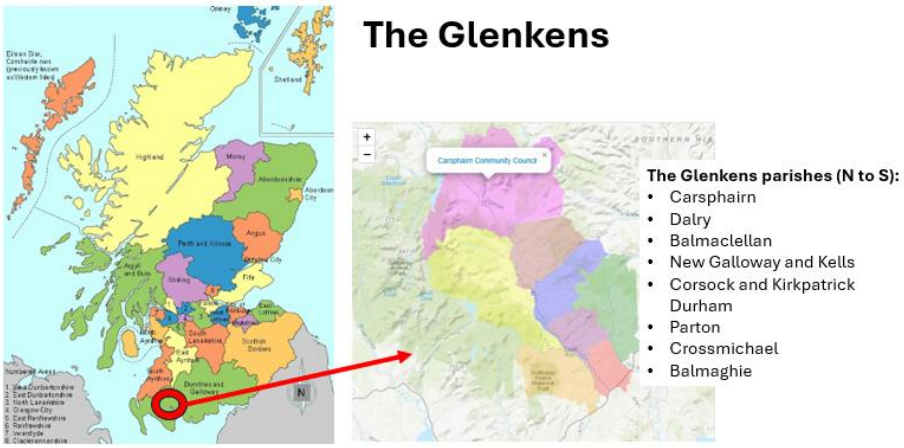
Glenkens Community & Arts Trust

Made possible with Heritage Fund

Cultural Glenkens:
Preserving the heritage of our place

The Glenkens

The Glenkens is a collection of remote-rural villages in Galloway, SW Scotland, who have a strong cultural and geographical identity. Characterised by an enviable sense of self-sufficiency and empowerment, and with unrivalled landscapes and natural beauty, it is also an area that faces severe challenges of biodiversity loss, depopulation, social isolation and rural poverty. It sits in the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere, the Galloway Forest Park, the UK's first Dark Sky Park and the new South of Scotland Natural Capital Innovation Zone. It has about 3,000 residents across 10 settlements and outlying farmsteads.



Our Heritage

Our **natural heritage** is of key importance to us here in the Glenkens. We are situated in a UNESCO Biosphere due to the uniqueness of our landscapes, yet they are changing very rapidly. Biodiversity loss and the climate crisis are underlying themes that affect us all.



Loch Ken and the Glenkens

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Our **cultural heritage** is also highly valued here in the Glenkens. From the Covenanters to the Galloway Hoard to 20th century rural living, our heritage is celebrated and revered – but often only by small groups of enthusiasts. As is often the way, national conversations overlook the hyper-local, deep-dive enthusiasm for culture that place-based communities naturally foster.



2023 Cultural Glenkens: 'The Glenkens Story' event at CatStrand

At the Glenkens Community and Arts Trust, we have a 18-year track record of weaving together Arts, Community and Heritage to create meaningful experiences for all our residents and visitors so that they can better understand and connect to the heritage and environment of the Glenkens.



2021 CatStrand Arts: 'On the water' Ken Bridge Song Cycle

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Cultural Glenkens

Our new 4 day/week 'Cultural Glenkens Project Lead', Jo Jackson, will support and amplify the enthusiasm of our Glenkens communities for their heritage. Over 3 years from June 2025, Jo will:

1. Create an annual programme of heritage events

Incorporating existing events from current Cultural Glenkens projects but also catalysing new initiatives including a Land Notes Festival, field trips and research projects. Working with our existing excellent network of local, regional and national partners and using our artistic credentials to better engage people with both their cultural heritage, their natural heritage and the environment.

2. Create a monthly programme of heritage talks - Galloway Conversations

We know that hyper-local hybrid talks delivered by experts will appeal both locally, across Scotland and even world-wide if we have the resources to publicise them accordingly. Working with our partners to provide place-based outreach for regional and national organisations.

3. Amplify the efforts of our volunteers

Support existing and new Cultural Glenkens projects with marketing, project management, start-up support and (crucially) time and enthusiasm.

4. Improve the online preservation of our heritage

Including:

- Digital recording of events and talks.
- Digitisation of photos and bringing them to life with associated stories and exhibitions.
- Oral histories. Reaching out to older voices and voices less heard.
- The creation of a digital Glenkens Archive.

5. Create an Intern programme.

Five full-time paid 6-month positions within the Glenkens and district. High quality opportunities that will make a real difference to the young people involved.

6. Carry out schools liaison around Glenkens heritage projects.

Use the youth-led approach that we are expert in to see which topics could be modified to increase reach to high school students.

