

<b>Institution: University of the Highlands and Islands</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 28</b>
<b>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b>

Before the founding of the Centre for History (CfH) in 2005, no university department or centre had taken as its focus the history in, of, and for, the Highlands and Islands. Since 2014, the CfH has become a leading academic research group dedicated to research into regional, transregional, and global histories. Through its publications and growing presence in publicly engaged medieval, early modern and modern history - unique within a Scottish context - the CfH is now influencing regional and national cultural bodies and institutions. It is also realising the University of the Highlands and Islands' (UHI) strategic plan and mission 'to have a transformational impact on the prospects of our region, its economy, its people and its communities' (University of the Highlands and Islands Strategic Vision and Plan, 2015-20, p. 2).

These developments have emerged from our response to an impressive REF 2014 performance and UHI's supporting of excellence in research. Assisted by senior UHI management, through the systematic release of Research Excellence Grant funds (via the Scottish Funding Council), we enabled significant and sustainable growth in staffing and research student numbers and an opening-up of career pathways. This has been the catalyst for a step change in our areas of expertise (table 1) and international standing. The CfH's researching staff numbers are now at their highest ever, the team comprising Head of Centre and Professor (David Worthington), Reader (Dr Iain Robertson) charged with lead responsibilities for research, three Senior Lecturers (Dr Elizabeth Ritchie; Dr Iain MacInnes; Dr Jim MacPherson), three Lecturers (Dr Kathrin Zickermann; Dr Lucinda Dean; Dr Philippa Woodcock) and two Senior Researchers (Professor James Hunter; Professor Marjory Harper). In terms of their research interests:

- Dean works on medieval and early modern Scotland and Europe, especially on monarchy, ritual, gender, and public history.
- Harper is an historian of the Scottish diaspora, with a particular interest in oral history, migration, and mental health.
- Hunter is an historian of the Highlands and Islands and the region's worldwide diaspora.
- MacInnes is an historian of fourteenth-century Scotland, with a focus on the Scottish Wars of Independence and, in recent years, medievalism.
- MacPherson is a collaborative, cultural historian of modern Britain, migration, and Empire.
- Ritchie is a social and cultural historian of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Scottish Highlands and its diaspora.
- Robertson is a historical geographer whose research explores the landscape history of the Highlands and Islands in the twentieth century, social protest and critical heritage studies.
- Woodcock researches and publishes on early modern European history and visual culture, especially on political, religious, and cultural interchange between France and Italy.
- Worthington works on Scotland's early modern ties with central Europe, and on seventeenth-century northern Scotland, whilst driving the emergence of coastal history as a distinct field.
- Zickermann researches and publishes on the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and on early modern maritime history.

### **Research strategy**

Our key, initial aims following REF 2014, are shown in *italics* in the bullet points below, while our responses to these objectives, in the years between 2015 and 2020, are provided in the short narrative that follows:

- *To add to our expertise and our developing unique approach to community-focused history, and to our REF 2021 preparations, by appointing a Reader and a Research Officer.* The appointment of Robertson in 2015 was intended to reposition ourselves at the forefront of modern Highlands and Islands history and critical heritage studies, and give a sharper, leadership focus for our research in the current REF period. It coincided with the beginning of our efforts to restrengthen our connections with Hunter and Harper (see section 2) to support our impact agenda. Simultaneously, we also took steps to promote our Administrative Officer to Curriculum and Research Officer, with an expanded research assistance remit, and recruited an Administrative Assistant. This financially supported return to modern Highland historical research and publication gave us confidence to think internationally again, surpassing our 2014 aims by recruiting Bowman (who left in 2019) on a fractional contract, and then two new, full-time lecturers, Dean and Woodcock, in 2016 and 2018, respectively. The latter are both early modernists, who research on themes that also take us well beyond our region and who are inspiring new approaches and thinking.
- *To support monograph preparation among as many research staff as possible.* Sabbaticals assisted our 'Outputs' submission for REF 2021 and have also helped ensure that six of our staff are currently working on monographs to be published in the years after 2020. Additionally, we complement the allocation of time provided by sabbaticals with ongoing support and mentoring for researchers over the longer term (see section 2).
- *To better organise our research activity via several interconnecting research 'alliances'.* The objective of this was to highlight areas of specialism and facilitate greater collaboration within the team around these. The seven 'alliances' initially created, encouraged, promoted and interlinked the work of all our research-active staff (see table 1).
- *To broaden the base of experienced PhD supervisors and increase research student numbers further.* We established an enhanced system of mentoring, which means that virtually all research-contracted team members are now supervising PhD students. This led to a significant increase in research student numbers and funded studentships. Our visiting professors and senior researchers were also targeted to play a more consistent and full part in this element of our research community (see **Future planning** below and section 2).
- *To increase staff participation in funding bids and expand the range and scope of these.* Participation increased significantly, with over half of Category A staff having submitted bids since 2015 and achieving great success in funded studentships (see section 2). We acknowledge the need to increase award rates on research grants, more broadly, and are now taking further positive action to do so (see **Future planning** below and section 4).
- *To increase participation in university research structures at all levels.* Participation has increased notably over the census period even to the level of more recently recruited staff. For instance, during her first full academic year Woodcock was appointed to the steering committee of the university-wide 'Society, Identity, Landscape and Knowledge Research Cluster' (SILK). This appointment interacted positively with her presentation at a transdisciplinary conference at the university during the same year.
- *To enhance and grow, in a spatial and online sense, our research environment.* We achieved this by moving to an entirely new, much-improved suite of offices in Dornoch, and adding a dedicated research space, also by enhancing our research student support and community, and increasing our provision of physical and digital library resources (see sections 2 and 3).
- *To deepen activity involving collaboration with the public, through hosting bigger and more ambitious public events, and inspiring community-led, co-produced research across the Highlands and Islands and beyond.* The collaborative, co-produced research embedded in our PGR studentships has been key here (see section 2). As of 2014, Public History was already a major international growth area in our discipline, with its own dedicated journals,

