

MAUCHLINE CONSERVATION AREA REGENERATION SCHEME (CARS)

FINAL EVALUATION

SMART CONSULTANCY

APRIL 2026



East Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

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Executive summary

Overview and Project Delivery

The Mauchline Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) ran from 2019 to March 2026 as a heritage-led regeneration programme funded mainly by Historic Environment Scotland and East Ayrshire Council, alongside contributions from property owners. Its central aim was to strengthen the economic and cultural value of Mauchline's heritage through building restoration, public realm improvements, and community engagement.

The scheme was designed around restoring key historic buildings, supporting private owners through grants, improving shopfronts and public spaces, and delivering education and training in traditional construction skills. It also aimed to increase community awareness and appreciation of local heritage.

In practice, delivery differed significantly from original expectations. None of the six planned major 'priority' building projects were completed due to a combination of financial, ownership, and practical challenges. Instead, the scheme shifted toward smaller to medium scale grant interventions. By completion, nine small and medium grant-supported building projects had been delivered or were nearing completion, alongside a wide range of public realm works and community-focused activities.

This shifting profile meant that while the programme still produced important and visible improvements, it did not achieve the large-scale transformation initially envisioned. The absence of major building restorations became the defining limitation of the project.

Investment, outputs, and community impact

The total cost of the scheme was approximately £2.29 million, with the majority coming from public funding and a smaller share from property owners. Spending was heavily concentrated on small and medium building grants, while only a very small level of fees was used to support the original priority projects.

Despite this redistribution of resources, the scheme delivered a range of tangible outputs. Several historic properties were repaired, helping to extend their lifespan

and improve their appearance. Public realm improvements, including upgraded lighting, signage, walls, and streetscape features, enhanced key areas of the village.

Beyond physical works, the project was particularly successful in its softer activities. Training programmes in traditional construction skills were delivered, and partnerships were formed with schools and community groups. Initiatives such as archaeological projects and the development of a heritage app created lasting educational and cultural value. The scheme also produced guidance documents and conservation tools that will support future maintenance and planning.

Community feedback reflects a mixed but generally positive picture. Awareness of the scheme was high, and many residents felt it improved the appearance of the village and helped preserve its heritage. However, there was also disappointment about the limited scale of change compared to initial expectations. Some residents felt that too many buildings remained unimproved and questioned whether the level of investment had delivered sufficient impact.

Overall, the project can be summarised as beneficial, but not transformative.

Key findings, challenges, and lessons

The final evaluation concludes that the scheme did not meet its original ambitions, primarily due to the failure to deliver any of the major priority projects. This shortfall significantly reduced the overall impact and contributed to mixed perceptions within the community. However, the project still delivered meaningful improvements through smaller-scale works and created valuable long-term outputs in training, community engagement, and heritage management.

A number of challenges explain this outcome. The project appears to have been overambitious from the outset, with initial cost estimates proving unrealistic. Rising construction costs and inflation further increased financial pressures, while limited early survey work meant that the true scale of required works was not fully understood. Ownership issues also played a major role, as some property owners were unwilling or unable to proceed under the grant conditions. External factors such as the Covid-19 pandemic added delays and uncertainty.

There were also issues around expectations and communication. Early enthusiasm created high expectations within the community, which were difficult to meet as

delays and project cancellations accumulated. Although communication efforts were generally strong, they could not fully offset frustration caused by the lack of visible large-scale progress.

In conclusion, Mauchline CARS can be described as a partial success. It brought investment, improved parts of the village, and generated valuable community and heritage outcomes. At the same time, it fell short of its central goal of delivering major building restorations, leaving some sense that the overall task remains incomplete.

The evaluation highlights several important lessons for future projects. These include the need for more realistic planning, better early-stage cost assessments, and stronger engagement with property owners to ensure commitment. Clear communication of grant conditions and risks is essential, as is managing community expectations from the outset. Delivering early visible improvements can help maintain momentum, and planning for long-term legacy should be built into projects from the beginning.

1. Introduction and evaluation process

Mauchline Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) was a heritage led regeneration scheme for Mauchline which ran from 2019 until March 2026. The scheme was primarily funded by Historic Environment Scotland and East Ayrshire Council, allied to contributions from property owners. The scheme provided property within the Mauchline Conservation Area with the opportunity to apply for grant funding for building repairs, re-instatement of architectural detail, and shop front improvements. It also included a range of supporting educational and training activities, and a series of Public Realm works. Section 2 provides further details on all aspects of Mauchline CARS.

Smart Consultancy was commissioned by CARS (via East Ayrshire Council) in early 2024 to undertake an evaluation of the project. This involved work in a series of stages to March 2026. This report is the final full evaluation and follows on from an interim report in July 2024¹, and a further progress review in May 2025².

The final evaluation process built upon review activities undertaken in preparing the previous two reports, and included:

1. A review of all final project records to present the full scope of CAR activities over the period of project operation.
2. Preparation of a suite of 'before and after' impact pictures on all capital works.
3. Analysis of final project spend by category of work, and the sources of investment that enabled this.
4. Design, distribution, promotion and analysis of an electronic survey to gather wider community views on all aspects of CARS work (with an accompanying aide memoir summary of what work was undertaken by the project).
5. Qualitative 1:1 or group discussions with: the Project Manager and lead EAC support officer; members of the CARS Steering Group; other linked community projects in Mauchline; the owners of the properties supported by CARS investment; owners of properties initially interested in grant that did not progress; local schools; local Councillors. (A full list of consultees is attached as appendix 3.)
6. Preparation of this final report, initially in draft form and then finalised following discussion with project staff and support. And thereafter preparation of an Executive Summary.
7. Presentation and discussion of report with the CARS Steering Group.

¹ 'Mauchline CARS: Interim Review and Evaluation Plan' (Smart Consultancy July 2024).

² 'Mauchline CARS: Review Update (Smart Consultancy May 2025).

Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Section 2: summarises the background, aims and nature of supports provided by Mauchline CARS.

Section 3: details all work and activities supported by CARS, and the investment sources that enabled these.

Section 4: presents the findings of a community survey on CARS impact conducted in the early spring of 2026.

Section 5: consolidates the key evaluation messages from all elements of process, including reflections on the qualitative discussions undertaken.

Section 6: presents final evaluation conclusions, and suggests some key learning for future projects similar to Mauchline CARS.

Appendix 1: presents the full CARS expenditure and investment profile.

Appendix 2: showcases CARS work through a series of images.

Appendix 3: summarises the key findings from the interim and update reviews.

Appendix 4: contains the full consultation survey questions.

Appendix 5: presents some case studies of individual CARS activities.

Appendix 6: details all consultees involved across the three stages of the evaluation process.