This will be a £250k project over 3 years, with a National Heritage Lottery Fund contribution of £200k, (not including in-kind contribution from the volunteer effort). Many thanks to all the National Lottery players who make projects like this possible!

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The National Heritage Lottery Fund's Principles

The outcomes from this project will support all four Heritage Fund's principles:

Saving Heritage

Our project will foster a living appreciation and understanding of our heritage, creating a proactive community who take pride in researching, understanding and communicating different aspects of the Glenkens' Cultural Heritage. Creating public understanding and pride in the things which make us unique, and the ability to communicate this better to visitors.

Our project will also save heritage by recording oral histories that are in imminent danger of being lost forever and by creating a digital archive for the Glenkens. This archive will include digital photos and the stories that give them life, as well as recordings of the talks programme.

Natural Heritage will be saved by the ability to better work with committed volunteers to celebrate what we have and to advocate to mitigate the losses caused by national policy or market forces.

By amplifying the huge volunteer efforts that already go into these topics, and by catalysing new efforts, we will embed preserving and celebrating heritage into the culture and practice of our communities for another generation.



2023 CatStrand Arts: The Galloway Agreement 'The Village on the Road' highlighting rural depopulation

Protecting the Environment

Our natural heritage is of key importance to us here in the Glenkens. We are situated in a UNESCO Biosphere due to the uniqueness of our landscapes, yet they are changing around us very rapidly. This project will tie in with much other work that GCAT is doing to meet its Aim of 'Interweaving Arts, Community and Heritage to enrich the life of the area'.

Land Use is a particular focus at present, and we are being supported by NatureScot as one of the only community-led initiatives working in this way in the country.

We will work with local artists and residents to shine light on natural heritage issues through creative lenses. Recent examples include the Fantastic Forestry Festival, the Crichton Carbon Centre 'Bog Banquet', the Leeming and Paterson exhibition on biodiversity in land use and our 2022 Eco-Festival, designed by our Arts intern to address eco-anxiety in young people.



The CatStrand Auditorium dressed for the Bog Banquet. Celebrating peatlands with a themed dinner

Increase inclusion, access and participation

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is at the heart of GCAT, and this project will benefit from our past work and future plans on this. We have an Equalities Policy and an EDI Action Plan specifically used to bring a wider range of people into contact with all of our artistic strands, including Cultural Glenkens. Our action plan focuses on the areas where we believe that we can best make a positive impact and that most impact our local population. These are currently:

- Disability
- Socio-economic deprivation
- Sexual orientation and Gender reassignment



2024: Paragon ‘All-In’ music troupe performing at the CatStrand Young Creatives Annual Showcase

Organisational sustainability

This project aligns exactly with our Artistic Policy for the CatStrand and our wider mandate to lead on the delivery of the Glenkens and district Community Action Plan, thereby ‘making the Glenkens an excellent place to live for people of all ages’ by ‘interweaving Arts, Community and Heritage to enrich the life of the area.’ Resourcing this project appropriately is a key under-pinning of our strategy for 2023-2028 and will be a key contributor to maintaining GCAT’s delivery ambitions.

GCAT remains an excellent and unique delivery vehicle for action on the

ground in the Glenkens. We have recently been designated as one of two ‘anchor organisations’ in the wider area by the Glenkens and District Trust, which comes with associated core-cost support to assure stability and delivery.



Some of the CatStrand Arts team at the 2024 DG Life Awards, where we received 2 nominations

Partnerships / Networks

Glenkens

- Existing Cultural Glenkens projects:
  - Ken Words writers' café
  - Watson Birds
  - The Glenkens Story
  - Write On writing project
  - Dalry Film Club
  - Clachan Folk Sessions
  - CatStrand Singers
  - Glenkens Food Month
- Existing GCAT projects:
  - Glenkens Hub, Glenkens Gazette and Our Glenkens.
  - Galloway Community Transport
  - CatStrand Touring Arts programme
  - CatStrand Young Creatives
  - Glenkens Youth Group
  - Glenkens Community Spaces Network, including Local Place Planning.
  - CatStrand café, bar and visitor centre.
- Other Glenkens projects supported by our Community Action Plan work, including:
  - The Galloway Food Hub
  - The Pamela Young housing trust
  - The Loch Ken Trust.
  - Energy efficiency in Glenkens Town Halls.
- The Glenkens and District Trust
- The Glenkens Community Action Plan Steering Group

Regional partners

- Southern Uplands Partnership
- D&G Woodlands Initiative
- Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere
- Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway (our TSI)
- Dumfries & Galloway Arts Festival
- The Stove 'What We Do Now' creative place-making
- Communities for Diverse Forestry.