national councils (USA) and coordinating bodies, but with a thinner reach in Scotland. We saw potential from that year (and since) for the CfH to come to the fore, in Scottish terms, in the form of community-facing historical collaboration, with a distinctive focus not just on modern themes, but on earlier periods too.

Table 1 (*Developing Research, Publication and Impact Strategy from 2014*) captures the initial development of our post-2014 research and publication strategy:

Research alliances and associated publication areas	Staff involved	Impact alignment and themes
Land, Landscape and Memories	Woodcock, Ritchie, MacPherson, Harper, Worthington, Robertson	Land issues
Maritime, Coastal and Riverine Histories and Cultures	Zickermann, Worthington	Curatorial policy/'public pasts' Digital interfaces for the public
Medieval Worlds and Medievalism	MacInnes, Dean	Curatorial policy/'public pasts'
Customs, Cultures, Rituals and Beliefs	Dean, Ritchie, MacPherson, Robertson	Land issues Digital interfaces for the public
Genders and Families	MacPherson, Ritchie, Harper	Land issues Digital interfaces for the public
Empires and Diasporas	MacPherson, Ritchie, Worthington, Zickermann	Curatorial policy/'public pasts' Digital interfaces for the public
Public Histories, Material Cultures and Heritage	Ritchie, MacPherson, Dean, Hunter, Harper, Worthington, Robertson	Land issues Curatorial policy/'public pasts'

As an example, MacPherson, Ritchie, Worthington and Zickermann have grown the Centre's expertise in the history of Irish, Scottish and British diasporas since 2014. MacPherson's monograph on *Women and the Orange Order* indicates the strength of this research, which led, in 2015, to invitations to speak on the theme at the Irish Ambassador's residence in Ottawa and to the Permanent Missions of Armenia and Cyprus at the United Nations in New York. Another key vehicle for such impact is the development of 'The Hub for the Study of British Identities' (HSBI), a digital research network developed by MacPherson. This online, interdisciplinary forum for academics around the world has drawn contributions from, for instance, the Universities of Salzburg, Bonn, Birmingham, Hawai'i and Saskatchewan. HSBI also produces the open access, free, and peer-reviewed [Journal of British Identities](#), which helps cement its academic/community linkage. The journal embraces contributions from partners in the heritage sector at a time of growing interest in, and reflection on, British imperial pasts, including slavery and its legacies. This is an area in which MacPherson's and Worthington's collaborative plans have grown. MacPherson now runs 'The Empire at Home' blog and published a *Northern Scotland* article in 2020 which linked black radicalism to Highland thought, while Worthington's 2019 [article](#) identifying the first Highland slave-owner network in the Atlantic for the journal *Dutch Crossing* quickly became the most widely-read in the journal's history.

Further, the strongly spatialised focus of CfH activities ensures that interdisciplinarity frames much of our research. Worthington and Zickermann have received international acclaim for their work in maritime and coastal research and in 2016 this led to the first ever international conference in the emergent field of Coastal History. 'Firths and Fjords' attracted over 100 delegates including from the USA, Canada, Finland. It featured widely in newspapers and on television (over 900 tweets in

the week from 30 March 2016) and inspired the first-ever full-length volume on coastal history: *The New Coastal History: Cultural and Environmental Perspectives from Scotland and Beyond* (Worthington, 2017). A further outcome was the unique online, distance learning MLitt programme, 'Coastal and Maritime Societies and Cultures'. As of 2020, amid the COVID-19 crisis, Worthington has launched a new online Coastal History forum that is bringing together 150-plus members from across five continents to regular meetings, roundtables and workshops focused on the past as well as on contemporary issues, such as climate-change induced sea-level rise. In autumn 2020, the forum generated its first piece of funded research.

Having a committed leader as Head of Centre (who is also a key budget holder within the university, a Professor since 2020, and a member of Academic Council) brings stability and vision to long term planning and investment. For instance, upon appointment Dean was supported to complete her monograph on rituals and ceremonies around death and Royal Succession in Scotland c.1214 – c.1513, as well as an associated report commissioned by Historic Environment Scotland. Several public facing outcomes emerged from this, including new interpretation work at two of Scotland's historic royal palaces (see section 4).

The CfH's impact strategy was initially predicated on three significant themes (see table 1 above) with 'digital interfaces for the public' ultimately being given less priority. This strategy was energised both through a long-term commitment to the development of a particular vision for outreach and the deployment of key resources, such as UHI's sabbatical scheme. For example, in 2016/17 Ritchie used her sabbatical to develop several articles for publication, including two on livestock rearing, and two on pregnancy and gender in nineteenth-century Scotland and its diaspora. These successes enabled her to forge deeper links with Community Land Scotland (the umbrella group for the buyout movement in Scotland that is radically changing landed estate ownership patterns) which resulted in contributions to their policy on rewilding; a funded research training project for a community owner; and contributions to exhibitions at the Scottish National Gallery and the National Museum of Scotland.

