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The “intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.
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*Easter in New Lanark*  
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Intangible Cultural Heritage in Scotland
Our cultural heritage informs the identity of our nation. It’s more than what we can see and touch in museums and galleries – it’s also those intangible aspects which make us who and what we are today. The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) suggests all nations consider the distinctive character of their heritage as manifested within their respective borders.

To preserve the richness and diversity of Scotland’s culture, an inventory is a first step. This report suggests the beginning of such a process in Scotland; it offers a clear way forward for the promotion and protection of our nation’s cultural practices and living traditions. It also puts us in the vanguard of such work within Europe.

From Shetland’s Up-Helly-Aa festivals in the north to the Common Ridings of the Borders in the south, from the weaving of Harris Tweed in the Western Isles to the silver bands of the Lothians’ pit villages in the east, Scotland possesses a wealth of living traditions. These traditions are being constantly augmented and adapted by exposure to the cultural practices of new groups who settle here.

Scotland’s cultural heritage is an important part of what makes it such a fantastic place to live, work and do business. Maintaining the intangible aspects of that culture will help to keep Scotland in this enviable position.

Linda Fabiani, MSP
Minister for Culture
Intangible Cultural Heritage in Scotland
ICH in Scotland

The parameters of a national inventory of ICH in Scotland should accord with the 2003 UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage domains and the Scottish Government’s commitment to respecting diversity and creating community cohesion. The national inventory should cover all ICH in Scotland. It should be a reflection of ‘living’ practices and knowledge rather than a record of purely historical ICH.

Creating the Inventory

ICH knowledge resides in communities of practice. The most efficient method of collecting ‘living’ data is through routes of access to such practitioners. The most effective route of access runs through Local Authorities. As well as already having holdings of information relevant to ICH, local authorities have unparalleled knowledge of their area’s cultural landscape (and the contacts that complement this knowledge). However, this approach is less effective for reaching ethnic minority communities, which are better approached via ethnic minority organisations. Longer established migrant communities with a strong presence often support independent associations.

Managing the Inventory

A flexible, customised Wiki-style database will allow the specification of the inventory to grow organically with its development mirroring the dynamic nature of ICH knowledge. The familiar and straightforward ‘Wiki’ style means that once the database is set up the process of data entry should not pose any significant technical obstacles. Restricted access will operate for data entry, but end-user access for retrieval will be universal.

Safeguarding ICH

An inventory is not in itself a mechanism for safeguarding knowledge of ICH practices that over time are marked by their changeability. However, a proactively managed inventory does play an important role in sustaining ICH in that it allows for monitoring and review of fragility. This will act as a prompt for early safeguarding intervention. The use of the inventory for educational purposes will facilitate the transmission of ICH from generation to generation.
Intangible Cultural Heritage in Scotland
The Nature of Cultural Heritage

‘Cultural heritage’ has become a familiar concept, and one that can evoke strong associations. If individuals are asked to articulate what this heritage actually is, or where it can be found, it is likely that museums, galleries, monuments and historical buildings will feature prominently among responses. In short, there is a common belief that heritage resides in material artefacts or ‘things’ that have cultural significance and that can also be seen, examined and, in some cases at least, touched. However, cultural heritage does not just consist of collections and monuments: it also encompasses traditions that go beyond the material and are living expressions inherited by groups and communities from their ancestors and, in turn, transmitted to their descendants. This is ‘intangible cultural heritage’ (ICH).

Intangible Cultural Heritage

Many years of research undertaken on behalf of UNESCO on the functions and values of cultural expressions and practices have encouraged and facilitated new approaches to understanding and respecting the total cultural heritage of humanity. The aspect of this that is ICH gives a sense of identity and continuity to individuals and communities. As a driving force of cultural diversity, ICH is very fragile. In recent years, it has received international recognition and its safeguarding has become one of the priorities of international cooperation. This owes much to UNESCO’s adoption and subsequent promotion of its Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

While the UK is not a signatory to the Convention, it is not hostile to its intentions. While it is not mandatory upon constituent administrations at national level to meet its requirements, there is, particularly in Scotland and also Wales, a willingness to adhere to best practice in the matter of the safeguarding of ICH.
**Defining ICH**

The definition of ICH that is contained within the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH stands at the head of this report. The ‘domain definitions’ of Article 2.2 of the Convention are:

— oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage
— performing arts
— social practices, rituals and festive events
— knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
— traditional craftsmanship

The Convention views ICH as ‘living heritage’ that is manifested, *inter alia*, through these domain definitions. However, UNESCO – which has consulted extensively with member states and ICH experts around the world in arriving at definitional workability – does not regard these definitions as either comprehensive or prescriptive and insists that forms of ICH are defined by the communities themselves that participate in them.

