation concept, the following use components are in scope:

1. Heritage Interpretation Centre

- Exhibitions, trails and digital experiences, based on a theme such as the "Layers of Inverness", Columba and Brude, Jacobite history, the Cameron Highlanders, civic life, and contemporary stories.

2. Live Performance Venue

- Music performance (particularly choral, classical, acoustic, organ recitals), spoken word, small-scale theatre and festival events.

3. Gallery and Installation Space

- Temporary exhibitions, visual arts, immersive installation work, artist residencies responding to the site.

4. Food and Beverage Offer

- Café and/or wine bar, ideally operated by a specialist partner, providing refreshments for visitors and audiences, and supporting event-based activity (interval drinks, receptions).

5. Retail

- Heritage and locally made goods, books, music, crafts and gifts linked to the building's themes and Inverness/Highland culture.

6. Markets and Pop-Ups

- Regular or seasonal markets (craft, book, local food) hosted in the nave and/or kirkyard, with careful management of impact on the fabric and memorials.

7. Venue Hire for Weddings and Celebrations

- Ceremonies, receptions (if compatible with the building), anniversary events, memorials and other rites of passage, with appropriate dignity.

8. Civic and Community Events

- Remembrance services, civic ceremonies, community meetings, educational activities, informal drop-in for reflection or quiet time.

9. 21st-Century “Sang Scuil” – Vocal and Choral Hub

- A programme base for vocal teaching, community choirs, youth ensembles, workshops, and partnerships with schools, conservatoires and festivals.

10. Office/Administration/Support Spaces

- Modest office and back-of-house provision for staff, volunteers and partners.

5.2.2 These components can be configured in different ways to create distinct options.

5.3 High-Level Constraints and Considerations

5.3.1 In assessing options, the following constraints apply:

- **Heritage and Planning**
 - Category A listing and the sensitive kirkyard setting limit invasive structural change, especially to external form and principal interior spaces.
 - Any external additions (e.g. new service cores, WCs, lifts) must be conservation-led and justified as necessary.
- **Ecclesiastical and Spiritual Character**
 - Uses must respect the site’s spiritual history and ongoing role as a place of remembrance and reflection.
 - Certain commercial activities (e.g. very loud late-night use or uses incompatible with memorial space) may be restricted or limited in timing.
- **Physical Configuration**
 - Single large-volume nave with galleries lends itself well to assembly, performance and exhibition, less so to heavy subdivision.
 - Accessibility upgrades (ramps, lifts, accessible WCs) will be required but must be carefully integrated.
- **Financial Feasibility**
 - Capital budgets are likely to be constrained; options requiring radical restructuring of the building are unlikely to be deliverable.
 - Operating models must avoid over-reliance on a single volatile income stream (e.g. weddings only, tourism only).

5.3.2 These constraints favour **multi-use models that enhance and work with the existing spatial qualities**, rather than single-use or heavily interventionist approaches.

5.4 Appraisal Criteria

5.4.1 Each option is assessed against a consistent set of criteria (qualitative at SOC stage):

1. **Heritage and Conservation Fit**
 - Respect for fabric, setting and ecclesiastical character.
2. **Cultural and Interpretation Value**
 - Ability to tell thematic story and support creative practice.
3. **Community and Social Value**

- Contribution to local wellbeing, participation, inclusion and civic life.
- 4. **Market and Audience Potential**
 - Likely demand, complementarity with other venues, ability to attract visitors and repeat use.
- 5. **Financial Sustainability**
 - Realistic potential to cover operating costs and contribute to lifecycle maintenance, with a balanced mix of income.
- 6. **Deliverability and Risk**
 - Complexity of capital works, planning risk, governance requirements, and reliance on uncertain funding or markets.
- 7. **Flexibility and Future-Proofing**
 - Capacity to adapt over time as markets, audiences and community needs evolve.

5.5 Summary Assessment of Major Single-Use Options

5.5.1 At SOC stage, we consider single-use forms of several options to understand their strengths and limitations.

5.5.2 Option A - Heritage Interpretation Centre

- **Strengths**
 - Strong alignment with conservation and story-telling aims.
 - Clear funding fit with heritage bodies.
- **Weaknesses**
 - Risk of limited local repeat visitation if offer is static.
 - Reliance on a seasonal tourist market; vulnerable to external shocks.
 - Under-use of the building's acoustic and performance strengths.
 - Interpretation may fall below expectations compared to the Castle
- **Conclusion**
 - Valuable as a core function, but **insufficient on its own** to guarantee financial or community sustainability.

5.5.2 Option B - Performance Venue

- **Strengths**
 - Excellent acoustics and existing organ; strong potential for choirs, chamber music, traditional music, and jazz.
 - Opportunities for festivals, touring programmes, and seasonal offerings.
- **Weaknesses**
 - Programming and audience development require sustained organisational capacity and risk-taking.
 - Event-based income is inherently volatile; building would be empty much of the week/day.
- **Conclusion**
 - Performance should be a **major pillar**, but not the sole use.

5.5.3 Option C - Wedding and Functions Venue

- **Strengths**
 - Strong atmospheric appeal; can generate high-margin income.
 - Clear market for distinctive wedding venues in scenic locations.
- **Weaknesses**
 - Risk of perceived over-commercialisation or loss of dignity.
 - Highly seasonal; demand may fluctuate with wider economic conditions.
 - Crowded marketplace
 - Can it provide a 360° offering the market may be looking for
- **Conclusion**
 - Weddings/celebrations can play a **supporting, not dominant** role.

5.5.4 Option D – Commercial Hospitality Focus (Food & Beverage-Led)

- **Strengths**
 - Potentially robust income if well-managed and marketed.
 - Creates a daily footfall of activity.
- **Weaknesses**
 - High fit-out and operational risk; may push building towards a bar/restaurant identity that conflicts with spiritual and memorial roles.
 - Risk of overshadowing heritage and cultural objectives.
 - Catering is volatile market and specialist sector
- **Conclusion**
 - A **complementary, partnership-based F&B offer** is beneficial, but the church should not become a restaurant with incidental heritage.

5.5.5 This summary appraisal of single-form options underscores the importance of **blended, multi-use configurations**. These benefit from their flexibility and their potential seasonality – some scenarios are outlined below.

5.6 **Shortlisted Mixed-Use Scenarios**

5.6.1 At SOC stage, the following mixed-use configurations emerge as the most promising for further exploration. (These are narrative rather than fully costed options; detailed financial modelling will follow at OBC.)

5.6.2 **Option 1 – “Interpretation & Performance Hub” (Core Heritage + Performance + Community Use)**

Core Components

- Heritage Interpretation Centre structured around a theme (e.g. “Layers of Inverness”).
- Strong performance and “sang scuil” offer (choirs, organ, chamber music, spoken word).
- Regular civic and community use, remembrance services, and educational activities.
- Modest retail and light refreshments (e.g. servery, simple café offer), primarily to support visitors.

Pros

- High alignment with heritage and spiritual character.
- Strong cultural and social value; clear differentiation from other venues.
- Lower risk of over-commercialisation.

Cons

- More reliant on grant funding and public support.
- Income potential is respectable but may be tight, requiring disciplined cost control and fundraising.

5.6.3 **Option 2 – “Cultural Hub with Enhanced Hospitality”** **(Option 1 + Stronger F&B and Markets)**

Core Components

- All elements of Option 1.
- More developed café/wine bar partnership, integrated subtly within the church or in an adjoining structure.
- Regular artisan and book markets (carefully managed) to animate the building and kirkyard.

Pros

- Higher revenue potential, particularly from local repeat custom and evening economy.
- More reasons for locals to use the building regularly.

Cons

- Requires careful management to preserve dignity and character.
- More complex operational partnership; higher risk if F&B market fluctuates.

5.6.4 **Option 3 – “Event and Destination Venue”** **(Cultural Core + Weddings / Conferences)**

Core Components

- Core interpretation and performance offer, but with particular emphasis on:
 - Weddings and life events.
 - Small conferences, symposia and corporate events.
- Catering and event-management partnerships scaled to these uses.

Pros

- Strong income potential from higher-value hires.
- Builds on the building’s atmospheric qualities and central location.

Cons

- Space timesharing between public access, interpretation and private hire is complex.
- Risk of community perception that the building is “mostly private” rather than a civic/public asset.

5.6.5 In practice, Option 2 and Option 3 are **variants of a single family of multi-use models** with different emphases. The eventual preferred way forward at OBC may combine elements of Options 1-3 depending on:

- The outcomes of the two-year activation testing;
- Market feedback;
- The nature and scale of capital funding available;
- Community and stakeholder preferences.

