



Saving the Home of Auld Lang Syne  
*A Campaign by the Robert Burns Ellisland Trust*

Robert Burns  
**Ellisland**  
MUSEUM & FARM

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

*'Ellisland is the place to fall in love with Robert Burns,  
Scotland's national poet'*

Here, beside the River Nith, he built a home for Jean Armour and their children, and created some of the most iconic works in world literature, including *Auld Lang Syne*, *Tam o Shanter*, and *My Heart's in the Highlands*. The only house he ever designed and built, Ellisland remains the most authentic and best-preserved. Set in a landscape shaped by Burns's own hand, it is the best place to see nature through the poet's eyes.

For many decades it was cared for by dedicated volunteers who created a museum with a significant collection. But time, weather, and financial pressures have taken their toll. Without urgent action, we face the loss of a cultural treasure and the home where the world's song of friendship was born.

The Robert Burns Ellisland Trust has launched a £11.4 million campaign to save Ellisland, safeguard its precious collection, and reimagine it as a place where future generations can be inspired through conservation, creativity, and community.

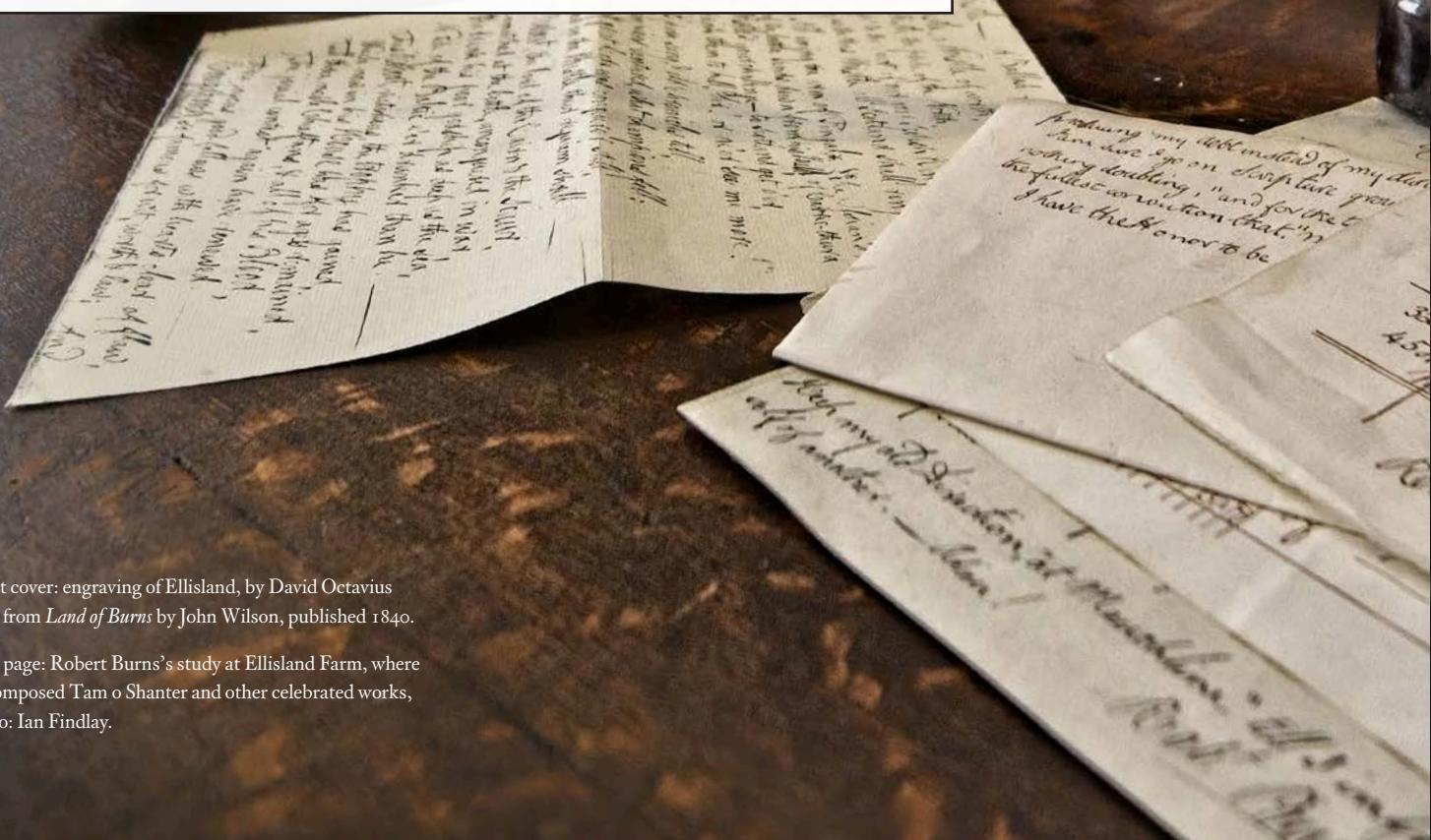
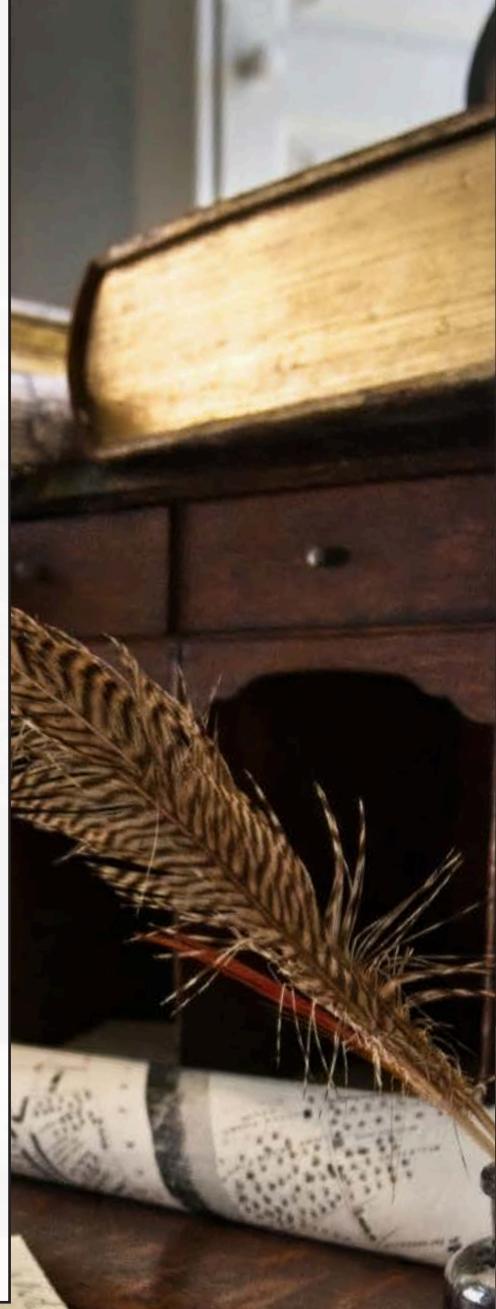
We are grateful for the support of major public funders. Now, we invite you to join us as a founding supporter.

Together, we can preserve the Home of Auld Lang Syne and pass on its inspiration to the world.



DUNCAN DORAN

*Chair, Robert Burns Ellisland Trust*



Front cover: engraving of Ellisland, by David Octavius Hill, from *Land of Burns* by John Wilson, published 1840.

This page: Robert Burns's study at Ellisland Farm, where he composed *Tam o Shanter* and other celebrated works, photo: Ian Findlay.

# An Anthem to Love and Friendship that Unites the World

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
and never brought to mind?*

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
and auld lang syne?*

Every New Year's Eve, from Times Square to Tokyo, the world sings *Auld Lang Syne*. A song of friendship, love and memory, its words have become part of global tradition. Indeed, the Guinness Book of Records cites it as the most publicly sung song in English after Happy Birthday. Yet few know its origins.