Guided by the UHI-wide infrastructure, CfH policy on Open Research Data is reviewed on a regular basis. All CfH researchers have completed professional development around embedding the ten shaping principles of the university's data management policy and make use of the university-wide specialist support and guidance provided for open access publishing and the provision for 'Gold' open access where necessary. See **Institutional context and mission** in the Institutional Environmental Statement (IES).

Open access enhancements include the creation in 2018 of a dedicated post for the administration, dissemination, and promotion of CfH research. This has significantly widened access to our research. Apart from the UHI open access environment (PURE), all staff are encouraged not only to have a research web profile, but to actively publicise their research via media outlets. CfH also helps support the fully peer reviewed journal *Northern Scotland* and has, for several years, had an agreement with the publishers to make articles freely available. This approach informs CfH's overall impact strategy and the public historical and land-based research themes which are the foundation upon which the Centre's impact case studies for REF 2021 are built. It also helps maintain both the Centre's shaping role in the university's mission to be fully embedded in the Highlands and Islands community, and its mentoring role to broader, ever-developing academic networks.

## Future planning

Our objectives for the next five years are:

- To double our output of monographs from this REF period by supporting the completion and publication of up to six single-authored books by CfH staff on Highlands and Islands, national, transnational, and international themes.
- To further increase research student numbers.
- To increase our number and quality of applications for major research grants and studentships from public and private bodies to a point where we ensure 70% of Category A researching staff submit such grants (increasing from 50%, as was the case in this REF period).

- To sharpen a Public History focus that engages with the work of most CfH staff in this area and adds an explicitly interdisciplinary perspective to the Centre's research culture, with the aim of changing lives and transforming communities beyond the academy.
- To open more defined and supported routes for staff progression (see section 2) by working with the support of the university's Athena SWAN and SFC Gender Action Plans (see **People** section in the IES) to ensure, for instance, continuing effective support to staff returning from maternity leave.
- To make the most of both our Dornoch base and our distributed nature to sustain our development of a supported, vibrant online and face-to-face community. The online element has, of course, been emphasised by the current pandemic, a situation that we are addressing, in line with the university's mission to its communities, by ensuring the inclusive nature of our electronic resources and supervisory structures. This has allowed us to recruit a new, distance learning PhD student as of late 2020, with further success with this initiative predicated on greater enhancement of, and investment in, physical and digital resources (see section 2).

## 2. People

Following the strategic investment at department and university level noted already, the CfH Category A staff headcount has grown from five in 2014 to ten in 2020. These appointments have directly aligned with and supported the staffing aspects of our research strategy:

- A Reader to lead on the growth and strengthening of our research culture and environment.
- Two new Lecturers working on themes that take us well beyond our region and established chronological focus.
- A new post of Curriculum and Research Officer to support our research strategy.
- Two Senior Researchers to mentor and strengthen our research community and to enhance our public-facing activities.

The 'people strategy' was further enabled through a greater focus on and support for research and writing time; enhanced opportunities for staff research development; new and improved office accommodation; and the development of a more cohesive and regular schedule of research seminars and workshops. The consequent step-change in research environment is evidenced by a doubling in numbers of research monographs as outputs (when compared to the previous census period), expanded community engagement and postgraduate research, and a significantly enhanced social media profile. Worthington has been awarded a personal chair and Ritchie, MacPherson and MacInnes have been promoted to Senior Lectureship roles. Two monographs and five edited collections have emerged from this senior group in the current census period, alongside significant impact and public-facing activities.

These successes have been extended by the appointment of two Senior Researchers who are both excellent communicators and place knowledge exchange at the heart of everything they do. Professor Marjory Harper and Professor James Hunter have had longstanding research connections with CfH and have consistently produced world leading research that has made significant contributions to wider society. Harper's work has won several awards, including *The Guardian University Award for Research Impact* (2019) while Hunter's research on Highland land issues has had a profound influence on Scottish Government policy and legislation and has led to numerous contributions to media outlets internationally, such as *National Geographic* and for the French-German TV channel *Arte*. Most recently Hunter was commissioned to write an article on the Highland famine for the 'Famine' area of the Irish public service broadcaster's website. *RTÉ* reaches 95% of the Irish population.

Our 'people strategy' has therefore balanced late and early-career recruitment to secure several medium and long-term objectives, including our intention (see below) to address the need for diversity in recruitment. All Category A staff are allocated time for research and undergo yearly



appraisals of research activity. Interacting with this strategy are staff development policies at departmental, faculty and university level. As demonstrated in the **People** section of the IES, UHI staff development aligns with the 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers' allowing, for instance, funded training opportunities in a university-wide mentoring scheme 'Leadership Development for Principal Investigators', and a research sabbatical scheme from which the Centre has benefitted significantly.

