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Craft as Culture, Not Artefact:

An Analysis of the Role of Museums and Heritage Centres in Scotland in
Heritage Craft Safeguarding

Master's Thesis

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Author's Declaration

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Emma Morag Marie Ramsay, 20th September 2025

Abstract

This study explores how Scottish museums and heritage centres safeguard heritage crafts through two case studies: Historic Environment Scotland's Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre in Stirling, and the Shetland Museum & Archives' partnership with Eve Eunson. Using a mix of qualitative methods, it examines institutional and practitioner collaborations. The findings reveal the complementary value of formal training and community-led initiatives, emphasizing context-specific safeguarding strategies aligning policy and practice. By documenting initiatives following the UK's CICH ratification, the study offers timely insights into how cultural institutions support and sustain Scotland's heritage crafts through engagement, best practices, and adaptive approaches.

Keywords: heritage crafts, intangible cultural heritage, safeguarding, community-led practice, traditional skills

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I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Date: 13/08/2025

Abbreviations

AHD – Authorised Heritage Discourse

CICH – Convention for the Protection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

DCMS – Department for Culture, Media and Sport

HC – Heritage Crafts (organisation)

HES – Historic Environment Scotland

ICH – Intangible Cultural Heritage

ICOM – International Council of Museums

ICOMOS – International Council of Monuments and Sites

MGS – Museums Galleries Scotland

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

SQA – Scottish Qualifications Authority

TRACS – Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland

UK – United Kingdom

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

1. Introduction

Iconic symbols of Scottish material culture have relied on traditional craftsmanship for centuries. Without craftspeople, items such as the kilt or the smallpipes (a type of bagpipe) would cease to be made in Scotland. Therefore, heritage craftsmanship skills are indispensable to the rich tapestry of cultural heritage practiced in this country. Delineated by the organisation of the same name in 2010 (Henley, 2010), the term ‘heritage crafts’ is employed as given by Heritage Crafts, a UNESCO accredited NGO (UNESCO, n.d.c):

a practice which employs manual dexterity and skill and an understanding of traditional materials, design and techniques, and which has been practised for two or more successive generations. (Heritage Crafts, n.d.c)

Despite the recent growing interest in traditional crafts in Scotland (Local Voices CIC, 2021; MacDonald, 2022; Really Interesting Objects CIC, n.d.), museums typically present them in their final form: as objects to be preserved. Local Voices CIC (2021), a community interest company helping communities across Scotland discover and engage with their heritage, reported that while museums in Scotland house materials related to heritage crafts, the networks and support systems for heritage craft makers remain underdeveloped. The role of museums has drastically evolved since their inception in the West as it is now considered that they should be hosts to expressions of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) (ICOM, 2022). With the inclusion of ICH in museal contexts, there is now a necessity for cultural institutions to adopt an active role in the safeguarding of manifestations of ICH, rather than simply being a keeper of the material culture associated with ICH practices, such as clothing, instruments and furniture. Safeguarding as a concept prioritises the concept of continuity and has been adopted by UNESCO in their 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (CICH) in reference to

measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage. (UNESCO, 2024a, p. 5)

In the context of heritage crafts, the concept of safeguarding aims to ensure that the knowledge of how to make the artefact continues through active engagement, intergenerational learning, and cultural participation and therefore cannot be preserved by physical means alone.

As a printmaker who has experience working with lithography and letterpress printmaking, both featured as endangered on HC's Red List (Heritage Crafts, n.d.d, n.d.e), there is personal motivation and interest behind the research theme. Having discovered the HC'S Red List during my undergraduate degree, I garnered a fascination for heritage crafts practiced in Scotland and have since submitted two assignments on the topic during the course of this postgraduate degree for the University of Glasgow and University of Tartu respectively. Also heavily featured as part of my art practice is a deep interest in the safeguarding of knowledge on the verge of extinction such as the revival efforts of the Celtic language Breton, spoken by my late grandfather, and the Fest-Noz, a UNESCO inscribed Breton music and dance celebration practiced in the French region of Brittany (UNESCO, n.d.b).

1.1. Problem Statement

Heritage crafts being practiced in Scotland are either endangered or at risk and while museums play a critical role in cultural preservation, their effectiveness in safeguarding heritage crafts is underexplored. Since the creation of the CICH there has been ongoing research into the relationship between museums and ICH (Alivizatou, 2011; Neyrinck and Nikolić Đerić, 2020; Nikolić Đerić, *et al.*, 2020a; Ferrer-Yulfo, 2022; Lüdtke, 2025) but the exploration of the role of the museum in heritage craft safeguarding is minimal (Pontsioen, 2020; Ringas *et al.*, 2022; Ştefan, 2023) and non-existent within a Scottish context despite the discussion of ICH practiced within Scotland (McCleery and Bowers, 2016; MacDonald, 2022; Dunn, 2024; Hewitt, 2024). In order to gain an understanding of what work is currently being undertaken to safeguard heritage crafts in Scotland, this study will look at two institutions which have taken different approaches to heritage craft safeguarding. This research examines how the Shetland Museum & Archives and HES' two Stirling sites, The Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre, have involved heritage crafts as part of their programming in two distinct ways and to what extent these approaches engage with local communities and craft practitioners. Shetland Museum & Archives longstanding partnership with Eve Eunson have adopted a community-led

collaboration with local craftspeople who work with straw whilst HES' Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre provide official SQA certification for their stonemasonry apprenticeship scheme alongside more informal training for professionals and the public in traditional building skills. Due to their significantly different approaches to heritage craft safeguarding, it felt appropriate to research two examples that had the same objectives but met them in distinctly different ways in order to gain a broader understanding of the current climate in Scotland.

1.2. Justification and Purpose

Heritage crafts fall under the umbrella of one of UNESCO's five ICH domains: traditional craftsmanship (UNESCO, 2003). In December 2023, the UK Government announced its plans to ratify the CICH and have decided to create advisory boards for each nation, Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Therefore, Scotland has its own board made up of cultural practitioners and institutions to collate ICH practices and potentially nominate to the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, and the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices (DCMS, 2023). Researching the role of museums and heritage centres in ICH safeguarding is crucial as ICH becomes a topical subject within the Scottish cultural sector.

Alongside Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS), Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) is one of the two Scotland-based accredited UNESCO ICH NGOs in the UK (UNESCO, n.d.c) and given that museums and heritage centres are regarded as key institutions in cultural sustainability it matters that heritage craft transmission is taken into account at the beginning of a nationwide conversation regarding the safeguarding of ICH. Prior to the ratification of the CICH, MGS were maintaining a community-based list of ICH being practiced across the country (ICH Scotland Wiki, n.d.) which will be discussed further in the following chapter. Now that Scotland is in the formative phase of its ICH policy development post-CICH ratification the responsibility that cultural institutions will take on in safeguarding efforts is still to be seen. Furthermore, navigating the challenges that people may face when engaging with ICH, as practices or as a concept, and its policy-centric terminology will be a task that institutions and organisations will have to prepare for as it may take some time before it is fully incorporated into the cultural sphere despite already being practiced.

My objective in conducting case studies on Shetland Museum & Archives ongoing relationship with straw craftsmanship and Fair Isle Strawback Chair Maker Eve Eunson as well as HES' stonemasonry apprenticeship scheme and traditional skills outreach events run by their two Stirling-based sites, the Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre, is to provide an understanding of the effectiveness of cultural heritage institutions in safeguarding heritage crafts as well as potential insights into best practices for safeguarding crafts through engagement. The research will inform how museums and heritage centres of all levels can better support craftspeople and ensure the continuity of craft practices in addition to policy recommendations for heritage craft safeguarding in Scotland.

1.3. Research Questions and Objectives

The primary aim of the study is to analyse and evaluate the role of Scottish museums and heritage centres in the safeguarding of heritage crafts. To do so the case studies will employ a qualitative methodological approach involving an analysis of the institution- and craftspeople-led workshops and content in addition to interviews with the staff and craftspeople. At the time of writing, the UK ratified the CICH just over a year ago on the 7th March 2024 (UNESCO, 2024b). Taking this into consideration, this topic is still a new and emergent discussion within the Scottish cultural sector. These considerations are reflected in the research questions:

- What is the current role of museums and heritage centres in Scotland in the safeguarding of heritage crafts?
- How do museums and heritage centres in Scotland engage with local communities and craft practitioners? What kind of programmes or initiatives are in place?
- What challenges do museums and heritage centres in Scotland face in the safeguarding of heritage crafts?

The questions will be addressed through the qualitative analysis of Shetland Museum & Archives' ongoing work with straw crafts and HES' Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre's role in the development of traditional building skills. Furthermore, the research seeks to assess the current situation within the existing funding climate and explore potential steps museums and heritage centres could take to play a more active role in safeguarding heritage crafts in Scotland.

1.4. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation follows the ensuing structure: the justification for the research alongside the research questions and objectives are introduced in Chapter 1, laying down the groundwork for the research. Chapter 2 will delve into the interpretative cultural frameworks and policy context for the inclusion of ICH in cultural institutions, followed by a review of relevant literature on the role and challenges of cultural institutions safeguarding ICH in both international and Scottish contexts. Methodology will be discussed in Chapter 3, including an introduction to the case studies, their participants and methods employed. Chapter 4 will be a compilation of the analysis and interpretation of findings of the qualitative data. Providing a conclusion for the dissertation, Chapter 5 summarises the primary findings of the research in relation to the research questions set out in the introduction in addition to reviewing the limitations and future research of the study.

2. Literature Review

Heritage crafts are vital in the complex makeup of Scotland's living heritage, connecting communities with their culture and history (McCleery and Bowers, 2016; Eunson, 2020). Cultural institutions can play an influential role in safeguarding crafts by fostering an environment for transmission, supporting communities and promoting public engagement but this responsibility is not without its challenges (Smith, 2009; Stefano, 2009; Alivizatou, 2011; Denes *et al.*, 2013; Nikolić Đerić *et al.*, 2020b). The aim of this chapter is to understand the general landscape of ICH safeguarding in which museums and heritage centres in Scotland find themselves in post the UK's ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Looking at existing international frameworks for interpreting cultural heritage, followed by an examination of the current UK and Scottish policy context for ICH, this literature review then considers international and domestic examples of cultural institutions as sites of ICH safeguarding, the case for ICH in Scotland and, to conclude, the challenges and risks of implementing ICH with cultural institutions.

Many of the crafts that we consider today as being traditional or heritage specific often originated in small industry or vernacular settings (Eunson, 2020; Heritage Crafts, n.d.c). Despite a strong history of specific craft forms in the UK, including textile production in both mass industries and localised forms, craft, as we know it today, is a concept that is deep-rooted in its development alongside the industrialisation of Britain. By the mid-nineteenth century, it had come to signify a connection to tradition, often linked—both positively and negatively—to conservatism (Adamson, 2013). As a craft curator and historian, Adamson (2013) emphasises throughout his book, 'The Invention of Craft', that while craftsmanship has not necessarily declined due to industrialisation and more contemporary modernisation, its value is perceived differently compared to other forms of cultural production. Contrary to, and much earlier than Adamson (2013), Manners (1978) laments the decline of crafts across the Highlands and Islands due to the financial appeal of working in the North Sea oil industry. Thus, attributing modernisation as a primary cause for the diminishing number of craftspeople and older craft skills such as thatching and basket making, while allowing that tourism in the area led to an uptake in the demand for more domestic crafted items (Manners, 1978). The argument that contemporary heritage craft practices are heavily influenced by issues such as

globalisation, industrialisation, and cultural homogenisation is one that is bolstered by UNESCO (UNESCO, n.d.a). Due to the recent ratification of the CICH as well as the size and nature of living heritage practiced in Scotland museums, heritage centres and cultural institutions are uniquely positioned at the intersection of ICH practices, informal education and community identity.

As crafts have adapted due to the pressures of modernisation, their recognition as a form of ICH has increasingly driven museums and other cultural institutions to embrace their role in safeguarding these practices. With the inclusion of ICH in the 2022 International Council of Museums (ICOM) definition as stated below means that there has been an uptake in awareness of the role of the museum in the way it examines, collects and understand traditional craftsmanship and other forms of ICH:

A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing. (ICOM, 2022)

The explicit addition of ICH to the definition of museums reflects an alignment with the core principles which reinforce UNESCO's 2003 CICH. Integrating ICH into museums allows for a deeper interpretation of the artefacts on display, shifting their significance from the objects themselves to the people and traditions associated with them (Grattan and Moses, 2006; Alivizatou, 2011). In the context of heritage crafts this definition stresses that the changing role of museums is one that has to promote and encourage the intergenerational transmission of skills and knowledge, emphasise the visibility of craft practitioners in their local communities and allow for a more co-creational approach to the implementation of community heritage narratives.

2.1. Frameworks for Interpreting Cultural Heritage

When discussing the nature of heritage crafts, it is important to understand the contexts and conceptual frameworks from which the term originated. Coined as one of the five domains of

ICH by UNESCO under ‘traditional craftsmanship’ (UNESCO, n.d.a) it concerns the skills and expertise required for the making of craft objects. The primary aim of the CICH category is to safeguard the expertise that craftsmanship emphasises rather than the objects themselves especially advocating for transmission to others within their own communities. ‘Safeguarding’ itself as a term is policy driven and adopted by UNESCO, thus, rather than utilising terms such as ‘conservation’ which could indicate the stagnation or fossilisation of living heritage, the term allows and encompasses the need for growth and expansion that naturally occurs with the transmission of knowledge as new generations adopt and develop the practices.

The argument of safeguarding craft forms as underscored by UNESCO is that it must prioritise living knowledge systems, focusing on community-led transmission and apprenticeships (UNESCO, n.d.a). The UN agency acknowledges that the knowledge itself is at risk of being lost due to a multitude of pressures such as globalisation, industrialisation, environmental decline and socio-economic changes (UNESCO, n.d.a). Within the context of Scotland industrial decline in the 19th and 20th centuries paired with a growth in global markets and cheaper imports from abroad has depleted the demand of Scottish craft skills (Manners, 1978; Peach, 2007). The Harris Tweed Act 1993 (1993) is a standalone piece of UK legislative protection for a specific type of craft as the majority of Scottish based crafts lack comparable foundational safeguarding and are bolstered by small-scale funding, community efforts as well as initiatives from NGOs and Museums such as TRACS and MGS. The delicate nature of this lack of legal support means that Scottish museums, heritage sites and NGOs take on the role of key cultural intermediaries switching between the demands of community identity, heritage-based tourism and, as of the UK’s ratification of the CICH in December 2023, the integration of international safeguarding frameworks.

