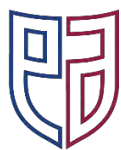


MAUCHLINE CONSERVATION AREA REGENERATION SCHEME (CARS)

INTERIM REVIEW AND EVALUATION PLAN

SMART CONSULTANCY

JULY 2024



East Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear



**HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND**

**ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA**

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1. Introduction and evaluation process

Mauchline Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) is a heritage led regeneration scheme for Mauchline which will run until March 2026. The scheme is funded by Historic Environment Scotland and East Ayrshire Council and will provide property owners 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 includes a range of projects supporting educational and training activities, and a series of Public Realm works.

Smart Consultancy was commissioned by CARS (via East Ayrshire Council) in early 2024 to undertake an evaluation of the project. This will involve work in a series of stages until the anticipated end of the scheme in March 2026.

This report represents the outcome of the first phase of this work. It is drafted in recognition that the core project capital works have been delayed, which significantly limits evaluation scope at this stage. Rather, this report focuses on the story and processes of CARS to date, reflects upon the non-capital projects advanced, and suggests an evaluation framework to judge CARS impacts in the longer term. It concludes by suggesting some potential risks to future developments, and the actions CARS requires to advance to address these threats.

Work for this report included:

- A commissioning and set up meeting with the lead East Ayrshire Council officer for CARS, and the Project Officer;
- A review of all available project documents on CARS to date – set up documents, progress documents, future spend projections, and wider related strategy documents;
- An analysis of further information contained on the CARS website;
- Input to a CARS Steering Group meeting to introduce the evaluation process;
- 1:1 consultations with CARS Steering Group members, and a range of wider stakeholders involved with the project. (Detailed in Appendix 2);
- Submission of this initial report – initially in draft form, and then finalised following feedback from CARS;
- Preparation of a full CARS Evaluation Plan. (Attached as appendix1);
- A presentation and discussion of the report and framework with the Steering Group.

The second phase of evaluation support will include periodic ongoing review and feedback to the Steering Group – assessing ongoing project progress and how the recommendations in this initial report are being advanced. This will, as applicable, make further observations and recommendations on future CARS development.

The work will conclude in the spring of 2026 with the preparation of a full final evaluation report. This will include a review of all qualitative and quantitative information collated on the project – assessed against the Theory of Change and Evaluation Framework in appendix 1. It will tell the full ‘story’ of CARS, and support this with a series of ‘before and after’ pictures

of works undertaken. Further consultations will be held with the Steering Group and other partners, and a survey will be conducted on how the wider community of Mauchline views the impacts of all the work advanced by CARS. The final report will conclude with suggested recommendations on what the CARS experience may mean for further related developments in the town.