On sabbaticals, funding is open to staff at all levels and on every contract type. We allocate it to support the completion of major pieces of research, to facilitate individual impact strategies and to enable personal research development. Through this:

- MacPherson completed his project on Irish diasporic identities and developed impact strategies (2014/15).
- Worthington undertook research to complete an article on the coastal history theme and organised the Firths and Fjords conference (2015/16).
- Ritchie completed a number of articles, began work on her monograph and wrote an essay commissioned by Community Land Scotland (2016/17).
- MacInnes developed new research strands following the publication of his monograph and Worthington completed an article and undertook a major series of knowledge exchange activities around the theme of the Scottish Highlands' first slave-owning network (2017/18).
- Zickermann was supported as part of her phased return to work following maternity leave and Dean worked on her monograph and associated knowledge exchange activities (2018/19).
- Woodcock worked on her monograph as part of her planned phased return to work following maternity leave (2020/21).

CfH sabbatical policy emerged in part out of the close collegiate and professional atmosphere developed over the census period, which has given rise to supportive mentoring of junior staff by more senior figures. This environment has enabled MacInnes to develop new lines of research leading to him being invited to give the keynote at an international conference, whilst Ritchie's confidence and achievements grew to the extent that she was promoted to Senior Lecturer. Indeed, the CfH has been a pioneer across the university for the use of the Senior Lecturer grade as recognition of staff excellence in research.

On internal funding for research, CfH staff have also been allocated individual research budgets at faculty level which are used to support publications and acquire specialist research materials. Impact activities are funded separately. In addition, all staff have access to the UHI conference fund and assistance for research funding applications from the central Research Office Grants and Contracts team.

This level of support has remained consistent in the face of a considerable, planned, and strategic expansion in Category A staff numbers and is thus, in and of itself, evidence of the university's commitment to support the UoA's research culture and plans. As detailed in the **Institutional context and mission** section of the IES, good practice is further embedded through the University-wide '[Knowledge Exchange sector groups](#)'. Supported by funding from the Scottish Funding Council Universities Innovation Fund, these coordinate information and activities from across UHI and increase the engagement of academics with businesses and other clients through training and developmental courses, such as 'the Enterprising Researcher'. We take a full role in the Tourism Group and are systematically made aware of all relevant national KE initiatives, such as the Innovation Scotland, Interface, and relevant SFC innovation centres. The group serves as a forum whereby exchange between academia and business is facilitated. In 2020, for instance, Robertson and Harper were awarded Interface funding to work with the Steering Group driving forward the development of a new, multi-million-pound heritage centre focusing on the Iolaire disaster (see Section 4).

A final indicator of the growing maturity and standing of the Centre's research environment has been the targeted appointment of scholars of international standing as Visiting Professors, all of whom emerged from existing research collaborations. This has been complemented by the extended visits of the late Professor Eric Richards (Flinders), on a Carnegie Centenary Professor

award, Associate Professor Tod Jones (Curtin), and Dr Julie Brown (Oregon) as a Fulbright Programme Specialist.

## Research Students

Since REF 2014 the Centre has:

- Become a full member of the Scottish Graduate School for the Arts and Humanities Doctoral Training Partnership, bringing access to fully funded UKRI studentships and training opportunities of which our students make regular use.
- Increased PGR enrolments from four at the start of the census period to fourteen in 2020.
- Achieved £466,347 worth of PGR funding, including: one AHRC CDP (with Historic Environment Scotland); one AHRC CDA (in conjunction with the Highland Folk Museum); and four European Social Fund awards (with various non-HEI partners).
- Become the recipient of the first Carnegie-Caledonian Scholarship awarded to the university.

Postgraduate research has been central to the genesis of our research funding strategy (see section 3) and the vehicle for a new form of collaborative supervision and co-creative research. The origins of this latter development can be traced to the pioneering Royal Dornoch studentship, but the main catalyst was the appointment of MacPherson in 2011 and his consequent turn to working closely and collaboratively with local heritage bodies. MacPherson took this strong base and, in partnership with policy makers and cultural managers, both fashioned a co-supervised studentship model and laid the foundations for one of our impact case studies. One example of this model in action is our fully funded North Coast 500 studentship, which is a partnership with a regionally transformative organisation that has significant international reach (certified 2.3 billion in 2017/18).

As detailed in the **People** section of the IES, recruitment of doctoral research students is undertaken in close partnership with the university's [Graduate School](#). Each student is assigned a full academic team, plus, in many instances, a senior representative of the co-producing organisation. PhD students at the CfH have also been able to draw upon expert external and international supervision (involving staff from Federation University, Australia, University of Stirling, Manchester Metropolitan University). Research students have access to facilities in the CfH suite of rooms, including a dedicated study space, computers, and a departmental library.

In addition, we hold an annual PhD day which brings together the research students, their supervisors, and all staff members. PhD students have taken the opportunity to participate in the Centre's extensive programme of public engagement and regular international conferences. Following the turning of his thesis into a monograph, one of our students had his monograph short-listed for the Saltire Society's Research Book of the Year in 2016; whilst another co-founded the Rural Modernism research network, whose first conference, held in 2019, was funded by the British Academy. CfH postgraduate students are therefore fully engaged with both wider scholarly and external communities and are closely supported by the CfH research culture and UHI's Graduate School and Research Office. All students participate in an intensive induction programme and an annual postgraduate conference and receive support for mental health and wellbeing.