Robert Burns wrote *Auld Lang Syne* at Ellisland, a farm he built as his first marital home with Jean Armour. This quiet farm beside the River Nith was a crucible of creativity. Here, between 1788 and 1791, Burns penned more than a quarter of his entire output, poems and songs that shaped

Scottish identity and inspired generations of writers, artists and musicians.

This unique 'Ellisland Songbook' includes *John Anderson, The Banks of Doon, Killiecrankie, My Heart's in the Highlands, I Love My Jean, Afton Water* and more.

*'Ellisland must be protected. But more than that, it must be reawakened. We will bring artists, musicians and poets back to this "sweet poetic ground," to create new works, inspired by the same landscape that once inspired Burns.'*

JOAN MCALPINE

Project Director, Saving the Home of  
*Auld Lang Syne*

Ringing in the New Year with *Auld Lang Syne* at Robert Burns's Ellisland Farm,  
photo: Jim McEwan.



# Make Ellisland *the place to fall in love with Burns*

*Ellisland is the place to fall in love with Burns. We will increase awareness of Ellisland as central to the artistic development of Robert Burns in poetry and romantic song. We will enhance understanding of the site as the best place to see the natural world through the poet's eyes. We will create a world class visitor experience and a vibrant centre for creative learning to ensure the unique collection, buildings and landscape are accessible to a diverse range of modern audiences.*

THE ROBERT BURNS ELLISLAND TRUST

VISION STATEMENT

## Our journey

The Robert Burns Ellisland Trust is a charity formed in 2020 to save Ellisland. The site was safeguarded for decades by volunteers who still maintain its extensive grounds. The trust has pioneered innovative engagement and heritage led regeneration, to bring the spirit of Burns into the 20th century, including building a version

of the site in the Minecraft computer game. We have run lively family events including a haggis brunch, offered performance opportunities to young musicians and given high quality employment and training to several young people. Our efforts were rewarded in 2023 when we received official museum accreditation.

To demonstrate our commitment to intangible cultural heritage, we had the Burns family flute fully restored with support from The Association of Independent Museums / Pilgrim Trust. It can now be played for the first time in hundreds of years. We have developed Auld Acquaintance Cottage, a holiday let in the heart of the farm, to generate income. In 2024, we secured almost £1m of development funding in from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, South of Scotland Enterprise, The Holywood Trust, Museums and Galleries Scotland. Now, with your help, we will deliver our plan to Save the Home of Auld Lang Syne.

Bringing the spirit of Burns into the 21st century – building the site in the Minecraft computer game.



Illustrated plan of Ellisland Farm, showing Robert Burns's 1788 farmhouse and steading.



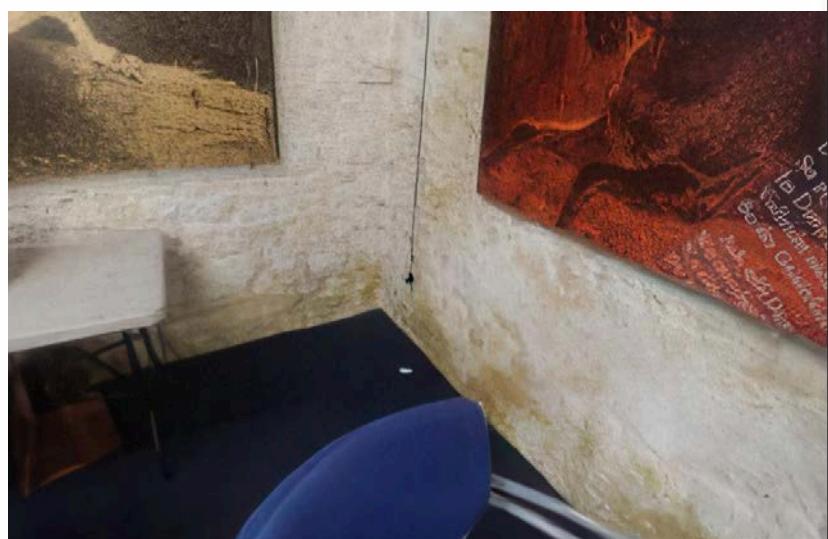
## The poet's home in peril

The Robert Burns Ellisland Museum and Farm, built by Burns in 1788, is a Category A listed steading, the best-preserved of all the poet's homes and the only one he designed and built himself. It was here that Burns created a quarter of his total output, including *Auld Lang Syne*, and where he helped shape what would become the Romantic movement.