5.7 Indicative Options Appraisal Matrix (Qualitative Summary)

5.7.1 The table below summarises how well each of the multi-use options fits against the key assessment criteria (* = strong, ● = moderate, X = weak at SOC stage):

Criterion	Option 1: Interpretation & Performance Hub	Option 2: Cultural Hub + Hospitality	Option 3: Event & Destination Venue
Heritage & Conservation Fit	* * *	* *	*
Cultural & Interpretation Value	* * *	* * *	* *
Community & Social Value	* * *	* * *	* *
Market & Audience Potential	* *	* * *	* * *
Financial Sustainability	● *	* * *	* *
Deliverability & Risk	* *	● *	●
Flexibility & Future-Proofing	* * *	* *	* *

5.7.2 This assessment shows that:

- **Option 1** scores highest on heritage, cultural and community value, with moderate financial strength that will require ongoing grant/philanthropic support.
- **Option 2** strengthens financial resilience and audience reach through hospitality and markets, at the cost of slightly higher complexity and heritage risk.
- **Option 3** offers strong financial potential but requires careful governance and clear safeguards to avoid perceived over-privatisation or misalignment with the building’s character.

5.8 Emerging Preferred Way Forward (for Further Development)

5.8.1 At SOC stage, the recommended strategic direction is to:

- **Pursue a blended model closest to Option 2**, anchored in:
 - A robust **heritage interpretation and performance core**;
 - A clearly defined **21st-century “sang scuil”** role;
 - Integrated but carefully scaled **hospitality and retail functions**;
 - A measured level of **weddings and private events** as part of the income mix, governed by strict guidelines.

- Use the **two-year activation phase** explicitly to:
 - Test the balance between public/open, cultural, and private/commercial use;
 - Gather data on spend, attendance, and community sentiment;
 - Refine operating assumptions and room-use policies;
 - Develop and trial partnership models (e.g. with an F&B operator, promoters, festivals).

5.8.2 The preferred way forward is not a rigid blueprint, but a **strategy for calibrated multi-use**, guided by clear values:

- Heritage and spiritual **respect** as the primary requirement;
- Cultural and community **purpose** as an important secondary requirement;
- Commercial activity as an **enabler**, not the driver.

5.9 Next Steps for Options Development

5.9.1 To move from SOC to OBC, the following workstreams will be required:

1. **Detailed Market Testing and Business Modelling**
 - Refined audience projections by segment and use type.
 - Pricing strategies for tickets, hires, F&B, retail.
 - Sensitivity analysis on demand and income.
2. **Design and Costing Options**
 - Spatial planning for each major option component.
 - Costed packages for essential fabric repairs and incremental adaptation.
 - Accessibility, services and back-of-house upgrades.
3. **Governance and Partnership Structures**
 - Further development of the lead operating body (e.g. SCIO/trust).
 - Heads of terms with potential F&B, retail and programming partners.
4. **Community and Stakeholder Engagement**
 - Co-design sessions to shape detailed interpretation and programming.
 - Transparent discussion on the balance between public and private use.
5. **Funding Strategy**
 - Mapping of phased funding opportunities (heritage, cultural, tourism, regeneration, philanthropic).
 - Early engagement with potential anchor funders and donors.

6. Economic and Financial Case

6.1 Purpose and Approach

6.1.1 This section provides an **initial economic and financial view** of the Old High project. It:

- Describes the **capital investment requirements** at a high level.
- Outlines the **phasing** of spend, including the two-year activation/test phase.
- Sets out the **emerging operating model**, cost base and main income streams.
- Summarises the **wider economic and social value** anticipated.
- Identifies the **likely funding mix** and key affordability issues.

6.1.2 It is **not** a full business plan or OBC-level financial model. Detailed cost planning, cashflow projections and sensitivity analysis will follow as:

- Architectural and engineering designs are developed.
- Market testing during the activation phase provides harder data.
- The preferred option is refined.

6.1.3 Figures at this stage are therefore **indicative and provide an order-of-magnitude**, presented mainly as structure rather than fixed numbers.

6.2 Capital Investment Requirements (High-Level)

6.2.1 The project will require capital investment in three broad categories:

1. Essential Conservation and Fabric Works

- Roof, stonework and rainwater goods repairs to stabilise the building.
- Conservation of significant interior elements (organ, pews, memorials, stained glass).
- Kirkyard conservation works, pathways and boundary repairs.

2. Adaptation for Multi-Use Operation

- Upgraded mechanical and electrical services (heating, lighting, power, data).
- Improved accessibility (entrance arrangements, internal circulation, lift solutions where feasible).
- Enhanced WCs and modest ancillary/back-of-house space (storage, office, dressing/green room provision).
- Discreet furniture and equipment to allow flexible layouts for performance, events, interpretation and worship/ceremony.

3. Interpretation, Digital and Experience Infrastructure

- Design and installation of core interpretive elements.
- Low-impact visitor orientation signage and trails (interior and kirkyard).
- Digital infrastructure (network, Wi-Fi, AV, minimal hardware) to support sound, projection and web/app-based interpretation.

- 6.2.2 The **scale** of investment will be defined by the chosen option (Section 5) and the balance between minimum “make safe and open” works and more ambitious adaptation. Separate cost consultancy work (by LDN and QS partners) will define:
- A **baseline conservation cost** (to arrest deterioration and allow safe operation).
 - Incremental cost bands for different levels of adaptation (e.g. basic, mid-level, enhanced).
- 6.2.3 At SOC stage, the working assumption is that the project will require a **substantial but realistic capital programme** typical of a Category A church adaptation, likely to involve a combination of:
- Heritage and conservation grants.
 - Regeneration and tourism/place-based funding.
 - Philanthropic and charitable contributions.
 - A modest proportion of borrowing or social investment, if appropriate and affordable.

6.3 Phasing and Capital Spend Profile

- 6.3.1 A critical feature of the Old High approach is **phasing** – both to manage risk and to align investment with learning.

Phase 0: Immediate Stabilisation and Enabling Works

- 6.3.2 This would comprise targeted, relatively low-cost interventions to:
- Ensure safe public access (H&S, statutory compliance).
 - Address any critical defects (e.g. urgent roof or stonework repairs).
 - Provide temporary services upgrades necessary to support the activation programme (portable WCs, basic AV, safe electrical distribution).
- 6.3.3 **Outputs:** Building safely usable for test events; risks of immediate deterioration mitigated.

Phase 1: Two-Year Activation and Testing Programme

- 6.3.4 This would comprise limited capital/fit-out expenditure on:
- Minimal interpretation and orientation (temporary exhibition, signage).
 - Moveable furniture, lighting and equipment for events, markets and performances.
 - Low-cost digital/online tools (website, simple app/QR trails).
- 6.3.5 **Purpose:**
- Generate **real data** on audience numbers, behaviour and spend.
 - Refine the preferred configuration of uses.
 - Build **case strength for major capital fundraising**.
- 6.3.6 Capital expenditure in Phase 1 is deliberately modest and reversible; it is best seen as “**capitalised prototyping**” to de-risk later decisions.

Phase 2: Main Capital Works – Conservation and Adaptation

6.3.7 This would comprise:

- Implementation of the **main fabric repair programme**.
- Permanent upgrades to heating, lighting, electrical systems and AV.
- Installation of durable, high-quality interpretive infrastructure.
- Delivery of accessibility and WC improvements.
- Any approved minor extensions or insertions required for back-of-house functions.

6.3.8 Phase 2 will only be confirmed after the activation phase has:

- Demonstrated sufficient demand.
- Helped secure a **credible funding package**.
- Clarified the preferred operational model.

Phase 3: Incremental Enhancements

6.3.9 This would comprise further refinements or additions as resources allow, e.g.:

- Extended digital interpretation and AR experiences.
- Additional flexible spaces within the envelope (e.g. small meeting/education rooms).
- Enhanced landscaping or lighting in the kirkyard.

6.3.10 This phased approach provides a **clear and fundable narrative**: stabilise, test, invest, enhance.

Capital Projections

6.3.10 A comprehensive QS assessment of capital costs for phases 0-2 has been undertaken and is provided separately. 14 fabric condition interventions are identified with a total cost of £911K + 15% professional fees (£136K) **giving a total of c. £1.05m**. In addition, Internal Repairs and Alterations **have been costed at £437K** (£378K costs + 15% professional fees). Fixtures, Fittings and Equipment (FFE) have been identified at **£160K**. The **total cost across phases 0-2 is, therefore, £1.64m**.

