

Institution: University of Glasgow (UofG)		
Unit of Assessment: 15 Archaeology		
Title of case study: Heritage-led regeneration in Govan for Glasgow and beyond		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000–present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Stephen Driscoll	Professor of Historical Archaeology	1991–present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013–31 st July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

Stephen Driscoll’s archaeological research established the Govan Stones collection (carved in the 9th –11th centuries), housed in Govan Old Church in Glasgow, as an internationally popular heritage site. Promotion of Govan Old as a visitor destination led to the establishment in 2013 of a free summer ferry service connecting Govan with the Riverside Museum across the River Clyde. Annual visitors to Govan Old doubled between 2013–2019 from c.6,000–14,000. Driscoll’s vision of Govan Old as visitor attraction and community cultural hub was central to efforts to raise GBP4 million between 2015–2018 for the necessary capital improvements, with work commencing 2019. The high profile of Govan’s early medieval cultural heritage has also contributed to wider regeneration in the Clyde waterfront, including c.GBP15 million for the construction of a bridge between Govan and the Riverside Museum.

2. Underpinning research



Figure 1: Govan Old Church (circled left) on the bank of the Clyde, in the heart of Greater Glasgow. Driscoll’s research established Govan as a place of great significance in the early medieval period. The popular Riverside museum, Partick (circled right) lies opposite.

Impact case study (REF3)

Since 1994, Driscoll has researched Govan Old's monumental sculpture and its wider context (Figures 1–4). This work established that Govan was a major political centre in Early Medieval Britain and drew out the international significance of the sculpture. Driscoll proposed this exceptional collection of 43 monuments, including four upright crosses and the unique reliquary sarcophagus, as the main religious and political site of the lost Kingdom of Strathclyde [3.1]. The sculptures date from the 9th–11th centuries, but Driscoll's excavations revealed the site was home to one of Scotland's earliest churches in the 5th or 6th century.



Figure 3: Sarcophagus

Between 2000–2004, Driscoll examined evidence for political assembly at Govan, situating the church within a wider ceremonial

landscape that stretched north across the Clyde [3.2]. His analysis also encompassed Govan's landscape setting in the Clyde valley (Figure 1), demonstrating the strategic significance of the site: a fertile district with an important

river crossing and an ancient church, astride the junction of major routes north, east, and west via the Clyde estuary to the Irish Sea [3.2].

Between 2007–2009 Driscoll led an evaluation of the archaeological and architectural heritage of Govan for Historic Scotland, producing an accessible book in the Government's Burgh Survey series that sold out two print runs [3.3]. This study was the first comprehensive synthesis of the archaeological and historical development of Govan from the medieval to industrial periods. It revealed the significance of medieval Govan, highlighting unsuspected connections between medieval and modern Govan, and concluded with recommendations on maximising the value of Govan's heritage resource. *Historic Govan* advocated the site of Govan Old be actively curated, arguing that planners should integrate elements of the historic townscape into future developments [3.3]. The case was made that the heritage value is inherent in remains of all periods, not just the Early Medieval era.



Figure 4: Hogbacks

Subsequent research established Govan's international significance via the Norse cultural influence represented by the five 'hog-back' grave-stones [3.4], a distinctive feature of Viking settlement in the British Isles. In terms of both quantity and quality they are arguably the most significant single collection of Viking Age sculpture in Britain and Ireland [3.5]. Driscoll also showed that re-use of the Celtic carved stones in the 17th–19th centuries to mark elite graves, previously considered 'defacement', testifies to their continued

association with high status. Not only did this veneration contribute to their survival to the present day, but the connection with the recent past facilitates public engagement [3.5].

Since the 2007 closure of Govan Old by the Church of Scotland, Driscoll's research has expanded to also focus on the modern cultural significance of Govan's heritage and its potential for social and economic regeneration [e.g. 3.3; 3.5]. As a member of the Govan Heritage Trust, now owners of Govan Old, his ongoing research helps shape the redevelopment strategy for Govan Old. Driscoll is leading the fieldwork programme associated with the regeneration work at



Figure 2: Cross fragment

Govan Old with an emphasis on community participation. Excavations in March 2019, as part of public realm improvements in the churchyard, led to the rediscovery of Early Medieval sculpture that had been lost for generations. A final strand related to this is his collaborative research into the pedagogical applications of using film and historical archaeology research to change local children's historical consciousness of Govan [3.6; 5.11].