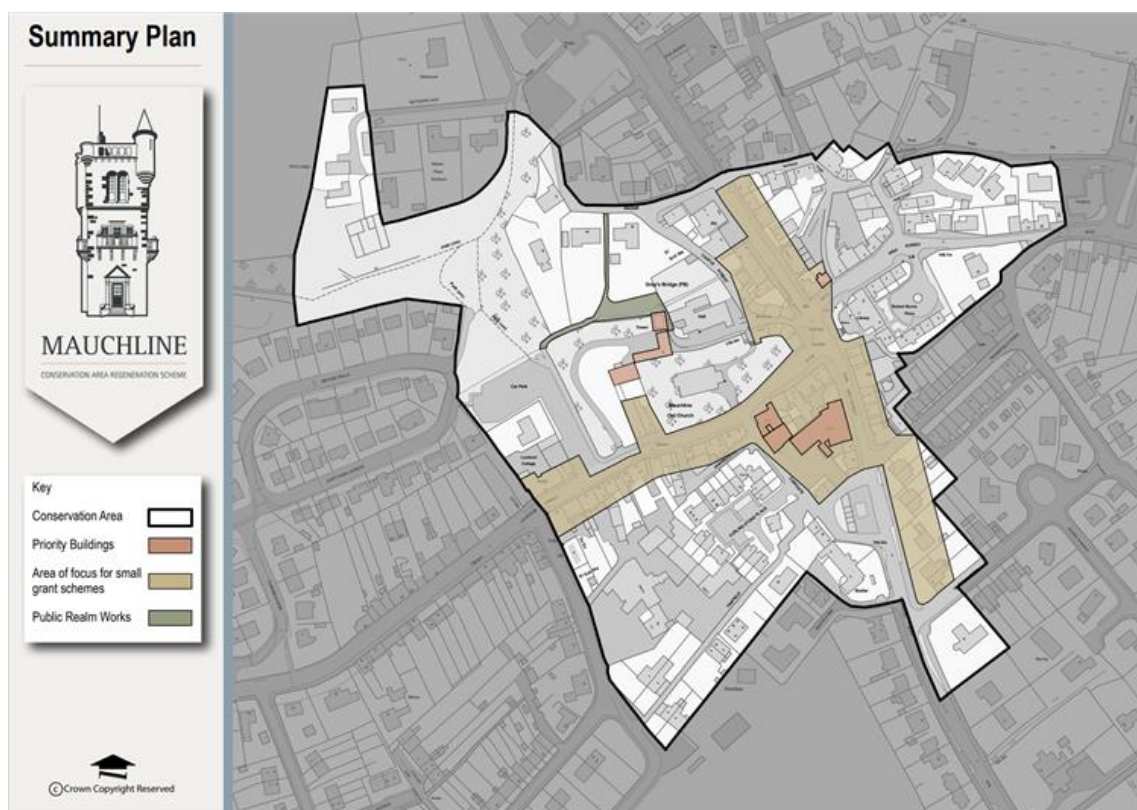
2. Mauchline CARS: background, aims, and principles.

Origins and background

A conservation area was established in Mauchline in 1973 and revised in 2003. Based on this history, and the opportunity to establish a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) investment, a Conservation Area Appraisal was conducted in 2017-18. This led to a successful application to HES supported by additional East Ayrshire Council funding to establish CARS. The project was initially intended to operate to 2024, but due to a number of factors (considered later) this has now been extended to March 2026.

CARS eligible areas

The designated areas for CARS investment were identified in the initial appraisal work. They are detailed in the map below.



CARS Aims

The aim of the scheme was to maximise and sustain the economic potential of Mauchline's Culture and Heritage assets through:

- The restoration and repair of six key historic buildings bringing them, where necessary, back into productive and sustainable use.
- A small grants scheme to enable and encourage private owners to carry out urgent repairs on traditional and older properties.
- A small grants scheme for shop front improvements.
- Public realm works.
- An education and training programme for those involved or wishing to be involved in the traditional construction industry.
- A programme of community participation and learning to increase people's understanding and appreciation of heritage.

Principles

The general principles behind the CARS scheme were:

- To adopt proven traditional building techniques based on analysis of the causes of defects and an understanding of the historic development of the building.
- To avoid unnecessary damage and avoid replacement of sound historic fabric.
- Restore architectural detail and heritage features based on appropriate evidence.
- Safeguard the future of the building with regular maintenance.

CARS grants

Grants available were identified at the outset as for:

Large building repair grants of up to 90% of eligible costs for priority building projects.

- Small building repair and shopfront improvement grants for properties within the main commercial areas of Loudon Street, Earl Grey Street and Kilmarnock Road – grant rate 75% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of £25,000.
- Small grants for the re-instatement of architectural detail – grant rate 75% of eligible costs up to a maximum of £15,000.

Eligible work

Historic building repairs - structural and external repairs to historic buildings including repairs to roofs, masonry, external doors, and windows.

Re-instatement of architectural detail - including ornamental metal work, decorative tiling or timber or stone details where the building is otherwise in good condition or will be repaired as part of the project.

Shopfront improvements - where works restore or contribute positively to the built heritage of the Conservation Area.

CARS activities

In the successful application to HES, CARS detailed that it would achieve its objectives through a combination of:

- Priority building repair projects that provide grant assistance for the re-use of redundant buildings and the intensification of underused buildings resulting in a viable end use.
- A Small Grant Scheme providing funding for building repairs to properties identified as medium/high priority.
- A Small Grant Scheme providing funding for shopfront improvements.
- A Small Grant Scheme providing funding for the replacement of UPVC windows and rainwater goods with wooden sash & case windows, and cast-iron rainwater goods in line with guidance on energy efficiency and climate change adaptation for traditional buildings.
- Public Realm Improvements - that repair and upgrade a pedestrian thoroughfare and provide a vantage point for interpretation and accessing the 'A' listed Abbot Hunter's Tower; and
- Community Engagement & Education - a programme of activities which promote community engagement and education.

In practice, this has evolved into a programme of work considered in the next section.

CARS governance

CARS was operated by East Ayrshire Council's Planning and Development Service and delivered through a full-time local Project Officer. In addition, a local community Steering Group supported the project – this was a sub-group of the Mauchline Community Action Group.

3. CARS projects, activities and spend

The interim report summarised progress across all CARS action areas by spring 2024. This was set against the original CARS project aspirations as contained in the successful funding application to HES. As CARS evolved, it broadened into offering a series of linked activities. As detailed below, however, none of the anticipated priority building repair projects were delivered.



The table overleaf summarises subsequent progress, and how things changed in the practice by the conclusion of CARS in the spring of 2026.

PROJECT ELEMENT	ORIGINAL EXPECTATIONS	WORK COMPLETED BY MARCH 2026 ³
Priority Building Repair Capital Projects	<p>At the outset, CARS was intended to support 6 priority projects that would provide grant assistance for the re-use of redundant buildings and the intensification of underused buildings, resulting in viable end uses. The proposed priority buildings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbot Hunter’s Tower (Mauchline Castle) – A listed. • 8 Loudoun Street (Gavin Hamilton’s House) – A listed. • 8 Loudoun Street (Old Bakery) (red sandstone building). • 21 Loudoun Street (Poosie Nansie’s) – B Listed. • 3 High Street (Home of John Richmond)- B Listed. • 8-12 Earl Grey Street (Mauchline & District Kilmarnock FC Supporters Club). 	<p>Due to a variety of reasons none of these priority projects were progressed.</p> <p>Poosie Nansie’s (21 Loudoun Street) – elemental costings were received by the new owner, having reviewed whether they would like to proceed with the project. Due to budget constraints MCARS were also reviewing which aspects of the project would be priority to instruct as “essential”. The new owner decided not to proceed due to the inability of the CARS to fund any internal refit, this being his priority over external and structural repair.</p> <p>Mauchline Castle Estate (8 Loudoun Street - Gavin Hamilton’s House, Old Bakery, Abbot Hunter’s Tower) – due to increased costs and a dispute regarding payment of professional fees the owner was not willing to proceed at risk as additional funding from HES would have been required to fund the full extent of the repair works.</p> <p>Mauchline District Kilmarnock Supporters Club – due to lack of client resource to manage the project and the clubs reduced availability of funding, staffing changes and limited contact it was determined that despite significant efforts by CARS the risk of progressing further became too great.</p> <p>3 High Street – due to changes in ownership and missing owners no progression was achieved.</p>
Small/Medium Building Grants	<p>The original submission to HES indicated the project would deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Small Grant Scheme providing funding for building repairs to properties identified as medium/high priority. 	<p>The following projects were progressed through the Small/Medium Grant Schemes (non-priority buildings)</p> <p>Project completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39a Loudoun Street • 17 Earl Grey Street • 4 Loudoun St