6.3.11 Each of the Phases carries both capital and operational costs. For phase 0 (immediate stabilisation and enabling), the capital costs are around £308K (+ professional fees of £46K) – **a total of £354K**. These can be considered the **Minimum Initial Works Required** (and may require amendment after discussions with insurers). They represent a set of essential works that would need to be undertaken prior to opening to the public. This will be reliant upon the specific initial public use, management strategy, and so on. However, the following interventions would be most prudent:

Physical Intervention

- Securing of ceilings over staircases in the interests of public safety
- Temporary demarcation of public routes and highlighting of hazards (trips and bumps)
- Carrying out of all “Emergency (E)” category repairs recommended by the Fabric Audit*

- A review of all “Urgent (U)” category repairs, to be potentially carried out in whole or part.
- The boiler and heating system is beyond its life-expectancy and it would be prudent to allow for an emergency budget for replacement parts and maintenance to keep it functional in the short term
- The building is without a fire alarm system, and one will need to be installed as part of any redevelopment project. In the interim, a Fire Risk Assessment (see below) should be commissioned to determine minimum compliance requirements for meantime use.

**NB: It should be noted that most relate to water ingress and therefore the protection of the Listed fabric, so it is possible that these could be carried out with appropriate safety measures in place when the building is open to the public.*

Surveys and Investigations

- Asbestos Management Survey
- Fire Risk Assessment - this would inform any fire safety measures to be implemented. When we spoke, we talked about the widening of escape routes and adjustments to the South exit doors from the Sanctuary (as proposed in Options 1 and 2), however, a qualified Fire Risk Assessor would be best placed to advise on best practice for legislative compliance in the short-term. This would involve a review of escape distances, signage, emergency lighting, detection and alarm systems, management strategies, firefighting equipment etc. It may go so far to recommend physical alterations. It would be wise to budget for this survey and the implementation of short-term recommendations.
- Physical testing, and associated repairs/maintenance/commissioning to Mechanical & Electrical installations including heating, electrical, lighting, fire detection, alarm, and water.

6.3.12 For Phase 1 (Two-year activation programme) it is preferred, but not essential, that the internal repairs and alterations are undertaken to physically improve the visitor experience within the building. These alterations have been costed at £437K (£378K costs + 15% professional fees). A further allocation for fixtures, fittings, and equipment (including audio, video, and mechanical) of £60K is required, **giving a total for Phase 1 works at £497K.**

6.3.13 For Phase 2 (Main Capital Works), the principal fabric upgrades would be undertaken – £693K. A further investment in FFE of £100K is required. **In total, this represents £793K of Phase 2 interventions.**

6.3.14 Phase 3 is likely to include levelling areas of the first floor balcony to allow large flat floor area to enable events, functions, and exhibitions to take place there. This Phase has not been costed.

6.3.15 In summary, the principal capital costs for each phase are:

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Capital (£'000)</i>
0	354
1	497
2	793
3	-
Total	£1,644

6.4 Operating Model and Cost Base

6.4.1 The operating model for the preferred multi-use option (Section 5) will be built around TOHI - a **charitable trust/SCIO not-for-profit body**, with powers to:

- Own/lease and manage the building.
- Employ staff, contract services and generate trading income.
- Receive grants, donations and philanthropic support.
- Create an independent trading subsidiary (TOHI Trading) to maximise both commercial and grant-raising opportunities.

Core Cost Categories

6.4.1 Indicative recurring costs will include:

1. **Staffing**

These are roles and functions rather than individual part-time posts – one person may take on one or more of the roles; there could be secondments; or partners may provide these roles. In the short term, it is anticipated that most, if not all, of these will be undertaken on a voluntary basis.

- Director/Manager (strategic, partnership, fundraising lead).
- Operations/Facilities Coordinator (including H&S, bookings, logistics).
- Front-of-house and visitor services (mix of paid staff and volunteers).
- Programming/learning/engagement (possibly part-time or shared roles).
- Administrative and finance support (could be partly shared with partner organisations).

2. **Premises and Utilities**

- Heat, light, power, water and waste.
- Security, cleaning, routine maintenance, groundskeeping for kirkyard.
- Insurance and compliance costs (fire, access, inspections, etc.).

3. **Programme and Interpretation**

- Fees and costs for performances, exhibitions, artists and educators.
- Ongoing interpretation refresh, digital content and marketing.

4. **Overheads and Governance**

- Professional fees (accountancy, legal, HR, ICT).

- Board support, training and governance-related costs.
 - Contingency.
5. **Lifecycle and Sinking Fund**
- Planned provision for future major repairs and equipment replacement, scaled to be realistic but affordable, and potentially supported by specific heritage maintenance grants.

6.4.2 The underlying objective is to **hold the core cost base at a sustainable level** while leveraging partnerships, volunteers and project-funded posts to extend impact.

6.5 Income Streams and Indicative Revenue Potential

6.5.1 The preferred multi-use model (closest to Option 2 in Section 5) anticipates a **mixed income portfolio** designed to spread risk and ensure resilience. Indicative streams include:

1. **Visitor and Interpretation Income**
 - Admissions (where appropriate) or suggested donations for general visits.
 - Guided tours, specialist tours (e.g. Jacobite, organ, architectural), and group bookings.
 - Educational group fees (schools, colleges, universities).
2. **Performance and Event Income**
 - Ticket income (where the Old High is producer/lead).
 - Rental fees or box-office splits for external promoters and festivals.
 - Fees for use as rehearsal space or recording venue (especially choral/organ-focused).
3. **Weddings, Life Events, and Private Hire**
 - Ceremony fees and venue hire charges.
 - Corporate and institutional hires (receptions, lectures, launches, conferences).
4. **Food and Beverage Partnerships**
 - Concession fees, profit-sharing or lease income from a café/wine bar operator, carefully scoped to fit the building's dignity and capacity.
 - Bar or catering surpluses from specific events (where legally and ethically appropriate).
5. **Retail and Merchandising**
 - Sales of books, music, prints, local crafts, gifts and interpretive materials.
 - Commission on artist sales during exhibitions.
6. **Public and Project Grants**
 - Programme-based grants for learning, outreach, creative projects and community work (e.g. from cultural, heritage or wellbeing funders).
7. **Donations, Friends/Membership and Philanthropy**
 - On-site donations (cash and digital).
 - Regular giving schemes ("Friends of the Old High").
 - One-off gifts and bequests.
8. **Other Income**

- Occasional consultancy, research collaborations or partnerships where cost recovery and modest fees are appropriate.

6.5.2 At SOC stage, the key point is that **no single type of income will be relied upon**. The business planning work for OBC will:

- Model conservative, central and optimistic scenarios for each stream.
- Test different balances of public access, paid events and private hire.
- Explore the trade-offs between maximising income and preserving community/public value.

6.6 Illustrative Seven-Year Operating Projections

6.6.1 While detailed numbers belong in the OBC, the **shape** of the projected operating trajectory is expected to be:

- **Test Year 1**
 - Modest programme; focus on opening the building, testing formats, building profile.
 - High reliance on project grants and start-up funding to cover staff and programme.
 - Income streams begin to develop but do not yet cover full operating costs.
- **Test Year 2**
 - More confident programming; increasing audience numbers, repeat visits, and private hires.
 - First signs of stabilisation in core earned income (events, hires, retail, F&B share).
 - Decision point on progressing to main capital works based on actual data and funder appetite.
- **Fully Operational Years 1-2**
 - Building reopens in its improved form (if works proceeded) with enhanced facilities and interpretation.
 - Step-change in visitor capacity, quality of offer and attractiveness to promoters, schools and tour operators.
 - Earned income rises; grant dependence shifts from core support to targeted programme and development projects.
- **Fully Operational Year 3 and Beyond (Steady-State)**
 - Operating income covers the majority of recurrent costs, supplemented by a planned level of ongoing grant and philanthropic support consistent with a heritage cultural venue of this type.
 - A contribution is made annually to a **planned maintenance and sinking fund**, subject to larger cyclical works being addressed through specific capital maintenance grants.

6.6.2 The ambition is **not** to become a fully commercial enterprise, but to achieve a **robust social-enterprise model** where:

- Core activities are financially sustainable.
- Public, philanthropic and charitable support is recognised as a **proper, ongoing part of the model**, reflecting the building's public-good functions.

Business Model

- 6.6.3 The projections assume TOHI will be **primarily based on a landlord business model** i.e. space will be let rather than actively programmed, reducing the need for carrying a large, fixed cost overhead of staff. While this model can be entirely reactive, it is anticipated that in the initial years lessees will be proactively sought and a mixed programme encouraged.
- 6.6.4 In addition, it is assumed that at times when the building is not let, TOHI will **open the building for ticketed visitors**. This will be run in the initial years by volunteers to assess what level of capacity is require undertaking this effectively. The type of visitor experience can vary according to available expertise/capacity – these projections have assumed two initial ticket types: a) a general daytime ticket for un-curated visits, and b) a more expensive bespoke experience that is longer and curated by a specialist guide.