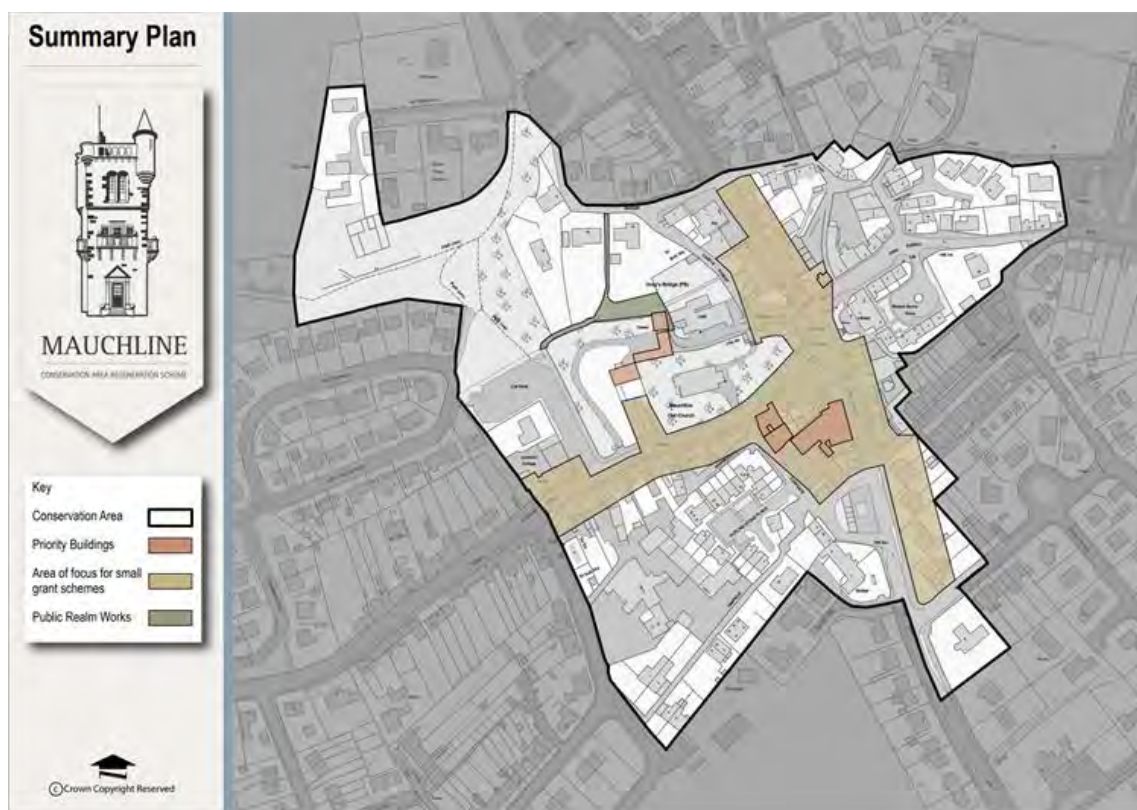
2. Mauchline CARS – background, aims, and principles

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 is 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 are:

- 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 rain water 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 which includes:



Section 3 looks at progress by May 2024 and future ambitions across all of these areas.

CARS governance

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

3. Progress on CARS activities and spend projections to May 2024

As indicated, the capital works at the core of CARS have been very significantly delayed from the timescales initially anticipated. The reasons for, and consequences of, this are considered in section 4. For this element of CARS, this section can only summarise the stage of relevant projects as of May 2024. More significant aspects of progress can be identified for the non-capital works. Progress is summarised for each work area, but no evaluation of these is presented at this stage.

PROJECT ELEMENT	ORIGINAL EXPECTATIONS	PROGRESS BY MAY 2024
Priority Building Repair Capital Projects	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: • 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). • 8-12 Earl Grey Street (Mauchline & District Kilmarnock FC Supporters Club).	Two of the Mauchline CARS Priority Projects are progressing through the necessary procedures to access grant funding: 21 Loudoun Street (Poosie Nansies) and 8-12 Earl Grey Street (Mauchline Kilmarnock Football Supporters Club). Both projects received approval for the required consents to undertake the proposed works to the properties, which will improve their current condition and enhance the conservation area. 8-12 Earl Grey Street has now progressed to tendered costs for works, and a grant offer is in preparation. The grant intervention rate was increased for these two Priority Projects from 80% to 90% in November 2023 with approval from EAC and HES. Work at Mauchline Castle Estate, which contains three of the priority projects: Abbot Hunter's Tower, 8 Loudoun Street (Gavin Hamilton's House), and 8 Loudoun Street (The Bakehouse) was halted due to change in ownership as a result of the death of the previous owner. This resulted in a two-year delay. Costings are now being sought to enable this work to progress, but this will be dependent on additional resources being allocated from HES. 3 High Street, is split in two ownerships and one part of the property is currently up for sale. Therefore, the owners do not wish to pursue a Mauchline CARS Grant, and this project will not proceed.
Small/Medium Building Grants	The original submission to HES indicated the project would deliver:	33 initial Expressions of Interest were submitted to CARS. These included a number of applications for buildings that included more than one of these