³ Images from all aspects of CARS work are

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Small Grant Scheme providing funding for shopfront improvements. • A Small Grant Scheme providing funding for the replacement of UPVC windows and rainwater goods with wooden sash & case windows and cast-iron rainwater goods in line with guidance on energy efficiency and climate change adaptation for traditional buildings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Loudoun St- WH Kirkwood, 23.09.24 • Burns House Museum (Main Works) <p>Practical Completion Issued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3a Earl Grey Street – final Account still to be agreed. <p>Works on-going.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 The Cross- WH Kirkwood (Gable to have render patch repaired) • Burns House Museum- CBC Stone, (courtyard additional works) • Castle Café, 3 Kilmarnock Road – Gable to be re- rendered. to enable mural to be installed. CBC Stone <p>Consequently, 6 projects complete/practically complete. There are 3 projects which will complete by June 2026 due to requiring works done within suitable dry/warm weather conditions.</p> <p>Due to an unallocated spend as a result of the withdrawal of Poosie Nansies. Mauchline CARS created the <i>Mauchline Small Grant Scheme</i>. This fund was of solely East Ayrshire Council Capital funding and would be utilised to support property owners with small aesthetic improvements to their properties. To date one project has progressed and is due to complete, the repair and repaint of 1 Loudoun Street, Well Pharmacy. Works yet to commence at the Black Bull, Earl Grey Street. The applicant here will be completing a full repair and (where required) replacement of the property’s dormer windows.</p> <p>3 projects anticipated in April 2024 will not now progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 15 Earl Grey Street – previously CARS project office, due to budget constraints the office was closed and lease terminated. As a result of this the application for grant was withdrawn by Mauchline CARS. ✓ Kays Curling Stone Factory – proposed improvement works by CARS were limited to external fabric repairs as grant eligible, owners plan to complete a wide range of improvement works internally and externally. Proposals created by Mauchline CARS will be considered by owners when progressing
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		<p>this project independently. Significant investment in the factory is ongoing with assistance from East Ayrshire Council’s Economic Growth service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1 Earl Grey Street – due to conditions of grant (15 year ‘clawback’ requirement) owner withdrew from process.
<p>Public Realm Works</p>	<p>The CARS application to HES indicated it would undertake a range of Public Realm Improvements and repairs to support wider regeneration and restoration objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bollards and Railings repaired and painted 2023. ✓ Flowerbed at side of Fairburn- collaborative project with Kays Scotland and Mauchline Burns Club. ✓ Cobble, Bollard & Railing Repairs - instructed via EAC Greener Communities, works complete. Repair works to cobbles at the Church Hall, all railings and bollards from Hall to the carpark, repaired and repainted. Previously lit bollards adapted with a photoluminescent insert to appear lit at night. ✓ Historic Boundary Wall, Mauchline Parish Church, Loudoun Street, Mauchline – full stretch of wall repaired and restored, scope included repointing, stone repairs, full repairs to gates and new traditionally styled notice board installed. <p>Live projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Street Signage - phase 2 of the street signage has now been instructed and will be installed in April 2026. ✓ Mural to gable of Castle Café, render repairs currently on-going, artist awarded project James Klinge. ✓ Improvement works to the rear courtyard of Burns House Museum, the Courtyard once complete will be accessible from Kilmarnock Road and accessible for the community during museum opening hours. ✓ New display and interpretation boards at Loudoun Street carpark including resurfacing works and re-configuration of street furniture to make best use of space. ✓ New interpretation board at rear of Abbot Hunter’s Tower. ✓ Reinstatement of cornerstone at Poosie Nansies ✓ Lanterns to street lighting across medieval lanes and churchyard yet to be replaced with traditional styled lantern, as agreed with ARA these works will be funded by ARA. Currently experiencing procurement delays.

<p>Community engagement and learning projects</p>	<p>CARS was anticipated to deliver a Community Engagement & Education programme of activities which promote community engagement and education.</p>	<p>Mauchline Heritage App- Project tendered in January 2026, awarded and completed in March 2026. Mauchline Heritage App now live. 4-year maintenance built in to 31st April 2030. (See appendix 5 for further details).</p> <p>Mauchline Archaeology Scotland Projects-</p> <p><i>Archaeological dig at old Boxworks 2024</i> - Young People from Robert Burns Museum, local archaeology groups and members of the community worked in collaboration with Archelogy Scotland Officers to explore the hidden history of the Mauchline Boxworks factory previously located on Kilmarnock Road. Findings included red sandstone walls marking out the corner of a lost structure, along with various small artifacts including tiles, bottles and metal goods. (See appendix 5 for further details).</p> <p><i>Historic Building Recording</i>- Young People from Robert Burswn Academy worked with Archaeology Scotland to explore the requirements for recording a historic building/structure.</p> <p><i>Graveyard Survey</i>- Young people from Robert Burns Academy worked with Archaeology Scotland Officers to explore the reasons behind a graveyard surveying and increase awareness of the historic symbols used on headstones.</p> <p><i>Archaeological dig at the lost Netherplace Estate entrance on Loudoun Street</i>- Young people from Sorn Primary School, local archaeology groups and members of the community worked with Archaeology Scotland Officers to explore the hidden history of the historic entrance to Netherplace Estate on Loudoun Street. Findings included the internal walls of the lost gatehouse and the original avenue surface material which would have led to the main house. (See appendix 5 for further details).</p> <p>Rabbie Road- Heritage Awareness Course- a celebration of Robert Burns’ work ‘Tae a Mouse’ with Mauchline Primary’s P6 completed in June 2021.</p> <p>Out of This World- Heritage Awareness Course- Based on existing artefacts displayed in local museums, namely Burns House Museum. The young people of</p>
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		<p>Mauchline Primary School created and original song and learned about historic local figures and stories.</p> <p>2023 Summer School- Mauchline parkour week long course, Mauchline’s young people developed friendships across peer groups and grew in appreciation for their beautiful town, whilst creating lasting memories and improving their physical and mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>2024 Summer School- Young people of Mauchline took part in dance and music making. Learning about their local heritage focused around the Ballochmyle Sandstone Quarry.</p> <p>CARS provided financial support to an educational project with local world-renowned artist, Elaine Johnstone and Mauchline Primary School, the project was themed around Mauchline’s unique built heritage and local environment. Followed by an exhibition at Burns Memorial Tower, Mauchline.</p>
<p>Training projects</p>	<p>CARS was anticipated to deliver a series of training projects to address an identified gap in traditional building skills, these would be central to both direct capital works in the scheme, but also to ongoing maintenance. This work would also provide new training, skills and job opportunities for local people.</p>	<p>CARS, with the support of The Scottish Lime Centre Trust (SLCT), produced a training programme for traditional building skills. Courses took place throughout September 2023.</p> <p>The 2023 Training Programme included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Masonry Course- a week-long course at Dumfries House, learning to build solid, freestanding walls using local sandstone, all bedded and pointed up using traditional lime mortars. • Scottish Slate Roofing- a one-day course providing an introductory guide to traditional Scottish roofs including function, structure, external roof shapes, typical details and decorative features, the causes of deterioration and the main causes of failure. • Traditional Joinery- this included a short history of the development of windows before looking at the different components that make up a window and the issues to consider when approaching repairs.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional Signwriting - this workshop was inspired by signage and lettering, including ghost signs. Attendees learnt about the history of sign painting and the main brush strokes used in signwriting.
Volunteer projects	CARS was intended to stimulate a series of related volunteer projects.	<p>Editing and publishing of the book by Lisa Dunlop was completed in January 2026 by Carn Publishing. The book 'The White Monks of Melrose and their Church at Mauchline' is now on sale direct from our publisher Dane Love and various other outlets and proceeds from this book go to Mauchline Community Association.</p> <p><i>Permian Motions</i>- Music provided by Mr Paul Haining was shared with Creative Minds Team to inspire the theme of the 2024 Summer School. Paul's research was focused around the Ballochmyle Sandstone quarries and named Permian Motions, after the process of stone extraction.</p> <p>Volunteers were also involved within the Archaeology Scotland project noted above.</p>
Policy Guidance and Research	In support of the planned capital works, a series of documents and guides were anticipated to support developments and ensure these were consistent with the conservation principles of CARS.	<p>CARS produced a number of useful documents to support the on-going maintenance, conservation, and repair of the Mauchline Conservation Area including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) - a complete guide regarding the management of the Conservation Area, including a framework for maintaining its special character and unique built heritage. Gazetteer- a "snapshot in time" of every historical property within the Conservation Area and its priority grading at the time of preparing the Gazetteer. Maintenance & Management Plan (MAMP)- a document created to support property owners maintaining their traditional properties. Colour Palette- a specially curated colour palette representing the range of pigments available historically within Mauchline. Materials Audit- a comprehensive analysis into the stone and mortar used across Mauchline. This will allow us to complete repairs like repointing and stone indents with the correct composition of materials.