**Safeguarding ICH**

A further key definition contained within this study is that of ‘safeguarding’. This also is outlined in the Convention, in Article 2.3. ‘Safeguarding’ means 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. The first step towards the safeguarding of ICH is to map those activities that fall within the UNESCO domain definitions above and to create an inventory of them. This inventory should also record the supporting mechanisms, both formal and informal, that are in place to safeguard ICH.

The purpose of this summary report is to outline the nature of ICH in Scotland and provide a guide for the creation of just such an inventory. In rendering the invisible visible, the creation of an accurate inventory of ICH in Scotland will constitute an important move towards its safeguarding for the future.
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Scope
ICH in Scotland has a broad basis in the cultural life of the country with examples falling within all the UNESCO domain definitions:
— oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage
— performing arts
— social practices, rituals and festive events
— knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
— traditional craftsmanship

An inventory of ICH will record all activities, no matter the different levels of penetration/diffusion of or participation in/impact of those activities. Indeed, it is important also to include these details of penetration/diffusion and participation/impact as indices of the strength or fragility of each activity. There will be no restriction to entry in the inventory based on the length of time the activity has been undertaken. Nor will the point of origin of the activity, whether in another country or indigenous to Scotland, be a factor in determining inclusion in the inventory. This will be an inventory of all ICH activities currently practised in Scotland.

Inclusivity and Diversity
A key reason for defining the scope of ICH in Scotland broadly in this way is in order to ensure that the definition resonates with the Scottish Government's commitment 'to serve all the people of Scotland, regardless of a person's race, religion, culture, ethnicity, or other background'. (See www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/people/equality/18934.) The definition of ICH in Scotland is therefore one that emphasises ‘inclusivity’, and which encompasses ICH in Scotland rather than Scottish ICH. Such a definition allows for the incorporation of the widest possible range of practices and knowledge in Scotland. It also avoids the problematic question of whether or not certain practices are specifically Scottish. The inventory will incorporate items of cultural significance within Scotland from as diverse a range of ICH sources as possible that reflect the UNESCO definitions, broadly interpreted.

ICH in Scotland is ‘living heritage’. The inventory will be a reflection of ‘living’ practices and knowledge rather than a record of the history of intangible culture. This approach mirrors the need to engage the interests of...
communities of practice and to be accessible. In other words, *purely historical* culture of an intangible nature cannot be considered central to knowledge of ICH in Scotland, but this does not, of course, mean that such knowledge is not informed by an awareness of the historical origin of intangible practices.

Practices of non-Scottish origin that remain unchanged and continue to be practised or are safeguarded ‘elsewhere’, also fall into the category of ICH in Scotland on the grounds that they are examples of cultural heritage ‘present’ in Scotland’s ‘territory’. The results of intercultural dialogue on Scottish practices, such as hybridised Scottish-Indian or Scottish-Italian cuisine that have evolved forms, and thus traditions, unique to Scotland, will also be recorded. The principle of ‘inclusivity’ can be further underlined in the area of language. ICH in Scotland should not be concerned solely with ICH practices (for instance story-telling) that exist only in indigenous Scottish languages. Practices that in Scotland exist only in non-indigenous languages spoken within migrant communities will be equally considered to be inside the scope of ICH in Scotland.

**UNESCO Domain Definitions**

In short, ICH in Scotland – with reference to the UNESCO Convention domains – can be considered to cover practices that reflect a broad range of Scotland’s cultural sphere, as now indicated below. The examples are not intended to be exhaustive.

**Oral traditions and expressions:** in terms of ‘oral traditions and expressions’, the linguistic diversity of Scottish culture, including practices in Gaelic, various Scots languages and dialects and in languages spoken by ethnic minorities, can be considered as of central importance to an inventory.