A conservation study funded by Historic Environment Scotland in 2021 confirmed Ellisland's exceptional historic and cultural significance, highlighting the unique survival of its rural setting. Even the field enclosures remain as Burns created them.

The same report exposed the true condition of the buildings, which are now at grave risk from damp, decay and disrepair. They can no longer safely house the significant museum collection, including manuscripts for the poems *On Seeing a Wounded Hare* and *The Whistle*, books belonging to Burns, his fishing rod and personal effects.

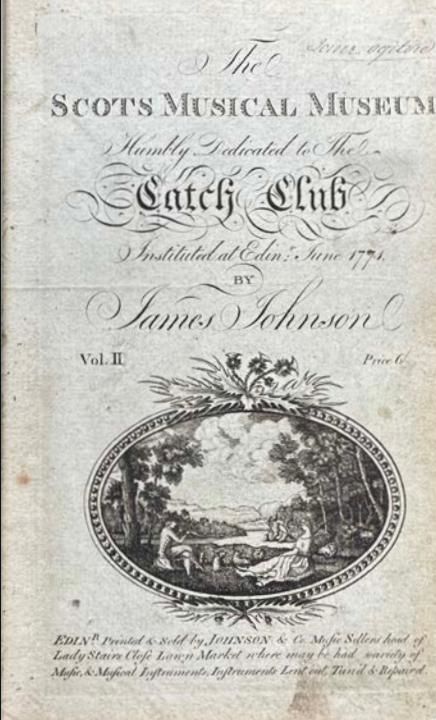
Saving the Home of Auld Lang Syne project is at the heart of The Robert Burns Ellisland Trust's vision: to rescue this fragile heritage, restore the home Burns built, and reimagine Ellisland as a cultural beacon for the future. Our project will transform an underperforming heritage site into a creative powerhouse – anchoring a national effort to grow the Burns economy and enrich local life through tourism, learning, and culture.



A conservation study report highlighted a number of significant problems with the condition of the building.



Robert Burns's study 'The Spence' at Ellisland.



The frontispiece of *The Scots Musical Museum*.

## Four ways to restore and re-imagine the home Burns built ...

I

### The Farmhouse

*The house he built – the home they shared*

The farmhouse will be restored meticulously to offer an immersive experience of 18th-century life. We will use newly discovered material from the collection of the Rosebery family 'The Barnbougle Papers' which include the 1788 'shopping lists' for the farmhouse and garden. Our curator and design team will use this information to authentically recreate the farmhouse Robert and Jean occupied as newlyweds. The papers even contain details of seeds and plants allowing us to re-create their kitchen garden.

*The Barnbougle material paints a fascinating picture of life on the farm, from bills for shoes, buttons and buckles to details of furniture, floorboards and doorframes. We have the minutiae of Burns constructing his first family dwelling, building both a house and a home*

PROFESSOR GERRY CARRUTHERS

2

### The Centre for Song

*Auld Lang Syne began here*

At Ellisland, Burns shifted his focus to song writing and collecting. His labour of love was the Scots Musical Museum, his way of preserving the oral culture of the country which he feared would otherwise disappear.

We are committed to upholding the living tradition which inspired Burns – the 'carrying stream' of culture passed down the generations, always changing, always dynamic, but staying true to its roots.

We will reimagine the original byre and threshing barn as a Centre for Song: a dynamic space where music, heritage, education and creativity converge.

This is a chance to support a world-first: a cultural home for the songs that connect us across time and place.

*There's a stillness at Ellisland, a sense of stepping into Burns's world. You hear the rhythm of the river, feel the stories in the walls.*

ROBYN STAPLETON

Traditional singer and ambassador for the Robert Burns Ellisland Trust



Framed illustration of a hummingbird (*Trochilus Mango*), part of the historic collection at Ellisland Farm.