		<p>Further, policy tools have been introduced to enhance controls within the Conservation Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 4- The removal of some areas of permitted development to further protect the heritage of a Conservation Area. ○ Removal of Deemed Advertisement Consent- again like Article 4 this provides more control over advertisements within their setting.
<p>Additional CARS development work</p>	<p>Out-with the core funding from HES and East Ayrshire Council, CARS was intended to be a mechanism to source other additional funding related to core project objective. This is relevant to both the next two years, and potentially beyond the end of the main CARS project.</p>	<p>Renewable Energy Fund (REF)-planters were produced by EAC’s Greener Communities. Bench Designs have been created by Jonny Burn, EAC’s Graphic Designer based on Mauchline heritage. All new street furniture has now been manufactured and installed.</p> <p>Place Based Improvement Programme (PBIP)- CARS successfully gained additional funding in 2022 and 2023 to support the replacement and repair of Mauchline’s street lighting. Areas to receive works were identified as Loudoun Street, Loudoun Street car park, lanes and churchyard. Following detailed surveys by ARA it was determined that works to Loudoun Street may carry unforeseen costs and exceed the allocated budget. However, works to replace the lighting to the car park and the repair, repaint and replacement of lanterns to lanes and churchyard were completed by a local East Ayrshire company appointed following a comprehensive tender process.</p> <p>With the PBIP savings CARS also gifted the Mauchline Community Council with a ride on lawnmower for their on-going maintenance requirements to various open spaces.</p> <p>Due to savings across the projects, we have purchased additional planters x2, interpretation boards x3, completed in March 2026. <i>The 2022 grant from PBIP included funding for Mauchline Community Council to repair/restore/replace the benches in and around the village. Works were completed spring 2023.</i></p>

CARS Investment and Costs

The CARS financial summary is attached as appendix 1. This may be fine-tuned as the project is formally wound up, but the key messages are unlikely to alter.

The total cost of the Mauchline CARS was £2,293,846. Respective contributions were as follows.

Historic Environment Scotland	£1,106,887	48.3%
East Ayrshire Council (capital funding)	£478,286	20.9%
East Ayrshire Council (revenue funding)	£282,000	12.3%
Property owners	£392,046	17.1%

The cost of the scheme to public funding was thereby £1,833,954 (82.4%).

Costs by activity area were.

Priority building costs ⁴	£14,327	0.6%
Small/medium building grants	£1,441,360	65.8%
Public Realm works	£205,434	9.4%
Community engagement and learning	£45,000	2.1%
Training and skills development	£45,000	2.1%
Staff and administration	£440,500	20.1%

A contingency fund remains of £34,627. This is projected to be spent in residual and ongoing works.

Reflective of the changes in project delivery, this latest financial profile varies significantly from that projected in the evaluation interim report in spring 2024. Most notably changes are:

Reflections on this cost and investment profile are contained in section 5.

⁴ None of these works progressed. These sums are entirely for fees.

4. Community survey on CARS impact

An electronic survey to gain wider community views at the completion of CARS was circulated through the project's various media channels between late March and mid April 2026. A total of 19 surveys were returned after the issuing of reminders. This is a low response rate, and any messages from the survey returns must be viewed in this context. The full survey circulated is contained as appendix 3.

Key findings of the survey are:

- The majority of respondents were long time residents of Mauchline.
- A majority of respondents of respondents (74%) stated they were 'well aware' of the CARS, the rest (26%) 'knew a little' about the programme.
- 42% of respondents noted they had opportunities to get involved in the work of CARS, whilst 58% did not.
- In terms of the specific aspects of CARS work respondents were generally aware of most activity categories. General building works, shop front improvements and public realm improvements were marginally better known than other activities.
- Local publicity was the most common way people had found out about CARS, followed by observing CARS work being undertaken in the village. Other individual initial information sources mentioned were via participating in the Steering Group, Facebook, via family involvement, and through knowledge of other East Ayrshire CARS.
- Most aspects of CARS activities were considered 'very important' by a majority of respondents, and as 'important' by all other respondents – 2 respondents were 'not sure', and 1 response considered all of CARS work 'not important'.
- The various related reasons suggested for the ratings above all registered highly in returns; the 2 most popular responses were that 'Mauchline looks better' and that 'the village's heritage had been preserved'. Young people understanding Mauchline's history and heritage better was considered the third most important factor.

- Overall, 53% of respondents thought the CARS had been ‘very important’ for Mauchline, 32% viewed it as ‘quite important, 10% rated it ‘not important. 5% were unsure.

A final open text question inviting any other comments on CARS generated a response from most survey participants. These varied very significantly, ranging from people very enthusiastic and positive about changes in how the village looks, to others very disappointed and underwhelmed by the impact and range of work completed – particularly given the CARS investment levels. Some concerns on the quality of work were also expressed, as was a sense that local tradespeople could have been more involved. Other comments balanced positive views on some work with frustrations that more properties could not have been improved, neatly summarised in the comment ‘the buildings improved highlight the ones left behind’. Wider concerns were also expressed on an overall sense of decline in village facilities and services (e.g. bins, traffic), though these were primarily about issues outwith the remit of CARS.

5. **Final evaluation: key messages**

This section now consolidates all aspects of the evaluation process and suggests key findings at the conclusion of Mauchline CARS. It updates and restates recurring messages from the initial and interim evaluation reports. For ease of reference, these are summarised in appendix 3.

Delivery of key project elements

The tables in section 3 very clearly highlight that CARS did not deliver on a number of key initial aspirations. Looking back over the initial and interim evaluations this was a gradual diminution of priority projects, compensated to a degree by substitute activities.

The highlight disappointment was not progressing any of the initial 6 priority projects. Expectations of delivering these gradually tapered – in July 2024 the project continued work on 4 of these and by May 2025 this had reduced to 2.

More positively, 9 small and medium grant projects will be completed by CARS. 6 are complete by March and residual work on 3 others by early summer 2026. These are significant and important projects restoring heritage and significantly extending the life span of key properties.

Public realm works have also been extensive and CARS attracting wider funding enabled more work to be progressed. The scale and significance of these varies, but as appendix 2 demonstrates they have improved a number of key locations in the village. These images highlight key improvements to public areas, including better lighting, flowerbeds, street signage, wall restoration, bollard replacement, and interpretation boards. Residual work to complete all public realm work will also be completed by earlier summer 2026.

Wider and smaller scale CARS activities, which do not involve capital works progressed more straightforwardly. These included community engagement activities, training and education. They were strategically important in maintaining some momentum in the early phases of CARS when the building works experienced repeated delays. New activities, not initially anticipated, were added and generally well received. Importantly

these strengthened CARS community engagement by reaching wider into the community including work with young people and school pupils. These projects also produced legacy outputs which should be of value beyond CARS. For example, heritage building and design guides, and the 2 projects summarised in appendix 5 – the Mauchline Heritage App and the archaeological excavation work.