	• 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 rain water 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;	categories, and due to the significant increase in building/repair costs, the balances for all categories have been amalgamated into a small/medium building repair fund. Eight additional EOIs were deemed not eligible due to location or construction period. Currently 10 projects are being advanced, and 1 other is under consideration. These are: • 15 Earl Grey Street • 3a Earl Grey Street • 1 The Cross • 5 Loudoun Street • 17 Earl Grey Street • Burns House Museum • 4 Loudoun Street • 39a Loudoun Street • Kays Curling Stone Factory • 65 Loudoun Street • 1 Earl Grey Street These projects are at various stages of development in terms of grant offers, costings, and necessary permissions.
Public Realm Works	The CARS application to HES indicated it would undertake a range of Public Realm Improvements and repairs to support wider regeneration and restoration objectives.	The following improvements are being progressed: • Lighting Improvements - these works, to be undertaken through Ayrshire Roads Alliance, will include the full replacement of the current lighting lampposts on Loudoun Street (within the Conservation Area), and the carpark with traditional style lampposts. Furthermore, all lighting within the lanes and churchyard of the medieval core will receive a traditional style lantern and fresh paint. This is being funded through the Place Based Investment Programme, (PBIP) and is aimed be completed in 2024. • Open Spaces- Proposals for 5 small areas of public realm improvement are currently being costed. • Historic Boundary Wall Restoration- Costings are being compiled for the restoration of the Mauchline Parish Church wall on Loudoun Street.

		• Street Signs-have been ordered and are being manufactured for the replacement of the standard street signs with traditionally styled signage, based on historic signage. Confirmation is awaited from HES to determine whether this project would be eligible under the scheme. • All railings and traditional bollards were restored in 2023 for the Holy Fair. Of the remaining three public realm improvement projects these will be implemented dependant on HES confirming whether they are eligible under the scheme. To prioritise future work, Public Realm community priorities have now been established as (in order): Burns House Museum Courtyard; Visitor Carpark; and The Cross.
Community engagement and learning projects	CARS was anticipated to deliver a Community Engagement & Education programme of activities which promote community engagement and education.	Three educational projects have been completed and one is ongoing: • Rabbie Road- this project celebrated Mauchline's unique, rich, cultural heritage and increased young people's understanding and appreciation of their own heritage and a sense of pride in where they live and learn. • Heritage Awareness Course "Out of This World"- through the creation of an original song, pupils of Mauchline Primary School were able to learn about the characters and stories of the history of Mauchline. • Parkour Summer School 2023 - this involved a choreographed parkour routine highlighting the unique built environment and architectural structures in Mauchline, it has recently been completed. (A further 2024 Summer School in co-operation with the East Ayrshire Council is in development) • Mauchline Heritage App- this project is a digital app which will be available to all, set to encapsulate the special and unique history and heritage within Mauchline. The project is ongoing with input from the Robert Burns Academy pupils. The App features will include - history, local stories, games, augmented reality. Archaeology Scotland Educational Projects are also ongoing around the village. These projects include collaboration with schools and local volunteers and includes; a small archaeological dig; field survey and walks; historic building recording; a graveyard survey; and storytelling.