National links

- NatureScot
- Propagate Scotland
- Strong links with community development on Uist.

Project Management

Jo Jackson, the Cultural Glenkens Project Lead, will report to Peter Renwick, the CatStrand Creative Director, whose remit is to deliver the CatStrand Artistic Vision. She will work alongside Catherine (Cat) Campbell, who delivers the third strand of the CatStrand Artistic Vision, CatStrand Young Creatives.

Peter, Jo and Cat are supported by:

- Helen Keron, GCAT Chief Executive
- Hayley Edgar, CatStrand Arts Marketing Officer – tying Cultural Glenkens new events into the existing CatStrand Arts marketing strategy.
- GCAT Business Support – paying Cultural Glenkens invoices, monitoring ring-fenced funds, supporting budget management.
- Brian Edgar, GCAT Facilities Manager – providing Cultural Glenkens with safe, accessible venues (CatStrand, New Galloway and the Smiddy, Balmaclellan)

Governance

The Board of GCAT maintains overall responsibility for the delivery of GCAT's strategy and assurance of good process. Because of the project structure of GCAT, they devolve some of the duties of this to the relevant Steering Groups but maintain overall accountability for strategic delivery and governance. The GCAT Chief Executive reports to the Chair of the Board.

CatStrand Arts is supported by the CatStrand Arts Steering Group (CASG), which currently comprises 6 volunteers with a keen interest in and expertise in the arts.

For this key project, we will also create a Cultural Glenkens Steering Group.

Through the CASG, they will provide strategic oversight and assurance to the GCAT Board as to the progress of Cultural Glenkens, as well as operational / moral support to the Project Lead if required.

They will comprise 4 volunteers in the first instance, including a GCAT Board rep and a CASG rep, and will operate under a standard GCAT Steering Group Memo of Understanding.



Logan Paterson, New Galloway farmer, songwriter and poet.

Evaluation Strategy

The aim of the evaluation will be two-fold:

Within project:

- To ensure that we are responding nimbly to changing contexts and needs.
- To ensure that we are engaging with and benefitting as many people as possible through effective delivery.

End of project:

- To assess the success of the project in delivering its Outcomes and therefore furthering the NLHF principles.
- To assess the success of the project with respect to delivery of the relevant elements of the GCAT Strategy, the CatStrand Artistic Policy and the Glenkens Community Action Plan.
- To draw conclusions as to what can be learned from both the successes and failures of the project and to share them with other like-minded organisations.

For the Within Project evaluation, we will use our well-established GCAT and CatStrand Arts protocols:

- Surveys at the end of big events, to assess satisfaction and learning points.
- Exit interviews with both interns and the host organisations at the end of each placement.
- Creating excellent personal / professional relationships such that informal constructive feedback is given semi-continuously.
- Seeking testimonials and feedback from people who have seen high impact benefits.
- Regular review of online engagement data from Google Analytics, TicketSource and social media analytics.
- Cultural Glenkens included in the annual CatStrand Arts audience survey.

For the End of Project evaluation:

- A survey of volunteers engaged in all elements of the Cultural Glenkens programme.
- A public survey open to all who have attended or benefitted from the programme (online and paper)
- Collation and analysis of informal/unsolicited feedback received throughout the project in the form of e-mails received and social media comments.
- Final collation of online engagement data from Google Analytics, TicketSource and social media analytics.
- Creation of a final evaluation report that summarises the aims, delivery, within-project learning and responses, final evaluation and a conclusion of project effectiveness.

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Summary

Cultural Glenkens will allow us to meet a real need in the communities of the Glenkens through a project that builds on the strengths of GCAT, the legacy of the Galloway Glens and the enthusiasm of our volunteers for their natural and cultural heritage. It will make a step change in our ability to be able to connect people with their heritage, and will make an impact disproportionate to the funding due to its position within the weight of the GCAT organisation and our networks. It will also build on our existing strong relationships with regional and national partners, and allow us to be a better partner to them as they look to further their aims in the Glenkens.

We are a credible and high-quality organisation, with an 18-year track record of excellent delivery. Our place-based nature means that we are rooted in the Glenkens, but we look out and up in order to achieve our aims more effectively. We are strategic in our planning and personal in our delivery. We are most excited about the possibilities that the next 3 years offer through this project!



A young fan.