Test Years 1-2: Operational budget requirement

- 6.6.5 The Two-Year Test Programme (phases 0-1) will require a one-off development budget to allow several of the proposed programming strands to be live tested to assess popularity, seasonality, price-point, and such like. A comprehensive breakdown of such income and expenditure is included in the Fully Operational Phase 2 Five-Year projections. The one-off nature of the development period may allow funders to consider the budget as part of the initial capital costs.
- 6.6.6 The budget will allow a development post to be created to coordinate and programme the activity, allowing seed money to facilitate events, marketing, and associated project costs, as summarised in the table below:

Expenditure	Year 1	Year 2
Development Post (FTE)	33,000	33,500
Events	15,000	15,000
Marketing	10,000	8,000
Merchandise	5,000	
Building costs (Ins./Util.'s)	30,000	30,000
TOTAL	93,000	86,500
Income		
Hire	7,000	8,000
Merchandise	1,500	2,500
Tickets	36,000	44,000
Donations	4,000	6,000
Sub-Total	48,500	60,500
<i>Sought</i>	<i>44,500</i>	<i>26,000</i>
TOTAL	93,000	86,500

- 6.6.7 One-off **interim funding of £70,500** would therefore be required to operate the Old High during this two-year phase.

Phase 2 - Five-Year Projections

- 6.6.8 In preparing an initial 5-year income and expenditure projection for Phase 2, the following assumptions have been made (all figures are net of VAT):

Income Assumptions

¹ Market hire income based on £1,000 per day and 12 hires p.a. in Year 1, 18 p.a Years 2-5. Thereafter prices increase by 5% every three years.

² Wedding income based on assumption of net income of £2,500 per wedding. Model assumes 8 p/annum in Year 1, 12 p/ annum in Year 2 and 16 p/annum in Year 3. Thereafter prices increase by 5% every three years.

³ Private hire income is based on a rate of £300 per half day. Model assumes 14 hires in Year 1, 18 in Year 2 and 24 in Year 3. Thereafter prices increase by 5% every three years.

⁴ Income from performances in the Old High is based on an assumed £300 per event (based on a split of 70/30 in favour of the promoter/ operator). Model assumes 12 events in Year 1, 18 in Year 2 and 24 in Year 3. Thereafter prices increase by 5% every three years.

⁵ Community Hires based on price of £40 per hour. Model assumes 6 hires per week in Year 1, 8 in Years 2-5 and 10 in Year 3. Thereafter prices increase by 5% every three years.

⁶ Additional hire income is an estimate for additional charges (particularly for corporate, weddings and private functions) for services such as cleaning and equipment use.

⁷ Income from general daytime visits based on 10% of visitors purchasing, at an average ticket price of £4 p.c.

⁸ Income from curated tours led by guides based on 0.5% of visitors, at an average ticket price of £25 p.c.

⁹ Income has been included from café services provided by a third party - this could either be from a straight lease, or a percentage of income

¹⁰ Income from the Bar is taken as 5% levy on events with a licence i.e. weddings, private functions, and performance

¹¹ Other income has been set at a modest level and includes opportunities for income via outdoor events as well as other unforeseen opportunities.

¹² Donations are calculated on an average of £0.60 per visitor

Expenditure assumptions

¹³ Staff costs relate to one manager position at £32,000 per annum, plus NI/ pension. An annual increment of 3% is included.

¹⁴ It is assumed that for the curated tours, guides will receive 50% of the ticket income

¹⁵ Staff training budget is an estimate only

¹⁶ It is assumed that the SCIO will be exempt from Non-Domestic Rates by virtue of its charitable status but this requires confirmation.

¹⁷ Premises insurance is an estimate only and allows for regular increases. It is expected that tenants would have their own relevant insurance cover for specific events that require it.

¹⁸ Utilities costs are based on extrapolating from current estimates expecting that, post capital works, the building will be used more so costs may increase (although the capital development may also include more energy efficient systems). Energy costs would also be recharged to tenants and this has not yet been modelled. The result is that overall costs to the SCIO could be lower.

¹⁹ Repairs and Renewals (maintenance) costs have been estimated but assume that there will be reduced demand immediately post capital investment with requirements increasing over time with regular spikes in demand.

²⁰ Other costs includes items such as water rates. It has been retained as a contingency.

General Assumptions

- Year 1 is the first year post Phase 1 capital works.
- New SCIO manages the building on a landlord rather than promoter model.
- Performance activity is managed/ promoted by a third party with 70/30 income split
- Performance venue includes a bar
- Café facilities are outsourced via a franchise or lease arrangement

6.6.9 On this basis, the following projections have been calculated:

Old High, Inverness: Operation

Estimated Footfall	40,000	55,000	65,000	70,000	70,000	
Inflation	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	TOTAL
Income						
Hire						
<i>Markets</i> ¹	12,000	18,000	18,000	18,000	18,000	84,000
<i>Weddings</i> ²	20,000	30,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	170,000
<i>Private Function Hire</i> ³	4,200	5,400	7,200	7,200	7,200	31,200
<i>Performance</i> ⁴	3,600	5,400	6,000	6,000	6,000	27,000
<i>Community Hires</i> ⁵	11,520	13,440	15,360	15,360	15,360	71,040
<i>Additional Hire Fees (equipment, cleaning etc)</i> ⁶	3,500	4,500	6,000	6,000	6,000	26,000
Ticket Income						
<i>General daytime</i> ⁷	16,000	26,400	31,200	36,400	36,400	146,400
<i>Curated tour</i> ⁸	5,000	6,875	8,125	8,750	8,750	37,500
Café services ⁹	3,000	4,000	4,500	5,000	5,000	21,500
Bar ¹⁰	1,390	2,040	2,660	2,660	2,660	11,410
Other income (ad hoc hire/ events) ¹¹	3,500	5,000	7,500	7,500	7,500	31,000
Donations ¹²	24,000	33,000	39,000	42,000	42,000	
General fundraising/sponsorship	2,500	3,000	3,000	3,500	3,500	15,500
Total Income	110,210	157,055	188,545	198,370	198,370	672,550

Expenditure

Staff Costs

<i>Staff Costs</i> ¹³	37,760	38,893	40,060	41,261	42,499	200,473
<i>Curated Tour Guides</i> ¹⁴	2,500	3,438	4,063	4,375	4,375	18,750
<i>Cleaning</i>	15,600	15,600	15,600	15,600	15,600	
<i>Caretaking</i>	20,800	20,800	20,800	20,800	20,800	

Operating Expenditure⁸

<i>Staff/Volunteer Training</i> ¹⁵	800	1,000	1,000	1,200	1,200	5,200
<i>Marketing (estimate)</i>	5,000	8,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	43,000
<i>Board/Gov'nce Costs (estimate - professional fees)</i>	7,000	6,000	6,180	6,180	6,180	31,540

Overheads

<i>Rates</i> ¹⁶						
<i>Premises Insurance (estimate)</i> ¹⁷	15,600	15,600	15,600	16,068	16,550	79,418
<i>Energy (estimate)</i> ¹⁸	30,000	30,900	31,827	32,782	33,765	159,274
<i>Consumables (estimate)</i>	500	500	500	515	530	2,545
<i>Telephone (estimate)</i>	400	400	400	412	424	2,036
<i>Internet (estimate)</i>	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,030	1,061	5,091
<i>IT Consumables (estimate)</i>	2,000	400	400	1,000	1,000	4,800
<i>Repairs & Renewals (estimate)</i> ¹⁹	1,000	5,000	10,000	5,000	25,000	46,000
<i>Refuse collection</i>	600	800	800	824	849	3,873
<i>Other</i> ²⁰	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	25,000

Total Expenditure	145,560	153,330	163,229	162,047	184,834	627,001
Surplus/ deficit	-35,350	3,725	25,316	36,323	13,536	45,549
Cumulative	-35,350	-31,625	-6,309	30,013	43,549	89,099

6.6.10 The projections show that a breakeven scenario can be reached by the second year of trading and that an annual surplus is likely, varying from c.£3 - 36K, generating reserves of around £90K within the first five years of operation. It should be noted that these assumptions are based on Year 1 of trading following the Phase 1 upgrades. A trading deficit of c. £35K in Year 1 should be addressed by the end of year 3/start of Year 4 of trading.

Summary of Capital and Operational Funding Required

6.6.11 The table below summarises the total required funding for the initial years of operation:

Phase	Capital (£'000)	Revenue (£'000)	TOTAL
0	354		354
1	497	44.5	541.5
2	793	26	819
3	-		
Total	1,644	70.5	£1,714.5

6.7 Economic and Social Value

6.7.1 Beyond the organisation’s own income and costs, the project will generate wider **economic and social benefits** that support the case for public and philanthropic investment:

1. Local Economic Impact

- Increased visitor spending in nearby cafés, restaurants, shops and accommodation.
- Additional employment (direct jobs within the Old High and indirect jobs in supply chains and local businesses).
- Strengthening of Inverness’s position as a **year-round cultural destination**, extending stays and encouraging repeat visits.