Training projects	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.	Mauchline 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. Further training projects will be undertaken in 2024. The 2023 Training Programme included: • 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. • 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.	Following an initial meeting CARS shared Liza Dunlop's book "The White Monks of Melrose and Their Church at Mauchline" with a potential publisher, Rob Close from The Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. Feedback and advice for the next steps are awaited. The works from Mr Paul Haining regarding Ballochmyle sandstone including music "Permian Motions" written by Mr Haining will be included within this year's Summer School.
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.	Since March 2020 Mauchline CARS has produced a number of useful documents to support the on-going maintenance, conservation, and repair of the Mauchline Conservation Area including: • 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. Further, policy tools have been introduced to enhance controls within the Conservation Area: ○ 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.
Additional CARS development work	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.	<i>Place Based Investment Fund</i> Successful PBIP applications totalling £35,500 (2022) and £15,000 (2023) were awarded. Two applications have been submitted to the 2024: <i>Burns House Museum Courtyard</i> - for all improvements works noted within the public realm proposals, in collaboration with East Ayrshire Leisure. Total grant applied for £192,841. <i>Visitor Carpark</i>- for all improvement works within proposals with the addition of bespoke Burns themed benches and large granite stone as carved sculpture. Collaborated application with Mauchline Burns Club, Total grant applied for £40,000 <i>Renewable Energy Fund (REF)</i> Collaborated application submitted with Mauchline Community Council, application to support; two planters for The Cross, two benches for carpark and planter for rear of carpark.

Spend projections

As of May 2024, summary spend projections on CARS are contained in the table below.

ALL EXPENDITURE HEADINGS			
<i>Total costs</i>	<i>HES costs</i>	<i>EAC costs</i>	<i>Owners</i>
£2,192,679	£1,061,976	£498,530	£310,280
PRIORITY BUILDING PROJECTS (2 PROJECTS COSTED)			
<i>Total costs</i>	<i>HES costs</i>	<i>EAC costs</i>	<i>Owners</i>
£598,332	£360,639	£180,000	£59,833
SMALL/MEDIUM BUILDING GRANTS (9 PROJECTS COSTED)			
<i>Total costs</i>	<i>HES costs</i>	<i>EAC costs</i>	<i>Owners</i>
£996,697	£462,837	£276,380	£250,446
PUBLIC REALM (5 PROJECTS COSTED)			
<i>Total costs</i>	<i>HES costs</i>	<i>EAC costs</i>	<i>Owners</i>
£105,650 ¹	£20,000	£42,150	n/a
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING			
<i>Total costs</i>	<i>HES costs</i>	<i>EAC costs</i>	<i>Owners</i>
£35,000	£30,000	£5,000	n/a
TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT			
<i>Total costs</i>	<i>HES costs</i>	<i>EAC costs</i>	<i>Owners</i>
£45,000	£40,000	£5,000	n/a
STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION COSTS			
<i>Total costs</i>	<i>HES costs</i>	<i>EAC costs</i>	<i>Owners</i>
£412,000	£148,500	£282,000	n/a

These projections leave a small unallocated balance at this stage of £37,363 in the total CARS grant available.

¹ The balance of funding for Public Realm works is from the Place Based Investment Fund.

4. Interim review – key observations

Based on the information in previous sections, and the various consultations conducted, a number of key observations are made on the progress to date, future CARS expectations, and the challenges facing CARS over the next two years.

Overview

Mauchline CARS has clearly not progressed within the timescales initially projected. A number of reasons have contributed to this outcome. Self-evidently the Covid-19 pandemic very significantly impacted on early developments. The period was characterised throughout by uncertainty, and this extended for a much longer period than initially anticipated.

Covid problems were then exacerbated by the retiral of the initial CARS project officer. This led to a gap of 4 months in this post being filled.

However, whilst Covid-19 and staffing changes were undoubtedly important, 2 years on its relevance to ongoing delays is now reduced. Other factors are in play – notably ownership issues with some properties, increased contractual costs, construction cost inflation, and some conditions applied to capital grant supports. The latter conditions include a requirement that any projects ‘pay back’ grant investments on a sliding scale over 15 years if ownership changes within this period. In addition, 10 years of maintenance guarantees are required. In practice, these conditions have led to delays in reaching agreements, and in some cases to people not continuing with initial expressions of interest.

Progress on Public Realm projects have also been delayed – for a range of similar and other reasons including procurement challenges.

