



# Kilmartin Museum Redevelopment Project

## Summary Information

Argyll is on the beautiful west coast of Scotland, two and a half hours drive north of Glasgow. The unique climate, pure air, and remoteness have contributed to the survival of exceptionally rare natural habitats. Undoubtedly, the jewel in Argyll's crown is Kilmartin Glen, mainland Scotland's most important prehistoric ritual landscape.

The combination of rich natural heritage and unique archaeological remains were the inspiration for the creation of Kilmartin Museum, which opened in 1997.

### Our Mission:

Kilmartin Museum inspires and educates people by interpreting, explaining and conserving the internationally important archaeological landscape, artefacts and natural heritage of Kilmartin Glen.

Since 1997, we have developed our work to the extent that our buildings are now no longer fit for purpose. This is inhibiting our growth, and, if not solved, will prevent us from continuing our work. Our solution to these challenges is an ambitious plan to transform the Museum with a new extension. Our aim is to significantly develop our work and create an inspiring place where we can care for, celebrate, and tell the story of Kilmartin Glen's unique archaeological and natural heritage. The project will encourage many more people of all ages to understand and appreciate its global significance, and will secure the long term future of Kilmartin Museum.



*Kilmartin Museum is located at the heart of Kilmartin Glen*

## **Our Archaeology and Natural History**

Kilmartin Glen in Argyll is home to internationally significant prehistoric and early historic sites and monuments, making it mainland Scotland's most important archaeological landscape. There is a wealth of prehistoric monuments, including the densest concentration of rock art of anywhere in Britain, a unique Neolithic and Bronze Age linear cemetery, the remains of one of Scotland's largest timber circles and Dunadd Hill Fort, which was home to the earliest Kingdom of the Scots. Many of the ancient artefacts found in the Glen are also of international importance and include rare jet necklaces and one of Britain's earliest 'Beaker' pots. This is our national story, one where the place and the people who shaped it in prehistory led to the emergence of Scotland as a nation. The area also has exceptionally rare natural heritage. Scarce wildlife species thrive in the Mòine Mhór peat bog. The neighbouring Atlantic Oakwoods, which are more romantically named Celtic rainforests, flourish.

This is a landscape of stunning natural beauty and its unique archaeological remains render it worthy of World Heritage Status.

## **Our Museum**

Uniquely situated in the heart of Kilmartin Glen, the Museum opened in 1997 with a very limited budget and a largely unpaid workforce. An 18<sup>th</sup> century manse and ancillary farm buildings were adapted to create a permanent exhibition with a café and shop. The organisation is now run by professional paid staff supported by valued volunteers, but we remain a community organisation with strong local representation on the independent charitable board that runs the Museum.

Over the course of the Museum's history, areas of work have expanded and diversified. When first founded, Kilmartin was a museum without a collection. Twenty years on, we collect and curate almost all of the archaeology in Argyll so that people are able to enjoy and understand these artefacts in the context of the landscape in which they were found. We are immensely proud of our Education Service, which focuses on natural and cultural heritage and targets all age groups across the region.

Argyll is a remote rural region, with significant challenges including lack of employment opportunities and depopulation. Tourism has been recognised as a major economic driver for development in the area. As one of the largest independent employers in Mid Argyll, the Museum is crucially important to the local economy with an estimated impact of over £3.8 million per annum.

Kilmartin Museum is a great source of pride and identity within the community and throughout the twenty years we have been operating, the Museum has acted as a fulcrum for community activity. We have inspired hundreds of thousands of people and extended their horizons.

## **Our Redevelopment Project**

Our work and artefact collections have grown to the point where we have outgrown our buildings. To give us space to grow, to allow us to build on our successes and continue our work, we have developed an ambitious Redevelopment Project.

This project will capitalise on the huge opportunities we have identified to develop existing audiences, attract new audiences, and gain widespread recognition, making the Museum and Kilmartin Glen's archaeology better known and appreciated.

A major extension designed by award winning architects Reiach and Hall will join together our two existing buildings creating a seamless Museum facility. Currently, the exhibition space is located in a small basement of the Manse, divorced from the rest of the buildings. The display is out of date and is showing its age. The new exhibition space will be much larger, giving us exciting opportunities to tell many more visitors the story of this special place.

The new building will also give us a Creative Space, which can be used by the local community to deliver and participate in cultural activities as well as allowing us to stage temporary exhibitions. No comparable facility exists in the whole of the region at present, so this will enable local people to have access to the same cultural opportunities as people elsewhere in Britain.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to gather Argyll's archaeology in one place, in its homeland where it belongs, and ensure it remains here. The new building will allow us to create an accessible research and learning facility where we can safely curate all our collections, and where we can allow school pupils, students and visiting researchers access to these precious artefacts. Crucially, the new design has a fit-for-purpose Education Space, which will allow us to develop our Active Learning and Volunteering Programme.

We will establish new ways for all sorts of different people to engage with archaeology from primary and high school to university level as well as informal learning opportunities.

A new path will provide a direct link to the monuments so that visitors will be able to use the Museum as a starting point to begin their exploration of the area's natural and cultural heritage. The project will allow us to work with partners to ensure the appreciation of the local landscape and monuments, enhancing appreciation and understanding for its own sake and so that future generations might also have the same experience.

The new building design includes a remodelled shop, reception and café, improving visitor flow throughout as well as substantially increasing car parking amenities. In addition to helping with the sustainability of the organisation, the improvements will also have a much wider economic impact in the region.

## **Our Timetable**

Throughout 2020 the Redevelopment Project has continued to progress. Work to develop the content for the interior of the Museum is progressing and a tender process is close to conclusion to appoint contractors for the main site redevelopment. The appointment of contractors is expected to take place early in 2021 to allow on site works to begin in the Spring.

Although it is difficult to anticipate all possible problems arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and also Brexit, we anticipate that construction will take approximately 16 months, before handing over for fit out of the Museum gallery content. We hope to re-open the site to visitors early in 2023.

## How Much Will it Cost?

A total of £3.2m has been granted by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. We have raised c.£3.4 million from other public body funders, through donations and pledges from private individuals and trusts.

Installation of the new museum facilities, new activities and educational programmes will account for half the cost, with the remainder to be spent on construction, fees and contingencies.

Once complete, Kilmartin Museum will be able to care for its internationally recognised collection. The artefacts will be exhibited and enjoyed in the place they were discovered.



This project will ensure Kilmartin Museum has an international profile and become THE must see archaeological attraction on the Scottish mainland. It will be an invaluable community resource but also a driver in domestic and overseas tourism visits to Argyll and to Scotland. The new Museum will ensure that Kilmartin Glen gains the recognition it deserves and its larger scale and better flow will mean that more than twice as many people can experience its treasures, enjoy its stories and appreciate the important role it played in shaping the Scottish nation.

*Kilmartin Glen's treasures have helped to shape the Scottish nation.  
The Redevelopment Project will allow everyone to enjoy them.*

Crucially, the Redevelopment Project will secure the long-term future of the Museum and preserve our important collections here in Argyll, where they belong.