## Equality and diversity

CfH is proactive in ensuring equality and diversity wherever practical in terms of, for example, mental and physical health, ethnicity, and gender. We support UHI's recognition, captured in the **People** section of the IES, that low ethnic diversity in rural areas can obscure appreciation of the impact of racism in society, through taking membership on the university committee that is developing work on the Advance HE's Race Equality Charter. More broadly, the CfH's guiding principle is full equity on all shortlisting and interview panels, underpinned by formal unconscious bias training delivered by Advance HE. CfH also assisted in the design and adoption of both the university-wide single EDI policy and the work that went into the award of Bronze Athena Swan in 2017.

Building on these achievements, the Centre is now supporting a colleague onto UHI's Aurora programme, the Advance HE's leadership development programme for those identifying as women. These demonstrate our fundamental objective of ensuring greater gender equality and diversity. Of eligible staff, 49% (3.9 of 7.9 FTE) identify as women. This is an improvement on REF 2014 (when 42% of eligible/submitted staff identified as women) and we remain committed to further improving our diversity. The Centre has reflected on our experiences in this area during this REF period and targeted it in our post-census research strategy. Three full periods of maternity leave in this REF period allowed the Centre to proactively recognise the impact of such a period of leave and the arrival of a new child into a family on an individual's research work. When a staff member returned to work it was on terms worked through with the individual and to their research plans. In two instances this took the form of sabbaticals to enable work on planned monographs. In taking charge of return-to-work practices in this way, the Centre has both influenced and will build on the university-wide principles captured in its Code of Practice and Gender Action Plan. We will continue to mainstream themes and equality outcomes including gender imbalances (see **Future planning** in section 1).

This is reflected in the following specific actions:

- Following standard regular review of job descriptions and recognising and ensuring the ongoing prioritising and importance of one strand of CfH public history research, Dr Elizabeth Ritchie was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 2019 consequent upon her innovation and leadership in these and other areas since joining CfH in 2009.
- The appointment of Professor Marjory Harper as Senior Researcher in 2019 was envisaged in part to allow her to mentor and act as a role model for other female staff. Harper has offered her expertise and advice in this area via research grant and research-teaching linkage workshops for both staff and postgraduates.

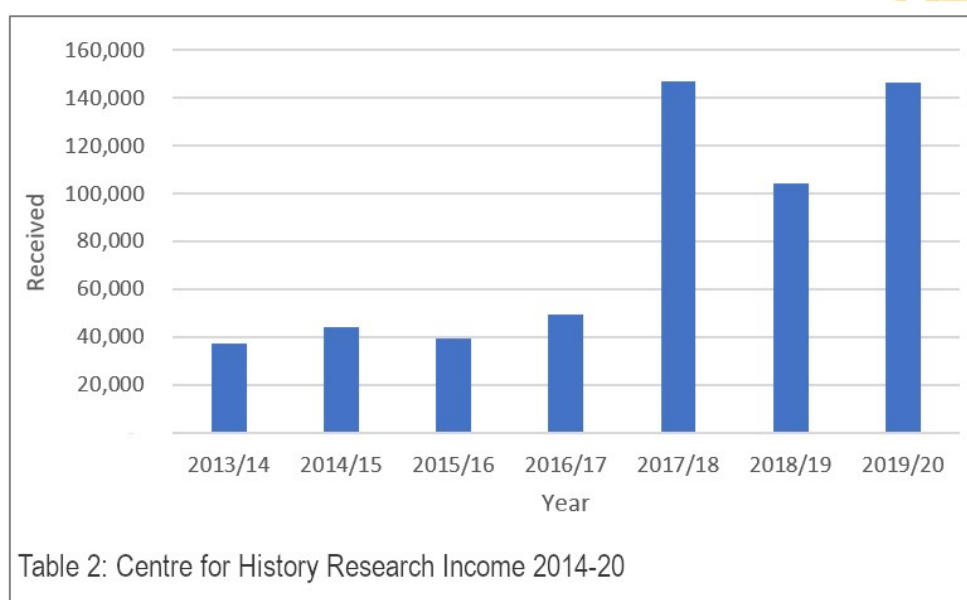
Through the Centre's behaviours, culture, policies, and procedures, we ensure equality of opportunity for all staff. This principle is central to our approach to practicing history and is sustained through regular team meetings, an 'equality audit', and by strict adherence to the university's 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusiveness' policy. As detailed in the **People** section of the IES, the university's REF 2021 Code of Practice states that UHI will provide REF Managers with general equality and diversity and unconscious bias training. CfH UoA leads and members of the output selection panel have all received this training.

### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

#### Income

As detailed in the previous section, CfH research strategy across the census period has sought to secure UKRI and other funded sources primarily to support PhD studentships. The success of this objective can be demonstrated both qualitatively and quantitatively. Our PGR students have had a profound influence on CfH broader research culture and have directly shaped our impact strategy for REF 2021. This success is evidenced most obviously through the 250% rise in student enrolments between 2014 and 2020 noted above, but also in the rise in our overall income. From sources recorded in Higher Education Statistics Agency returns our income rose from £37,350 in 2013/14 to £146,283 in 2019/20. As demonstrated in Table 2 below, this near 300% increase is a considerable achievement for a unit the size of CfH.