Engraving of the Hermitage at Friars Carse, Nithsdale, where Robert Burns wrote poetry in solitude during his time at Ellisland.

## ... for artists, visitors and generations to come

### 3

#### The Collection

##### *Love, nature and song brought to life*

The Ellisland collection, including manuscripts, personal possessions and everyday items, is one of the richest in Scotland. But its survival is threatened by unsuitable environmental conditions.

Creating a dedicated museum space will secure the collection for the future, open it up for deeper public engagement and allow rotating exhibitions and new research.

Support here means safeguarding treasures that speak to the soul of Burns and the lives he touched. These include one of the first anti-bloodsports poems, *On Seeing a Wounded Hare*, and the Burns family flute. There are items belonging to Jean Armour, including an exquisite engraving of a hummingbird, her cotton mutch (hat) and a silk handkerchief exchanged between Burns and Agnes Maclehose (Clarinda) for whom he then wrote the beautiful love song *Ae Fond Kiss*.

*This is one of the most emotive and intellectually important Burns collections in Scotland. Saving it isn't just about preservation, it's about unlocking its power to inspire.*

DR DAVID HOPES

### 4

#### The Hermitage

##### *See nature through the poet's eyes*

During Burns's time at Ellisland he was given the keys to a tiny retreat among the glades of Friars Carse, the neighbouring estate owned by his friend Robert Riddell. Known as the hermitage, the simple stone bothy offered a secluded space where the poet could write, away from the toil of the farm.

We will recreate that experience and build eco-friendly hermitages – simple, beautiful spaces where today's artists, musicians and writers can find the same inspiration as Burns, close to nature. Residencies and visitor stays will generate income for the Trust, sustaining Ellisland's future, while fostering creativity.

In addition to the hermitages, we will enhance biodiversity through managing the woodland, some of which is believed to have been planted by Burns himself. We will also restore the idyllic but neglected Ellisland orchard, which contains damsons, apples and plums.

*Life is but a day at most  
Sprung from night, in darkness lost  
Hope not sunshine every hour  
Fear not clouds will always lour*

ROBERT BURNS

*Lines Written in Friars Carse Hermitage*

# The impact of Saving the Home of Auld Lang Syne

*This project will deliver wide-reaching cultural, economic and social benefits, locally, nationally and globally. This is more than preservation.*

It will create a sustainable heritage destination where new art, friendships and memories can be made.

## What We Will Deliver:

- An immersive, fully restored 1788 farmhouse
- A new museum space safeguarding the Burns collection
- A Centre for Song in the historic barns and byres
- Creative residencies inspired by Burns's woodland hermitage
- Expanded riverside paths and outdoor learning spaces
- A dynamic programme of events for schools, families and communities
- Conservation-led business model rooted in local opportunity

## Who Will Benefit:

- Local people – through jobs, training, volunteering and community engagement
- Young people – through education, skills-building and access to culture
- Artists and musicians – with space to create, reflect and perform
- Visitors – drawn to a world-class destination rooted in Scotland's heritage
- The global public – through a renewed cultural landmark linked to Auld Lang Syne
- The environment – through nature-based regeneration and biodiversity

1. A local singer leads festive celebrations at Ellisland. 2. Face painting at one of the trust's community fun days. 3. Teenage fiddler performs at Ellisland Halloween event. 4. All the community events at Ellisland include youth performers. 5. Musicians Rebecca Hill, Robyn Stapleton and Claire Mann rehearse the Ellisland Songbook in Burns's farmhouse. 6. Children learn to make butter in the barn. 7. Professor Pauline Mackay (left) Director of the Centre for Robert Burns Studies at the University of Glasgow, joins musicians Dr Alasdair C. Whyte and Robyn Stapleton for a Saltire Society showcase at Ellisland. 8. Children enjoy traditional 'apple dooking' as part of an intangible cultural heritage celebration. 9. Dumfries band Bogle Mufty lead Hogmanay celebrations at Ellisland.



