



Invitation to tender 17 April 2025, from
The Old High Inverness SCIO (known as The Old High), for a
Feasibility Study and options appraisal for rejuvenating The Old High building, to take
three months to complete from the date of commissioning.

We wish to commission a team to carry out an assessment of the potential physical and cultural options for future use of the Old High, Inverness.

Background

In 2021 the Session for the joint congregation of the Old High (St Stephen's) Church and St Stephen's Church decided to close the Old High for worship whilst keeping St Stephen's open. The Old High was put up for sale by Church of Scotland in 2022. The Church of Scotland agreed a sale in principle but the sale fell through. The Old High was recently put on the market again.

A group of local residents have submitted a proposal to register The Old High Inverness as a SCIO with a view to acquiring and securing an appropriate viable future for the building.

The Old High is of international importance. It was built on a prominent mount beside the River Ness, the site of Columba's first preaching to the Picts. The intriguing under-lying archaeology of the site is unexplored. The main body of the building is late-Georgian and Victorian and the tower is medieval. During and after Culloden it was a prison for the Jacobites, some of whom were executed here. It has been the Civic Church of Inverness. It has housed the Cameron Highlander colours and many other memorials. It has great significance for overseas families with Highland roots. The Old High has a dramatic interior with a high roof and gallery lit by high-quality stained-glass windows and echoes to the sounds of a Father Willis Organ. It is a Grade A Listed building.

The Old High SCIO intend to ensure that the story of the Old High is told and continues to unfold through active use of the building. Achieving this will bring lasting benefits to the local and wider community through cultural and educational events, training opportunities and job creation. The Old High has an exciting past and can also have an exciting future.

<https://www.facebook.com/savetheoldhighinverness>

Website [SAVE THE OLD HIGH](#)

The Commission

We are looking for a consultancy team to carry out a viability study for the Old High Inverness. The purpose of the study is to enable The Old High Inverness SCIO to make an informed decision about whether to pursue the acquisition of the building, and to support applications for funding thereafter. Possible funders might include, but not be restricted to, the Architectural Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, the Scottish Land Fund and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Specifically, we require:

1. An assessment of the fabric of the building to identify any risks, repair needs, ongoing maintenance requirements, and improvements necessary. Particular attention may be needed in relation to the roof, the tower, the sub-floor, wiring, drainage and IT/telecoms. An earlier limited survey was done in 2018 and we can provide access to this report. The assessment will need to include outline costs for the work that will be required. Consultants are also required to comment on the likelihood (and cost) of needing specialist input at the next stage, especially in terms of a bat survey, asbestos assessment, rot, and structural movement.
2. A preliminary heritage statement including appraisal of the historic and cultural importance of the building to different interest groups. This is likely to require specialist input on the archaeology of the site. This will require consultation with Historic Environment Scotland, Highland Council planners and other key stakeholders.
3. Identification and engagement with relevant interest groups or “communities”, for example Inverness residents, the business community, young people, artists or historical societies to indicate potential cultural, community and supporting commercial uses for the building.
4. A preliminary assessment of physical development needs and options to meet the above purposes, e.g. for catering, sanitation, specialist equipment, acoustics, access and circulation.
5. A preliminary appraisal of possible future development paths sketching out options for phasing and timelines, the physical changes and organisational structures which might be required.
6. A detailed report on the short-term development options to permit a viable early occupation and use of the building, for example immediate repair and maintenance works, the employment of staff, the provision of temporary toilets etc. Including an estimation of capital costs and running costs (which will require an indicative energy assessment).
7. A detailed business plan for the first five years.

Outputs

The following outputs are required:

- A detailed architectural appraisal with suggested works, phasing, and costs.
- Community and stakeholder consultation report.
- An options appraisal.
- A five-year business plan (draft and then final version).
- A mapping of likely timescales of the regulatory issues and processes.

All documents must be provided initially in draft form before finalisation. One paper copy of each document is required, along with an electronic copy. Any survey data will also be made available to the SCIO.

Methodology

We welcome proposals from the consultants as to how they would carry out the work to deliver the elements identified above. The attached appendices should be used by the consultants as a *starting point* for the potential uses of the building. It is important that a degree of imagination is shown in both the uses to be considered and any design elements.

An early stage of the actual contract should be detailed discussion with the SCIO. We expect the consultant to provide progress reports and maintain regular contact with the SCIO. We would expect to be involved in any public engagement events.

It is expected that as part of the tender, a clear outline of the consultation process will be set out with an initial indication of agencies and individuals who would be approached.

We expect to review any community or stakeholder surveys prior to their being launched. Stakeholder engagement must include, as a minimum, the following organisations:

- The SCIO and other former congregation of the Church (probably including the Church Session and Presbytery).
- The Cameron Highlanders.
- Relevant Highland Council Departments.
- Relevant community interest groups (as discussed above).

All work should be carried out to a high standard. We would like consultants to indicate how they will mitigate the key risks in completing the work on time.

We would like references for at least two recent pieces of relevant work, for each element of the consultant team where this includes more than one business/organisation. Given the nature of the building, a heritage-accredited architect is an essential element of the consultancy team, and they must work to RIAS Standard. Given that this is a Category A listed building, consultants should be aware that HES and funding agencies e.g. AHF will require an architect with advanced heritage accreditation. We will wish to see evidence among the team of an understanding of the area, the building and its significance at a national level, and the wider local context.

Contract management

The work needs to be completed in 12 weeks from the date of commissioning.

The final report shall be submitted to The Old High Inverness SCIO.

The anticipated indicative budget is in the order of £25,000 to include all expenses and VAT. The contract will be let by The Old High SCIO. **The contract will be subject to The Old High SCIO securing funding. We anticipate we will know whether funding has been secured in three months from selection of a lead consultant.**

Payment will be in three stages – 1/3 upon satisfactory completion of the architectural assessment and community/stakeholder consultation, 1/3 upon satisfactory completion of the options appraisal, and the final 1/3 upon satisfactory completion of all works.

The evaluation will be managed on a day-to-day basis for The Old High Inverness SCIO by Chris Lewcock.

Award criteria

A proposal for undertaking the work should include:

- a detailed methodology for undertaking the different elements of the work.
- an outline of the internal responsibilities and liaisons.
- details of the consultancy team, together with experience of the contractor and staff members in carrying out similar projects. The project manager/lead contact should be identified.
- the allocation of days between members of the team and by task, along with day rates.
- a short project plan with timescales for carrying out the project.
- the overall cost for the work, including all expenses and VAT.
- at least two references of recent work for each business/organisation in the consultancy team.

Proposals should be submitted by email to Chris Lewcock at info@oldhighinverness.co.uk

Proposals submitted will be assessed by The Old High Inverness SCIO against the following questions:

- To what extent does the proposal demonstrate an understanding of the issues (including the historic value of The Old High and social values) related to this brief?
- To what extent are the methodology and methods appropriate to the requirements set out in this brief?
- What degree of experience does the bidder demonstrate in order to successfully complete the work?
- How well has the bidder structured a team in order to successfully manage the contract and deliver the required work to the budget and timetable required?

Procurement process

The procurement timetable will be:

Proposal return deadline of six weeks from the date of the call for submissions.

A panel of The Old High Inverness SCIO Board will consider the written submissions and may decide to invite one or more or none of the bidders to make a presentation and/or be interviewed before a final decision.

Proposals should be addressed to The Old High Inverness SCIO and sent by email to Chris Lewcock at info@oldhighinverness.co.uk by 17.00 on Friday 30 May 2025.

Bidders will be advised of the outcome as soon as possible after a decision has been made.