These wider activities also developed new partnerships with for example local schools, the Scottish Limescale Trust, and Archaeological Scotland. These links should also be maintained in post CARS community structures to support future activity.

Taken together, CARS has progressed a varied and extensive range of work. But despite ongoing effort and new idea generation, the failure to deliver on the priority projects results in an ultimate sense of disappointment.

Investment and costs

Final total CARS expenditure on the conclusion of some small residual works still underway is projected as £2,293,846. The respective shares of funding highlights HES as supplying 48% of total costs, East Ayrshire Council 33% and property owners 17%.

Total final spend projected is £101,167 more than the projected budget detailed in the interim evaluation report of July 2024, and £82,252 lower than projected in the update evaluation in May 2025. Within individual budget lines investments were reallocated over time in recognition of the reducing number (ultimately zero) of anticipated priority building projects. Small and medium grants and Public Realm budgets subsequently increased. The lack of progress on priority projects also reduced owner inputs – down from an estimated £474,209 in May 2025 to £392,046 in final projections.

The overall cost profile reflects the spiralling of initially anticipated costs across most aspects of CARS portfolio. Although the total spend is not significantly higher than the initial projections this is in a context (detailed above) that significantly fewer capital projects were supported. The reasons for this were primarily unanticipated inflation and major initial under costings of most works. The latter was linked to limited survey work in advance and is a key learning point for future capital heritage projects.

Community expectations and feedback

The introduction of the CARS generated significant initial interest and excitement in Mauchline. The ambition and relevance of the plans and associated investment was welcomed. In retrospect this contributed to some future difficulties. The main building projects were significantly delayed and this lack of progress given the expectations inevitably caused some disillusionment in the local community. Other CARS work did progress, but this could not detract from the absence of visible property improvements. CARS communications worked hard to address these problems. For a period, the realities of Covid 19 were accepted. But in more recent years the significance of this receded, and at points CARS communications could only explain rather than resolve delays.

The lack of progress was overcome in the latter stages of CARS, but over time it became apparent that the scale of work would be notably less than initially anticipated and, in particular, the priority projects incrementally fell away. Inevitably this led to disappointment.

Nonetheless, on conclusion of CARS many community views are far from negative. The individual consultations for the evaluation noted many positive achievements which were often progressed in difficult circumstances. The community survey – though limited in reach – notes more positive than negative views of the project. Notable, visible and lasting physical changes to key aspects of the village are praised as important. Legacy from some of the non-building works are also recognised. Overall, awareness of CARS work is strong and its importance by March 2026 valued.

Balancing this are a number of more negative views. These largely reflect concerns on the pace and scale of change given initial expectations, and that a large number of key projects did not proceed. At best, there is a sense from some people of ‘work incomplete’ with significant buildings still in disrepair. In this context, the value from the level of investment in CARS is questioned.

CARS governance and communication

The location of the project officer in the village was considered valuable although the dedicated office was closed mid project as unnecessary. The officer changed at the

beginning of Covid and whilst not ideal does not appear to have been a significant problem. However, messaging on grants may have changed and caused some confusion with the initial officer reported as less concerned on some of the detailed conditions which applied. Overall, the Project Officer is reported as committed and determined to make progress despite delays and setbacks. Considerable effort was applied to adapting the project as some anticipated works terminated. This resilience was appreciated. The only potential concern suggested was a determination to continue some priority projects for too long when it was apparent they were very unlikely to progress. This is clearly a matter of balance.

Communications by the project to the wider community were extensive and viewed positively. Through newsletters and wide use of social media continued attempts were made to keep people updated on developments.

The community Steering Group should be credited with sticking with CARS despite some significant challenges along the way, and at points disillusionment. Some people did drift from the group over time, but a core stayed the course. At times the lack of significant progress on building works and other criticisms of CARS was awkward. The group was viewed as providing a 'sounding board' for local people – but for members this could be a two-edged sword.

The initial evaluation report reflected significant concerns amongst steering group members on their precise role. In short, the degree to which the group was consultative or had significant decision-making powers. Discussions clarified it was primarily the former. Terms of reference were drawn up and agreed on this basis in 2024, and this is reported as clarifying and improving the group's role. In retrospect terms of reference should have been agreed at the outset.

The CARS steering group wound up on project completion. The capacity and learning of members generated through its operation could be of value in future community-based work in Mauchline. How this is harnessed needs consideration.

Grant applicant reflections

The evaluation gathered the direct views of both a successful and unsuccessful grant applicant. This intelligence was enhanced by perceived views on the grant applicant experience by lead CARS officers.

The views recorded are very mixed, and at times represent a diametrically opposite experience. One applicant who was successful viewed the process as a bit bureaucratic but understandably so. Ultimately it provided key funding for an important building improvement which was subsequently enhanced. This applicant was surprised and disappointed more property owners did not take advantage of CARS support – it could have enabled key work which will have to be undertaken at some point in the future without grant support.

Another consultee had a very different journey which did not result in a grant award and the progression of any work. This was despite the owner spending a significant sum in drawing up plans. The costs received for the work advanced were well in excess of anticipated (estimated as 3x higher than expectations). This meant it made no business sense to proceed with the owner contribution. Attempts to resolve the issue with CARS were reported as extensive and upsetting.

CARS officers reflected that the grant application process was at times challenging for owners, and many changed their minds when some of the grant conditions and costs were made clearer. This recognised that Mauchline is not overall a wealthy community and that some owners were not in a position to commit. The grant's payback condition of a 15-year period was off-putting to some, and a sliding scale linked to the value of work may have helped here. In addition, the costs of heritage focused works were higher and often more than the owners viewed as realistic.

Assessing Mauchline CARS recurrent challenges

As evidenced throughout this evaluation, CARS very clearly did not deliver near to the level of its original expectations. A number of reasons for this have been indicated, and without doubt the project encountered some very serious 'head winds' which detracted from its final scale.

There is a need to reflect the degree that the project was simply ‘unlucky’ in terms of unforeseen circumstances, and the degree to which some problems could have been anticipated, reduced in significance, or avoided. The interim evaluation started this analysis, and much of what it concluded remains unchanged. Some other factors are, however, added below.

Challenge	Assessment
Initial ambition	Looking back Mauchline CARS was perhaps over ambitious from the outset given the levels of budget available, costing underestimates and expectations on property owner commitments and motivations. This was to a degree avoidable.
Covid 19	Completely unforeseen, entirely unpredictable in its course, and of huge consequence. Credit is due that any momentum in delivering CARS was maintained in this context. But it should be noted that some CARS progress was already delayed before pandemic.
Ownership issues (including multiple ownership)	This included a combination of lack of interest/commitment, property sale, and ill health (and ultimately death) of key owners. Unpredictable to a degree but perhaps given the critical importance of owners to CARS progress some greater pre assessment and engagement work would have better understood the risks here. Multiple ownership issues also hampered and cancelled some planned projects. This was known and should have been assessed more at the outset.
Cost increases	Much higher than anticipated inflation at key point and Covid repercussions were unforeseeable. But increases due to additional work would have benefitted from more initial interrogative survey work on building conditions before the scope of work was agreed and associated contracts issued. More due diligence here would assist future projects.
HES funding requirements	Apparently more significant in earlier capital projects than in past year. But HES requirements were clear

	from outset and very unlikely to change so perhaps need to more clearly communicate and explain these in initial discussions
Extending timescales	Covid 19 clearly very significant here – impacting on building works and supplies. But there is also need to proof realism on some initially suggested timelines.
Community perceptions/disillusionment	To a significant degree triggered by the other problems detailed above. Perhaps there was a need to articulate more caution at project start, explain potential challenges and risks in capital works of this nature, and the possibilities of delays. Also the option – in context of wider delays – to prioritise some visible ‘early wins’ from CARS.
Project Officer change	The initial Project officer left unexpectedly. This cannot be foreseen, but speedy replacement is important. Overall, however, this does not seem a major factor. Once in post, the new Project Officer is recognised to have picked up the challenge quickly.