1



4



5



7





# How you can play a role in Saving the Home of Auld Lang Syne

*Your support is vital to our success and will ensure that we continue to build on our achievements and partnerships in order to deliver our vision to restore the heritage and deliver a sustainable future for Ellisland.*

## Development Phase

The Development Phase of the project is fully funded by our core partners: The National Lottery Heritage Fund, South of Scotland Enterprise, Museums Galleries Scotland, Architectural Heritage Fund and The Holywood Trust. This phase provides the time to develop our architectural and business plans as well as secure the £11.4 million goal to deliver the project in 2027.

## Delivery Phase

Our project is recognized as a strategic opportunity for regional growth, heritage-led regeneration and national cultural leadership. We are working closely with a range of partners that account for approximately 80% of our £11.4 million Delivery Phase goal, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, South of Scotland Enterprise, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Historic Environment Scotland, Museums Galleries Scotland and The Holywood Trust.

## So how can you help?

We would be delighted to speak with you about opportunities that will secure the remaining 20% of the target to help us restore and reanimate Ellisland in 2027.

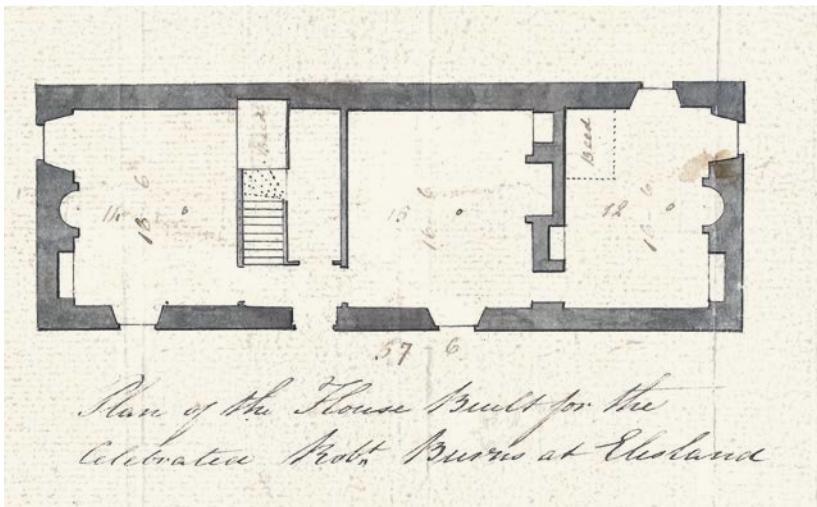
We have a range of giving opportunities that will restore heritage, create opportunities for creativity through the Centre for Song, residencies in the hermitages, and improve our landscape.

We look forward to speaking with you about the best way to support the project.

For more information contact:  
Peter Thierfeldt, Director of Development  
Robert Burns Ellisland Trust  
Email: [peter@ellislandfarm.co.uk](mailto:peter@ellislandfarm.co.uk)



The farmhouse, where Burns lived with Jean Armour and wrote some of his most iconic works.



Early 19th-century floor plan of the farmhouse built for Robert Burns at Ellisland, showing the original layout of rooms shortly after his residency.

Collective Architecture, appointed in spring 2025, will lead the conservation and sensitive adaptation of Robert Burns Ellisland Museum and Farm. They will develop design proposals that will safeguard and revitalise this uniquely significant heritage site. Their focus will be on conservation through use, so that some of the buildings will be adapted to bring them back to life.

*It is a privilege to be appointed to lead the design team for Ellisland Farm, a site of deep historical and cultural value. We look forward to working closely with The Robert Burns Ellisland Trust to restore and enhance this remarkable place, ensuring its legacy is preserved and celebrated for generations to come.*

EMMA FAIRHURST  
Collective Architecture

## Saving the Home of Auld Lang Syne Consultancy Team:

Collective Architecture Lead Consultant with consultant team:

- Brown & Wallace, Quantity Surveyors and Principal Designer
- Harley Haddow (Glasgow) Ltd, Engineering Consultants
- Elliott & Company Consulting Engineers Ltd
- HarrisonStevens Ltd, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design
- Ellendale Environmental Ltd, Ecological Surveys & Environmental Management
- Abound Design & Interpretation Ltd
- Rob Robinson Heritage Consulting, Business Planning

## PROJECT TIMELINE

### 2024

#### SEPTEMBER

National Lottery Heritage Fund Development Phase Award

#### DECEMBER

South of Scotland Enterprise Development Funding Award

#### DECEMBER

Museums Galleries Scotland Funding Award

### 2025

#### FEBRUARY

Permission to Start with the Development Phase

#### APRIL

Holywood Trust award for youth activity and engagement in development phase

#### MAY

Appointment of the consultancy team lead by Collective Architecture, business planning consultant Rob Robinson and interpretation plan team, Abound.