Other than the theoretical framework that UNESCO’s 2003 CICH, a framework that has largely shaped the academic sphere of contemporary heritage studies is ‘Authorised Heritage Discourse’ (AHD) explored by Laurajane Smith (2006) in her seminal work ‘Uses of Heritage’. Smith (2006) argues that heritage is not a naturally occurring phenomenon but rather a negotiated, political and social process that we choose to participate in. With this in mind, it can be argued that heritage crafts are not innately meaningful, they gain importance through identity politics, current cultural processes and nationalistic or place-based narratives.

Therefore, the role that institutions, like museums and heritage centres, have is one that actively influences how these crafts are interpreted as markers of Scottish identity furthering Smith's (2006) argument that museums are not neutral actors and perpetuate AHD that suit their narratives, oftentimes overriding and ignoring community voices. In addition to critiquing cultural institutions as purveyors of AHD creating monolithic nationalistic narratives, Smith (2006) comments on the power of bodies such as UNESCO and ICOMOS have in AHD discourse as it can be "reinforced and perpetuated through the policy and technical processes that are driven or underlined by the various charters and conventions" (Smith, 2006, p.87). The frameworks can help to instigate a cycle of reinforcement in what is considered to be legitimate heritage by codifying it to suit Western, expert-driven ideals that leave little room for localised and community-led practices despite that being their initial purpose. This in turn can lead to Scottish institutions which do align themselves with the UNESCO ICH framework to then unknowingly reproduce AHD if they choose not to support dynamic localised manners of crafting.

Alongside Smith's influential critique within the realm of cultural heritage studies is Kristin Kuutma's 2013 chapter titled 'Between Arbitration and Engineering: Concepts and Contingencies in the Shaping of Heritage Regimes'. Agreeing with Smith (2006), Kuutma (2013) argues that UNESCO's ICH frameworks may be well intentioned but are not exempt from biases as they are loaded with power structures and in turn create a hierarchy of heritage practices favouring recognisable traditions for international recognition. Asserting that heritage works through feats of "arbitration and engineering" (p. 21), influencing cultural understanding through institutional collection and categorisation, Kuutma reasons that while nominations are framed a community-led, the nominations themselves are state-refereed often performing as acts of diplomacy and nation-branding rather than legitimate safeguarding. The UNESCO nomination lists can be seen as tools of control manipulated by dominant institutions, like that of preceding conventions such as the World Heritage Convention, despite the notion that the ICH is built to be used as a community-controlled, bottom-up nomination scheme. Meaning that these frameworks produce heritage as much as they aim to look after it as the required documentation and nomination files convert living practices into static ones by fossilising them in time and perhaps even getting communities to adapt their practices to fit in with the expectations of UNESCO. It is important to note that the latter issue has been recognised by UNESCO, as its own understanding of ICH or now being referred to as 'living heritage'

(Schnüttgen, 2025) has been broadened to include "cultural practices, expressions, knowledge systems and skills passed down from one generation to the next" (p. 43). Like Smith (2006), Kuutma examines throughout the text how policy and the technical processes of institutionalising heritage manipulate it for political and economic outcomes rather than for community requirements. In application to the safeguarding of crafts within a Scottish context this could lead to museums unintentionally fixing localised ICH practices as forms of heritage that are frames exclusively for the needs of the tourism industry instead of encouraging them to develop as community-led forms of livelihood. Therefore, discussing Smith and Kuutma in tandem allows for us to understand that universal frameworks created by the likes of UNESCO and ICOMOS not only propagate AHD but also keenly construct heritage regimes through their bureaucratic processes.

2.2. Policy Context

While major global frameworks such as UNESCO's 2003 CICH have greatly influenced the international conversation around living heritage practices (including the coining and use of the term 'living heritage'), the interpretation of them within national policy is context dependent. In Scotland, the safeguarding of heritage crafts sits at the crossroads between cultural policy, museum and heritage site management and community-driven initiatives. The development of a more focused commitment towards the institutional championing of ICH over the past two decades has led to key actors across the cultural sector (TRACS, MGS, HES and Creative Scotland) collectively working together in the form of the 'Intangible Cultural Heritage Scotland Partnership' (TRACS, n.d.). Informed by 'Scoping and Mapping Intangible Cultural Heritage in Scotland' (McCleery *et al.*, 2008) report to be discussed below, the development of networks has led to the 'Inventory of Scotland's Living Culture' website launched in 2008 (*ICH Scotland Wiki*, n.d.) and as of July 2025 the launch of 'Protection Through Connection: Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Scotland' (MGS, 2025) project, which looks to strengthen the connections between heritage institutions and ICH communities.

Prior to the UK's ratification of UNESCO's 2003 CICH, there is one rare example of UK legislation that explicitly safeguards a traditional craft: The Harris Tweed Act 1993. The Act

of Parliament was created to protect the definition, quality and authenticity of the handwoven textile from the Outer Hebrides, Scotland (*Harris Tweed Act 1993*) granting it a geographical protected designation of origin. The main provisions of the Act legally defines ‘Harris Tweed’, established the Harris Tweed Authority (a body to protect it), trademark protection and legal enforcement mechanisms (*Harris Tweed Act 1993*) acting primarily as protection of the craft as a commercial product. This Act is an exception to the rule, not a standard form of ICH safeguarding practice as Dunn (2024) argues when comparing Harris Tweed to Tartan as the delay on the UK’s ratification has larger ramifications on safeguarding the different domains of ICH. Dunn (2024) continues to discuss her concerns by considering how the legal protection of Harris Tweed has evolved through IP tools, questioning if formal IP regimes enable genuine community ownership or simply strengthen the power of institutional bodies. The Act has enabled and supported the economic stability of a rural livelihoods dependent on the craft (Dunn, 2024) however in comparison to the goal of the 2003 CICH there is less attention given to the importance of intergenerational skill transmission suggesting the chasm between how safeguarding has been conceptualised and practiced in the past.

It is important to note that the safeguarding of ICH initiatives has received considerable vocal support from the Scottish Government (Local Voices CIC, 2021) which, both at the time of the cited report and at the time of writing, is led by the Scottish National Party (SNP). The nature of Scotland’s current cultural policy stresses inclusivity, place-based development, and cultural rights (The Scottish Government, 2020, 2023) at its core. The 2020 Culture Strategy and its 2023 Action Plan indicate that there has been a significant shift towards embedding culture within a wider social context, seeing it as a driver of social justice, not just economic output. However, this policy does not offer clear mechanisms to support safeguarding ICH. While the policies emphasise collaboration and skill development there is not a clearly defined role for cultural institutions in this facilitation. Despite this lack of targeted support for ICH practices outlined in their policy documents it is essential to understand that instead of aligning with simple nationalistic ideologies, the SNP’s approach emphasises the conservation, contextual understanding, and living continuity of traditional practices. Nonetheless, the politicisation of cultural heritage remains an inherent and complex aspect of its framing, deserving critical attention within policy narratives.

Aligning with the Scottish Government's 2020 Culture Strategy is Historic Environment Scotland's (2020b) 'Intangible Cultural Heritage Policy Statement'. With the aim to integrate ICH into decision-making, policy, and community engagement while representing the historic environment sector in national-level discussions, the policy statement establishes HES's understanding of ICH and what role it has in its safeguarding. The non-denominational government body does adopt UNESCO's definition of ICH and its five domains recognising that tangible and intangible heritage are "inextricably linked" and that it is "integral to our understanding of the historic environment" (HES, 2020b, p. 11). The policy itself positions HES as a facilitator and advocate for ICH in Scotland: treating living traditions and historic places as equally vital to the current cultural landscape whilst aligning themselves with international norms and looking to help empower communities to lead their own safeguarding efforts. However, the successful delivery and integration of the policy heavily relies on how resource allocation will be prioritised and effective cross-sector project coordination. Furthermore, echoing Kuutma's (2013) concerns, the embedding of ICH into HES' wider strategy could in fact be an attempt at institutionalising ICH within broader heritage management operational frameworks, creating an organisational paradigm shift. This in turn risks the commodification or fossilisation of ICH if subjected to institutional regulation without careful consideration. Overall, the policy statement is a forward-thinking commitment to broadening the scope of heritage management in Scotland, and, given that it was published prior to the CICH ratification, aligns Scotland with international frameworks as well as the Scottish Government's wider cultural policy.

Despite Scotland's incapacity to legislate its own ICH protection into law due to the nature of its devolved powers from the UK Government certain academic and public bodies have collaborated in the past to develop inventorying practices. Most significantly Edinburgh Napier University's 'Scoping and mapping intangible cultural heritage in Scotland' (McCleery *et al.*, 2008) and the 'Inventory of Scotland's Living Culture' website that MGS took over from the university in 2011 (ICH Scotland Wiki, n.d.) have been foundational in the current ICH policy landscape. McCleery *et al.*'s (2008) report is the baseline for Scotland's ICH policy thinking using UNESCO's 2003 CICH as the benchmark for its attempt to identify and categorise ICH practices in Scotland. The report itself was a catalyst for discussions between the government, heritage bodies and academics (Edinburgh Napier University, 2014) as it identified gaps and inequalities in the then current climate, in particular the disparity between the UK-level

recognition of legally protected items such as ‘Harris Tweed’ and the invisibility of community practices such as ‘The Burryman’ influencing later reports on the equity of ICH Safeguarding (Local Voices CIC, 2021). The report was not without critique however, as Melis and Chambers (2021) scrutinise the findings using a Foucauldian approach to emulate similar arguments to Smith (2006) and Kuutma (2013): by using UNESCO inventory frameworks, ICH is constructed as a formalised “object of knowledge” (Melis and Chambers, 2021, p. 7). They stress that the dialogues surrounding the fragility and immateriality of these practices in turn validate institutional control favouring bureaucratic representation over the practitioners’ lived experiences. Additionally, they remark that the narratives that surround ICH in Scotland are interconnected with the broader political discourses of the Scottish National Party and Scottish Independence movement (Local Voices CIC, 2021; Melis and Chambers, 2021). Despite the contemporary critique on the report, McCleery *et al.* (2008) created seminal awareness and tools which in turn have directly affected the way in which Scottish cultural institutions engage with ICH. The report then cemented the creation of the ‘Inventory of Scotland’s Living Culture’ which is still actively used and maintained as a participatory tool for ICH awareness to this day.

Since then, two fundamental reports have been commissioned: ‘Mapping Intangible Cultural Heritage Assets and Collections in Scotland’ (Local Voices CIC, 2021), and, yet to be published, ‘Traditional Crafts in Scotland’ (Really Interesting Objects CIC, n.d.). The former was the first cross-sectoral national ICH resource mapping exercise of Scottish institutions and collections which revealed a prominent imbalance in institutional attention. It underlined gaps in the participatory methodologies that institutions claim to incorporate, stating that most practices exist only within the context of their communities separate from archives and institutions. Furthermore, when discussing traditional craftsmanship, the 2021 report revealed that while Scottish museums hold significant amount of materials relating to heritage crafts, the networks and assistance for traditional heritage craft makers were not well established (Local Voices CIC, 2021). Aligning itself with UNESCO’s request for inclusive and sustainable safeguarding, the report called for more community-led, bottom-up mapping, equitable financial and physical support for underrepresented practices and participatory documentation procedures.

As of July 2025, post-CICH ratification, MGS and the ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage Scotland Partnership’ have announced a new cultural heritage project ‘Protection Through Connection’ (MGS, 2025). The project is operating in phases with the first part of the project being to build an extensive picture of ICH practices across the country with the aim of creating a national inventory. The second part of the project launching this year is the funding of applications to support and facilitate “five mutually supportive partnerships between ‘tradition bearers’ of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and cultural or heritage organisations” (MGS, 2025) making their intentions for cementing the role of cultural institutions in the transmission of ICH in Scotland clear. Keeping Smith (2006) and Kuutma's (2013) critique of the paternalistic role of cultural institutions in ICH safeguarding in mind it is important to question if the role of Scottish museums in this process, as MGS consider them to be, are in fact “genuinely participatory community spaces and resources” (MGS, 2025). While this new project is indeed a positive step in the integration of ICH into the world of museums and heritage centres, the framing of the museum and cultural organisations as primary facilitators invites critical consideration. Without the correct mechanisms in place to focus on the decision-making and voices of the tradition bearers, there is the danger that such partnerships reproduce existing hierarchies, wherein the communities of practice are not considered as equitable partners. Thus, this new programme and policy implementation from the ICH Scotland Partnership offers the opportunity to consider museums, heritage sites and organisations as participatory cultural spaces however its success relies upon these institutions embracing models of shared stewardship and co-curation.

2.3. Cultural Institutions as Sites of Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding

With the exception of ethnographic and open-air museums, ICH in museums remains a relatively novel concept. Less than a year after the creation of the 2003 CICH, UNESCO (2004) published a position paper titled ‘The Roles of Museums in Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage’ which aimed to establish a framework for museums to implement the 2003 convention. The paper encourages museums to engage with living heritage by facilitating community participation, documenting practices, and promoting visibility of intangible cultural expressions despite their historic role as keepers of material culture. Thus, situating the role of museums at the turn of the century as transitioning towards a new phase in heritage

management: moving from centring artefacts to centring people. Acting as an international expert in the field of ICH for UNESCO since 1999, Dr Janet Blake's (2018) article 'Museums and Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage – Facilitating Participation and Strengthening their Function in Society' brings UNESCO (2004) position paper into a more contemporary context. Whilst Blake delves more into the paradigm shift in heritage protection introduced by the 2003 CICH, moving from a focus on universal, material heritage to living heritage rooted in human skills and local knowledge, both papers discuss the evolving role of museums calling for them to "re-think their role vis-à-vis not only the heritage they hold and display, but also the communities that create it" (Blake, 2018, p. 20). Furthermore, Blake (2018) recognises that there may be obstacles for museums in the interpretation of ICH mimicking UNESCO's (2004) call for "careful scrutiny"(p. 3) when exhibiting or keeping artefacts related to ICH practices as it may limit their use by the tradition bearers which in turn may restrict the transmission of practices to other generations. Both documents highlight a significant paradigm shift in how heritage, particularly intangible heritage, is understood and safeguarded. Museums are called upon to move beyond their traditional roles as archives of material culture to become proactive social institutions capable of fostering intercultural dialogue whilst actively facilitating the transmission, viability, and recognition of living cultural practices.