Further examples: Shetland, Urdu, Travellers’ Cant, Polish, Doric, Italian, and practices such as Precentor-led psalm singing, the Mod, story-telling, traveller ballads or muckle sags.

**Performing arts:** in terms of the ‘performing arts’, Scotland has, among many others, the *Celtic Connections* festival and the *Mela*.

Further examples: *Robert McLellan Festival, Arran; Ceilidhs and Ceilidh culture, Scottish Country Dance, Shetland fiddling tradition, Step dancing.*
Burnsang, former Colliery or ‘Pit’ Pipe and Silver bands, Gaelic mouth music, waulking songs.

**Social practices, rituals and festive events:** in terms of ‘social practices, rituals and festive events’, events as diverse as the Beltane Festival, Up-Helly-Aa and the Jedburgh ba’ game come under this category.


**Traditional craftsmanship:** in terms of ‘traditional craftsmanship’ practices, Caithness glass making and Harris Tweed manufacture are two of many Scottish traditions within this area.

Further examples: Fair Isle knitting patterns, Peat-cutting, Dry-stane dyking, Thatched roofing, Arbroath Smokies, Shetland Yoal/Orkney Yole and other boat building practices, Black House renovation.

Scotland possesses a richness of ICH, accentuated by the keen sense of local identity felt within the country. The inventory will provide the opportunity to appreciate the scale of ICH in Scotland and to acknowledge its diversity.
The enduring influence of the Vikings, who arrived in Shetland just over a thousand years ago, is celebrated on the last Tuesday of January every year by fire festivals across Shetland. The centrepiece of these events is a torch-lit procession, culminating in the burning of a replica Viking longship.

The Lerwick ‘Up-Helly-Aa’ is the largest fire festival in Europe. The term ‘Up-Helly-Aa’ itself dates from the late nineteenth century and the event evolved from earlier Yuletide and New Year festivities in the town, one notable aspect of which was burning tar barrels, overseen by rival groups of masked revellers. In the late nineteenth century, the Lerwick festival was also gradually moved to the end of January, and the tar-barrelling element was replaced by the burning of a Shetland yoal (traditional boat) decorated with a dragon’s head. A far more elaborate element of disguise – ‘guizing’ – was introduced into the new festival and the torch-lit procession was incorporated.

The festival ‘organisers’ deliberately sought to introduce Viking themes to their new festival of Up-Helly-Aa. The first sign of this policy appeared in 1877 and in the late 1880s a Viking longship – the ‘galley’ – took centre stage. In 1906 a ‘Guizer Jarl’, the chief guizer, was appointed. After the First World War he acquired a squad of Vikings, the ‘Guizer Jarl’s Squad’, in the procession every year. Approximately one thousand local ‘Viking’ guizers are now involved in the procession itself. Until the Second World War, participants were predominantly working class males. Much of the
town participates in the general festivities. Tourists from across the world are today attracted to the festival, which is now larger than ever before and more professionally organised. It remains not-for-profit.

Similar events take place across Shetland: Yell, the second-most northerly of the main Shetland Islands, hosts its own traditional Viking fire festival at the village of Cullivoe on the north-east coast, overlooking the island of Unst; and Northmavine in the northern part of Shetland’s Mainland, hosts its own Up-Helly-Aa at Hillswick. The form of these events is now very similar to the Lerwick one, although there is some historical evidence that people in rural Shetland, unlike in Lerwick, celebrated the 24th day after Christmas as ‘Antonsmas’ or ‘Up Helly Night’. These smaller Up-Helly-Aa events have, unsurprisingly, a much lower profile than Lerwick’s.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Shetland Council have advised that no specific work has yet been done on the economic impact of the various Up-Helly-Aa festivals. However, the Lerwick event is clearly a high-profile visitor attraction for Shetland, having featured in, among other things, Lonely Planet’s Bluelist. The impact of Up-Helly-Aa cannot be measured purely in terms of the number of visitors. It adds immensely to community cohesion and identity. There is now a permanent Up-Helly-Aa exhibition.