2. Regeneration and Place-Making

- Contribution to Church Street’s vibrancy and perceived safety (footfall, evening economy).
- Reinforcing the city’s image as a **historic riverside destination** with high-quality, authentic experiences.

3. Cultural, Educational, and Wellbeing Outcomes

- Increased participation in music, performance, storytelling and heritage activities.
- Opportunities for schools to engage with living history in a powerful site-specific environment.
- Wellbeing benefits from participation in choirs, community events, volunteering, and simply having access to a quiet, beautiful place.

4. Heritage and Identity

- Safeguarding of a nationally important site for future generations.
- Strengthened sense of local identity, continuity and pride.

6.7.2 These wider benefits will be quantified more formally at OBC/FBC stage using appropriate tools (e.g. heritage and cultural valuation frameworks, multiplier estimates, wellbeing indicators) and captured in a **Benefits Realisation Plan**.

6.8 Funding Landscape and Strategy

6.8.1 The project is well aligned with the priorities of multiple potential funders. The likely mix includes:

- **Heritage Capital Funders**
 - National and regional heritage bodies supporting conservation and adaptive reuse.
 - Potential for staged or multi-phase awards tied to conservation, interpretation and capacity-building.
- **Cultural and Creative Funders**
 - Support for the “sang scuil” concept, performance programme, artist residencies and participatory arts.
- **Tourism, Regeneration and Place Funds**
 - Investment in city-centre regeneration, visitor economy, and public realm/trails connecting Inverness Castle and the Old High.
- **Trusts, Foundations and Philanthropy**
 - Particular opportunities around:
 - Jacobite and regimental heritage.
 - Music and organ/choral culture.
 - Faith and reconciliation projects.
 - Community wellbeing and inclusion.
- **Corporate Partnerships and Sponsorship**
 - Local and national businesses, especially those with roots or markets in the Highlands, may support specific programmes, spaces or events.
- **Community Fundraising**
 - A structured campaign enabling individuals to contribute at different levels (from “buy a stone” or “adopt a pew” schemes to major gifts).

6.8.2 The SOC recommends a **Funding Strategy and Case for Support** be developed in parallel with OBC, drawing heavily on the narrative provided in the Strategic Case and the interpretation concepts.

6.9 Affordability, Risk and Sensitivity

6.9.1 At this early stage, key affordability considerations and risks include:

- The **scale of capital required** relative to likely grant and fundraising capacity.
- The ability to **phase works** so that meaningful benefits are delivered even if only partial funding is secured initially.
- The need to avoid **over-specifying** capital works beyond what can be sustained operationally.

- The importance of **conservative assumptions** in income projections, especially for weddings, tourism and F&B.
- The resilience of the operating model to external shocks (economic downturn, changes in visitor patterns, public health crises).

6.9.2 Mitigations include:

- A phased approach (stabilise → activate → invest) that allows **go/no-go decision points** at each stage.
- Early development of a **robust governance structure** with financial oversight capacity.
- Use of the activation phase for **live stress-testing** of business assumptions.
- Diversification of income and cautious reliance on any single market.

6.10 Summary

6.10.1 The initial economic and financial case indicates that:

- The Old High can, with appropriate capital investment and phasing, support a **sustainable mixed-use operation**.
- A balanced portfolio of income streams, underpinned by ongoing public and philanthropic support, is achievable and realistic for a heritage cultural venue of this scale.
- The wider economic, social and heritage benefits are substantial and justify public and charitable investment.

6.10.2 Detailed costings, financial modelling and value-for-money analysis will form the core of the Economic and Financial Case at **Outline Business Case** stage, informed by the data and experience generated through the proposed two-year activation programme.

7. Management & Delivery Case

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This section sets out how the Old High project will be **governed, managed and delivered** from Strategic Outline Case through the two-year activation phase and, subject to approvals and funding, into the main capital project and steady-state operation. It addresses:

- Governance and decision-making arrangements;
- The structure and remit of the Project Board/Steering Group;
- The roles and track record of the core delivery partners;
- Day-to-day project management and reporting;
- Risk management and mitigation;
- Programme, phasing and key milestones;
- Stakeholder, community and partnership working;
- Arrangements for benefits realisation, monitoring and evaluation.

7.1.2 The overarching aim is to ensure that the project is **well governed, competently managed and transparently delivered**, with appropriate checks and balances and clear lines of accountability.

7.2 Project Governance

Governance Principles

7.2.1 The governance framework for the Old High project is built on the following principles:

- **Clarity of Purpose** - A shared understanding of the project's vision and objectives as set out in the Strategic Case.
- **Transparency and Accountability** - Clear decision-making structures, documented responsibilities and regular reporting.
- **Proportionality** - Governance arrangements appropriate to the project's scale and risk, evolving as the project progresses through SOC, OBC and FBC.
- **Inclusivity and Partnership** - Representation of key interests (heritage, community, funders, technical experts) in advisory structures.
- **Separation of Duties** - Distinct roles for strategic oversight, project delivery and day-to-day operations, to avoid conflicts of interest.

Governance Structure (Overview)

7.2.2 At Strategic Outline Case and activation stage, the governance model will broadly comprise:

- A **Project Sponsor / Client** – the organisation with ultimate responsibility for commissioning and stewarding the project (i.e. TOHI SCIO).
- A **Project Board or Steering Group** – providing strategic oversight, decision-making and assurance. This can feature TOHI members but benefits from introducing additional skillsets in areas likely to be required for the early phases of the Old High's development.
- A professional **Project Delivery Team** – including the client's internal team, Architects and other technical consultants.

- A wider **Stakeholder Advisory Group** – providing input from key partners, community representatives and users.

7.2.3 As the project moves towards capital delivery and long-term operation, this governance may evolve into a more formalised structure and can consider other governance vehicles that may help reduce risk, enhance income-raising potential,, or ensure more effective operations – a trading company is the most frequently used of these vehicles, often a **charitable company** with a board of trustees/directors responsible that comprises members of the Client Board as well as others who can bring relevant specialist knowledge or experience.

7.3 Project Board / Steering Group

Role and Responsibilities

7.3.1 The Project Board (or Steering Group) will be the principal decision-making body for the development project. Its responsibilities will include:

- **Strategic Direction**
 - Approving the project vision, objectives and strategic direction.
 - Ensuring alignment with wider policy, community and funder expectations.
- **Approvals and Gateways**
 - Approving key project documents: SOC, OBC, FBC, funding applications, design briefs and major contracts.
 - Taking “go/no-go” decisions at critical gateways (end of activation phase, commencement of capital works, transition to steady-state operation).
- **Risk and Assurance**
 - Overseeing the project risk register and mitigation strategies.
 - Ensuring that appropriate technical, financial and legal advice is sought and acted upon.
- **Resource and Capacity**
 - Ensuring that the Project Delivery Team has the skills, capacity and budget necessary to deliver.
 - Approving the appointment of key consultants and contractors.
- **Stakeholder and Funders’ Confidence**
 - Acting as the “public face” of governance, accountable to funders, stakeholders and the community.
 - Signing off monitoring and evaluation reports and annual reviews.

Composition

7.3.2 The Project Board will be kept to an effective but manageable size (typically 8–12 members), including:

- Project Sponsor (TOHI) / Client representative (Chair);
- Representatives with expertise in:
 - Heritage and conservation;
 - Finance and business planning;
 - Legal and governance;
 - Culture and creative programming;
 - Community engagement and equality;

- Tourism / economic development;
- Managing capital projects;
- Representation (or close liaison) with key stakeholders such as the Church of Scotland, local authority, heritage bodies and community organisations.

7.3.3 The Project Board tend to meet on a regular cycle (e.g. bi-monthly during active phases), with additional meetings as required at key decision points.

7.4 Delivery Partners and Track Record

7.4.1 Although the exact organisational form may evolve, the **delivery model** will rest on collaboration between:

- **The Client (TOHI)** – working closely with public sector partners to secure the future of the building. This organisation will:
 - Hold (or seek) rights to lease/own and operate the building;
 - Be accountable to regulators, funders and members;
 - Provide long-term stewardship and strategic leadership.
- **Project Development Lead**
 - Leading on strategic project development, business planning and funding strategy.
 - Bringing experience of heritage, cultural and place-based projects, business case preparation, funding applications and stakeholder negotiation.
- **Design Team**
 - Architectural practice serving as lead designer and conservation architect, responsible for condition surveys, options appraisal, concept and developed designs, and overseeing capital works.
 - Bringing a strong track record in church adaptations, heritage regeneration and conservation-led re-use.
- **Other Professional Advisers**
 - **Quantity Surveyors / Cost Consultants** – for cost planning, value engineering and procurement strategy.
 - **Engineering Consultants** – structural, mechanical, electrical, environmental and accessibility design.
 - **Interpretation and Exhibition Designers** – to develop and deliver the thematic interpretive concept.
 - **Business Planning / Financial Modellers** – to support detailed OBC-level projections.