A fundamental scholar in the early discussions of the role of the museum in heritage production is Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and her 2004 paper 'From Ethnology to Heritage: The Role of the Museum'. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) states that museums have historically been home to tangible heritage artefacts but that due to the nature and provenance of these artefacts they have continuously worked with the intangible nature of the objects, especially those relating to indigenous performance, as she states "tangible heritage, without intangible heritage, is a mere husk or inert matter, objects that are not yet things" (p. 3). The very nature of objects is to be used for a purpose, therefore if museums are to display objects without acknowledging their intangible qualities, then they are merely storing them and not correctly interpreting them. The challenge in recognising that crafted objects are carriers of embodied knowledge and cultural practice, specifically in the context of safeguarding heritage crafts, underlines the value in interpretation strategies that prioritise function, transmission, and living use, rather than aesthetic decontextualisation. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett further argues that through the act of displaying and selecting objects museums are actively producing heritage by applying museological practices to people, their knowledge, practices and artefacts. It is the concept of

heritage as a metacultural practice: it is culture about culture. Museums consequently produce heritage by selectively transforming elements of the past, including living practices and people's identities, through museological processes into curated exhibitions. Through her analysis she explicitly warns that safeguarding expressions of ICH can get stuck between “freezing the practice and addressing the inherently processual nature of culture” (2004, p. 2) meaning that the fossilisation of practices can indeed happen if a cultural institution prioritises performative action over community engagement. In essence, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) urges for museums, particularly ethnology museums, to actively engage with their difficult and problematic histories and hold themselves accountable for their responsibility towards the communities whose heritage they support.

A more contemporary case for museums are being an ideal institutional environment for the safeguarding of ICH is discussed by Lüdtké (2025) in the book chapter ‘Museums as Facilitators in the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage’. Lüdtké's (2025) primary argument is that not only do museums conserve artefacts in relation to ICH but that if museums offer practical demonstrations and re-enactments as “places of experience” (p. 444) through hands-on learning to make ICH accessible and engaging to visitors then it plays a key part in transmission. Furthermore, the role of community involvement and, in particular, the analogue transmission of knowledge “with no virtual substitute” (p. 448) is fundamental, especially to offset the increasing dependence on digitisation within museum and heritage spaces. However, this can only be achieved if the museums wishing to integrate ICH into their spaces become more participatory through collaboration with the communities, groups and individuals who are ICH stakeholders, to ensure that ICH remains dynamic and relevant through co-creation (Neyrinck and Nikolić Đerić, 2020; Nikolić Đerić, *et al.*, 2020). The culmination of a multiyear project involving museums and ICH specialist, Nikolić Đerić *et al.*'s (2020) book ‘Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Towards a Third Space in the Heritage Sector’ investigates how museums can evolve to meaningfully encourage the safeguarding of ICH emphasising on co-creation and participatory practices. In the book Neyrinck and Nikolić Đerić (2020) frame ICH as a parallel of cultural biodiversity: “it is a range of creative solutions that people have come up with over time to address how and where we live together” (p. 12) emphasising the human aspect of these practices. Due to this emphasis, they bolster their argument that museums can shift their centre from being authority figures to facilitators and participants in heritage practices by adopting a ‘third-space’ approach. Homi Bhabha states (as cited in

Neyrinck and Nikolić Đerić, 2020, p. 13) that if museums do open themselves to taking on a new sphere of collaboration where practitioners and institutions co-create new meaning then it can “give rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation”. This implies that with genuine collaboration and co-curation in praxis, museums can sustainably safeguard using inclusive, dialogical museum practices involving the stakeholders or the “communities, groups and individuals (CGIs)” (p. 16) as experts in their own heritage.

Comparatively to Lüdtke (2025) who champions museums as custodians of tradition, grounded in material culture and tactile experience and Nikolić Đerić, *et al.* (2020) who push for a participatory revolution, where heritage is safeguarded with, not just for, communities, Alivizatou (2006) positions intangible heritage as an unsettling yet catalytic force for rethinking museum roles. Drawing on Hooper-Greenhill’s concept of the “post-museum” (p. 48), Alivizatou (2006) explores how museums can move on from being artefact-centred monoliths to its direct opposite, sites that embrace the living cultural expressions beyond the objects. Despite the critique of (then) current museological practices, she is anticipatory in the future that museums could have in the safeguarding of ICH, calling for them to develop a practice that appropriately engages with the intangible, its communities and contexts. All three discussions concur on the importance of museums in the maintenance of ICH but disagree in their applications of methodology and philosophy. Together they plot an evolution that museums and heritage sites could take: beginning with Alivizatou's (2006) critical reflection to Lüdtke's (2025) practical demonstrations and public participation to, finally, Nikolić Đerić, *et al.* (2020) community co-creation and participatory re-imagination.

Putting the theoretical notions of ICH safeguarding into practice is a grand undertaking but there are international examples of museums actively participating in the dialogue between communities and collections. A long-term scholar of the relationship between ICH and Museums, Alix Ferrer-Yulfo (2022) examines how museums can evolve their educational roles by integrating ICH into their engagement strategies in detailed case studies on two museums: Museo del Baile Flamenco, Spain and Museu do Fado, Portugal. Through these case studies Ferrer-Yulfo (2022) considers the possible transformative nature that ICH can have in museums as “museum education is transformed through ICH by recognizing the role and

agency of the ICH community in determining the most appropriate ways of transmitting their knowledge and practices” (p. 328). Therefore, when museums support intergenerational transmission and long-term sustainability by empowering bearer communities, they can ensure representation and preservation through the encouragement of co-curatorial partnerships between museums and cultural practitioners. The transformation of pedagogy is rooted in shared authority, performance, and multisensory experiences when discussing the inclusion of ICH within museum spaces. This inclusion and integration is not without tension however as Banović, Milenković and Milenković (2024) explore the friction between museum practice and ethnic attribution in the safeguarding of ICH in the Western Balkans, mainly in Serbia and Montenegro, using Tamburica-playing as a case study. Due to the history of the Balkans, and the nature of ICH, heritage practices are often shared between different countries, peoples and groups but are nonetheless contested between practitioners due to ethnic attribution which in turn leads to major dilemmas for museum professionals who are expected to “respond professionally to the ethnic attribution of ICH elements when collaborating with stakeholders” (Banović, Milenković and Milenković, 2024, p. 514). Within this geographical context they consider that museums are culturally situated as mediators between policy, communities of practice and the state creating problems between representation, ownership, and authority. If museums do actively engage in “identity management” (Banović, Milenković and Milenković, 2024, p. 523) then they can become mediums in reconciliation and cooperation when enabled by culturally sensitive and professionally nuanced museum practices.

A growing form of ICH inclusion within museum spaces is the use of digital technology. Chan and Cai (2023) investigate how a virtual museum was developed to preserve and exhibit the Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival in Hong Kong. With a focus on representing the emotional atmosphere and cultural continuity the project adopted a community-driven approach by centring the ICH practitioners through in-depth interviews which “detailed information of the celebrations, [their] historical knowledge of the festival, old photographs, and personal memories” (p. 408). This bottom-up strategy mirrors the intentions of UNESCO’s CICH increasing community agency as to how heritage is presented, furthermore, the museum captured 360° video footage of festival activities, ambiance, and performance aiming to represent both the tangible and intangible aspects of the traditions. By combining community-led storytelling with multimodal digital media the virtual museum aims to present the more ephemeral and emotional aspects of ICH in practice. This approach reflects a wider

development, conducted both within and outwith museums, in the use of digital technologies for the preservation and representation of rural crafts, as exemplified by multiple Greek research projects. Utilising digital technologies such as 3D scanning and augmented reality, this research explores methods of preserving crafts through both practical actions and digital tools (Zabulis *et al.*, 2022). Practical applications of these tools include the recreation of these crafts digitally with the aim to curate museum exhibitions that enhance educational engagement, allowing audiences to explore traditional crafts without the need to travel to the communities where they are produced (Ringas *et al.*, 2022; Zabulis *et al.*, 2022). The use of technology and digitisation of heritage does not exist without healthy critique as Dunn (2020) and Wagner and de Clippele (2023) do provide in relation to intellectual property. Dunn (2020) criticises the way in which scanning removes attention from the craft processes themselves, whereas, Wagner and de Clippele (2023) claim that digital archives can separate ICH from the lived experience and community contexts in which they original from, highlighting that power, ownership and meaning become contested in the act of digitising heritage. Both agree that digitisation can marginalise the intangible community-based practices and urge cultural institutions, including museums, to act with more ethical consideration for the communities of practice when engaging in this form of digital heritage procedure.

Museums are increasingly utilising heritage crafts as a tool for cultural tourism, particularly in regions where economic diversification is a pressing concern. Horjan (2011) explores how a cross-border craft project between Croatia and Slovenia called 'CRAFTATTRACT' aims to promote traditional crafts as a cultural tourism attraction. The project successfully created a foundation for promoting traditional crafts establishing two new centres for traditional crafts and skills located within existing museums in Kumrovec, Croatia, and Ptuj, Slovenia (Horjan, 2011). A primary strength of the project is that the museums are active agents of cultural continuity rather than static institutions organising educational workshops with regional vocational schools and creating and managing a compatible database of traditional crafts and skills. However, the project was not without its drawbacks as in spite of an identified "growing interest in 'authentic' traditional life" (p. 48) within the tourism sector there was in fact limited interest in promoting genuine traditional products with a preference for "an easily accessible fake to 'the real thing'"(p. 54). In contrast, this preference for 'fake' heritage cannot be mirrored in Musinguzi and Kibirige's (2009) analysis of 'The role of cultural and heritage education at Bakoni Malapa Open Air Museum' as the museum actively pushes against

adapting cultural traditions to appeal to the demands of tourism. Along with demonstrations of traditional dress and dances the museum uses craft demonstrations as a form of cultural heritage education to teach the “artistry and skill of the Bakoni people” (p. 155) whilst discussing the establishment and evolution of the museum during the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. The crafts produced at the museum are sold as souvenirs, recognising the importance of craft as a vital marketing tool given that they can evoke memories and encourage others to visit their museum. However, the museum refuses to change the size and shapes of the artefacts to suit tourism needs. At its core, the Bakoni Malapa Open Air Museum safeguards the authenticity of Bakoni craft traditions, emphasising promotion and education rather than pursuing commercial opportunities that risk eroding their cultural meaning. Both Musinguzi and Kibirige (2009) and Horjan (2011) stress that the role that museums play in heritage craft safeguarding when it is used as a tool for tourism, can in fact be a factor for local development and concrete education rather than being used as an exploited marketing technique.

When looking at the role of museums and heritage sites in the direct safeguarding of heritage crafts there are two primary examples from which Scotland could draw upon due to their inclusionary practices: Japan and Romania. In Japan museums are active participants in sustaining living craft traditions as Pontsioen (2020) examines through institutional advocacy, strategic partnerships, exhibition platforms, and community-centred programming. Pontsioen (2020) highlights that Japan has a tradition of protecting its craft heritage not only through the 1974 ‘Act on the Promotion of Traditional Craft Industries’ but through the integration of policies from museums, government agencies, and community guilds to support both artistic and economic sustainability of crafts in rural regions. Museums do so by helping craftspeople navigate the legal frameworks in applying for traditional craft designations and increasing the public’s exposure to traditional craftsmanship through annual demonstrations. Moreover, within the context of Romania, museums can help ensure the long-term survival of endangered craft traditions as well as maintaining this source of economic sustainability in rural communities as Ștefan (2023) asserts. Focusing on ASTRA, an open-air museum in Sibiu, Romania, Ștefan (2023) explores how museums can act as catalysts for sustainable rural development by promoting and preserving traditional crafts through supporting local craftspeople by hosting workshops and live demonstrations, supporting knowledge transmission from master craftsmen to younger generations by giving them a place to do so and by organising events and festivals to promote traditional crafts to tourists and locals.

Through this holistic approach, the museum ensures that heritage remains a living, evolving, and economically viable part of the community. In both cases, museums are stressed as active participants, rather than passive vessels, in the safeguarding and long-term sustainability of heritage crafts.

2.4. Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Case for Scotland

Other than major reports previously discussed in relation to ICH policy in Scotland ('Scoping and mapping intangible cultural heritage in Scotland' (McCleery *et al.*, 2008) and 'Mapping Intangible Cultural Heritage Assets and Collections in Scotland' (Local Voices CIC, 2021)) the primary piece of academic literature looking at ICH within the context of Scotland is McCleery and Bowers' (2016) book chapter titled 'Documenting and Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Experience in Scotland'. McCleery and Bowers (2016) outline the nation's efforts to document and safeguard ICH with an emphasis on inclusivity and community participation in building national identity through heritage management. They discuss the 'ENrich' (Edinburgh Napier University Research in Cultural Heritage) Initiative which led to the creation of the user-generated online wiki (*ICH Scotland Wiki*, n.d.) to promote ICH practices as an inclusive, non-ethnic, and civic entity rather than a nationalistic one. Theoretically emphasising the role of ICH as a form of political soft power, they prove that the way in which Scotland has engaged with ICH as a concept (prior to the UK's CICH ratification) is not only a cultural goal but also a geopolitical signalling of progressive values. McCleery and Bowers (2016) also discuss the use of ICH as a tourism tool to "be able to be employed as a vehicle for promoting economic development" (p. 187); with the correct infrastructure in place this could be a positive driver for local economies. However, the tension between the authenticity and commodification of ICH in Scotland is acknowledged but not fully resolved in the text. Overall, the discussion raises the argument that ICH in Scotland can operate as a cultural bridge between communities, promoting tourism, and redefining national identity in the 21st century.