3. References to the research

- 3.1 Driscoll, S. T. 2003 '[Govan: an early medieval royal centre on the Clyde](#)', in *The Stone of Destiny Artefact and Icon*, R. Welander, D. Breeze and T. O. Clancy (eds) Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph 22, 77–83. (ISBN 0903903229) [DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5284/1082002>]
- 3.2 Driscoll, S. T. 2004 The Archaeological Context of Assembly in Early Medieval Scotland - Scone and its Comparanda, in *Assembly Places and Practices in Medieval Europe*, A. Pantos and S. Semple (eds) Dublin: Four Courts Press, 73–94. (ISBN 9781851826650). [available from HEI, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5284/1082003>]
- 3.3 Dalgligh, C., Driscoll, S.T., Maver, I., Shead, N.F. and Shearer, I. 2009 [Historic Govan: Archaeology and Development](#). Series: The Scottish Burgh Survey. Historic Scotland: Edinburgh, UK. (ISBN 9781902771625) [available from HEI]
- 3.4 Driscoll, S. T., Owen, O. 2011 [Norse Influence at Govan on the Firth of Clyde, Scotland](#), in *Viking Settlements & Viking Society*, S. Sigmundsson (ed.). Reykjavik: Proceedings of the Sixteenth Viking Congress, 333–348. (ISBN 9789979549239). [available from HEI]
- 3.5 Driscoll, S.T. 2016 [Reading Govan Old: interpretive challenges and aspirations](#). In: Hunter, F. and Sheridan, A. (eds.) *Ancient Lives: Object, People and Place in Early Scotland*. Sidestone Press: Leiden, pp. 73–91. [PDF available at link]
- 3.6 Archibald, D. (ed.), Driscoll, S.T., Doherty, C. and Perry, M. 2018. '[Dossier on Govan Young: Exploring children's historical consciousness through film and archaeology](#)'. *Film Education Journal*, 1 (2): 193–208. ([doi:10.18546/FEJ.01.2.07](https://doi.org/10.18546/FEJ.01.2.07))

Quality: comprising original research, mostly peer-reviewed, with 3.3 having attracted funding from Historic Scotland, the body of work is expected to meet or exceed the 2* threshold.

4. Details of the impact

Driscoll has expanded awareness of the cultural significance of the Govan Stones, providing a counterweight to a popular history of Govan previously confined to the industrial shipbuilding era. The shipbuilding narrative was one of decline: from a thriving independent burgh in 1912, Govan became one of the most deprived areas of Glasgow and Scotland as its shipyards closed in the 1960s. Connecting the forgotten Govan Stones with the Kingdom of Strathclyde provided a powerful alternative narrative of another era of greatness, implying the prospect of future greatness. This case study presents impacts achieved between August 2013–July 2020, when Govan Heritage Trust was seeking major funds for redevelopment to restore the church's position as the social and cultural heart of Govan.

Regeneration of Govan Old and its contribution to wider regeneration

Although investment had been underway since the announcement of Govan Old's closure in 2007, by 2013 its future remained uncertain. Govan Heritage Trust (GHT) was formed in 2015 to campaign and receive funds to invest in the site, managed by local charity Govan Workspace Ltd with Driscoll on its board of trustees. Under Driscoll's expert guidance and with the help of Govan Workspace, GHT safeguard the Stones and Govan Old to ensure their cultural significance is recognised along with their potential benefit for Govan. [5.1]. The Managing Director of GHT noted that Driscoll '*played an important role as a founder member*' with his '*guidance [and] research expertise [making] that task more manageable*', commenting:

There is no doubt that Prof Driscoll's ongoing work at Govan Old – his expertise, academic input and the profile he has given to the 6th century graveyard and Medieval Govan Stones – has been a pivotal factor in securing approval for redevelopment of the site. Since 2013 when ... he provided in the building for the first time an interpretation of the monuments and narrative on Govan's Medieval history, annual visitor numbers have climbed from around 6,000 to 14,000, and Govan Old has grown steadily in stature as a place to visit [5.2].

In 2017, GHT with Driscoll's support secured GBP400,000 of Scottish Government funding towards transforming the site into a modern, accessible heritage attraction, a further GBP1.9 million in 2018 [5.3], and GBP715,000 from the Central Govan Action Plan (CGAP). The total reached over GBP3 million by 2018 [5.3, 5.2]. The first phase of building began in 2019, and associated archaeological excavations are described below, however phase 2 which was scheduled for 2020 experienced Covid-related delays.

This investment is in addition to over GBP120 million invested in Govan's regeneration 2006–2016, overseen by the Central Govan Action Plan, and including [new homes, restoration of historic buildings and new public art features](#). CGAP see Govan Old as integral to these ongoing regeneration efforts. Project Manager Susan Hanlin commented [5.4] that Driscoll:

'has been instrumental in bringing to light the important archaeological treasures of the Govan Old site, and to establishing and promoting their significance for the benefit of the Govan community ... the preservation and promotion of Govan's rich cultural and built heritage has played an important role in the regeneration programme' [5.4].