The Lerwick event is strong and at little risk. The other eight fire festivals throughout Shetland, although supported locally, may be more fragile and in need of safeguarding.
Community-based safeguarding entails a self-conscious and deliberate decision to conserve, emphasise or enhance the practice of ICH. The case of the Lismore Ceilidh Weekend, and the development of a local heritage centre, illustrates the consolidation of existing ICH without either artificialising or commodifying it. This is because the safeguarding activity is promoted from within the island community.

Lismore is an island situated in Loch Linnhe on the West Coast of Scotland. The current population is 176. Gaelic language has been a significant aspect of Lismore’s culture for centuries. Although in the national context speakers of the Argyll idiom of Gaelic are scarce, on the island of Lismore, Gaelic is very much alive, with residential language weekends being run for learners and speakers of all levels. Farming and crofting remain the island’s chief industries, but tourism is becoming an increasingly important part of the economy, with approximately 12,000 visitors per year.

Comann Eachdraidh Lios Mòr (CELM), or the Lismore Historical Society, was set up in 1991 by a group of Liosachs (people from Lismore). The Society identified a need to extend and develop the social, economic and cultural facilities available to the people of Lismore. The manner of achieving this was conceived of in terms of a new, multi-function Gaelic heritage museum and community facility, which would incorporate amenities such as a library and educational IT centre, and which would have the primary aims of safeguarding and interpreting Lismore’s unique cultural inheritance and helping develop the future economic viability of the island, primarily through increased tourism.

In terms of the collection, this stated rationale emphasised the need for the development not simply of a building to display the existing artefacts (although this was clearly also required), but for a different way of conceiving it: one that would help promote local identity through the integration of the intangible cultural knowledge of the local population with the tangible knowledge of local history, something that a display of material culture alone would be unlikely to achieve so effectively. The new heritage centre, ‘Ionad Naomh Moluag’ (St Moluag’s Centre),
opened on 17 March 2007.

The Centre reflects the then concerns of local people about what they saw as the danger of the undermining of their cultural heritage by a diminishing population or by the arrival of people to the island unaware of the traditions and culture of the island. It has been developed not solely in terms of the preservation of a collection of objects of significance to Lismore, but also as a means of promoting and preserving the island’s cultural identity. In other words, the artefacts housed there do not ‘stand alone’, but are displayed within a framework of interaction with local people. The planned centre acts as a site for the transmission of knowledge of the intangible cultural practices that compliment the material collection. Furthermore, through this synthesis, the community is able to curate its own material cultural and oral heritage, and thereby hold a stake in the preservation and reinforcement of Lismore’s cultural identity.

The process of collecting and sharing the oral heritage that accompanies the artefacts and archives took the form of a two-day ceilidh in the island’s hall led by CELM. During the ceilidh, the society’s members began a process of ‘listening’ to the objects in the collection. This entailed islanders being invited to ‘visit with’ the collection, while ‘recorders’ moved among their fellow islanders in order to note down their comments concerning both the objects themselves, and their own memories thereof, including the memories and objects brought by people new to the island. This process of integrating the tangible with the intangible has ensured that local knowledge and expertise is fully honoured and integrated into the collection in a way that enriches the community’s cultural landscape.
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Context
Capturing the scale and diversity of ICH in Scotland for entry into a national inventory is a challenging task. By contrast with collections of tangible heritage, ICH resides everywhere and yet, within any given official locus, is often invisible. ICH exists in both formal and informal contexts which are often highly localised geographically. Specialised knowledges may be retained as an oral tradition only by small sub-groups of specific regional or ethnic minorities within Scotland and, as a general rule, the more invisible the ICH, the more fragile it is, and therefore the more urgently it requires safeguarding.

The huge diversity, multiple scales and geographical range of examples of ICH in Scotland today, render the scoping and mapping for purposes of an inventory a significant undertaking. It is one that demands the decentralisation of data collection although the ongoing management of the inventory will be by a single, national body.

This organisational approach derives directly from the needs of data collection. Sources of data in themselves are less important than finding secure access routes to practitioners and knowledges, that is, the focus of primary attention for accessing living ICH. Approaches can therefore be categorised on the basis of ‘sources’ on the one hand, and ‘routes’ towards knowledge on the other, as outlined below, with the latter preferable.