Other than McCleery and Bowers (2016), the dialogue surrounding ICH in Scotland is still a primarily institutional focus exemplified by MGS' series of non-peer reviewed case studies on ICH cases in Scotland. Hewitt's (2024) blog post observes how the Annan Museum in Dumfries

and Galloway functions as a key local hub, operating as a community centre, raising visibility of local traditions and facilitating connections among heritage bearers, supporting a local custom called the ‘Annan Riding of the Marches’. The case study places the museum as a civic anchor within the community illustrating a very concrete way in which a local museum can support living traditions by offering a place to safeguard an object or memorabilium “until it is needed by the community for an annual custom or event” (Hewitt, 2024) as well as displaying exhibitions relating to the marches. Prior to the UK’s ratification of the CICH a yearlong celebration of Scottish culture through storytelling was hosted all over the country as VisitScotland’s ‘Year of Stories 2022’ (VisitScotland, n.d.): two are highlighted by MGS – Gairloch Museum’s Festival of Stories and Stories from the Kist (MGS, 2023b, 2023a). The former was a 10-day festival which converted the museum into a taigh cèilidh (storytelling house) aimed at combating Covid-19 pandemic related social isolation through using the museum as a community hub (MGS, 2023a) and the latter brought to life the Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches archive of audio recordings of Scotland’s cultural heritage with the goal of revitalising oral traditions and extending local reach through professional storytellers (MGS, 2023b). Both case studies stress the role of Scottish museums as places that can create new relationships to old traditions by encouraging cultural continuity through education.

In relation to contemporary craft and museums MacDonald (2022) reviews the significance of the relationship between ICH and heritage crafts in Scotland through her analysis of two craft exhibitions. Through this analysis, MacDonald (2022) notes that the exhibitions worked as platforms for discussing the part that a sense of place has within craft practice and further highlights that many communities and activities once associated with hunting, shooting, and fishing have declined, leading to the loss or radical change of associated craft skills. Concerns are raised throughout the text about the future of rural craft in the UK due to loss of skills, raw materials, and affordable places to live and work, exacerbated by the under-recognition of intangible heritage.

2.5. Challenges, Risks and Research Gaps

The incorporation of ICH in museums is not without risk as there are multiple factors that could impede the community-centred evolution of the practices. Alivizatou (2011) argues that there

are three central concerns with the inclusion of ICH in mainstream museums: financial, petrification, commercialisation. Acknowledging financial constraints may limit a museums' ability to integrate interactive experiences as well as any technology that may be used to document the practices alongside the act of documenting and that recording traditions might fossilise them in time, disrupting their natural evolution. However, the primary challenge is the risk that commercialisation can bring when cultural practices are adapted for tourism or spectacle rather than authentic production. Nikolić Đerić *et al.* (2020b) agree on the danger of the commercialisation of ICH in museums as there is a fine balance between the act of safeguarding and its economic use. In spite of being in agreement with Alivizatou (2011), they also highlight two further challenges to consider.

Firstly, the loss of the ICH practices' original meanings in the hands of the museum, calling for any inclusion within museums to remain community-driven rather than museum-dictated. The second one is the integration of ICH into displays and collections which would require museums to develop strategies for documenting and exhibiting ICH to preserve its living essence rather than reducing it to mere objects. This ongoing debate shows growing realisation of the importance of ICH and the manner in which it needs to be handled within museum contexts. Nikolić Đerić *et al.* (2020b) further warns that the incorporation of ICH into museological spaces is at risk of being tokenistic unless it involves intercultural dialogues and a community approach to shared decision-making.

The novelty of UNESCO's ICH terminology when discussing practices with communities has proven to cause issues and obstacles when it comes to implementing safeguarding measures as Denes *et al.* (2013) reflect on. In the context of the ICH and Museums Field School held in Lamphun, Thailand the "newness of the ICH discourse" (p. 19) can present a challenge, as there may not be a stable, direct translation for capturing the essence of ICH in local languages, leading to approximations and potentially imposing international concepts on local understandings. Furthermore, the act of identifying and classifying ICH itself can transform a community's understanding of their own traditions through the selection process, as Smith (2006) and Kuutma (2013) warned as it indicates that the safeguarding process itself is not neutral and has an inherent impact on the heritage it seeks to protect.

In the context of the UK, challenges have been identified in relation to the incorporation of ICH in heritage sites for built heritage professionals and English museums in rural and less considered parts of the country. Djabarouti (2021) focuses on the perceived barriers experienced by UK-based built heritage practitioners when incorporating intangible heritage into their work stating that the non-physical qualities; uncertainty surrounding the definition of ICH; the complexity it would add to their work; and participatory problems were all considered to be significant constraints to incorporating ICH into their professional roles. Djabarouti (2021) confirms that without the active endorsement of education and policy ICH will remain an under-recognised and perceivably complex element within UK built heritage work. Specifically focusing on rural and overlooked parts of England, Smith (2009) and Stefano (2009) present complementary yet distinct insights into the challenges of safeguarding ICH within museums. Both articles confirm that traditional museum practice tends to prioritise physical, tangible aspects of cultural heritage with Stefano stating that ICH is seen as “secondary to material evidence” (2009, p. 120) as well as finding that there is a significant challenge in identifying and engaging with the “originating communities” (Smith, 2009, p. 16) who are the custodians of the forms of ICH that the museums want to work with. With the latter challenge, both stress that ICH is inextricably linked to people and therefore there are deep complexities with identifying communities of origin as well as ‘Englishness’ and rural identity in a more diverse society. The authors, Smith (2009) and Stefano (2009), differ in their approaches to identifying the issues at hand, Smith (2009) uses more theoretical and illustrative project examples to focus on societal and conceptual complexities at the Museum of English Rural Life, a national museum that addresses a broad scope of topics, whereas Stefano (2009) concentrates on how these complexities manifest in small to midsized museums in the North East of England using policy analysis, observations and interviews as research methods. Collectively Smith (2009), Stefano (2009) and Djabarouti (2021) reveal that the UK heritage sector faces considerable conceptual and practical challenges in ICH safeguarding primarily due to a focus on tangible heritage, insufficient time and financial resources, and difficulties in defining and engaging with diverse communities.

While scholarship over the past 20 or so years has explored and expanded the understanding of intangible cultural heritage and craft practices in relation to international frameworks and cultural institutions, such as museums and heritage centres, significant gaps remain concerning the role of museums and heritage centres within a Scottish context. As discussed in this chapter,

there is notably little peer-reviewed academic work examining how cultural institutions engage with ICH safeguarding in Scotland, which is particularly relevant following the UK's 2024 ratification of UNESCO's CICH. Furthermore, most of the peer-reviewed literature discussed connecting cultural institutions to heritage crafts concerns the period directly post-2003 CICH creation and prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to this, there is a disconnect between prominent policy frameworks and their overarching goals and the day-to-day realities of embedding ICH safeguarding in institutions of any size. Safeguarding requires practice-based, long-term engagement, and the current literature largely overlooks this kind of work in museum settings focusing more on craft in education and the display of artefacts in relation to their associated ICH practices.

3. Methodology

3.1. Case Studies

The analysis is comprised of qualitative case studies of two museums and heritage centres in different regions of Scotland and their relationships with heritage craft safeguarding: two Historic Environment Scotland sites in Stirling, the Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre, and Shetland Museum & Archives with Eve Eunson and the Straw Craft community in Shetland. The main selection criterion for the studies was that each site had worked in partnership with craft practitioners as active collaborators in exhibitions, workshops, and preservation and safeguarding initiatives in the last 5 years. Furthermore, the sites were selected due to the longstanding nature of the collaborations and safeguarding activities: whilst the Engine Shed is a relatively new site, the Stirling Skills Training Centre has been running for 15 years, and Eve Eunson and Shetland Museum & Archives have been working together for 5 years. Additionally, during the initial stages of the study, I approached the V&A Dundee and the Edinburgh Kiltmaker's Academy as another case study but was unable to include them in the project due to their unavailability. Additionally, the sites are considerably different from one another in geographical, financial and philosophical terms that in turn engenders a breadth of approaches towards heritage craft safeguarding which could help determine what strategies are most effective.

In the following section the Heritage Crafts viability definitions will be used for the crafts being discussed. These definitions have been developed for the 'Red List' and employ a conservation status system similar to that of the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List and the Rare Breeds Survival Trust Watchlist (Heritage Crafts, n.d.a). They are as follows: extinct in the UK – “no longer practised in the UK; critically endangered – “serious risk of no longer being practised in the UK” ; endangered – “currently have sufficient craftspeople to transmit the craft skills to the next generation, but for which there are serious concerns about their ongoing viability”; and currently viable – “in a healthy state and have sufficient craftspeople to transmit the craft skills to the next generation” (Heritage Crafts, n.d.a).

3.1.1. The Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre, Stirling

The Engine Shed, based in Stirling, is one of Historic Environment Scotland's accredited training centres claiming to be not a museum but a building conservation centre (The Engine Shed, n.d.a). Running since 2017, the centre is part of the HES network which teaches traditional craft skills, particularly in historic building conservation with teams of experts in 'Heritage Science', 'Technical Education and Training' and 'Digital Documentation and Innovation' (The Engine Shed, n.d.b). Alongside the Engine Shed, in a separate building, is the Skills Training Centre, one of two HES training centres. This site is home to the delivery of modern apprenticeships in Stonemasonry that has been running for over 15 years and employ a team of salaried stonemasons and educators to run the 4-year SQA accredited course. The Stirling Centre (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) can take up to 12 apprentices a year who are required to attend 30 weeks of training over the first two years of their apprenticeship and who are monitored working on site with the contractor that they are employed by whilst undertaking their apprenticeship.



Figure 1: Person carving stone block in the Skills Training Centre (Historic Environment Scotland, n.d.)



Figure 2: Workshop of Skills Training Centre (Historic Environment Scotland, n.d.)

Stonemasonry is the traditional craft of carving stones for buildings, it is among the oldest occupations and practices in human history and is currently viable according to Heritage Crafts (Heritage Crafts, n.d.f). There are two types of stonemasons who practice the trade: banker masons, who carve the stones into completed pieces for installation, and fixer masons, who install completed stones during building construction (Heritage Crafts, n.d.f). With many of stonemasons today undertaking repair and maintenance, there is a high demand for the skills of the trade in countries like Scotland due to the number of historic buildings across the country made of local stone. The centre also hosts building management and energy efficiency events open to professionals and to the public in the form of lectures, open days, continued professional development and talks and seminars (The Engine Shed, n.d.d).

3.1.2. Shetland Museum & Archives and Eve Eunson

Opened in 2007, Shetland Museum and Archives based in Lerwick, Shetland is home to a display of the islands' rich cultural heritage and history (Shetland Museum & Archives, n.d.a). The Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) accredited museum and archives has a permanent exhibition exploring the history of the Shetland Isles, Da Gadderie, a temporary exhibition space and the Crofthouse Museum in Dunrossness, a traditional 19th century thatched crofthouse (Shetland Museum & Archives, n.d.b). They run a variety of educational events in

person and online throughout the year for children, families and adults as well as having educational sessions for schools with workshops and resource packs (Shetland Museum & Archives, n.d.a).

Eve Eunson is a professional maker of Fair Isle Straw Back Chairs (see Figure 3), a critically endangered craft specific to the Fair Isle which consists of making traditional chairs which have a wooden frame and knotted straw back (Heritage Crafts, n.d.b). In 2018, Eunson started a project called ‘The Fair Isle Chair Project’ with the aim to locate and document all the Fair Isle chairs that she could find and then craft a representative example of each type (Eunson, 2020). Learning from Stewart Thomson who had revived the craft in the 1990s (Eunson, n.d.), Thomson has since stopped making Fair Isle straw back chairs for commercial purposes which makes Eunson the only practicing professional maker (Heritage Crafts, n.d.b). Similar to the Orkney chair, the Fair Isle Chair relies on natural locally sourced materials and the straw is held in place with tightly knotted cotton fishing line rather than stitching (Heritage Crafts, n.d.b) as seen in Figure 4. Eunson regularly teaches this knotting technique in a simplified form using her rope basket kits which provide very basic introduction to the craft and a means to raise awareness. It is important to note that Eunson also worked with Heritage Crafts to get recognition for Fair Isle Straw Back Chair Making: it was listed on the Red List in 2019 as “critically endangered” (Heritage Crafts, n.d.b).



Figure 3: Eve Eunson's Fair Isle Straw Back chair as seen in the 'Fair Isle Chairs' Exhibition (Alistair Hamilton, 2020)



Figure 4: Eve Eunson demonstrating straw techniques (Ewan Nicolson, 2021)

Shetland Museum and Archives collaborated with Eve Eunson in the *Fair Isle Chair Project* exhibition which they organised and co-curated together and which ran from 17th November 2020 to 28th May 2021, in Da Gadderie (Shetland Museum & Archives, 2020). The exhibition gave a comprehensive insight into the history, traditional craftsmanship and unique characteristics of the chairs and during the exhibition run Eunson gave a demonstration of the knotting technique used for the chairmaking. From the exhibition came the creation of the ‘Winter Straw Club’ hosted at Shetland Museum & Archives as the initial drop-in session had approximately 90 attendees (Shetland Amenity Trust, 2022). Eunson is one of the now three tutors of the ‘Winter Straw Club’, alongside Samantha Dennis and Leslie Smith. ‘The Winter Straw Club’ is a skill-based workshop on the preservation of endangered straw skills that has been running annually (and which sells out) for the past three years (Shetland Museum & Archives, 2024b).