Govan Stones as a heritage destination for Glasgow and beyond

The continued promotion of the site as a visitor destination continues to contribute to local economic investment while recognition of Driscoll's research continues to grow through his trusteeship in GHT, collaboration with CGAP, and public talks. In 2017, the [Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology](#), the Govan Stones were voted the [most popular of six 'Hidden Gems'](#) of Scotland nominated by the public; attracting over 2,000 public votes and considerable media coverage [e.g. 5.5]. Visitor numbers have increased steadily [5.6], and the ongoing GBP6 million enhancement of Govan Old, beginning with improved facilities for visitors, aims to further increase footfall to 60,000 visitors per annum [5.7].



Figure 5: local volunteer and his find was the focus of extensive media coverage

Throughout March 2019, as redevelopment work began at Govan Old, Driscoll carried out community excavation to enhance local awareness and interaction with the site (Figure 5). There were 60–70 community participants, and between 100–200 primary school children visited, many from local Pirie Park Primary. GHT's Managing Director stated that Driscoll's 'archaeological digs in the 6th century graveyard [are] consistently enjoyed by local participants and regularly generate publicity of a positive nature for Govan'. Media coverage was

extensive, further raising the profile of the site. When a local school-age volunteer found a significant addition to the known gravestones, the story was picked up by, among others, the [BBC](#), [STV](#), [Evening Times](#), and [Fox News](#), and local website [Glasgow Live](#). An Associated Press article was then covered by over 50 other news outlets on 29th March 2019 alone, and [MSN - News](#) covered the story in their Canada, Australia, Malay and other platforms.

Since 2013, GHT together with Govan Workspace have raised GBP41,000 per annum to [run a free ferry](#) between Govan and the Riverside Museum, Glasgow's new Zaha Hadid-designed Transport museum north of the Clyde [5.7]. As part of wider regeneration plans, plans were also approved in January 2019 to construct a (c.GBP15 million [5.8]) footbridge re-connecting the Glasgow areas of Govan and Partick, part of a GBP56.85 million Clyde waterfront revitalisation [5.9]. One of the stated goals of the bridge project is to encourage visitors to the Govan Stones: according to the Scottish Strategic Development Forum, '*when visitors arrive in the city they head to Kelvingrove Art Gallery and the Transport [Riverside] Museum. This plan would encourage them to visit the Govan Stones afterwards*' [5.10]. In this vision Govan represents a vital stepping-stone in a cultural corridor stretching from the Hunterian Museum (in the city's West End) to the Burrell Collection (Glasgow's south side), with Govan Old as the focal point of Govan's cultural offering.

Govan Young: raising local and international awareness of the Govan Stones

Local and international appreciation of the cultural significance of the heritage resource situated at Govan Old has been raised still further through Driscoll's collaboration with filmmaker and UofG researcher David Archibald [3.7]. The project, which followed a group of local Primary 4 children from Pirie Park Primary in 2015 as they learned about the Govan Stones, produced the documentary film [Govan Young](#). The film has been shown at over 25 international film festivals, viewed by ~9,000 people, including 3,000 in India and 2,120 digitally, following the film's online release in November 2018. The film has won awards at the Seoul Guro International Kids' Film Festival, the Arkhaios Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Film Festival and the Festival International du Film d'Archéologie de Bordeaux Archaeological [5.11].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Entry in Govan Heritage Trust's constitution: [Public Contracts Scotland.gov](#) February 2017 / see also [the Scotsman](#) 24th January 2019 [PDF]
- 5.2 Testimonial letter, Govan Workspace Ltd [PDF], corroborating the impact of Driscoll's work in Govan in raising the profile of and advocating for its unique heritage resource.
- 5.3 Govan Workspace Ltd [Annual review](#) 29th March 2018 [PDF], detailing investment raised.
- 5.4 Testimonial letter, Project Manager at Central Govan Action Plan [PDF], corroborating the contribution of Driscoll's expertise to heritage being recognised in ongoing regeneration plans, and detailing investment figures and regeneration plans.
- 5.5 [Glasgow Live](#) / [BBC](#) / [I-news](#) / [the Scotsman](#) / [Sunday Post](#) (all 2017) [PDF]
- 5.6 Summary of visitor numbers year by year provided by Project Development officer at Govan Old [PDF], corroborating steady increase over most of the reporting period.
- 5.7 Managing Director GHT, quoted in [Glasgow Live](#) 3rd February 2019 [PDF]
- 5.8 GBP15 million figure was quoted at public consultation event held by Glasgow City Council 11th Feb 2020. This is congruent with GBP113.9 million funding total under the Glasgow City Region City Deal for improvements to pedestrian and cycle routes under the heading 'Waterfront and West End Innovation Quarter' and which includes the Govan-Partick bridge as one of five spending items, corroborated in its *Procurement Activity Overview* [PDF]
- 5.9 [Glasgow City Council](#) n.d. / Glasgow Live [29th Jan 2019](#) and [30th Jan 2019](#)
- 5.10 Quoted in [Evening Times](#), 24th January 2019 [PDF]
- 5.11 Email, Filmmaker David Archibald, corroborating Govan Young Awards and estimation of attendance figures; see also film available at: <https://vimeo.com/294109808>