Sources
Many potential primary sources of knowledge, particularly those susceptible to a centralised collection structure, fail to fulfil the UNESCO convention guidelines on various grounds. These rejected methods include the use of a questionnaire survey, and using subject-based searches through, for example, standard search engines such as Google, or standard reference books. Furthermore, existing archives (for instance, those of universities and local authority museums and cultural services departments) often tend towards a historical focus while having a narrow and highly specific remit which is not replicated for other ICH themes and/or in other geographical areas.

However, while inefficient as ‘primary’ sources some of these are considered potentially valuable as ‘supplementary’ sources of knowledge and include local newspapers, information from national or umbrella bodies, and existing archives.
Routes of Access

Given that continuing ICH knowledge resides in the community, the most efficient method of collecting ‘living’ data must be through routes of access to such practitioners. The preferred route identified runs through Local Authorities. Accordingly, initial Local Authority contacts will be responsible for providing access to a diverse range of further contacts within the cultural and community sector in their area, contacts reflecting the forms of ICH practised. This secondary level of contacts will then facilitate access to practitioner communities, who will provide required ‘deep data’ through the establishment of focus or discussion groups chaired and recorded by trained Local Authority or project staff or volunteers.

However, this method may be less effective for reaching ethnic minority communities, which are better approached via Ethnic Minority Organisations. It is acknowledged that longer established migrant communities with a strong independent presence (for example, Italian and Polish) are more easily accessible, often via independent websites.

The sequence of ‘snowballing’ implementation would be as follows:
— Local Authorities’ ‘best contacts’ already identified in the course of preparatory work would be re-approached in order to facilitate access to ICH practitioners and data. The efficient design and management of this primary element of a national inventory demands that roles, responsibilities, and technical details (extending down to the form and format in which data should be requested and supplied) would be negotiated with a
view to securing a transparent and mutually rewarding relationship between Local Authorities and the national inventory.

- ICH data would be collected through ‘focus’ or discussion groups, ideally facilitated by Local Authorities, and chaired and recorded by trained Local Authority or project staff or volunteers.
- Information already held in Local Authority databases would be explored and requested as necessary.
- The significance of Local Authorities as a source of supplementary data would be recognised with any ICH information not already catalogued and/or transcribed (film footage, tape or digital recordings) being recorded.
- Ethnic minority support organisations – such as Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS) and The Council of Ethnic Minorities Voluntary Sector Organisations – offer the most efficient ‘route of access’ to certain less visible practitioners and groups and to other ethnic minority organisations whose databases are not directly available to the public and they would act as surrogates for Local Authorities in this instance.

There is no specific schedule attached to this implementation as there are still issues to be resolved including funding. A more formal agreement would be negotiated with the Scottish Local Authorities to undertake this role as intermediaries in the collection of ICH data for the national inventory.
The Database

If the organisation of collecting ICH data is agreed and the process of compiling a national inventory begins, then the material will be entered into a database that is both convenient for inputters and accessible to users. The key attributes of such a ‘fit-for-purpose’ database to be used by a range of people with different educational levels and skill backgrounds are, on the one hand, ease of data entry and access, and on the other, flexibility across categories and over time.

A web-based solution would solve most of the problems associated with making the inventory accessible to as wide a public as possible. It can also provide a more streamlined approach to collection of the data for inclusion in the inventory. The only requirement for those inputting entries would be that they have an internet connection with a web browsing facility.

The ICH content management system, in other words the national inventory, would be a flexible, customised Wiki-style database, such as MediaWiki, rather than a custom-built one. The former would allow the specification of the database to grow organically, with the inventory mirroring the dynamic nature of ICH knowledge as well as the possibility that priorities may alter over time. This option can also run on a relatively cheap, shared web-hosting package. The familiar and straightforward ‘Wiki’ style would ensure that once the database is set up, the process of data entry would not pose any significant technical obstacles to a large and geographically dispersed team of authorised inputters and editors.

The Process

Those responsible for inputting data, as well as those collecting it, should be fully cognisant with the nature of the inventory in terms of UNESCO domains, and with the issues of scope, diversity and inclusivity, since a high level of awareness of the types of information sought would be vital to facilitating full and accurate data entry. ‘Joined-up’ practices of data collection and input would be essential. In other words, the processes for communicating data from collector to inputter should be robust, ensuring that the collected data matches that which goes into the inventory.