The non-capital elements of CARS have developed more positively, and in line with original timescales. This includes some exciting and well-received education, community development, and vocational training activities. These have been developed and delivered through strong partnerships with EAC Education Services, and specialist support organisations such as Archaeology Scotland and The Scottish Lime Centre Trust (SLCT). A suite of useful support documents and guides- have also been produced to ensure fidelity to conservation principles in capital works, and some further funding applications are in place to further enhance CARS aspirations.

But progress in these latter areas of work – though valuable – cannot disguise that the core of CARS, and by far its major component, is capital works. A recurrent theme of all initial review work is that these have not yet happened, and are consequently not visible to any significant degree. This sits alongside initial expectations and enthusiasm that by this time Mauchline would have been notably and positively transformed by these developments. Understandably, this had led to growing disillusionment and the potential disengagement of the project within the local community, and this is to a degree reflected within the CARS Steering Group itself.

The expectation now is that capital project works will now progress in the immediate future. This is critical to addressing a growing cynicism that CARS is 'all talk and no action'. It is an immediate and ongoing challenge for the initiative.

CARS objectives and aspirations

Despite this context, the original aims and objectives of Mauchline CARS remains valid. The town combines a proud sense of identity and an outstanding physical heritage. It also has the exceptional 'asset' of being central to the life and works of Robert Burns². But equally there is a sense that some buildings and public realm areas are looking tired, and in a state of some dilapidation. In addition, the Burns legacy is perhaps underplayed. The opportunity for CARS to play a major part in realising Mauchline's 'unrealised potential' remains, and the overall 'restoration' theme of CARS sits well with this.

Delays or cancellation?

A recurrent question in this initial external review is: does progress to date reflect operational delays and changed circumstances, or a cancellation of some initial CARS plans? The answer appears to be a mixture of both.

Of the priority projects only 2 of the original 6 identified are currently progressing, but an additional 3 have now been reactivated to a degree by CARS seeking costings to apply for further HES funding - due primarily to inflationary pressures. The outcome of this is currently unknown. The 6th identified project will not progress due to ownership issues.

The small/medium building grants projects have now been amalgamated into a single fund. 10 and potentially 11 are anticipated to now progress. Though no numerical targets were set in the original CARS application, this appears to be less than initially anticipated. 33 EOIs were received: whilst not all of these were anticipated to progress, an attribution rate of only c33% of EOIs translating into actual projects appears low. As the budget is now all but fully allocated this is not projected to change unless additional resources are accessed.

Public Realm projects are now anticipated to progress based on identified community priorities, but again these are now to a degree dependent on securing additional funding.

As indicated - the other areas of CARS activities have largely advanced as anticipated.

CARS Governance

The governance structures of CARS reflect an East Ayrshire Council initiative, supported by a local community Steering Group. This is intended to ensure the application of appropriate professional expertise complemented with the added value of local knowledge and experience.

² Burns is by no means the only historically important aspect of Mauchline's history. For example, the shortly forthcoming CARS supported book by Liza Dunlop "The White Monks of Melrose and Their Church at Mauchline" highlights other important elements.

But as CARS has progressed, the role of the Steering Group appears to have become less clear. This is reflected in some confusion on the balance between directing, influencing, reviewing, or simply being informed about ongoing developments. Steering Group members report some concerns here. They have a limited sense of being involved in determining what the CARS project does. If it is clearly a Council initiative then this is to a degree acceptable, but if it is more intended as a partnership of the local Council and the community greater clarification is required.

These problems have been exacerbated in a context where there have been significant delays in the delivery of the core CARS capital projects. Steering Group members report being regularly asked what is happening, and have a sense at points that they are in some way accountable for something which they have in reality very little control over.

To some degree this reflects a historic problem, with many decisions effectively now taken. Nonetheless, CARS should consider discussing and reviewing the future role of the Steering Group, and as an option consider whether it is any longer required. If it is, some new terms of reference for the group should be established.