3.2. Research Paradigm

The research seeks to understand how the sites and craft practitioners collaborate on heritage craft safeguarding using pragmatism as an analytical guide for the applied focus and real-world relevance of the studies. Pragmatism, as explored by John Dewey (1963), is fundamentally grounded in practicality rather than idealism, emphasising action and experience (James, 1907; Riga, 2020). It suggests that truth and reality can be both singular and multiple, subjective and objective, scientific and humanistic (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p. 36). Whilst predominantly used for a mixed methods approach, if one applies pragmatism with inductive reasoning it allows for themes and insights to emerge from the data rather than imposing a strict theoretical framework (Thomas, 2006). Additionally, it can help with facilitating the discussion of the practical applicability of any recommendations that arise from the research. Using this approach helps to further understand the processes, relationships and cultural significance of the collaborations between museums and heritage crafts. Thus, acknowledging that there is a need for methodological flexibility, the integration of pragmatism with inductive reasoning enables an adaptable research design using a mix of qualitative methods that prioritises actionable insights that both institutions and craft practitioners can use to improve their collaborative safeguarding efforts. The case studies do not assume one correct perspective but instead seek practical insights for craft safeguarding efforts in the current state of the Scottish cultural sector.

Given that this study is looking at a contemporary issue within the Scottish cultural sphere it is important that it engages with the more practical aspects of these collaborations, hence the choice to integrate inductive reasoning within the studies. Inductive analysis is a form of data analysis that captures emerging trends and challenges in institution-practitioner collaborations ensuring that the theories which materialise are led by the data findings (Patton, 2015). The primary theoretical background for this form of pragmatism is Dewey's interpretation due to his application of pragmatism to educational environments which emphasises that knowledge is created through action and problem-solving rather than through abstract contemplation (Riga, 2020). Dewey's (1963) principles of learning emphasise that education should be interactive and encourages the exploration of real-world problems which align with a pragmatist-inductive methodology. Furthermore, the application of emergent theory, building Dewey's principles of learning through experience, can help analyse how heritage craft

knowledge is safeguarded. Rather than integrating a comparative case study approach, each study is explored in-depth on its own terms rather than integrating a comparative case study approach. However, this will still allow for best practices and challenges to be identified through emergent theory building as it allows for theoretical insights to develop from data rather than being imposed before data gathering (Eisenhardt, 1989). This will allow for findings to shape grounded recommendations, therefore reflecting adaptive strategies rather than a fixed model.

3.3. Methods

3.3.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

The primary form of data collection for the studies are semi-structured interviews with museum and heritage site professionals and craft practitioners involved in the programming, leading or organisation of the collaborative projects. Interviews were established as a method early in the process given that they allow for in-depth exploration of personal experiences, institutional perspectives, and collaboration challenges (Yin, 2018). While flexible, a semi-structured interview ensures that key topics such as collaboration, challenges and sustainability are covered across all participants. With the initial aim of covering 5-6 recorded interviews, the data collated comprises of two sit-down recorded interviews and 4 extensive non-audio recorded interviews: during the latter notes were taken in real time to record essential information and opinions of the participants all whilst remaining anonymous.

The participants for the interviews are museum curators, museum and heritage site professionals and craft practitioners involved in collaborative projects. The sampling strategy is purposive to ensure that participants represent both institutional and practitioner perspectives and also allows for the capturing of any additional relevant participants that are identified through recommendations from initial interviewees, as snowball sampling could have been employed. Through purposeful sampling there is a confirmation that the key stakeholders are included (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015) whilst snowball sampling enables the researcher to reach participants who may not be formally documented in museum-practitioner networks (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). To this affect the key stakeholders in question are the craft practitioners directly involved in the projects as well as the museum and heritage centre staff who are

working on active collaborations with said craft practitioners as no other relevant participants identified in the initial discussions were available to interview during the data collection period.

The key themes to be explored through the interviews aim to gauge the scope of the collaborations and the impact of these collaborations on the museum, practitioners and their crafts; the challenges in sustaining partnerships (if long-term); public engagement with craft; participants' experiences in museum-craft partnerships; and practical solutions and best practices that museums and craft practitioners have developed. The interview questions can be found in **Error! Reference source not found.** and Appendix C: **Interview Questions for Craftspeople.**

3.3.2. Content Analysis

Given that for one of the venues a part of the project happened in the last five years the use of content analysis is fundamental in understanding the content produced before, during and after the projects' completions as I was not able to attend the events in person. Content analysis is a systematic, replicable method which involves identifying patterns, themes and meanings in data (Krippendorff, 2019). The aim of using this as a form of data collection is to understand how museums and heritage sites frame their role in craft safeguarding whilst gathering a wider perspective of the sites and craft practitioners' partnerships in heritage craft safeguarding. Looking at publications, digital content and educational materials related to the joint initiatives will help to identify themes of how the sites and craft practitioners communicate their collaborative efforts in craft safeguarding. For this purpose, a specific table was created (see Appendix D: **Content Analysis Sheet**) with the aim of having a consistent analysis format. This form of data collection helps to identify how heritage crafts are represented, promoted, and valued by institutions which can lead to opportunities for more effective heritage craft safeguarding. Furthermore, it helps recognise effective communication strategies used by museums.

3.3.3. Observation

As part of the study, observations will be employed to examine the ongoing work of Historic Environment Scotland (HES) at their Skills Training Centre and the Engine Shed.

Unfortunately, the nature of the project at Shetland Museum & Archives make that observation is not an option for past projects. As a method, observation complements interviews and content analysis by seeing if the practise aligns or contrasts with them; bolstering the interviews with evidence also reduces the reliance on personal recollections (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Furthermore, non-participatory overt observation supports a pragmatic focus on situated, experiential knowledge concentrating on how safeguarding happens in action by catching informal learning moments which may have not been mentioned in interviews or documents and how the craft is presented and interpreted in situ. With this in mind, any observations were recorded in the format as seen in Appendix E: **Observation Sheet**. Since the approach is inductive, observing safeguarding and learning practices as they unfold in situ may reveal unexpected themes and support additional research methods.

3.3.4. Data Analysis

Since the study follows a pragmatist-inductive approach the data will be analysed using thematic analysis. As the use of an inductive approach ensures that analysis is driven by datasets the study will identify patterns and emergent themes across interviews, observations and content analysis rather than analysing it through a pre-imposed framework. This aligns with the research topic as it lets the researcher explore how Scottish museums and heritage centres frame heritage craft safeguarding; examine how craft practitioners experience and interact with museum collaborations; and compare institutional narratives (content analysis) with real-world experiences (interviews). Furthermore, it ensures the formation of stronger conclusions as it uses converging evidence from different sources (Yin, 2018) - i.e. interviews, content analysis and observation research - also known as data triangulation. Once collated, the data will be inputted into NVivo software accessed through the University of Glasgow which will provide a space to organise, examine and label using inductive reasoning.

3.4. Considerations

3.4.1. Ethical Considerations

Ensuring best practice in the data collection requires specific ethical considerations to be put into practice: primarily, the insurance of informed consent and confidentiality among participants. While approval from the University of Tartu Ethics Committee is not required due

to all the participants being adults who can fully consent to their inclusion in the research, the project does abide by the Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (Centre for Ethics, University of Tartu and Estonian Research Council, 2017). To guarantee confidentiality participants' identities will be protected unless explicit consent is given for recognisable attribution alongside being fully briefed on the purpose of the study, data usage, and withdrawal rights as stated in Appendix A: **Interview Information Sheet & Consent Form**. For this purpose, interview data will be classified using pseudonyms or role-based identifiers instead of participants' names unless they explicitly consent otherwise, and written consent will need to be obtained prior to interviews using a consent form (see Appendix A: **Interview Information Sheet & Consent Form**). Data storage will align with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) with interview transcripts and audio files being saved on encrypted, password-protected storage alongside the guarantee of the destruction of the raw data once the degree is completed in December 2025. There is also a need to be sensitive to potential power imbalances between institutions and craft practitioners as they may have different levels of institutional power, affecting how freely they share information. To ensure equal representation of voices, participants will be given the option to review and approve interview transcripts before analysis.

Alongside ethical considerations, researcher bias and reflexivity may influence data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Researchers are not neutral observers as their perspectives are affected by personal experiences, beliefs, or institutional affiliations that influence how they engage with participants and interpret data (Berger, 2015). As an artist with a BA in Fine Art my artistic background, creative training, and personal experiences inevitably shape how I have approached the institution-craft practitioner collaborations in the research. This means that my biases make me identify more with the craft practitioners than with the museum professionals which could lead to subconsciously favouring their perspectives over institutional viewpoints. To mitigate this, triangulation (comparing interviews, observations, and content analysis) will be used to ensure balanced interpretations and reduce personal bias in conjunction with the use of a reflexivity journal to track personal assumptions, biases, and decision-making processes throughout the research.

3.4.2. Assumptions and Limitations

As with any form of qualitative research there are assumptions made by the researcher in terms of the datasets collected from the research. There is the underlying expectation that the selected case studies are representative of broader trends in cultural institutions and craft practitioner collaborations and that the findings can be applied to other institution-practitioner partnerships in heritage craft safeguarding.

In the case of these studies there are three primary assumptions: that participants will provide honest and informed responses, that observations and content analysis will reflect actual practices and strategies and that certain themes will emerge from the data. With regard to the participants, it is presumed that institution professionals and craft practitioners will answer truthfully about their experiences, challenges, and perspectives as well as being able to accurately recall past events. Given that participants may hesitate to criticise institutions due to their professional relationships cross-checking interviews with observation and content analysis will help to verify claims as well as mitigate memory bias where certain events may be emphasised or key details forgotten or omitted.

For content analysis it is expected that museum policies, reports, and publications accurately represent institutional strategies for craft safeguarding and that, in addition, the publications, exhibition texts, and digital content reveal how institutions construct narratives about craft safeguarding. Data triangulation will also be used in case some museum documents may have been curated to present a more idealised version of their efforts or if some aspects of museum-practitioner collaborations may not be formally documented.

As a researcher, there are certain themes that are anticipated to be highlighted in the datasets such as funding limitations, museums as being passive preservers of ICH, and public engagement. In order to alleviate the confirmation bias having researcher flexibility is vital, especially in the coding and interpretation process. Alongside specific assumptions there are limitations to the set of case studies. The findings may not be broadly applicable or universal to all museums and craft partnerships therefore the multiple case studies will offer insights into specific partnerships rather than a global perspective. Moreover, the interviews are dependent

on participants' availability so all perspectives may not be captured due some participants not being willing or available due to time constraints thus follow-up interviews may be necessary. Regarding the context of the studies, the funding and policy across the sites differs widely. The sites may have different funding models, policies and institutional priorities, affecting how they engage with craft practitioners. The financial stability of large institutions may differ significantly from smaller sites, hence the need for a discussion on how funding structures impact safeguarding efforts differently based on museum size and resources.

4. Analysis & Interpretation of Findings

As stated in the previous chapter, the study follows a pragmatist-inductive approach and as such the data was analysed using thematic analysis and organised accordingly. Interviews, conversation notes and observations were used alongside published promotional and educational materials throughout the study to ensure data triangulation in order to review how these relationships support the education and transmission of traditional craftsmanship. Prior to analysis the data was sorted by recurring themes such as visibility, material viability, models of engagement and the use of institutions as platforms.

The following chapter is organised by titled sections which categorise the findings in relation to both the intersection of the data from both case studies and the research questions posed in Chapter 1. These questions aim to understand the current role of museums and heritage centres in heritage craft safeguarding through their collaborations with practitioners and the implementation of community engagement via programming initiatives, if such initiatives are in place. Alongside this, is exploration of the challenges that these cultural institutions may face when safeguarding heritage crafts in Scotland.

4.1. Institutional Roles in Heritage Craft Safeguarding

Institutions such as museums and heritage centres play a vital role in shaping how cultural heritage is represented and transmitted. When it comes to heritage crafts their responsibility goes beyond programming as they also have an active role in how craft is understood, valued and engaged with by policy bodies and the public at large.

4.1.1. Institutional Narratives of Safeguarding

The narratives that institutions create and perpetuate shape how safeguarding is practiced and understood not only within the organisation but by the public, funders, and policymakers. Ultimately the narratives that such institutions construct affect which crafts are supported and which practitioners are within these crafts are recognised and included.

At the Engine Shed safeguarding is framed as ‘built environment conservation’ (The Engine Shed, n.d.a) aligning themselves, as part of HES which is a non-denominational government

body, with national training frameworks and policies. It is important to note that they do not use the terms ‘safeguarding’ or ‘heritage crafts’ as they consider stonemasonry to be part of ‘traditional building skills’ and preferring to employ the term ‘conservation’ for the work that they do. This alignment with professionalised language such as “skills investment” (HES, 2024b) and “conservation accreditation” (The Engine Shed, n.d.d) is in line with their focus on structured learning, sustainable procurement and policy engagement. Positioning itself as HES’ “dedicated building conservation centre” (The Engine Shed, n.d.c) combining skills training, scientific research and public engagement they position safeguarding within a broader infrastructure and workforce strategy. This is at the potential risk of placing the crafts as primarily a workforce workplace solution for a particular instance of conservation rather than an evolving entity in its own right.

At Shetland Museum & Archives safeguarding is framed as a form of place-based cultural continuity emphasising seasonality and the conservation of a “critically endangered craft” (Shetland Museum & Archives, 2024b). Running during the first winter months, the ‘Winter Straw Club’ is an example of programming centred around the community’s interest and developing that interest into exhibition displays like that of ‘The Craft of Foragers’ (Shetland Museum & Archives, 2024a) where the curator, Carol Christiansen states “we want the public to engage with this heritage and pass these skills on to future generations”. This explicit educational connection to the straw craft workshops highlights just how embedded the museum’s focus on the support for local traditions is. Additionally, despite the discussion surrounding ‘official’ ICH concepts being relatively new to the museum (T Interview), the way in which they approach safeguarding aligns with UNESCO’s understanding of safeguarding as the transmission of knowledge and meaning.

These two institutions thus suggest two different yet complementary safeguarding narratives, which follows a pragmatist understanding of safeguarding as part of a situational and multi-layered environment: an environment in which national frameworks must be balanced with community-established experiences.

4.1.2. Platforms for Maker Visibility

Institutions can act as platforms to celebrate and make visible the work of craft practitioners to a wider audience effecting not only this larger public awareness but also the level to which they

are socially and culturally appreciated. Looking at how the institutions present, promote and support the practitioners that they work with can help highlight the power that institutions can have in the promotion of heritage craft safeguarding.