The inventory would be managed centrally in a proactive fashion and would require updating on a continuing basis, so that it can be a reflection of living and dynamic practices. A regularly maintained and updated national inventory of ICH along the lines indicated above would play an important role in itself in sustaining ICH, in that it would allow for monitoring and review of fragility. This would act as a prompt for early safeguarding intervention.
Intangible Cultural Heritage in Scotland
The Nature of Safeguarding

The safeguarding of ICH practices, as much as their recording, is the main focus of the UNESCO Convention. The Convention states that ICH to be safeguarded ‘is transmitted from generation to generation’. Safeguarding can be considered in terms of the mechanisms that facilitate the transmission of ICH knowledge. These mechanisms must be sufficiently robust and fit for purpose.

The creation of a national inventory of ICH, while it may ensure that there is a public or collective knowledge of practices recognisable up to this point as ICH, will not of itself safeguard the continuation of these practices by communities, groups and individuals into the future. However, the national inventory will provide an important springboard in respect of identifying examples of ICH that are fragile and in need of being safeguarded.

There is a risk to safeguarding. The very process of safeguarding may lead to the ‘commodification’ of the practices being supported. Essentially, this is where the method of support transforms the practice into a commercial product. While this may be appropriate in certain circumstances, it is unsuited to many forms of ICH as it can result in the practices being geared to the needs of the marketplace rather than to those of the community in which they originate.

Transmission of ICH knowledge

Within Scotland, the education system is identified as a potential and actual mechanism for transmitting knowledge about many aspects of intangible Scottish culture, ranging from music and food to festival and ritual. The Scottish Curriculum guidelines demonstrate that there is already considerable scope for the curriculum as a vehicle for the dissemination of ICH-relevant knowledge. Moreover, the curriculum is currently evolving – through the vehicle of the ongoing Curriculum for Excellence review for ages 3–18 – in a way that seems consciously to be placing more overt emphasis on transmitting Scotland’s cultures through education. The national inventory will be an important tool for the development of the curriculum as well as for its delivery in the classroom.
Methods of Safeguarding

Safeguarding should, wherever possible, take the form of ‘supporting’ community groups through education, in its broadest sense, so that ICH is not either taken over and distorted beyond recognition or alternatively preserved in aspic. It follows that while local authorities and other public bodies can facilitate the safeguarding of ICH by providing the framework for that support, they cannot actually undertake the safeguarding, which is achieved through continuing community-based practice of the ICH in question.

Community-based safeguarding does entail a self-conscious and deliberate decision to conserve, emphasise or enhance the practice of ICH. It has the benefit of consolidating existing ICH without either artificialising or commodifying it, given that the safeguarding activity is promoted from within the community itself. In other words, the safeguarding is not by a public body or a tourist organisation for their own purposes – even if that purpose may be an attempt to preserve ICH – but is being carried out by the community for the benefit of that community.
The Next Steps

**Step One**
A national inventory is fully funded as a cost-effective and efficient repository of knowledge of ICH practices in Scotland.

**Step Two**
Details of ICH practices are collected through a Local Authority-led process of ‘snowballing’, supplemented as necessary by secondary sources, all coordinated centrally.

**Step Three**
This data is stored, for ease of deposit of and retrieval, in a customised ‘Wiki’ format for which inputting rights for data entry would be restricted, but data access for end users would be universal.

**Step Four**
The national inventory of ICH becomes a key tool for safeguarding through identification of fragility and an important component of education and community development.

**Conclusion**
A nation that prioritises ICH demonstrates a high level of respect for, and commitment to, the communities and individuals whose sense of identity is, in part, shaped through these practices. It is therefore of benefit to Scotland to pursue an agenda that will allow it to showcase and preserve those elements of its diverse cultural inheritance which have hitherto been accorded a lower priority than is desirable.

Recognising and safeguarding ICH practices is gaining increasing priority internationally and Scotland now has the opportunity to become a leader in the field in a way that can only be advantageous to its people. ‘Embracing the intangible’ can be achieved in a manner that is cost-effective and that enables the people of Scotland to be stakeholders in that important process.

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A Samhuinn performer © Gerry McCann.
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Fair Isle knitted hat
© Shetland Museum.
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Intangible Cultural Heritage in Scotland

THE WAY FORWARD