CARS spend profile

As indicated in section 3, CARS future spend profile highlights that the vast majority of monies available have now been notionally allocated. Only c£37,000 remains unallocated. This means that without securing additional resources, no significant funding work can be supported. Work is underway to secure some of these, and the evaluation process will continue to track progress on relevant applications.

This spend profile causes potential communications challenges for CARS. From a distance it could suggest a strange combination of a spent budget alongside a sense very little is actually happening. Whilst there are clear explanations for this, it is a growing community perception that needs to be addressed.

Managing expectations, community engagement, and communications

As of May 2024, Mauchline CARS stands at an important crossroads. This combines ongoing expectations that many of its original objectives will be realised, with a recognition very little progress is currently visible to the local community. It sits in a context where very well attended events at the outset of CARS generated a good level of enthusiasm and engagement with the project. This appears to have significantly dissipated.

Ongoing communications is essential. It is apparent much work in this regard is in place – regular e-newsletters, a comprehensive website, and ongoing engagement with the local press. But looking forward, more may be needed. This could include:

- A higher CARS profile at key community events such as the Mauchline Fair and events associated with the new Community Action Plan;
- Specific events/meetings with people less familiar or comfortable with social media;

- Potentially, a dedicated community meeting based on this review report – explaining delays, but more importantly signalling exciting and imminent capital work commencement;
- Where possible use of a visible ‘quick win’ to re-establish CARS momentum.

Future risks and challenges

Many of the future risks for CARS have been referenced above. In summary these are suggested as:

- Ongoing delays in capital works, leading to further community disillusionment, and a danger that not all CARS activities can be completed by the revised deadline of March 2026;
- Grant conditions – particularly regarding payback requirements over extensive periods - lead to further withdrawals of CARS grant applications;
- Overall and increasing community disillusionment and cynicism due to the lack of visible progress, which is reputationally damaging to CARS;
- Concern about physical disruption when capital works actually start – particularly as these may be necessarily concurrent rather than phased;
- A loss of Steering Group members due to ongoing delays, allied to a lack of clarity on their purpose;
- A failure to source additional resources to address significant construction cost increases. leading to a reduced range of capital works progressing from initial CARS aspirations.

Some suggestions to address or mitigate these potential risks are contained in the concluding section.

5. Conclusions and next steps

Mauchline CARS now stands at a critical point in its development. Progress on the key aspects of work have been significantly delayed from initial expectations. Whilst there are some clear reasons for this, it has led to a growing sense of disillusionment in the local community from initially high expectations.

Progress on the non-capital aspects of CARS is more positive – notably in a range of well-received activities linked to education and training. But whilst these are important, they cannot deflect from frustrations on the visible impact on the anticipated, core capital activities.

There are also some concerns on the role and purpose of the CARS Steering Group. This requires review and clarity.

Within many frustrations, there remains a level of optimism that CARS can now progress relatively quickly, and still realise the majority of its original objectives and work programme by the end date of March 2026. As part of this, community expectations need to be rekindled – but only on the basis of guaranteed delivery.

It was agreed that the evaluation process should also include support for continuous CARS improvement, consequently some immediate future actions are suggested.

1. Consider a new programme of community engagement and communications to update the local community on positive progress, and address disillusionment. Potentially using this report as a catalyst.
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.

The evaluation process will now continue to track and discuss ongoing CARS progress, updating on the key issues and progress on recommendations in this report. This will conclude with a final full evaluation report in the spring of 2026.

Appendix 1 – Mauchline CARS Theory of Change and Evaluation Framework

The theory of change and Evaluation Framework have been created from a combination of:

- The original CARS aims and principles
- Evaluation outcomes as detailed in HES applications
- The range of activities advanced by HES
- The various consultations undertaken in the spring of 2024

Theory of change

The evaluation approach is based on a simple theory of change as detailed in the table below.