7.4.2 Together, these partners bring a **credible and experienced team**, combining conservation expertise, cultural programming experience and business planning skills necessary to deliver a complex heritage project of this type.

7.5 Project Management Arrangements

Project Manager / Development Lead

7.5.1 A dedicated **Project Manager (or Development Lead)** will be appointed on behalf of the client to:

- Coordinate the work of all consultants and contractors;
- Develop and maintain the project plan, risk register and budget;
- Report regularly to the Project Board on progress, risks and issues;
- Act as day-to-day point of contact for funders and key stakeholders;
- Ensure compliance with funder and statutory requirements (including procurement rules and reporting).

7.5.2 This role may initially be part-time during SOC/OBC and ramp up to full-time during capital delivery.

Project Controls

7.5.3 Key control mechanisms will include:

- A **Project Initiation Document (PID)** – summarising scope, objectives, governance, roles and initial risk profile.
- A detailed **Project Programme** – setting out tasks, milestones, dependencies and critical path (see 7.6).
- A **Risk Register** – live document reviewed regularly by the Project Manager and Board (see 7.7–7.8).
- A **Change Control Process** – ensuring that any scope, budget or programme changes are formally assessed and approved at the appropriate level.
- **Financial Reporting** – periodic income/expenditure and cashflow reporting, including funder-specific reporting as required.
- **Quality Management** – clear briefs, design review processes and technical checks to ensure quality standards and conservation requirements are met.

Procurement

7.5.4 During the SOC/OBC phase, procurement will focus on:

- Appointment of consultants (architect, QS, engineers, interpretation designers) through transparent procedures proportionate to the scale and nature of the work.
- Commissioning of services for the activation programme (e.g. event delivery, marketing, digital content) where needed.

7.5.5 For the main capital works, a **formal procurement strategy** will be developed, considering:

- Appropriate forms of building contract;
- Pre-qualification of contractors with suitable heritage experience;
- Best balance between cost certainty, quality control and programme risk.

7.5.6 Procurement will comply with relevant public funding requirements and charity/company law.

7.6 Programme, Phasing and Key Milestones

7.6.1 The project is structured in four main stages, recognising both the constraints and opportunities of the Old High context:

1. **Stage 1 – Strategic Outline Case and Set-Up (Current)**
 - Completion and approval of SOC by Project Board and key stakeholders.
 - Refinement of governance arrangements and Project Board membership.
 - Initial dialogue with key funders and partners.
2. **Stage 2 – Activation Phase and OBC Preparation (Years 1–2)**
 - Implementation of enabling works and health & safety measures.
 - Launch of a managed **two-year activation programme**, including:
 - Interpreted open days and tours;
 - Pilot events (music, markets, exhibitions, community use);
 - Schools and learning activities;
 - Data capture on audiences, income and community feedback.
 - Preparation of the **Outline Business Case**, including:
 - Refined options and preferred way forward;
 - Developed designs and cost plans;
 - Detailed financial model and funding strategy;
 - Updated risk and management plans.
 - Gateway decision: proceed to detailed design and capital fundraising.
3. **Stage 3 – Capital Development and FBC (Years 3–4)**
 - Detailed design and statutory consents.
 - Securing the main capital funding package.
 - Procurement and mobilisation of the main contractor(s).
 - Implementation of conservation and adaptation works.
 - Development of operational plans, policies and staffing structures.
 - Preparation of the **Full/Final Business Case** (if required by major funders), confirming costs, funding, delivery and operational readiness.
4. **Stage 4 – Opening and Steady-State Operation (Year 5 onwards)**
 - Soft opening / phased reintroduction of activities.
 - Full public launch of the renewed Old High.
 - Ongoing programme of interpretation, performance, community use and events.
 - Continuous monitoring, evaluation and business improvement.

7.6.2 Milestone markers (with indicative dates) will include:

- M1 – SOC approval and initiation of governance. (Spring 2026)
- M2 – Activation programme launch. (Summer 2026)
- M3 – OBC completion and agreement of preferred option. (Autumn 2028)
- M4 – Capital funding secured and contractor appointed. (Summer 2029)
- M5 – Practical completion of capital works. (Summer 2030)
- M6 – Public opening and first-year review. (2030-2031)

7.7 Risk Management Framework

7.7.1 Risk management is integral to the project’s management and governance.

Approach

- 7.7.2 A comprehensive **Risk Register** will be maintained from SOC onwards, covering:
- Strategic risks (policy, funding environment, reputational).
 - Financial risks (overruns, income shortfalls, cashflow).
 - Technical risks (fabric, ground conditions, design complexity).
 - Operational risks (staffing, governance capacity, health & safety).
 - Programme risks (delays, dependencies, consents).
- 7.7.3 Each risk will have:
- A clearly defined description;
 - An assessed likelihood and impact (e.g. Red/Amber/Green);
 - Identified owner;
 - Mitigation actions and contingency plans.
- 7.7.4 The Project Board will review the risk register at regular intervals, with the Project Manager responsible for day-to-day updates and escalation of emerging issues.

Benefits of the Activation Phase for Risk Management

- 7.7.5 The proposed two-year activation phase is itself a key risk mitigation measure, enabling:
- Real-world testing of business assumptions (demand, income, costs).
 - Early identification of operational challenges (access, logistics, staffing).
 - Progressive building of community and funder confidence.
 - Opportunity to trial and refine interpretation and programming approaches before committing to permanent installations.
- 7.7.6 Lessons learned during this phase will feed directly into the OBC and risk management plans for the capital stage.

7.8 Key Project Risks (Summary)

- 7.8.1 A fuller Risk Register will be developed as a separate document; at a strategic level, the following headline risks have been identified:
- **Capital Funding Shortfall**
 - Risk: Failure to secure sufficient capital funding to deliver the preferred option.
 - Mitigation: Phased approach, diversified funding strategy, scalable design solutions.
 - **Cost Overrun / Inflation**
 - Risk: Construction costs exceed estimates due to inflation, unforeseen conditions or scope creep.
 - Mitigation: Conservative cost planning, contingency allowances, thorough site investigation, tight change control.
 - **Demand and Income Risk**
 - Risk: Visitor numbers, event demand or private hires lower than forecast.

- Mitigation: Activation testing, flexible use model, diversified income streams, strong marketing and partnerships.
- **Governance and Capacity**
 - Risk: Insufficient governance capacity or skills to manage a complex heritage project.
 - Mitigation: Careful Board recruitment, training, professional Project Manager, use of external specialists.
- **Heritage and Planning Risk**
 - Risk: Delays or constraints arising from listed building consent and planning requirements.
 - Mitigation: Early and ongoing engagement with heritage authorities, conservation-led design, clear justification of any interventions.
- **Community and Reputational Risk**
 - Risk: Perception that the building is being over-commercialised or “taken away” from the community.
 - Mitigation: Genuine community involvement, clear communications, transparent use policies, safeguarding key civic and spiritual functions.

7.8.2 These risks are considered manageable within a robust governance and project management framework, particularly given the flexibility of the phased approach.

7.9 Stakeholder, Community and Joint Working

7.9.1 The Old High project is inherently **relational**, relying on strong partnerships and community support. Inverness is a small city and most of the key partners will be known to TOHI, and vice versa. Establishing and developing these relationships on an open and inclusive basis from the outset is likely to pay dividends in realising the project more effectively.

Stakeholder Engagement

7.9.2 A **Stakeholder Engagement Plan** will:

- Identify key stakeholders (public bodies, heritage organisations, former congregations, community groups, schools, cultural organisations, local businesses, funders).
- Map their interests, influence and potential contributions.
- Define engagement methods (briefings, workshops, co-design sessions, one-to-one meetings, online updates).

7.9.3 The Project Board will oversee engagement, ensuring it is **meaningful, not symbolic**, and that feedback genuinely shapes project decisions where feasible.

Community Involvement and Co-Creation

7.9.4 Community involvement is central to:

- Interpretation development (stories contributed by residents).
- Programming (local choirs, artists, schools and community organisations using the space).

- Volunteering (front-of-house, tours, events, archival research, gardening/grounds care).

7.9.5 The project will seek to:

- Establish a **volunteer and “Friends” programme** early in the activation phase.
- Support local capacity-building (training, skills development, creative opportunities).
- Ensure representation from diverse local communities (age, background, longstanding and newer residents).