The Engine Shed play a fundamental role in the promotion of practitioners who work in traditional building crafts. Craft visibility is actively integrated into the centre's public programming, learning resources, and training initiatives. The platform that they have created is successful primarily due to their professional visibility via their Open Days, World of Work taster sessions and other public events. The craft practitioners involved in these events get to interact with diverse audiences allowing them to showcase their skills like stone carving, blacksmithing, or lime plastering (Historic Environment Scotland, 2019b, 2020a; Dorman, 2025; The Engine Shed, n.d.d) whilst also positioning craftspeople as active contributors to Scotland's sustainable heritage future. Furthermore, they also platform practitioners with significant digital visibility through their online videos and blog posts published on both HES and the Engine Shed sites and social media platforms. Oftentimes practitioners appear in these forms of digital outputs, serving as a recognisable link between craft knowledge and national heritage priorities. For younger practitioners the visibility championed through different means at The Engine Shed can open pathways into further training or employment. For audiences, these engagements translate technical expertise into accessible heritage narratives, reinforcing the idea that traditional skills are not just relevant, but essential to Scotland's future.

Shetland Museum & Archives elevates practitioner voices by ensuring that they are visible as culture-bearers and supporting community knowledge transmission as a form of accessible learning for the public. Originally Eve Eunson received funding from Shetland Amenity Trust to "track down and survey all the Fair Isle made chairs that [she] could find" (Eunson, n.d.) and then make a version of each kind that she found. This then led to the co-curation of the 'Fair Isle Chairs' Exhibition hosted at Shetland Museum & Archives from 2020-2021 (Shetland Museum & Archives, 2020) which in turn helped to generate the interest that underpinned the creation of the popular 'Winter Straw Club'. When discussing how 'Winter Straw Club' came about Eve Eunson mentioned that at the taster event to gauge interest they had "put out chairs for about 20, then turned our backs and 90 people had walked into the room. So it ended up being an excellently well attended event." (E Interview). Eunson also highlights how important the HCA listing the crafts on the Red List in 2019 was for them and how at the same time people recognised in Shetland that "[straw skills] had almost gone, and I think

people are going “We like this, it's important to our culture. We don't want to lose that”. This stresses the platform that the museum and cultural organisations has given the practitioners, through supporting their exhibitions and projects the museum acts as co-facilitator meaning that the platform is co-owned by the museum, its staff and the Shetland straw craft practitioners.

These platforms are valuable because they function effectively within real-world systems given that they provide access, recognition, and engagement opportunities that practitioners might otherwise struggle to obtain. One is rooted in policy alignment, formal education, and broad visibility; the other is embedded in relational, cultural, and community-centred practice. Visibility platforms remain crucial to normalising and elevating traditional crafts within museums and heritage centres proving that they can work as advocates for heritage crafts by championing and supporting practitioners and their projects through the means of co-creation.

4.2. Collaboration Between Sites and Craft Practitioners

Collaboration between craft practitioners and museum and heritages sites is vital for public engagement with intangible cultural heritage. These partnerships, how they are formed and maintained influence how skills are transmitted, framed and interpreted by institutions and the public at large.

4.2.1. Models of Collaboration

The structure and nature of collaboration concerning institutions and craft practitioners considerably influence the nature in which heritage crafts are transmitted and publicly respected. Scottish models of collaboration go from project-based partnerships led by institutions (The Engine Shed) to co-created programmes rooted in community relationships (Eve Eunson and Shetland Museum & Archives). Considering how these models operate offers us an understanding into how institutional frameworks and grassroots practices can work in tandem to promote the long-term safeguarding of traditional skills.

At the HES' sites, the Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre, collaboration is often built into structured institutional frameworks through strategic partnerships like that of the Scottish Traditional Building Forum or via contracted practitioner roles for educational sessions, demonstrators, advisors etc. Practitioners are largely brought in as specialists making the

collaborations more goal-orientated and both project and time-bound focusing on accredited training or educational sessions like that of the 3-Day World of Work taster sessions in collaboration with Morgan Sindall Construction (Morgan Sindall Construction, 2025).

This model is reflective of an institutionalised approach wherein the practitioner provides their expertise, but the organisation sets part of the agenda based on either sector or policy requirements. While highly impactful in terms of skill transfer and access to infrastructure and future employees, these relationships may limit practitioners' agency in defining project narratives. Albeit more schematic this can not only lead to long-term contractual partnerships for practitioners ensuring long-term employment but also inter-organisational collaborations leading to more effective policy change and implementation.

Collaboration in Shetland Museum & Archives leans towards a more grassroots and community driven approach, propelled by long-term relationships between museum staff and local artists and makers. The relationship that Eve Eunson and Shetland Museum & Archives has is one of partnership that is over six years old, and which encompasses Eve Eunson initially receiving funding for a research project through to the running of 'Winter Straw Club' for three consecutive years and most recently the 'Shetland Aets' collaboration. The 'Fair Isle Chairs' Exhibition and 'Winter Straw Club' reflect a model of collaboration where practitioners and the museums co-create programming that reflects traditional knowledge and community demand given how popular straw club is with the local populace as "not everybody could get on to the winter straw group [in 2021], but we did two that first year" (E Interview). This model is more dialogical and sustained over time whilst being held in an institution and is an example of the type participatory community co-creation that is brought to the fore by Nikolić Đerić *et al.* (2020a).

Given that Eve Eunson approached the museum with the idea and they then set it in motion together, it is entirely consistent that rather than being invited to teach a pre-set curriculum, Eunson, Dennis and Smith shape the format, timing, and content of workshops, based on participants' interests, seasonal material availability and historically accurate making rhythm. Not dissimilar to the case studies discussed by Ferrer-Yulfo (2022), the collaboration model is relational as well as easy to reproduce and repeat year-on-year, shaped by trust, place-identity and shared goals.

These two models are not mutually exclusive but rather illustrate the variety of ways in which practitioners and museums and heritage centres can work together and form partnerships. Through Eve Eunson's and Shetland Museum & Archives' collaboration on 'Winter Straw Club' the relationship evolves from cultural investment and continuous dialogue whereas at the Engine Shed collaboration aligns with professional development pathways and national skills strategies. Identifying and supporting this range of collaborative partnerships is vital in ensuring that they remain culturally embedded, receptive and resilient over time.

4.2.2. Practitioner Authorship and Agency

While the support that cultural institutions can provide is critical to the safeguarding of heritage crafts, the authorship and agency of craft practitioners within these collaborative partnerships is equally, if not more important as highlighted by Ferrer-Yulfo (2022). Examining the extent to which practitioners intervene in shaping how traditional skills are interpreted and shared with the public within these institutions alongside the authorship of how their work, fits in the wider heritage discourses in Scotland.

Despite regularly naming practitioners in promotional material for events (HES, 2019) and treating them as authorities on their traditional skills, the Engine Shed oftentimes highlights practitioners framed within a curricular or institutional structure. The practitioners voice is visible in demonstrations, videos or even event materials (HES, 2023, 2024c, 2024a), but the overall authorship of publication materials remains within the institution. Those at the Skills Training Centre who are training the apprentices on the SQA programmes are practitioners who are employed by HES specifically to not only teach but also create training content and design the programmes being taught to align with SQA standards. The platform HES gives practitioners is one of significant public visibility and grants them the opportunity to contribute to sector-wide training and educational prospects particularly when they are involved in open-days, policy consultations and specialised research partnerships. This approach, however, might lead to a loss of the practices' meanings as it involves more than just transmitting knowledge: practitioners also help to convey the cultural significance of these skills which may not always be clear if moderated through an institutional lens.

In Shetland the practitioners have considerably more creative and interpretative agency as the collaboration between Eve Eunson and Shetland Museums & Archive is one of co-creation and co-curation. This mutual understanding has been present since the beginning of their working relationship with Eve Eunson being credited as a “collaborator” and the “creator of the exhibition” (Shetland Amenity Trust, 2021) by the then curator Dr Iain Tait. This has continued with the ‘Winter Straw Club’ as Eunson, Dennis and Smith determine the structure, content and messaging of the workshops and their embodied expertise shapes not only what is taught but how it is contextualised (Shetland Amenity Trust, 2022; Shetland Museum & Archives, 2022, 2023, 2024b).

Shetland Museum & Archives acts as a facilitator or partner rather than a lead authority enabling practitioners to retain authorship over both skill transmission and cultural meaning. Moreover, this model of practitioner agency supports their position as an educator and knowledge-bearer with initiatives like the growing of ‘Shetland Aets’ where Eve Eunson and Samantha Dennis firmly influence the research direction. This form of collaboration reinforces the importance of co-creating to bring the past’s relevance into present context.

These distinct forms of practitioner authorship and agency are shaped by institutional structures, community dynamics, and heritage policy frameworks. A strong safeguarding strategy must therefore support conditions where practitioners are not merely participants, but active agents of heritage. Recognising and embedding practitioner voice across multiple levels of collaboration is essential to maintaining the relevance and legitimacy of traditional skills in Scotland today.

4.3. Learning, Transmission, and Public Engagement

The education and transmission of traditional craftsmanship differs significantly in the various relationships between the institutions and the craftspeople depending in part on the size and nature of the institution.

4.3.1. Formal vs. Experiential Learning Models

The transmission of knowledge through efficient learning environments is as critical as the continuation of specific techniques in the safeguarding of heritage crafts. Both formal and

experiential learning models play foundational roles in sharing these skills within Scotland's heritage sector: as exemplified by the SQA recognised training offered by the HES' Skills Training Centre, and the community-led learning found in the 'Winter Straw Club' at Shetland Museum and Archives.

At the Skills Training Centre, one of Historic Environment Scotland's Stirling sites, the stonemasonry apprenticeship is a curriculum based 4-year SQA accredited programme. The course is taught in a controlled environment to meet industry standards as the apprentices are only based at the centre for 30 weeks over two years whilst also working for a construction company. The programme includes both theoretical and practical assessment throughout the four years for a class of 12 to 15 apprentices. This model is imperative for creating a concise path into a technical heritage career aligning with HES' Skills Investment Plan for vocational education and career development. With a significant demand for these traditional construction skills this formal learning environment helps to render these skills into the mainstream for building and conservation sectors. The more traditional nature of the course can thus emphasise the craft as a technical skill rather than as living cultural heritage which aligns with the need for reliable construction methods.

The 'Winter Straw Club' hosted at Shetland Museum & Archives by craftspeople Eve Eunson, Samantha Dennis and Leslie Smith exemplifies a more experiential model. The course has been running for over four years, rooted in a more traditional seasonal practice over the winter months prior to the beginning of the crofting season. Based as a community shared practice, it is led by local practitioners using 'learn by doing' as its primary mode of transmission the teaching is process-led and relationship-forward with previous years' attendees participating as both learners and teachers - "ones that had learnt previously wi' Eve come back and can offer advice as needed" (Interview with T). The craft safeguarding is not formally assessed but tied to place, identity and intergenerational transmission of cultural as it encourages collective participation, mutual learning and heritage as a shared, lived experience. Due to the nature of a community-led more experiential model, it can be difficult to fully source all the materials and may be vulnerable to a lack of long-term institutional or financial support.

Both models complement each other through their context-specific needs as they succeed in achieving the requirements that they have highlighted for themselves: for HES it is an industry specific demand that fulfils the professional requirements of the constructed environment and in the case of Shetland and its straw crafts it has revived an interest in craft techniques that were on the verge of complete extinction. Formal training results in employment, increased visibility and more favourable funding opportunities whereas the experiential learning mode sustains community engagement, cultural meaning and relationship building. The appropriateness of the differing models of engagement can also be in part influenced by the craft itself given that the repercussion of faulty construction is much more deadly than that of poorly made basket. They both favour practice-led learning aligning with Dewey's notion that learning is experiential and situated, and that knowledge is shaped by doing and reflecting, not just teaching (Dewey, 1963). Thus, proving that safeguarding Scotland's crafts needs both institutional and community support to create the learning model that is most appropriate for the craft being practiced.

4.3.2. Public Learning Environments and Access

The importance of learning environments and access to those by participants and the public at large plays a critical role in the transmission of skills. Whether through more structured training programmes or informal community projects public learning environments provide spaces where skills can be transmitted and contextualised by those who are able and invited to participate. Looking at HES' more formalised approach and the 'Winter Straw Club''s more experiential approach, this section explores how the approaches by the sites influence how the crafts are transmitted.

The Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre do follow a more schematic approach to their learning environments as they function as formal heritage skills training and public education centre. At the Skills Training Centre there is the structured, curriculum focused aspect of the apprenticeship scheme which is offered in a dedicated learning environment designed for heritage working skills as well as a series of educational material available on the HES website which aligns with heritage conservation standards offering hands-on access, but within controlled settings that reflect professional practice. Another form of formal education present at the Engine Shed are their building management and technical conservation courses that are

open to the public for both enthusiasts and professionals. Lasting between a day to a week these bookable paid courses offer specialised teaching in relation to heritage conservation and construction. These environments are designed to deliver technical skills whilst also supporting policy-driven goals such as upskilling, climate adaptation, and sector resilience.

Outwith the formal classroom-like setting of the Skills Training Centre and specialised courses, the Engine Shed also hosts educational events such as ‘World of Work’ taster sessions, which invite schools to participate in activity stations like “One Build at a Time - A hands-on practical brickwork workshop.” and “Carving Out Construction - A hands on practical stonemasonry workshop” (Morgan Sindall Construction, 2025) and hosted on a yearly basis is ‘Doors Open Day at the Engine Shed’ which invites the public to visit the site and learn about the range of work that is undertaken both on and off site free of charge.

This dual-model approach demonstrates how the heritage centre and the training centre balances specialist training with broader public engagement in both formal and informal ways. The formal nature of HES’ public learning environments allows them to successfully help develop Scotland’s heritage construction workforce through certification routes and offering young people first hand encounters with construction specialists that could lead to apprenticeships or formal study. By taking a mixed approach, they are lowering barriers to entry by allowing young people to experience heritage skills without prior knowledge or long-term commitment whilst creating a non-intimidating environment to interact with crafts, tools, and conservation professionals. However, it is important to acknowledge that the more official model of education when looking at apprentices and specialist courses does limit access to only those who are undertaking long-term formal education to become a practitioner or expert, focusing much more on technical skills rather than the cultural meaning of learning the traditional skill.