Change anticipated	Project activities	Change evidence
• An improved physical infrastructure • More positive views within the local community about living in Mauchline • An improved understanding and appreciation of Mauchline's cultural heritage • More and more profitable, sustainable and confident local businesses • Increased attraction of Mauchline to potential investors • An improved Mauchline tourism offer • A more engaged and involved local community in Mauchline's heritage	• Priority building repairs capital projects • Small building grants • Public Realm Works • Community engagement and learning projects • Training projects • Volunteering projects • Policy, research and guidance • Additional CARS development work	• Heritage improvement works completed • Increased positive reflections of residents and visitors • Increase awareness/appreciation of Mauchline's cultural heritage • Increased business confidence, profitability and business numbers • Increased investment in Mauchline • Improved perceptions of the Mauchline tourist offer/increased tourism numbers • Increased community engagement in heritage activities

Evaluation framework³

The first element of the framework addresses the inputs, outputs, and outcomes directly associated to specific project activities.

Activity area	Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Evidence sources
• Priority building repairs capital projects • Small/Medium building grants • Public Realm Works⁴	• Projects supported • Levels of investment secured (all sources including partnership funding)	• Projects completed • Number of building repaired • Square meters of vacant/underutilised space brought back into productive space • Number of vacant and derelict buildings brought into use • Number of property owners involved • Amount of private investment in projects	• Positive increase key social and economic indicators • Positive perceptions of improvements in Mauchline by local people	• Project records • End project community perception study • Visual 'before and after' images of all works • Final evaluation qualitative discussions
• Community engagement and learning projects	• Projects/events with CARS inputs • Learning projects delivered • CARS investment levels	• Participants levels in events	• Post event participant surveys	• Project records • Output and feedback data from delivery partners

³ These tables incorporate all performance indicators included in EAC's application for HES funding.

⁴ These are grouped together because most of the inputs, outputs, and outcomes are the same.

				• End project community perception study • Final evaluation qualitative discussions
• Training projects	• Training projects designed and delivered • CARS investment levels	• Participant engagement and completion levels • Participant post training feedback	• Participant labour market progressions – work, further learning/training, volunteering	• Project records • Output and feedback data from delivery partners
• Volunteering projects	• Volunteering projects designed and delivered • CARS investment levels	• Volunteer engagement levels • Volunteer feedback	• Any recorded volunteer progressions - work, further learning/training, volunteering	• Project records • Output and feedback data from delivery partners
• Policy, research and guidance	• Relevant documents and materials produced	• Circulation and use of documents		• Project records • Document availability • Final evaluation qualitative discussions
• Additional CARS development work	• Applications submitted	• Application outcomes	• Dependent on nature of work supported	• Project records • End project community perception study • Visual 'before and after' images of all works

				Final evaluation qualitative discussions
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The second element of the framework addresses the collective impact of all CARS activities against key social and economic indicators. These are generally harder to assess as (a) some data may not be available at Mauchline area level, and (b) attributing changes to CARS is problematic as a range of other services and initiatives in the town will also contribute to any progress. Consequently, qualitative perceptions may be more useful and available than quantitative evidence.

Through a combination of available data, qualitative end project evaluation discussions, and the end project community perception study, the evaluation will seek to assess any CARS impact on:

- New business creation
- New local jobs created
- Number of existing jobs retained
- Increased economic activity levels in the town centre (including tourism)
- Increased community engagement with heritage issues
- Increase in cultural and creative activity
- Reduction in crime, vandalism, and litter in the conservation area

Appendix 2 – Consultees

Douglas Airbright – Mauchline Burns Club
Stephen Kerr- Wylie Shanks Architects
Alan Cook – Mauchline Community Association
Caitlin Cunningham – Robert Burns Academy
Liza Dunlop - Mauchline CARS Steering Group
Jane Higgins – 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 –East Ayrshire Council Project Coordinator
Zara Smith – Creative Minds Team, East Ayrshire Council
Carol Sommerville - Mauchline CARS Steering Group
Robert Sommerville - Mauchline CARS Steering Group
Allan Vint – Mauchline Community Council