Joint Working with Key Institutions

7.9.6 Strategic partnerships will be pursued with:

- Churches and faith communities with a historic or ongoing interest in the site.
- Heritage and regimental organisations, museums and archives.
- Inverness Castle and other cultural destinations to coordinate programming, ticketing and marketing.
- Education institutions (schools, colleges, universities) for curriculum-linked and research-based activity.

7.9.7 These partnerships will maximise impact while avoiding duplication and ensuring the Old High is embedded in the wider cultural and civic ecosystem of Inverness.

7.10 Benefits Realisation, Monitoring and Evaluation

7.10.1 The project’s **Benefits Realisation Plan** will be developed alongside OBC, but the core approach is:

- **Define Expected Benefits**
 - Heritage outcomes (fabric conserved, risks reduced).
 - Cultural outcomes (number and diversity of performances, exhibitions, creative projects).
 - Community outcomes (participation, wellbeing indicators, volunteering).
 - Economic outcomes (visitor numbers, local spend, jobs supported).
- **Set SMART Indicators**
 - Quantitative (visits, events, ticket sales, school groups, income levels).
 - Qualitative (visitor satisfaction, perceived sense of place and pride, community narratives).
- **Data Collection Methods**
 - Visitor counting and surveys.
 - Booking and ticketing data analysis.
 - Focus groups, interviews and creative evaluation (e.g. story and arts-based methods).
 - Partner and stakeholder feedback.
- **Review and Reporting**
 - Annual impact reports to the Board and funders.
 - Mid-term and end-of-programme evaluations for major funded phases.
 - Use of evaluation findings to refine programming, business model and engagement strategies.

7.10.2 The two-year activation period will function as a **pilot for the evaluation framework**, allowing the project team to test methods, refine indicators and establish realistic baselines before major capital investment.

7.11 Transition to Outline Business Case and Delivery

7.11.1 The Management & Delivery arrangements described here are capable of **scaling and adapting** as the project progresses. As the project moves towards OBC and capital delivery:

- Governance will be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose (e.g. strengthening financial and legal expertise on the Board).
- The Project Manager's role will be expanded and supported by clear internal capacity and appropriate professional services.
- Formal agreements (MoUs, leases, contracts) will be developed with key partners.
- A full **OBC-level Management Case** will be prepared, building on this SOC section with more detailed organisational charts, resource plans and contractual structures.

7.11.2 In summary, the proposed Management & Delivery arrangements will provide a **robust, proportionate and flexible framework** for taking the Old High project from concept to reality—supporting the careful stewardship of a nationally significant heritage asset and its successful transformation into a vibrant, sustainable civic and cultural hub for 21st-century Inverness.

Appendix A

Interpretation and Storytelling Concept

The following interpretation concept, “Layers of Inverness” is presented for illustrative purposes at this stage, to show how a single theme can be developed across various aspects of the building, the kirkyard, in its marketing, and its operation and programming.

A Overall Aim

To use the Old High and kirkyard as a **living time-field**, where visitors and residents move through layered stories of Inverness – faith, conflict, everyday life, song, remembrance and renewal – in ways that are emotionally resonant, participatory, and compatible with worship, reflection and performance.

B Guiding Principles

1. Respectful and Reverent

- Treat the church and kirkyard as an active landscape of memory and spirituality, not a backdrop or “set”.
- Design all interventions to be **reversible**, low-impact and conservation-led.

2. Layered, Not Linear

- Avoid a single, didactic “master narrative”.
- Allow visitors to assemble their own pathway through time and theme: sacred hill, Jacobite trauma, civic town church, regimental chapel, community hub.

3. Many Voices, Not One

- Blend expert scholarship with **local memory, family stories, Gaelic and Scots voices**, and contemporary perspectives (including migrant and younger communities).
- Use recorded testimony, creative writing and song to bring the building’s stories into the present.

4. Building as Exhibit

- Minimise physical “clutter”: the stone, timber, organ, stained glass, kirkyard and views over the Ness are the primary interpretive media.
- Use **lighting, sound and projection** carefully to reveal details rather than overwhelm.

5. Testing and Learning

- Use the first two years as an **interpretive laboratory**: trial formats, gather feedback, refine what works for different audiences (locals, schools, faith groups, tourists, special interest groups).

C Core Thematic “Layers”

Each layer becomes both a **theme** and a **spatial zone or trail**, so interpretation is legible on the ground.

1. Sacred Hill – Columba and Brude

- Theme: Encounter, conversion, thresholds between beliefs.
- Location: Higher ground around tower; a simple “threshold point” at entry.
- Devices:

- A short audio moment dramatising Columba and Brude (in Gaelic and English), triggered at the threshold.
 - A discreet floor/stone inlay marking “St Michael’s Mount – Hill of Many Prayers”.
 - Night-time or seasonal vigils / reflective events using candlelight, choral chant and silence.
2. **Town Church – Sang Scuil and Civic Life**
- Theme: Everyday worship, civic governance, education and music.
 - Location: Nave, galleries, pulpit area.
 - Devices:
 - “Sang Scuil” interpretation: graphic panels and audio about burgh song schools and psalm-singing, linking directly to the **21st-century choral hub**.
 - Listening posts with layered sound: historic psalms, contemporary choir rehearsals, school projects.
 - “Seat Stories”: selected pews/galleries carry short anecdotes or QR-linked micro-stories from Inverness families about life events in the Old High.
3. **Conflict and Consequence – Jacobite and Military Histories**
- Theme: War, punishment, loyalty, trauma, remembrance.
 - Location: Kirkyard, tower exterior, areas associated with musket scars and executions.
 - Devices:
 - A “**Witness Stones**” trail marking key points (prison, firing line, graves) with subtle plaques and an accompanying leaflet / app.
 - A soundscape that might be activated only at certain times: whispered testimonies from different perspectives (Jacobite prisoners, government soldiers, later descendants).
 - Collaborative exhibitions with Culloden and regimental museums exploring myth vs. reality, and the ethics of dark tourism.
4. **Empire, Regiment and Remembrance**
- Theme: Global conflict, empire, service, loss and memory.
 - Location: Internal memorials, regimental plaques, organ area.
 - Devices:
 - Digital or print **Book of Names** allowing families to search for those commemorated, with space to add contemporary reflections or photos.
 - Occasional “Living Remembrance” events where artists, veterans, school pupils and community groups respond to specific wars/memories through music, poetry, and visual art.
 - Interpretation explaining the regimental colours and their continuing significance.
5. **River City – Inverness, Nessie and the Wider Landscape**
- Theme: The Old High as a lookout point over the river, a node in a wider story-web of Inverness and the Highlands.
 - Location: Exterior viewpoints, especially looking towards the river and castle.
 - Devices:
 - A minimalist **viewing rail** with etched place-names and distances (Castle, Kessock Bridge, Ness Islands, Loch Ness) tying in tales like the **first recorded Nessie sighting** in the Columba tradition.

- Links to walking trails along the river and up/down Church Street, encouraging dwell time and repeat visits.
- Commissioned artworks / projections that temporarily “wash” the tower or kirkyard with imagery related to water, migration, climate and change.

6. Modern Transformations – From Parish Church to Public Trust

- Theme: Secularisation, community action, new uses.
- Location: Entrance foyer, transitional zones.
- Devices:
 - A simple timeline wall showing the building’s changing uses, owners and communities, ending with **the current project and its aspirations**.
 - “Have Your Say” points (physical and digital) where visitors contribute ideas, memories, concerns and hopes for the Old High’s future.
 - Regular updates on fundraising, restoration, and community projects, reinforcing transparency and trust.

D Interpretive Media and Experience Types

a) Low-Impact Physical Media

- Elegant, minimal **graphic panels** using a consistent design language, bilingual where appropriate (English/Gaelic).
- Floor or wall **markers** indicating layers, trails and threshold points.
- Simple tactile elements (stone, wood, textiles) that echo the building’s materials.

b) Sound and Music

- The organ and the building’s acoustics are primary interpretive tools.
- Curated soundscapes for different times of day (e.g. quiet early-morning reflection vs. more animated afternoon visits).
- Regular “**Soundings of the Old High**” events: organ demonstrations, choral tasters, public singing workshops, “bring a song from home” sessions with newer communities.

c) Digital Layer (Opt-in, Not Compulsory)

- A lightweight **web-app / QR trail** rather than heavy installed hardware, offering deeper dives, translations, archival images and recorded stories.
- AR “peels” that show earlier phases of the church when you point your phone at certain walls or windows (optional, but a strong funding hook).
- Downloadable schools’ packs and teacher resources aligned to Curriculum for Excellence.

d) Temporary Exhibitions and Installations

- Rotating small-scale exhibitions curated around one “layer” at a time (e.g. “Women of the Old High”, “The Sang School Today”, “From Culloden to Commonwealth”).
- Artist residencies that respond to the building over a season, culminating in site-specific installations or performances.