The assessment above leads to a conclusion that Mauchline CARS did suffer from some unfortunate circumstances which could not have been anticipated. Nonetheless, many problems could have been foreseen and in retrospect handled differently. It is important future learning.

6. Conclusions and learning

Conclusions

What Mauchline CARS actually delivered by March 2026 clearly changed very significantly from the original expectations. None of the 6 anticipated priority projects advanced for a variety of reasons, more focus was placed on smaller and medium sized grants, and public realm works grew in scope and significance. Impressive educational, training and community engagement work compensated to some degree for capital work disappointments – particularly in earlier years. But these were never the core part of the CARS vision: the initial expectations were of considerable and visible physical improvements to the village. Overall, the headline conclusion must be that Mauchline CARS failed by some margin to realise its initial aspirations. That disappointment is clearly felt by everyone involved in the project and the wider local community.

The reasons for this are reflected in earlier sections. Within this is a sense the project was overambitious from the outset. Another key question is the degree to which CARS was unlucky in the changing context it faced or whether some problems could have been anticipated. Analysis in section 5 suggests a combination of both. Issues such as Covid clearly could not be predicted, but other things were avoidable.

Within a recognition of under delivery in key areas there is also a recognition CARS delivered many positive activities. A significant number of properties were improved: and community feedback recognises this. The images in appendix 2 highlight notable visible improvements in key locations within the village. The public realm works enhance Mauchline, and the wider community engagement, training and education activities of CARS leave an important legacy to build upon. Overall, the project brought significant investment to the community, though views vary on whether more should have been achieved with this money.

Assessing the impact of CARS within the overall Mauchline context is problematical. The project clearly enhanced the village in a number of important and visible ways. But other anticipated work was not progressed. In terms of the declining fabric of some buildings, the problem has been more suspended than resolved. Community views on impact through the survey or individual evaluation consultations are inconclusive –

ranging from a sense of very important and visible change to frustrations and even anger that more was not achieved.

Projections of wider social and economic impact are limited in value. Given the scope of work undertaken any suggested attribution would require many caveats, and any impact (or otherwise) may only become apparent if assessed in a longer timeframe. In addition, as earlier sections note, the actual delivery of CARS is not fully complete.

In line with the change and reduction in capital project delivery the anticipated allocation of CARS expenditure changed very significantly from both the original projections, and the subsequent projections at the dates of the initial and interim evaluation reports. Despite a reduction in overall project delivery, costs grew linked to inflationary pressures, initial under-costing, and the redirection of some investment to other projects. The reasons for this are discussed earlier and suggest important learning for groups embarking on a similar project in future.

The management and governance of the project again reflect strengths and weaknesses. Positively, the project should be commended for its perseverance, resilience, and willingness to adapt to challenging circumstances. The necessity of a project officer change in the midst of the pandemic was not ideal but seems to have been managed effectively. The oversight of a community based steering group demonstrated positives as an aide to communications and as a local sounding board. But clarity from the outset on what is – and what is not – in the remit of this group is important. At times of limited tangible CARS progress a sense of ‘responsibility without influence’ was apparent within the steering group. ‘In flight’ clarifications helped but did not entirely remove all concerns.

In terms of the post CARS era, a legacy of enhanced community capacity has been created within the Steering Group. This needs to be harnessed and clarified in terms of where and how this is transferred to ongoing community structures. Many outstanding challenges remain in Mauchline which will need community input and investment. CARS could never have resolved all of these issues, and within its own envelope of ambition there is a sense of ‘task incomplete’. How ongoing community involvement now happens requires further thinking.

Key learning

With the caveat of some residual work, Mauchline CARS is complete. In the local context nothing can now be changed. But some lessons for future projects of this nature are suggested by reflecting on the experience. Many of these are likely to have future resonance beyond the Mauchline context.

1. Owners and ownership

CARS is premised on a partnership between funders and owners. Without this working progress will be limited. Consequently, significant due diligence is required to identify owner commitments, anticipated gains, and understanding of what CARS support requires. This must accept that the aspirations of the owners and the funders are not automatically identical: the connecting points must be found.

Layered on this, and important in the Mauchline context, is the issue of multiple ownership. These realities need to be identified, and any potential problems resolved in advance.

2. Clarity on grant conditions

The conditions on HES CARS investment were clearly laid out in advance. Whether these were reasonable or not is a wider debate. People promoting grant schemes must understand and consistently communicate conditions from the outset. Any 'soft sell' at the start will unravel.

3. Initial survey work and costings

Mauchline CARS original costings appeared to be based on relatively 'light touch' street level surveys. They consequently rose excessively as a better understanding of the scale and cost of work was revealed by initial investigative works. This is not surprising; it is perhaps inevitable. Better pre cost assessments are required which fully factor the restoration expectations of funders. Otherwise, initial costs will always be underestimated, and individual owners provided with inaccurate estimates of their required contributions.

4. Clarity and realism on ambition

This is linked to many of the points above. There is a need to avoid generating unrealistic local expectations of what a CARS (or equivalent scheme) can achieve, and in what timescales. The due diligence implied in points 1-3 above should apply. There is also a need to communicate some works are essential to building sustainability without necessarily being visually impactful.

5. Expectations of a local steering group

A local steering group has many potential advantages. But clarity on the remit of this group at the outset is essential, and that the expected role is clearly communicated to potential members.

6. Understanding 'qui bono'

From the HES perspective CARS is a restoration project focused on appreciating and maintaining heritage. For supporting local authorities, it advances a range of economic, social and environmental priorities. Why owners get involved is different and largely based on business/trading realities. Recognising these varying motivations is important – in Mauchline it contributed to many planned projects being abandoned. This comes back to the core concept of 'qui bono' – who gains, and who gains what? Would, for example, a business prefer cheaper improvements less focused on traditional building works/heritage? So 'who is buying what'? This needs to be factored in considering the balance and risks of investments.

7. The importance of 'early wins'

This is to a degree specific to the Mauchline experience but not entirely. When a CARS programme is introduced community expectations are raised and people are impatient for evidence of change. For some works this is not practical; maintaining community momentum may benefit from identifying and progressing an early and visible project, even if relatively small scale.

8. *Consider 'legacy' at the outset.*

CARS projects are not anticipated to resolve all issues within a community. But they deliberately and correctly raise expectations. They also get local people involved and build capacity. Beyond CARS the aspirations should be that a longer-term momentum is created - a sense local people can influence and drive ongoing change. This should not be considered at the end; it should be articulated in the original plan.