Funding successes represent a key component of our research strategy and bring important benefits for CfH. As of the end of 2020, we have a cohort of postgraduate researchers, with a supervisory base that has broadened to include early career colleagues, and a physical space that has been refurbished to offer enhanced dedicated and specialist PGR provision. Our PGRs use this income stream to attend and present at international conferences and to set up and run conferences and public engagement events of their own. We have also bought dedicated research equipment and enhanced our specialist library in Dornoch with the aim of developing resources for future research. Finally, the CfH co-supervisory model has benefitted both staff and students by, for example, creating a unique level of access to Inverness Library's collection of 10,000 rare books.

These PGR successes are in line with our overall research strategy to enhance income generation (as detailed in section 1) driven largely through a continued prioritising of UK Research and Innovation grants. In 2020 alone, CfH staff submitted bids for an AHRC Standard Grant, for a British Academy/Wolfson Fellowship, and for a Leverhulme Research Grant. With university support, we aim to maintain this level of activity across the next census period and will increase the number of research bids of this type by staff.

Examples of what can be achieved through this approach include the Carnegie Trust Centenary Professorship, awarded to the late Professor Eric Richards of Flinders University in 2014, and the AHRC funded (2016/18) project 'Visualising the lolaire' (see section 4).

- Professor Richards' three months at CfH included public and academic seminars and one of two keynotes at the CfH's 'Strathnaver Conference'. The conference brought significant business to the north coast, especially Bettyhill and Tongue, through accommodation, catering and attendees. In the remainder of his time in the Highlands, Professor Richards conducted further archival research and mentored CfH staff and research students.
- 'Visualising the lolaire' led to new funding for a research consultancy project with West Harris Trust and a Royal Society of Edinburgh workshop grant with Abertay and Digital Humanities at Glasgow University (2019-21).

## Infrastructure

As detailed in the **Institutional context and mission** section of the IES, the creation of four [interdisciplinary research clusters](#) during this census period, has been 'key to implementing the strategic plan for research, knowledge exchange and impact'. These clusters are the mechanism through which research leadership is driven, with the CfH reaching across both the Humanities (HARC) and Social Sciences (SILK) clusters. The Centre plays a leadership role on both clusters: Worthington was the first co-convenor of HARC and Robertson is on the current steering committee, and Woodcock performs an equivalent role for SILK. The research clusters are closely

aligned with the university's research and knowledge exchange committees which CfH staff also serve on, and which draw research and impact together at institutional level and pan regionally. These knowledge exchange sector groups are responsible for delivering activity against University Innovation Fund monies from the Scottish Funding Council. This activity is disseminated back to the individual UoAs through the university's annual research forum, which serves to sense-check recent developments in UK-wide policy and initiatives.

The CfH shows a similarly enhanced professionalism in terms of support for research and impact. Over the current census period we identified a need for a Curriculum and Research Officer and filled the role internally as part of our career progression policy. This strategic expansion included a 50% increase in support staff and the appointment of an Administrative Assistant to look after our social media channels. The use of social media, for which CfH was something of a pioneer amongst Scottish History UoAs, is now a major tool for engagement with the public. As of February 2021, CfH has 3,000 Twitter and 1,900 Facebook followers, with an average monthly reach throughout 2019/20 of 36,000 and 17,000 for each channel.

### Facilities

Research income makes a significant contribution to the CfH's position as a self-sustaining financial centre. This autonomy has, for instance, enabled the systematic development of CfH facilities over the current census period. With the financial support of the university, we increased provision at our Dornoch base to meet staff expansion by moving into a dedicated suite of six rooms in 2017/18. These provide the physical environment to enable a vibrant research culture that is further underpinned by a dedicated room for critical interaction, seminars and workshops. Reflecting the UHI model for dispersed learning, our postgraduate provision enables students to be co-located across the partnership but always with dedicated space in Dornoch. This space is further utilised for the annual postgraduate research days and the reading groups run by the postgraduate cohort. The physical space occupied by CfH, therefore, is strongly configured to support its research culture at all levels, albeit this has moved temporarily online during the pandemic.

Over the current census period, CfH's softer research infrastructure has been similarly realigned and developed. There is a library of research texts available to staff and postgraduates, including the Pennie Collection, which has been used in several public engagement and knowledge transfer projects. Of great significance has been the acquisition of the digitised [archive](#) of the transcripts of evidence given to the Napier Commission of 1883, which was established to 'enquire into the conditions of the crofters and cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland'. The five volumes of evidence gathered by the Commission are one of the most important primary sources of 'history from below'. To be the sole guardian outside formal archival settings for this unique resource is a privilege and a responsibility. Online availability does much to facilitate community-led research and demystifies archive use, with the pages receiving at least 1,200 views per year since their first upload. CfH research and funding bids are based upon the archive, with Robertson, for instance, utilising Napier Commission testimonies extensively in his essay (2019) which explored the moral code that underpinned natural resource utilisation in the Highland way of life.

Oral history, both as training for community projects and research, is a major theme for the CfH and there has been significant strategic investment to support this. Since 2015, we have bought video and digital cameras, and digital voice recorders (of archiving standard) for oral history research projects to achieve impact and look beyond the current census period. The North Coast 500 studentship is an example of the way in which the Centre's growing multi-disciplinary methods and epistemologies are being applied and supported for both impact and scholarly research, in that one strand of the community co-curation, that lies at the heart of this project, is being facilitated using a disposable camera methodology.