E Sample Visitor Journeys (for Testing Phase)

1. Local Lunchtime Visitor (20–30 mins)

- Enters from Church Street, sees a **short “What’s on today” board** and map.
- Walks a simple **three-point loop**: Sacred Hill – Town Church – Modern Transformations.
- Pauses at a quiet bench with a view of the river; leaves a memory or thought on a small card or digital wall.

2. Culloden / Loch Ness Tourist (60–90 mins)

- Picks up a **“From Battle to River”** leaflet at the castle, arrives at Old High as part of a self-guided trail.
- Follows **“Conflict and Consequence”** and **“Empire and Remembrance”** trails, then ends with a short organ demonstration or recorded soundscape.
- Exits via a small **heritage retail** and café offer that showcases local books, crafts and music.

3. School Group (Half Day)

- Classroom session in a flexible space introduces Jacobite, river, and sang scuil themes.
- Split into rotating activities:
 - Kirkyard investigation with tablets / worksheets.
 - Inside **“sound lab”** with simple rhythm/chant exercises.
 - Story circle on Columba and early Christianity.
- Leaves with follow-up materials for creative writing, art or oral history projects.

4. Community Choir / Arts Group (Evening)

- Uses the building as rehearsal/performance space.
- Short pre-rehearsal talk or film connecting their practice to the Old High’s musical and civic traditions.
- Post-event time in a small social space (perhaps in a side aisle or porch with pop-up bar/refreshments).

F Two-Year **“Test and Learn”** Programme – Interpretation Dimension

During the initial two years, interpretation is **deliberately provisional** and iterative:

• Year 1 – Light-Touch Foundations

- Install essential orientation and basic story panels.
- Run a small number of pilot trails (Jacobite, Sacred Hill, Remembrance).
- Host 3–4 **“Story Weekends”** where locals bring photographs, artefacts and memories to be scanned/recorded.

• Year 2 – Deepening and Differentiation

- Refine based on feedback, invest in higher-quality permanent fixtures in core zones.
- Launch a beta version of the digital layer and test AR / audio experiences.
- Commission first artist/choir residencies linked to specific layers.

The evaluation from this programme will directly inform the **final interpretive masterplan** and business plan at OBC/FBC stage.

Appendix B

How the Project Meets the Objectives of the Inverness City Centre Strategy

The redevelopment of the Old High strongly supports and advances the core aims of the Inverness City Centre Strategy. It offers a rare opportunity to deliver meaningful regeneration, animate a key part of the urban core, and strengthen the city's cultural and economic identity. The project contributes to the strategy's objectives in the following ways:

1. Strengthening the City Centre as a Vibrant, Attractive and Inclusive Destination

City Centre Objective:

Increase footfall, encourage longer dwell times, enhance the mix of uses, and create reasons for residents and visitors to choose the city centre for culture, leisure and social activity.

How the Old High Delivers:

- Establishes a **daily-access, visitor-friendly cultural attraction** in a part of Church Street that currently lacks a strong draw.
- Creates a **balanced mix of uses**—heritage interpretation, music and performance, community use, hospitality and small-scale retail—that reinforce each other and support repeat visits.
- Anchors the northern end of Church Street as a destination, complementing the redevelopment of **Inverness Castle** at the southern end and creating a strong cultural spine across the city centre.
- Encourages **evening and out-of-season activity**, supporting the night-time economy through performances, events and workshops.
- Improves perceptions of safety, welcome and vitality through increased footfall, lighting, volunteer presence and programmed activity.

2. Supporting Heritage-Led Regeneration and Re-Use of Key Civic Assets

City Centre Objective:

Protect Inverness's historic fabric and repurpose heritage buildings to support modern urban life.

How the Old High Delivers:

- Prevents the further deterioration—and potential loss—of one of Inverness's **most significant heritage assets**.
- Uses **conservation-led repair and adaptation** to breathe new life into the building while respecting its spiritual and memorial character.
- Ensures that a nationally important site becomes **actively used**, not mothballed or at risk of sale to private interests that limit public benefit.
- Reinforces Inverness's identity by celebrating the intertwined histories of Columba, Brude, Jacobitism, regimental heritage, and the civic traditions of the burgh.

3. Growing the City Centre Economy and Supporting Local Businesses

City Centre Objective:

Boost economic activity, support local enterprises, and increase visitor spend in the city centre.

How the Old High Delivers:

- Attracts significant **new and repeat footfall** through events, exhibitions, performances, and daily access.
- Generates direct income through weddings, hires, retail and hospitality partnerships—while driving **secondary spend** to nearby cafés, hotels, bars, bookshops and craft outlets.
- Creates new opportunities for **local makers, artists and food producers** via markets, pop-ups and retail partnerships.
- Provides a memorable cultural experience that helps Inverness become a **stay-longer destination**, benefiting accommodation providers and the wider economy.
- Supports employment in culture, tourism, operations, education, volunteering, and hospitality.

4. Enhancing Cultural Life and Creative Participation

City Centre Objective:

Position Inverness as a cultural capital for the Highlands, broadening access to arts, learning, festivals and events.

How the Old High Delivers:

- Establishes a unique **“sang scuil” choral and musical hub**, supporting choirs, music education and performance.
- Provides an atmospheric venue for **festivals, touring productions, creative residencies and local arts groups**.
- Embeds heritage interpretation (“Layers of Inverness”) that connects visitors and residents to the city’s deep and complex identity.
- Increases opportunities for **community storytelling, oral history, creative writing and visual arts**.
- Supports school programmes and lifelong learning aligned with Curriculum for Excellence.

5. Improving Accessibility, Connectivity and Wayfinding

City Centre Objective:

Create welcoming, walkable, accessible routes that draw people through the city centre and along the river.

How the Old High Delivers:

- Forms a **northern gateway** to a cultural route linking the River Ness, Church Street, Inverness Castle and the wider city centre.
- Encourages movement between the castle and the Old High through coordinated trails, interpretation and shared marketing.

- Supports improved accessibility and site legibility through carefully designed paths, signage and digital wayfinding.
- Encourages healthy walking-based tourism and local exploration.

6. Supporting Community Wellbeing, Identity and Inclusion

City Centre Objective:

Ensure the city centre offers inclusive, sociable spaces for communities to gather, feel welcome, and participate.

How the Old High Delivers:

- Revives a building that has been central to community identity for over a millennium as a **shared public asset**.
- Provides a reflective, dignified space for quiet contemplation—an essential component of community wellbeing.
- Offers accessible, low-cost or free programming for schools, families, older people, new Highlanders, and marginalised groups.
- Strengthens intergenerational connection through stories, remembrance, local memory and cultural participation.
- Delivers volunteering and skills opportunities across heritage, arts and visitor services.

7. Delivering a Sustainable, Low-Carbon, Climate-Aware City Centre

City Centre Objective:

Promote sustainable development, reduce carbon emissions, and adapt the city centre to climate impacts.

How the Old High Delivers:

- Demonstrates climate-conscious **adaptive re-use**: retaining embodied carbon rather than building new.
- Upgrades inefficient systems with low-energy lighting, efficient heating approaches and a fabric-first conservation plan.
- Encourages walking and green travel through its city-centre, riverside location.
- Uses interpretation to engage visitors in the environmental history of the river, the city's development, and contemporary climate challenges.

8. Building Strong, Collaborative Partnerships

City Centre Objective:

Strengthen collaboration between public agencies, culture and tourism bodies, community organisations and businesses.

How the Old High Delivers:

- Engages Historic Environment Scotland, Highland Council, museums, regimental partners, creative organisations, tourism bodies and universities.
- Aligns its programme with festivals, choirs, schools, community groups and local businesses.

- Creates a model of **co-governance** through a community-led SCIO/trust backed by professional expertise.

The Old High thus becomes a **shared civic project**—a platform for partnership rather than a standalone venue.

Summary: Strategic Fit With the Inverness City Centre Strategy

The Old High redevelopment is not simply compliant with city-centre objectives—it is **transformational** in meeting them.

It supports:

- **Regeneration** of a key historic site
- **Economic growth** and local business vitality
- **City-centre vibrancy** and year-round activity
- **Cultural identity and participation**
- **Improved accessibility and connectivity**
- **Climate-conscious reuse and sustainability**
- **Community wellbeing, inclusion and civic pride**

In short, it delivers a project that **embodies the City Centre Strategy's ambitions**, positions Inverness as a dynamic cultural capital, and safeguards one of the most important historic sites in the Highlands for future generations.