Appendix 1 – CARS expenditure and investment profile (March 2026)

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
MAUCHLINE CARS SPEND PROFILE								
EXPENDITURE	Total Eligible Cost £	Grant Intervention Rate %	Total CARS Grant £	HES Cost £	EAC Capital £	EAC Revenue £	Owners £	
Priority Building Projects								
21 Loudoun Street, Poosie Nansies FEES ONLY	£ 3,458.84	100%	£ 3,458.84	£ 2,075.30	£ 1,383.54	£ -	£ -	
8-12 Earl Grey Street FEES ONLY	£ 10,777.77	100%	£ 10,777.77	£ 6,466.66	£ 4,311.11	£ -	£ -	
Total Priority Building Grants	£ 14,236.61		£ 14,236.61	£ 8,541.96	£ 5,694.65	£ -	£ -	
Small / Medium Building Grants								
3A Earl Grey Street	£ 231,738.01	75%	£ 173,803.50	£ 104,282.10	£ 69,521.40	£ -	£ 57,934.50	
1 The Cross	£ 224,134.51	75%	£ 168,100.88	£ 100,860.53	£ 67,240.35	£ -	£ 56,033.63	
4 Loudoun Street	£ 222,882.25	75%	£ 167,161.69	£ 117,013.18	£ 50,148.51	£ -	£ 55,720.56	
5 Loudoun Street	£ 231,738.01	75%	£ 173,803.50	£ 104,282.10	£ 69,521.40	£ -	£ 57,934.50	
17 Earl Grey Street	£ 185,595.28	75%	£ 139,196.46	£ 83,517.88	£ 55,678.58	£ -	£ 46,398.82	
39a Loudoun Street	£ 80,329.21	75%	£ 60,246.90	£ 42,172.83	£ 18,074.07	£ -	£ 20,082.30	
39 Loudoun Street	£ 25,392.94	75%	£ 19,044.70	£ 17,140.23	£ 1,904.47	£ -	£ 6,348.23	
Burns House Museum	£ 197,051.15	100%	£ 197,051.15	£ 151,729.39	£ 45,321.77	£ -	£ -	
Burns House Museum ADDITIONAL	£ 42,497.66	100%	£ 42,497.66	£ 36,123.01	£ 6,374.65	£ -	£ -	
Total Small/Medium Building Grants	£ 1,441,359.00		£ 1,140,906.45	£ 757,121.25	£ 383,785.20	£ -	£ 300,452.55	
Public Realm								GRANTS
Boundary Wall Restoration	£ 46,544.69	100%	£ 46,544.69	£ 39,562.99	£ 6,981.70	£ -	£ -	
Repair to gable to facilitate mural	£ 50,000.00	100%	£ 50,000.00	£ 45,000.00	£ 5,000.00	£ -	£ -	
Lighting Improvements	£ 73,000.00	0%	£ 16,753.25	£ -	£ 16,753.25	£ -	£ 56,246.75	
Open Space Improvements	£ 14,226.00	0%	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ 14,226.00	
Street Signs	£ 7,150.00	100%	£ 7,150.00	£ 2,481.25	£ 4,468.75	£ -	£ -	
Bollards, Cobbles & Railings	£ 14,613.00	100%	£ 14,613.00	£ 5,479.88	£ 9,133.13	£ -	£ -	
Total Public Realm	£ 205,533.69		£ 135,060.94	£ 92,724.11	£ 42,336.83	£ -	£ 70,472.75	
Community Engagement & Learning	£ 45,000.00	100%	£ 45,000.00	£ 40,000.00	£ -	£ 5,000.00	£ -	
Training & Skills Devt.	£ 45,000.00	100%	£ 45,000.00	£ 40,000.00	£ -	£ 5,000.00	£ -	
Staff & Administration Costs	£ 440,500.00	100%	£ 440,500.00	£ 168,500.00	£ -	£ 272,000.00	£ -	
TOTAL CARS COSTS	£ 2,226,256.07		£ 1,820,704.00	£ 1,106,887.32	£ 431,816.67	£ 282,000.00	£ 370,925.30	
MAUCHLINE MURAL								
EXPENDITURE	Total Eligible Cost £	Grant Intervention Rate %	Total CARS Grant £	HES Cost £	EAC Capital £	EAC Revenue £	Owners £	
Mural at 3 Kilmarnock Road	£ 20,000.00	100%	£ 20,000.00	£ -	£ 20,000.00	£ -	£ -	
MAUCHLINE SMALL GRANT SCHEME SPEND PROFILE								
EXPENDITURE	Total Eligible Cost £	Grant Intervention Rate %	Total CARS Grant £	HES Cost £	EAC Capital £	EAC Revenue £	Owners £	
23 Loudoun Street	£ -	80%	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	
1 Kilmarnock Road	£ 2,600.00	80%	£ 2,080.00	£ -	£ 2,080.00	£ -	£ 520.00	
1-5 Loudoun Street	£ 6,314.04	80%	£ 5,051.23	£ -	£ 5,051.23	£ -	£ 1,262.81	
5 Earl Grey Street	£ 38,676.00	50%	£ 19,338.00	£ -	£ 19,338.00	£ -	£ 19,338.00	
TOTAL SMALL GRANT SCHEME	£ 47,590.04		£ 26,469.23	£ -	£ 26,469.23	£ -	£ 21,120.81	
MAUCHLINE TOTAL SPEND PROFILE								
EXPENDITURE	Total Eligible Cost £	Grant Intervention Rate %	Total CARS Grant £	HES Cost £	EAC Capital £	EAC Revenue £	Owners £	
MAUCHLINE CARS TOTAL	£ 2,226,256.07		£ 1,820,704.00	£ 1,106,887.32	£ 431,816.67	£ 282,000.00	£ 370,925.30	
MAUCHLINE SMALL GRANT TOTAL	£ 47,590.04		£ 26,469.23	£ -	£ 26,469.23	£ -	£ 21,120.81	
MAUCHLINE MURAL	£ 20,000.00		£ 20,000.00	£ -	£ 20,000.00	£ -	£ -	
OVERALL INVESTMENT	£ 2,293,846.11		£ 1,867,173.23	£ 1,106,887.32	£ 478,285.91	£ 282,000.00	£ 392,046.11	
CONTINGENCY FUND								
	HES	EAC CAPITAL	EAC REVENUE					
SECURED FUNDING	£ 1,119,800.00	£ 500,000.00	£ 282,000.00	£ 370,925.30				
ALLOCATED COSTINGS TO DATE	£ 1,106,887.32	£ 478,285.91	£ 282,000.00	£ 370,925.30				
CONTINGENCY FUND	£ 12,912.68	£ 21,714.09	£ -	£ -				
TOTAL CONTINGENCY	£ 34,626.77							

Appendix 2 – CARS in pictures

This appendix highlights key work delivered by Mauchline CARS. For building works demonstrating the changes in ‘before and after’ images.

Small medium grant building repair projects

Burns House Museum, before and after



4 Loudoun Street, before and after



5 Loudoun Street, before and after



17 Earl Grey Street, before and after



39a Loudoun Street, before and after



Nanse Tinnocks, before and after



3a Earl Grey Street, before and after



1 The Cross, before and after (snagging on-going to gable)



Small Grant Scheme

1 Loudoun Street, before and after



Public Realm works.

PBIP funded street light replacement Loudoun Street carpark.



REF funded benches and planters.





Bollard clean/ repaint 2023



Fairburn Flowerbed



Street Signage



Church Wall repairs



Bollards and railings, before and after



Training projects

Traditional Masonry



Traditional Joinery



Scottish Slate Roofing



Signwriting



Education

Rabbie Road



Out of This World, Heritage Awareness Course



Parkour Summer School 2023



Summer School 2024



Appendix 3 – CARS initial and interims reviews: key findings

This appendix summarises the key messages from the interim and update reviews of CARS in 2024 and 2025 respectively. This is important as an aide memoire and in assisting relections on section 5 on how CARS reflective and responded to suggested changes as the project advanced.

Interim review 2024

The initial interim report reflected a number of recurrent messages on progress to late spring 2024. These included:

- Very significant delays in progression of anticipated capital works – significantly due to Covid, but also for a variety of other reasons;
- Consequential changes in projected CARS spend profile – but within a context the overall budget remained largely committed;
- Understandable community disillusionment from the apparent lack of development progress, and the need to manage community expectations in this context;
- Some more tangible progress on public realm works;
- Significant progress across the non-building’ aspects of CARS – education, training, policy development etc;
- Perceptions on a lack of clarity and functions of the CARS community Steering Group.

From these messages, potential immediate actions identified were to:

1. Consider a new programme of community engagement and communications to update the local community on positive progress and address disillusionment.
2. Identify some visible ‘quick wins’ which can be delivered to support new community engagement.