## 4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

Emerging from REF 2014 and integrating new interests with existing networks and relationships, the Centre has focused strategically on key initiatives, audiences and collaborations. Our strategy has been to prioritise those public history and critical heritage focused collaborations and networks that can be developed according to the model of co-production (see section 2). This facilitates cross-fertilisation of ideas and works well in a small team by ensuring a sustainable number of initiatives are pursued to a level sufficient to develop meaningful impact.

Worthington's research into Scottish ties with Poland and other parts of early modern Europe is an example of the benefits deriving from writing community engagement and advocacy into a project from inception. Grasping the contemporary resonances of his research, Worthington reached out to communities, hitherto largely silent in a Scottish scholarly context, and rapidly built networks and partnerships which have developed in several directions. One such is Worthington's appointment to the Scottish Parliament's cross-party group on Poland. He also organised the workshop 'Unheard Voices, Unseen Communities: Perspectives on Polish Ethnicity in Scotland' which was attended by Members of the Scottish Parliament and featured widely on *BBC Radio Scotland*, the BBC news website and in the local press. Worthington was subsequently invited to present the keynote at an international conference in Krosno, Poland, and curated an accompanying travelling exhibition.

A further example of the benefits which flow from public-facing collaborative projects is the AHRC funded (2016/18) project 'Visualising the Iolaire'. This was a partnership between Robertson (as Co-Investigator), Dr Iain Donald, from the School of Design and Informatics at Abertay University, and community heritage groups on the Outer Hebrides. Initiated by the community partners, the project developed to centre on the creation of a digital 'deep map' and memorialisation of the UK's worst twentieth-century peacetime maritime disaster (after the Titanic) which has had 'plays' from across the globe.

The project became a catalyst for several new collaborative initiatives:

- With the Imperial War Museum and Highland Archives, leading First World War study days in Inverness and on Lewis. The Inverness event attracted an audience of around 100 people, with Robertson and community partners being interviewed for *BBC Alba's* Gaelic TV news programme and led to Heritage Lottery funding for an event to recreate the FWW Armistice celebrations on Lewis.
- Working with internationally renowned musicians and playwrights to incorporate elements of research findings into their play 'An Treas Suaile' (The Third Wave) which was performed to capacity audiences in Inverness, Stornoway and at the Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow.
- An international conference to celebrate the centenary of the 1919 Land Settlement (Scotland) Act.
- A research consultancy project based on the island of Harris.

At the heart of our developing public history focus is good communication with wider society. Whether through more traditional means, such as an exhibition, or via more recent digital technologies, this demands constant tracking between scholarly research and wider audiences and communities. This is particularly the case for Dean's interaction with Historic Environment Scotland (HES). Supported through a sabbatical, Dean was able to work on her monograph on rituals and ceremonies (see section 1) and an associated report commissioned by HES. This resulted in her making a significant contribution to the new (2018) multimedia guide at Holyrood Palace, with the HES report underpinning new display panels at Edinburgh Castle. Dean has also been supported in her research and impact activities on the 'Perth Charterhouse Project' in collaboration with Professor Richard Oram (University of Stirling) and local partners including Culture Perth and Kinross (CPK) and Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT). She received a Geoffrey Barrow Award to fund archival research on this project and has undertaken a range of outreach activities, including running collaborative workshops with CPK, supporting a funded intern at the archive (2019), and a public event showcasing fifteenth-century Scottish culture and modern creative responses to the project's themes (February 2020). Dean is currently advising PKHT on a new public information panel about the Charterhouse and co-organising the annual Royal Studies

Network conference, due to take place in Perth in 2021. This activity forms the basis of one of the Centre's projected impact strands for the next census period.

This strategy is already bringing positive benefits to both the Centre and its wider community. Ritchie's contracted work with the community owners of the Isle of Ulva is thus an element of both a current impact case study and part of our future planning. Through her research activities and links with Community Land Scotland, she has been appointed to act as a consultant and member of the team directing a National Lottery funded project which focuses on the history of the island, its people, and their impact on Scotland and the world. Equally future facing is MacPherson's increasing involvement in knowledge exchange activities with the Clan Macpherson Museum in Newtonmore. As a member of the museum's board, MacPherson has been a key contributor to a successful Museums Galleries Scotland funding bid, securing £88,000 in December 2020 for the refurbishment of the museum. MacPherson is taking a leading role in redesigning the museum's exhibition and rewriting interpretation, ensuring that it incorporates elements of his latest research on James Macpherson (1736-1796), Ossian and history writing, thereby significantly shaping public understanding of Clan Macpherson's history.

Connection and collaborations between CfH researchers and High Life Highland (HLH), the organisation responsible for cultural and leisure activities in the region is a central element of our contribution to wider society. This partnership began in community-based activities and then co-produced research with one of HLH's flagship facilities, the Highland Folk Museum. It was followed by research into the knowledge exchange potential of the Rare Books collection in Inverness library, which resulted in an upgraded evaluation of the collection by the National Library of Scotland. From this co-operative base the Centre has taken a key advising role in the cultural and heritage-led regeneration aspects of the Inverness and Highland City Regional Deal (worth £315 million). High Life Highland has now adopted a research-led cultural approach to the stories it tells. These activities will continue well into the new census period and therefore form a key element of both our current and future impact case studies.