At the Shetland Museum & Archives, the inclusion of straw craft education within specific learning environments is embedded in a community-based learning programme. Contrasting with the methods undertaken in Stirling, Shetland Museum & Archives acts as a host for the ‘Winter Straw Club’ providing a space and the materials required for the workshops themselves whilst the practitioners such as Eve Eunson organise and lead the sessions. The sessions are open to the public who can attend six to eight successive weekly workshops at the low cost of around £35 for the set of workshops which covers straw, material costs, practitioner fees and

venue costs. As Collection Manager Tracey states “we want to get that heritage craft built, build up that momentum behind it and get folk, can equip them with a skill. We don't look to mak money” (T Interview). This in turn creates a supported environment in a publicly accessible building for learning where participants acquire skills through observation, repetition, and collective making.

These sessions in turn centre on place-based heritage practices in a learning environment that is socially and ecologically contextualised during the winter months where historically these straw crafts would have been practiced. It preserves knowledge not only through instruction but also through the embodied presence of craft in daily life and creating a community network of practitioners as Tracey mentions that the workshops enable social connection too: “you learn a skill, but actually it's about community. It's about that socialising [...] Cause' you are makkin and forging new friendships”. A setting like ‘Winter Straw Club’ offers opportunities for intergenerational exchange and engaging with other members of the local community helping to foster confidence, inclusion, and wellbeing, which in turn can often create a strong emotional connection to the craft. These benefits are essential to sustaining not only the traditional craftsmanship but also the community relationships that give heritage meaning and resilience. Furthermore, it has been the catalyst for further transmission development in Fair Isle Straw Back Chair making as Eve mentions that through straw club she has been able to “identify people [that] are really quite interested and I have 2 trainees that come here [her studio] and have been learning how to do the backs” (E Interview). Overall, this form of learning guarantees that safeguarding is not solely focused on continuity of traditional techniques, but also about sustaining the cultural ecosystems in which heritage crafts retain their importance.

Collectively, The Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre and Shetland Museum & Archives demonstrate a multitude of learning environments towards the safeguarding of heritage crafts. Each site showcases a distinct programme of participation embedded in its institutional and cultural context supporting a pragmatist attitude by considering the most effective learning environment for their individual settings rather than adopting a universal standard approach. This method acknowledges that safeguarding is diverse and site-specific: it may take the form of accredited technical education in one place and intergenerational community craft in another. Both forms of learning operate within their own structures of access and transmission whilst contributing to the broader ecosystem of heritage safeguarding in Scotland.

4.4 Challenges to Safeguarding Heritage Crafts

There is no shortage of challenges when it comes to ensuring the transmission of heritage crafts however the primary challenges highlighted are visibility, funding, and long-term material availability.

4.4.1. Visibility & Acknowledgement

One of the primary concerns for the continuation of craft transmission from both practitioners and institutions is the visibility of their programmes, activities and the crafts themselves alongside the local acknowledgement of the importance of the skills practiced.

At the two HES sites, the Engine Shed and the Skills Training Centre, discussions surrounding more youth involvement and awareness of the programmes available to young people have highlighted this as increasingly becoming a priority. Since the Covid-19 pandemic they have shifted their priorities away from focussing on families towards upskilling the future generation and with the release of HES' 2024 'Skills Investment Plan for Scotland's Historic Environment Sector' (SIP) the focus has increased in order to provide hands-on skills training. Historic Environment Scotland (2024) stresses that the building skills sector struggles to attract future talent due to low visibility of career pathways alongside an absence of accessible ways to get into heritage professions particularly traditional skills and crafts that often are not included in mainstream career guidance arrangements. The SIP's emphasis on creating well-defined entry routes and promoting the heritage building skills sector as an "attractive place to work" reflects an urgent need to reframe craft skills not as nostalgic or niche, but as viable, contemporary professions.

Due to this need for distinct and easy-to-find entry routes into the sector the Engine Shed have been trialling different events that can lead young people down these avenues such as 'A World of Work Tasters' which invited school groups to participate in skills workshops such as hands-on stonemasonry and lime working. Dorman (2025) explains that through the feedback they received "showed us that young people were more informed to choose a career in construction following the event" proving that direct exposure with active engagement from heritage

professionals allows young people to explore their interests and encounter skills firsthand even bridging the gap identified in the SIP. This highlights that the lack of partnerships with schools, colleges, and youth organisations means that heritage crafts remain largely invisible to young people (Hardaker, 2025). Without younger generations actively participating in and valuing these traditional craft skills, institutional efforts may succeed only in preserving knowledge archivally, rather than as living practices.

Within the Shetland Islands the community participation in crafts is practiced but often without acknowledgment that these are skills at risk of being lost. Tracey Hawkins, Project Curator at Shetland Museum & Archives, admits that prior to ‘Winter Straw Club’ and the Fair Isle Chairs exhibition “there has been folks that have been makkin kishies and doing straw work in the community, but that just wasnae that kind of general interest, there was a specialist interest” (Interview with T). The collaboration between the craftspeople and the museum gave these crafts a place to be platformed and shared due to local interest and demand, that being said, the craft practice persisted at a community level regardless of institutional involvement. However, the crafts have historically been maintained by a small number of members of the community, underscoring a wider issue that certain practices can be overlooked by institutionally recognised safeguarding methods unless they attract mainstream or commercial appeal particularly if they are exercised within a niche cultural sphere.

Furthermore, this lack of local acknowledgment within the Shetland Islands can obscure the recognition of a craft’s vulnerability as highlighted in an interview with E when discussing Shetland’s knitted lace: “just because something's happening around you doesn't mean that it's not really, really rare just ‘cause you're totally familiar with it”. This cultural perception gap can also result in missed safeguarding opportunities emphasising context-sensitive evaluation due to institutional recognition perhaps prioritising more visibly endangered or commodifiable practices. It suggests that in the context of low-profile, specialist craft practices, raising awareness within the communities of practice themselves can be of a greater importance than external heritage recognition given that what can appear ordinary to some may in fact be of extraordinary cultural value.

4.4.2. Material Sustainability & Accessibility

While skills training and programme visibility are vital to the continuation of heritage safeguarding, the sourcing and sustainability of materials fundamental to heritage craft practices present ongoing challenges. With the aim of creating local and sustainable material sources The Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre as well as the partnership between Eve Eunson and The Shetland Museum & Archives have recognised and begun to address the challenges.

Historic Environment Scotland have signposted the decline in traditional building material use and accessibility across the country. Noting that “more than 50 per cent of stone used in Scottish projects comes from England” (HES, 2017, p. 7) and that there has been “no supply of Scottish slate for more than 40 years... almost all slate used in Scotland is imported.” (HES, 2017, p. 8). When discussing this with the staff at the Engine Shed, they further highlighted this by emphasising that materials are equally as important for the longevity and sustainability of our building skills. Throughout the discussions one project supported by HES was highlighted by multiple members of staff: the reestablishment of a community-run slate quarry on Luing, an island on the West Coast of Scotland. While not directly linked to the stonemasonry training happening on site this example of supporting built heritage brings forth the importance of locally sourced material not only for the organisation’s sustainable procurement goals but also as an ‘opportunity for traditional materials to underpin local economies and help local communities thrive in a sustainable way’ (HES, 2022, 3 mins 30 secs). The fostering of rural community resilience while supplying essential resources for building conservation indicates that safeguarding efforts need to expand past the simple transfer of knowledge to incorporate the revival of local material supply networks. Without projects like this there is the possibility that even the most proficient tradesperson may find their work unsustainable due to a shortage of quality materials. Furthermore, such initiatives require successful community partnership, or even ownership, alongside considerable long-term investments which may not be achievable for larger projects.

With more people participating in straw related projects in Shetland the demand for straw itself is increasing with it. Eve Eunson and Samantha Dennis have collaborated with Shetland Museum & Archives to grow and cultivate ‘Shetland Aets’ also known as small oats or black

oats (Shetland News, 2023) with the aim of getting the community to start sowing it across the islands. This project seeks to re-establish a sustainable material supply that would no longer rely on non-native seed from abroad as Eunson points out that with the current cultivation used for the straw club they “always have to be really careful to say “don't take this home and grow it” ‘cause it's not your Shetland seed and you don't want people to be disappointed on that front.” This move to fully integrate native seed reveals the intricacies of material safeguarding beyond convenience. The balance between the regeneration of a sustainable local supply of straw and retaining its contextual veracity ensures that the material remains tied to Shetland’s agricultural and craft history. It is important to note that traditionally these straw crafts would have used by-products of the contemporary agricultural needs and was in fact a cultural expression of the time. Therefore, to safeguard the materials in the current global market is to reposition the craft itself, which can be taken as a sustainability initiative but also as a political stance which borders on a form of conservatism. With the small-scale, ecological, and craft-driven nature of the collaboration between makers and the museum it also relies on an in-depth knowledge of farming and making creating further relationships with other stakeholders in the community such as small-scale crofters and farmers. The further development of Shetland’s already operative straw-growing project remains fundamentally place-bound, stressing that safeguarding requires both a sustainable material supply and the maintenance of the cultural identity rooted within it.

The projects show just how deep the ties material continuity have to land use and agricultural policy, rendering the act of craft safeguarding an interdisciplinary concern beyond the bounds of museum and heritage centres. The Luing Slate Quarry is a community-run, moderately industrial project that aims to support the current state of built heritage crafts whilst strengthening the local economy and the Shetland Straw project is a hyper-local intervention that sustains a legacy of craft knowledge linked to seasonal and agricultural knowledge. Despite their difference in scale, they demonstrate that material supply is not a neutral mechanism as it is a cultural, economic and environmental issue that requires long-term funding and interdisciplinary cooperation across communities, cultural institutions and sectors such as agriculture and land management. From a pragmatist perspective these projects embody practical and context-specific solutions to material scarcity in real time. They are adapting to local requirements and resource availability, illustrating that safeguarding is contingent on a

full ecosystem of making, not just technique transmission and must be a flexible, environment-specific practice.

4.4.3. Financial Constraints

One of the most important challenges in the safeguarding of heritage crafts is the availability, structure, and sustainability of funding for both institutions and the practitioners they work with. Financial constraints can determine a large number of factors in safeguarding projects such as scale, longevity and who gets to participate.

As part HES, the Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre do benefit from public funding which provides the organisation with the capacity to run large-scale training programmes, public engagement events, and apprenticeships. However, in comparison to the industry wide offering, the post-apprenticeships salaries for those employed for their construction skills are low in comparison meaning that many stonemasonry graduates work for an independent contractor or start their own business once completing their studies. Additionally, funding constraints on a national level caused the closure of other apprenticeship programmes such as the one that was offered by Edinburgh College and thus have had an impact on the HES' training centres as these have had to take in the affected apprentices and qualify them under much stricter time constraints.

Shetland Museum & Archives operates on a more mixed funding model, funded by Shetland Islands Council and, like many museums and heritage sites in Scotland, relying on external grants from organisations like MGS for specific projects. This approach allows a higher level of agency for practitioners and museum staff but is also marked by financial precariousness, as stated earlier, the museum does not make money from the 'Winter Straw Club' but will integrate a mixture of paid and free events during exhibitions for the community to make revenue (Interview with T). Initiatives like these may ask for practitioners to contribute a significant amount of time and expertise without guaranteed long-term support which in turn could make it more challenging for them to access wider networks or compete for institutional resources.

If heritage crafts are to be sustained, funding strategies will need to be found that support both formal institutions and informal networks, valuing not only outputs but also the relational, place-based knowledge that underpins living traditions. Ultimately, economic sustainability is not just a logistical concern as ensuring that practitioners are compensated and given long-term opportunities is fundamental to building a resilient safeguarding framework for Scotland's heritage crafts.

5. Conclusion

In this dissertation the current role of museums and heritage centres in Scotland in heritage craft safeguarding was explored through two case studies: Shetland Museum & Archives' long-term partnership with Eve Eunson and Historic Environment Scotland's Stirling sites, The Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre. These two case studies demonstrate that the role of Scottish museums and heritage centres are shaped by institutional structures, community dynamics, and heritage policy frameworks. These institutions play a dual role in the safeguarding of heritage crafts: they act as both institutional platforms for structured learning, visibility, and policy-aligned programming, and as community facilitators that support craft practitioners in the relational, cultural, and intergenerational transmission of traditional skills. At Historic Environment Scotland's Stirling sites, The Engine Shed and Skills Training Centre, safeguarding is embedded within national strategies for workforce development and sustainable conservation. Craft is supported as a technical skill aligned with broader economic and environmental goals, with practitioners contributing to structured training, demonstrations, and events. This contrasts with that of Shetland Museum and Archives' focus on community-based, practitioner-led safeguarding efforts rooted in place and local memory. Through initiatives such as the 'Winter Straw Club' and Shetland Aets research project into increasing the growth of native seed, practitioners are empowered to lead programmes, shape narratives, and adapt traditions to contemporary needs. Together, these examples reflect a broader shift in Scottish heritage practice: that effective safeguarding requires supporting both models of practice: giving practitioners a strong voice within institutions, while also investing in community-led models where authorship is shared or led by tradition-bearers themselves.

Secondly, the research sought to understand if both sites actively engage with their local communities and craft practitioners and whether specific programming and educational outreach sessions were in place to maintain these relationships. Both case studies have highlighted that they do engage with local communities and craft practitioners but have different approaches to their programming and educational initiatives. With the support of Shetland Museum & Archives Eve Eunson and her colleagues have been able to popularise critically endangered straw crafts and bring them into the current conversation surrounding vernacular craft skills not only in Scotland but in the UK. The longstanding partnership has brought about community investment into these craft skills with the yearly 'Winter Straw Club'

that was so popular that they ran two sets of sessions the first year it ran. The relationship between the practitioners and the museum has also led to a collaborative research project on Shetland Aets that seeks to re-establish a sustainable material supply for the crafts and the museum.