3. Review the role of, and need to continue the Steering Group, and if continued draft and agree new terms of reference.
4. Seek further negotiation with HES on grant payback arrangements if these threaten some of the planned future work programme.

Update review 2025

Broadly a year on, this report noted:

- Significant progress on the main capital and Public Realm works in the year to March 2025. The impact of CARS in Mauchline was much more visible, although still very much ‘work in progress’.
- Subject to additional requested funding, up to 4 priority capital projects, and 8 smaller capital projects were still anticipated, alongside a range of Public Realm improvements.
- The past year had, however, led to a further reduction in the anticipated number of major and smaller capital projects that would now be delivered. The scale of change delivered by CARS would be reduced from initial expectations.
- Wider community views on CARS remain largely untested.
- Despite a reduction in capital projects, the costs of CARS had increased significantly, and these will increase further if the requested additional funding from HES is approved. A number of factors are identified as causing cost increases including Covid and a periodic spike in inflation. But the dominant reason is the need for very significant additional repairs identified by contractors when works began on site.
- The role of the CARS Steering Group had been helpfully clarified through drafting and agreeing a formal Terms of Reference. This clearly defined the role of the group as consultative rather than having any formal decision-making powers.

In terms of overall learning from the experience for future similar developments a the update began consideration of a key question: the degree to which the problems of CARS were primarily caused by misfortune and a significantly changed context that

could not have been foreseen, or actions taken that in retrospect could have been anticipated and different. The main challenges facing CARS were identified in this context: Covid19; ownership issues; cost increases; HES funding requirements; extending timescales; community perceptions/disillusionment; and Project Officer changes. Final assessment of these issues is returned to in section 6.

Appendix 4 – Community survey questionnaire

To gather final community views the following survey was issued in late March 2026 through a range of project communication channels. This survey was supported by attaching pictures of CARS work – many of which are contained in appendix 2.

Introduction

Mauchline Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) ran from 2019 and will conclude in March 2026. The overall aim of the scheme was to maximise and sustain the economic potential of Mauchline’s Culture and Heritage assets through:

- The restoration and repair of key historic buildings bringing them, where necessary, back into productive and sustainable use.
- A small grants scheme to enable and encourage private owners to carry out urgent repairs on traditional and older properties.
- A small grants scheme for shop front improvements.
- Public realm works.
- An education and training programme for those involved or wishing to be involved in the traditional construction industry.
- A programme of community participation and learning to increase people’s understanding and appreciation of heritage.

This short survey is to gather wider community views on the impact and potential importance of these works to Mauchline. It should only take a few minutes to complete, and your views are very welcome on helping to assess local views on CARS, and what these may mean for similar projects in future.

Please view the image galleries prior to completing the survey, these can be found on the right-hand side column of the Mauchline CARS Evaluation Homepage

Do you live in Mauchline?

Yes	
No	

How long have you lived in Mauchline?

Under 5 years	
Under 10 years	
More than 10 years	

How would you best describe your awareness of Mauchline CARS?

I am very aware of CARS	
I know a little about CARS	

I am not aware of CARS

If you answered C, please go to question xx.

Have you personally had any opportunities to get directly involved in CARS e.g. joining steering group, attending public meetings etc

Yes	
No	
Not sure/can't remember	

Which of these aspects of CARS do you know about? (Tick as many as apply)

General building repairs	
Shop front improvements	
Public Realm works e.g. street signage, cobble/bollard replacements, historic boundary wall etc	
Other CARS activities e.g. work with schools, training projects etc	
Anything else?	

Why are you aware of CARS? (Tick as many as apply)

Local publicity	
Word of mouth through neighbours, friends etc	
Through visibly seeing CARS work in Mauchline	
Other, please state	

Overall, how important or otherwise do you think aspects of CARS work has been in Mauchline?

Work	Very important	Quite important	Not very important	Not at all important	Not sure
General building repairs					
Shop front improvements					
Public Realm works e.g. street signage, cobble/bollard replacements, historic boundary wall etc					
Other CARS activities e.g.					

work with schools, training projects etc					
Anything else					

If you have answered very or quite important above, which of these reasons influence your answer? If not, please skip question.

Improvement	Very important	Important	Not important
Mauchline looks better			
Mauchline is a better place to live			
Mauchline's heritage has been preserved			
Mauchline has a better offer for tourists			
Mauchline's local economy will be stronger			
Young people in Mauchline understand the town's history and heritage better			

Overall, how would you describe your overall views on Mauchline CARS? (tick one only)

It has been very important to Mauchline	
It has been quite important to Mauchline	
It has not been important to Mauchline	
Don't know	

Finally, do you have any other comments?

Appendix 5 – CARS community engagement case studies

Mauchline Heritage App

As part of its wider partnership work, CARS co-ordinated the development of a Mauchline Heritage App. This was created based on wide community collaboration including local students, historians, and tech experts:

- Ayrshire College students created the app's aesthetic and visual style.
- Pupils from Robert Burns Academy were behind the interactive elements, branding, and themes.
- The Mauchline Burns Club provided audio recordings. These recordings bring the stories of the National Bard and local landmarks to life.
- Neill Ritchie from [Aerial Digital](#) was the digital specialist. His expertise helped combine the elements into a high-quality product.



The app turns a smartphone into a tour guide, enabling users to:

- Explore an interactive map of Mauchline's historic core.
- Visit "out-of-town" heritage sites.
- View "Then and Now" images of buildings
- The app turns a smartphone into a tour guide, enabling users to:
 - Explore an interactive map of Mauchline's historic core.
 - Visit "out-of-town" heritage sites.
 - View "Then and Now" images of buildings
 - Become a master at curling with our fun Mauchline Curling Game
 - Listen to local stories and poetry through the Burns Club audio features.

The app is now free to download for local people and visitors and represents a lasting digital legacy for the village and CARS.

Partnership project: exploring archaeological remains in Mauchline.

This two-phase partnership community engagement project involved Archaeological Scotland, CARS, local volunteers from Mauchline and Ochiltree, and children from Sorn Primary School. Across 2024 and 2025 work included:

- Exploratory works at Netherplace House on the Netherplace Estate dating back to 1620 involving vegetation removal and excavation at the former Archway Lodge.
- A small archaeological dig at the possible remains of a 19th century wooden snuff box producing factory that once belonged to William and Andrew Smith.



The projects enabled pupils, staff and other volunteers to participate in a live archaeological dig and interpret/reflect on the potential historical significance of the sites. The small excavation project also generated extensive engagement from people neighbouring the sites and the local community who shared their wider knowledge of the sites.



Appendix 6 – Consultees

Consultees listed below have inputted to the evaluation process one or more times over the period of review. Their inputs are much appreciated, but the conclusions in this report are entirely attributable to Smart Consultancy (Scotland) Ltd.

Douglas Airbright – Mauchline Burns Club

Roz Artis – Scottish Lime Centre Trust

David Aitken – Lochlie Construction (Grant recipient and contractor)

Alan Cook – Mauchline Community Association

Caitlin Cunningham – Robert Burns Academy

Liza Dunlop - Mauchline CARS Steering Group

Jane Higgins – Mauchline CARS Steering Group

Andrew Hunter - Mauchline CARS Steering Group

Darran Littauer-Dolan – Mauchline CARS Project Officer

Joyce McGregor – Vibrant Communities Team, East Ayrshire Council

Paul McGurn – Robert Burns Academy

Colin McKee – Planning and Economic Development Service, East Ayrshire Council

Zara Smith – Creative Minds Team, East Ayrshire Council

Carol Sommerville - Mauchline CARS Steering Group

Robert Sommerville - Mauchline CARS Steering Group

Carol Spier (Grant applicant who did not progress to grant award)

Allan Vint – Mauchline Community Council