From these positions of strength, the Centre has been able to build influential international connections. Engaging with international research networks through the Critical Heritage Studies organisation, Robertson has been able to build strong and active connections with Federation and Curtin Universities in Australia. These include three funded Fellowships and his appointment as Adjunct Associate Professor in the School of Design and Built Environment at Curtin. These linkages have resulted in three edited collections and a new international network, 'New Geographies of Heritage', which includes colleagues from Denmark and Singapore, and has won funding for a knowledge exchange workshop in the Highland region.

In a different strand and from a slightly different perspective, Worthington's pioneering of the new coastal history led to funding from the Fulbright Specialist Programme for the Centre to host Dr Julie Brown, a scholar of coastal and maritime literature from Clatsop Community College in Oregon, USA. Whilst at the CfH, Dr Brown spoke to and held poetry workshops with the local fishing community and local schools and was interviewed for *BBC Radio Scotland's* 'Out of Doors' programme. Brown has spoken of the influence of her UHI visit at the annual Fisher Poets Gathering in Oregon, an event which has attracted attention from the *New York Times*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the BBC and other media.

Such engagements with wider society have been developed even further by MacInnes through his blogging and other public-facing activities around the theme of the representation of the medieval in contemporary popular culture. The fandoms of TV shows like *Game of Thrones*, as well as readers of the comics in question, provide a ready-made popular audience for research that considers the works in which they have a deep interest. Promoted and developed further through social media, this has led to contributions to *Times Radio*, to commissioned contributions to *BBC History Extra* podcasts and on depictions of the Middle Ages in graphic novels for *Comics Forum*, an online meeting point for scholars, artists and fans.

## Contribution to the discipline and peer recognition



The Centre for History is at the forefront of Highlands and Islands history. It is the only dedicated History department in the region, and the only History department with a leading focus on Highlands and Islands history in a global context. From this core position, several associated strengths and indicators of esteem have emerged. One such is our involvement throughout the current census period in the fully peer-reviewed journal *Northern Scotland*. Harper, Worthington and MacPherson have all served as editors, with seven CfH staff editorial board members as of 2020.

*Northern Scotland* links UHI directly with the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee as well as with the much broader body of universities who have representation on its editorial board. The *Journal for British Identities*, for which MacPherson is founding editor, is similarly based upon a strong cross-disciplinary ethos and is linked to universities globally. Colleagues sit on the editorial boards of the *Scottish Historical Review* (MacInnes; Harper), the *Economic and Social History Society of Scotland* (Zickermann) and *Northern Studies*, the journal of the Scottish Society for Northern Studies (Zickermann). Worthington is also a History panel member of the Scottish Graduate School for the Arts and Humanities.

Across the current census period the Centre has moved towards a more interdisciplinary approach and wider subject engagement for our research, based on the view that this more closely resembles how our audiences see the world. This is instanced through Robertson acting as Membership Secretary for the Historical Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society, his keynote to the *Permanent European Conference for the Study of the Rural Landscape* and by his role as peer reviewer for the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, and *Journal of Historical Geography*. Furthermore, through Chairing of the Centre for Scotland's Land Futures, Robertson connected CfH with the School of Humanities at Dundee and the Stirling Law School, the lead disciplines at the other participating universities.

Following a similar trajectory, albeit from an early career point of departure, Zickermann is now co-editor of the *Scotland, Scandinavian and Northern European Database* and *Northern Studies*, an interdisciplinary journal that explores the inter-relationships between Scandinavian and Scottish cultures. In 2017, Zickermann gave the invited keynote 'English and Scottish migrants in Bremen during the Seventeenth Century' at an international conference in Bremen (*Die 'andere Reformation' im Nordwesten des Alten Reichs: Bremen und Westeuropa*). She is also a full participant in the 'European Cultures of Military Warfare 1500-1800' research network and in 2020 set up the Scottish Women and Warfare group with the Professor of Early Modern History at the University of St Andrews.

In recent years, the study of the history of warfare within CfH has gained wide peer recognition. Woodcock, for instance, is a committee member of the Society for the History of War, whilst MacInnes's interest in contemporary popular representations of medieval military history led to him being invited to give the plenary talk at the conference: *IN THE MIDDLE: Recreating the Middle Ages in popular culture / EN EL MEDIO: Recreando la Edad Media en la cultura popular*, Instituto de Estudos Medievais in Lisbon, Portugal. Media organisations now regularly turn to MacInnes as an authority on the Wars of Independence of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. He has been commissioned to produce an interactive podcast for *BBC History* magazine, written a series of articles for the popular history magazine *History Scotland* on the Scottish Wars of Independence, and was historical consultant and script editor on an episode of *BBC Radio 4's* 'Homeschool History'.

Activities such as these have combined with our unique approach to community-focused history (see section 1) to establish significant public and media profiles. Harper, for instance, acted as both programme consultant and interviewee on *BBC Scotland's* 'The Promised Land' which broadcast in 2020. That does not mean, however, that CfH staff ignore more traditional academic outlets, with the weight of our wider contribution to the discipline inevitably matching key research foci. Colleagues have acted as referees for *Scottish Historical Review*, *Rural History*, *The English Historical Review* and *French History*, with Harper peer-reviewing for University of Toronto Press and Manchester University Press. In this REF period, our staff have reviewed grant applications for all the major humanities-focused funding bodies, alongside major Scottish funders such as the Scottish Graduate School for the Arts and Humanities, the Carnegie Trust and The Royal Society of Edinburgh.



For a small and growing department these are further clear indications of our standing in the discipline.