#### SUMMER

Quiet phase of the Saving the Home of Auld Lang Syne campaign

#### NOVEMBER

Launch of the fundraising campaign

### 2026

#### JANUARY

Visit to key American cities to promote campaign

#### FEBRUARY

RIBA3 plans submitted to Dumfries and Galloway council. RIBA4 work can begin.

#### APRIL

Visit to take part in Tartan Week Celebrations in USA

#### SEPTEMBER

Submission of National Lottery Heritage Fund Delivery Stage Application and completion of the fundraising plans

#### NOVEMBER

National Lottery Heritage Fund decision

### 2027

Spring Permission to start

### 2028

Completion of the Auld Lang Syne Project, re-opening.

# Who we are – the Project Team

**JOAN MCALPINE**, Project Director, former MSP for South Scotland and convenor of the Scottish Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee

**PETER THIERFELDT**, Director of Development with extensive fund-raising experience including at St Mary's Music School and the National Galleries of Scotland

**ADAM DICKSON**, Project Curator, from Stranraer, Adam has a post graduate qualification in Museum Studies from the University of Glasgow and previously curated Burns, Barns and Byres

**CAMERON HINDE**, Audience Development and Operations Manager, Cameron has extensive experience working across numerous heritage organisations throughout the UK. Organisations like Chelsea Physic Garden in London, the National Botanic Garden of Wales and more recently at the National Trust for Scotland.

**KATIE MACDONALD**, Project Officer – Events, Engagement and Visitor Services, is a history graduate from the University of Glasgow and experienced primary teacher who has worked recently with Motherwell Heritage Centre and the National Galleries of Scotland.

**ASIF KHAN**, Director of the Scottish Poetry Library, who spent most of his professional career in Bristol and London in business development, marketing and engagement roles across cultural platforms; including public libraries, performing arts venues and art galleries.

## The Trustees

**DUNCAN DORNAN**, Chair, recently retired as Head of Museums and Collections at Glasgow Life. Highlights of his tenure include the £68.25m refurbishment of the Burrell Collection.

**DR DAVID HOPES**, deputy chair, Head of Leeds Museums & Galleries, previously Head of Collections & Interiors for the National Trust for Scotland, former Director of the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway.

**PROFESSOR GERARD CARRUTHERS**, Secretary to the board. One of the world's leading Burns scholars, Gerry holds the Francis Hutcheson Chair of Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow.

**LINDA DORWARD**, Councillor for Dumfries and Galloway Council Lochar Ward, which includes Robert Burns Ellisland Museum & Farm

**IAN HUSTON**, Global Scot based in Washington DC. Ian specialises in promoting Scottish business, trade, industry, culture and universities in the US.

**GRAHAM MAIN**, Founder and Director of Big Burns Supper in Dumfries and Galloway, the world's largest Burns Night celebration.

**MARY STONES**, Senior Interpretation Manager at Historic Environment Scotland



The steading at Ellisland.



*Robert Burns*  
**Ellisland**  
MUSEUM & FARM

SUPPORTED BY



**AHF** Transforming Heritage  
[www.ahfund.org.uk](http://www.ahfund.org.uk)



Holywood Road, Auldgirth, Dumfries & Galloway, DG2 0RP, Scotland  
Telephone: +44 (0)1387 740 426 · email: [info@ellislandfarm.co.uk](mailto:info@ellislandfarm.co.uk) · [www.ellislandfarm.co.uk](http://www.ellislandfarm.co.uk)  
Robert Burns Ellisland Trust is Scottish Charity Number: SC049973