The Engine Shed and the Skills Training Centre have been supporting and developing new generations of stonemasons and craft fellows through their academic courses, open days, taster sessions and by providing financial support. With public open days and skills taster sessions the centre allows young people and the wider local population to get a sense of the world of traditional construction skills whilst trying them out first hand with practitioners. Additionally, they are actively supporting larger HES projects, such as the reopening of the Luing Quarry, to strengthen a wider ecosystem of which construction craft skills are a part of. Their differences in safeguarding measures reveal not a conflict but a spectrum: safeguarding efforts must operate across policy, practice, and community. Considering this from a pragmatist perspective, it is not a matter of which approach does better, but how their different roles collectively contribute to a resilient safeguarding ecosystem.

Finally, this dissertation found that the challenges that museums and heritage centres in Scotland face in the safeguarding of heritage crafts is three-fold: there are financial constraints, lack of accessible local materials and an absence of acknowledgement and visibility. The three factors intensify one another when considered in the current ICH climate. Without consistent, flexible funding structures institutions and organisations often rely on short-term grants which may limit long-term planning and the opportunity for a space for innovation within these projects. Furthermore, funding constraints across the country then have knock-on effects on teaching programmes by limiting number of participants. This then has consequences on the visibility of programmes as young people are less aware of the career pathways available to them and effects the public and practitioner's acknowledgement of the importance of what they are partaking in. Concurrently the lack of accessible local materials raises the question whether the safeguarding efforts are in fact sustainable recognising that these craft practices are part of a much larger ecosystem. These challenges collectively highlight the necessity for a rounded safeguarding model that is financially sustainable, community inclusive and grounded in practical and context-specific needs.

The role of museums and heritage centres in Scotland in safeguarding heritage craft is not exclusive. This is increasingly understood as a shared responsibility, bridging institutional authority and community practice, and requiring flexible models that respond to the diverse needs of crafts, practitioners, and publics. As Dr Janet Blake (as cited in Nikolić Đerić, 2020, p. 28) states

one of the most important safeguarding measures that museums can contribute to is that of awareness-raising, not only among outsiders to the heritage community, but even among bearers themselves.

The active cultivation of visibility and value alongside the transmission of craft skills has proven to be essential across both case studies. Ensuring that traditional skills are not simply practiced but recognised and meaningfully sustained reinforces the concept that museums and heritage centres are not only keepers of history but also facilitators of cultural identity and vitality. It is important to note that despite the argument that a museum or a heritage centre is an ideal environment for supporting heritage craft safeguarding (Alivizatou, 2006; Ferrer-Yulfo, 2022; Ştefan, 2023; Lüdtke, 2025) it can be a paradoxical relationship due to the potential ossification that they are often associated with, particularly at large scale ‘national’ sites (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Smith, 2006; Kuutma, 2013).

Given the scope of the study, it is important to recognise that it is not without its limitations. Firstly, the sample case studies given are limited in number, therefore the findings cannot be considered as a comprehensive report for the whole of Scotland. Despite the geographical distance between the Shetland Islands and Stirling in the Central Belt it is important to note that there are no representations of practices from the Borders, Highlands and Islands, East or West coasts of the country and no inclusion of collaborations which include or centre Gaelic. Secondly, given that the UK has only recently ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage the conversation surrounding ICH in Scotland is still in its early stages and the term is largely considered to be an academic and institutional which could in turn affect public perception of the subject. As with all research projects this study cannot be without experiential bias, despite the constraints in place as discussed within the Methodology chapter, researcher partiality may have affected the research results.

In regard to future research, the project can be considered as a step towards a doctoral thesis or large-scale research endeavour. With the UK's recent ratification of the 2003 UNESCO CICH there is plenty of discussion surrounding institutional roles within ICH safeguarding and particularly in Scotland where it is still underrepresented in comparison to ongoing projects in England and Wales. This study also offers future insights into how museums and heritage centres can effectively use education and community co-creation as tools for craft knowledge transmission whether that be for longstanding partnerships or community integration into programming.

To conclude, this study found that the efforts of safeguarding of crafts in museums and heritage centres in Scotland cannot rely solely on institutional programmes or community efforts. It requires an integration of both into a standard which respects the value of cultural practice as much as it promotes technical preservation and professional development. Whilst future safeguarding initiatives can integrate these into their projects it is imperative that heritage crafts are not simply considered as modes of artefact creation by museums and heritage centres but also as vessels for making connections to place, language and history as Eve Eunson expresses:

I suppose the reason that I am so passionate about it is that it is entirely my history and my story and my family. Fair Isle is so important to me and it's such an important part of my heritage. I just feel it really, really keenly and there's not many people that have these skills or that are advocating for this subject, and so it's important that I do my job and give it the spotlight it deserves.

We cannot dismiss the connection that making has, not so much as part of the network of intangible cultural heritage practices but as a living manifestation of a system that relates to language, local economies, place identity and a specific way of making sense of our past. Museums and heritage centres must remember that they cannot separate people from the artefacts that they have created, they are too intertwined with our understanding of who we are, what we are and where we come from.

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Appendix A: Interview Information Sheet & Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet

You are invited to take part in an interview for a research study on the role of Scottish museums and heritage sites in the safeguarding of heritage crafts. Before making a decision, it is important that you understand the purpose of the research and what your participation will involve. Please review the information below, and feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns.

About the study:

My name is Emma Ramsay, and I am a student in the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters in Education in Museums and Heritage at the University of Tartu, Estonia in partnership with University of Glasgow, Scotland, and University of Malta, Malta. I am collating data for my dissertation which is focused on the role of Scottish museums and cultural heritage sites in the safeguarding of heritage crafts. This study explores how Scottish cultural institutions collaborate with craft practitioners to share and promote the transfer of know-how, skills and meaning of heritage craft practices to ensure their continued practice. It aims to examine institutional strategies, practitioner experiences, and the challenges of sustaining traditional craft skills. You have been selected as a participant because of your involvement in a heritage craft collaboration project. Your insights will contribute to a deeper understanding of these collaborations. I do not anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

What Will Participation Involve?

- An interview lasting approximately 45–60 minutes, conducted either in person, online, or via telephone.
- Questions will be shared with you prior to the interview date.
- The interview will be audio-recorded.
- You may be contacted for follow-up clarification, if necessary.

Participation is voluntary. You are free to:

- Decline participation without giving a reason.

- Withdraw at any time before or during the interview and ask for the interview to be paused.
- Withdraw up to 2 weeks after the interview by notifying the researcher.

What will Happen to the Interview?

- The interview will be transcribed and analysed by Emma Ramsay as research investigator.
- Your responses will be used in the dissertation and other outputs on the conditions specified in the consent form.
- Due to the specificity of contexts, you may be identifiable in the study. While every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed, as your role and connection to the museum will be discussed throughout.
- Data will be stored securely and only accessible to myself as per the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Findings may be published, but identifiable information will be removed unless explicit permission is given.

Researcher Contact Details:

- Researcher: Emma Ramsay
- Institution: University of Tartu in collaboration with the University of Glasgow
- Contact Information: emmarams99@gmail.com // 2919397R@student.gla.ac.uk

Supervisors:

Dr Elo-Hanna Seljamaa (University of Tartu): elo-hanna.seljamaa@ut.ee

Dr Sandro Debono (University of Malta): sdebo04@um.edu.mt

Dr Margaret McColl (University of Glasgow): margaret.mccoll@glasgow.ac.uk

By agreeing to participate in this study, you confirm that you have read and understood the information provided above.

Participant Interview Consent Form

Research project title: The Role of Scottish Museums in the Safeguarding of Heritage Crafts

Research investigator: Emma Ramsay

Research Participants name:

Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from Estonian and UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for me to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying **information sheet** and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project, and I do not expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation. I understand that I do not have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
2. Access to the interview transcript will be limited to Emma Ramsay and academic colleagues with whom she might collaborate as part of the research process. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
3. Any interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be pseudonymised so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed unless you provide explicit consent for attribution;
4. I understand that due to the specificity of contexts, I may be identifiable in the study even if pseudonyms are used;
5. I may be contacted for clarifications or follow-up questions;
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future;

Quotation and Attribution Agreement

I also understand that my words may be quoted directly. With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:

	I consent to my name being attributed to my responses.
	I consent to my role being attributed to my responses.

Participant Agreement:

I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided in the information sheet and consent form and agree to participate in this study.

Participant Agreement:

I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided in the information sheet and consent form and agree to participate in this study.

Participant Name:

Participant Signature:

Date: _____

Researcher Statement:

I confirm that I have provided adequate information about this study and obtained informed consent.

Researcher Name

Researcher Signature

Date: _____

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Museum Professionals

1. Role and Involvement

- Can you tell me about yourself?
- What is your role in this museum or heritage site?
- What are the best and most challenging aspects of your role?

2. Museum-Practitioner Collaboration

- How do you collaborate with [name of craftsperson or organisation]?
- How did the collaboration between your museum/site and craft practitioners begin?
- Can you share an example of a particularly successful aspect of your collaboration with craft practitioner project?
- What challenges have you faced in working with craft practitioners, and how have they been addressed?

3. Practical Strategies for Craft Safeguarding

- What specific methods does your museum use to share the craft practice with visitors? (document, exhibit, and promote)
- How does your museum ensure that this is passed on?
- Who are you wanting to pass this onto/ share it with?

4. Funding, Policy, and Institutional Support

- How do funding structures influence your ability to support heritage craft safeguarding?
- What role do government policies or external organisations play in shaping your craft safeguarding efforts?
- Are there any policy or institutional barriers that help your museum's ability to support practitioners?
- Are there any policy or institutional barriers that limit your museum's ability to support practitioners?

5. Future Outlook and Recommendations

- Are you aware of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage? If so, what impact do you think the UK joining it will have on your project?
- How do you see the role of your museum/ heritage site in heritage craft/ ICH preservation evolving in the future?
- What lessons have you learned from your collaboration efforts with [craft practitioner]?
- What recommendations would you give to other museums looking to strengthen their role in craft safeguarding?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Craftspeople

1. Background and Craft Practice

- Can you tell me about yourself?
- Can you tell me about your craft and how you became involved in it?
- What do you enjoy the most about practicing your craft?
- What challenges do you face in sustaining your craft practice?

2. Working with Museums

- How did your collaboration with [museum or site] come about?
- What role has the museum [if relevant, add other museums/ sites] played in supporting your craft practice?
- What has been the most valuable aspect of working with a museum?

3. Knowledge Transmission and Public Engagement

- How do you share your craft knowledge with others (e.g., workshops, apprenticeships, demonstrations)?
- Is there one that you prefer and/or think is better for sharing with new generations?
- What types of events or programmes do you think museums could host or partake in that might work in making craft practices more accessible?
- [Follow up to previous question depending on the answer] Are there any that you think may be overlooked but could work?

4. Challenges and Sustainability

- In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges in maintaining craft skills today?
- What support do craft practitioners need to ensure long-term sustainability?

5. Looking Ahead

- Are you aware of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage? If so, what impact do you think the UK joining it will have on your practice?
- How do you see the future of heritage crafts in Scotland?

- What advice would you give to museums looking to better support craft practitioners?
- If you could change one thing about museum-craft collaborations, what would it be?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Appendix D: Content Analysis Sheet

Item	Description
Document ID	
Institution or Craftsperson	
Date of Document	
Document Type	
Audience	
Intended Purpose	
Access Method	

Theme	Sub-Categories/ Indicators	Example or Notes
Role in Craft Safeguarding - Safeguarding efforts - Knowledge transmission - Partnerships with craft practitioners - Use of craft in interpretation or education		
Engagement with Communities & Practitioners - Mention of local community involvement - Collaborations with specific artisans - Co-designed programmes - Community outreach / education - Intergenerational learning		
Programmes and Initiatives - Training or apprenticeship schemes - Events or demonstrations - Residencies - School or community projects - Public-facing initiatives - Skills-based learning - Intergenerational or community learning - Curriculum-linked resources - Access to materials or kits		
Heritage Craft Visibility - Named crafts or practitioners - Reference to tradition or history - Cultural framing		

<p>Challenges Mentioned or Implied</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding or staffing constraints - Risk of craft loss - Difficulties with documentation - Lack of institutional focus - Access or inclusion issues 		
<p>Language and Framing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Terminology - Tone - Cultural framing of craft - How is heritage craft discussed? - Does it appeal to emotions, pride, identity? 		
<p>Visibility of Craft Practitioners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are practitioners named? - Are their stories/skills highlighted? - Is their authorship acknowledged? - Practitioner involvement - Co-authored material - Mentions of named makers or guest tutor 		
<p>Engagement Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interactive elements - Storytelling, quotes, practitioner profiles - Invitations to participate 		
<p>Accessibility & Inclusivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language accessibility - Diverse representation - Free vs. paid activities - Physical/online/hybrid availability 		

Appendix E: Observation Sheet

Field	Description
Date & Time	
Location	
Event/Activity	
No. Participants Present	
Type of Setting	

Code	Observation Notes
Institutional Role - What is the institution facilitating or doing to support the craft? - Is safeguarding discussed? If so, explicitly or implicitly?	
Role and Visibility of Craft Practitioners - Is the practitioner positioned as expert, partner, performer? - Are they named? How are they introduced or described?	
Community Engagement & Audience - Who is attending? - Is the setting inclusive and accessible? - Are there opportunities for interaction, questions, hands-on activity?	
Communication and Language - What language is used? - How is craft work framed or valued?	
Educational Purpose / Knowledge Transmission - Is there active teaching, storytelling, demonstration? - Is the process explained, shown, or contextualised? - How is learning structured?	
Environment and Spatial Layout - How is the space set up? - Are crafts central or peripheral? - What visual cues or signage reinforce the theme?	
Informal Dynamics - Are there off-script interactions? - Do participants seem engaged, hesitant, curious? - Do makers/staff respond flexibly?	
Other Notes/ Reflections	

Appendix F: Work Timeline

Task	Month								
	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
Proposal									
Introduction									
Methodology Plan									
Literature Review									
Methodology									
Data Gathering									
Findings & Analysis									
Compiling & Editing									

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