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*Scottish Life*

**Scottish life**  
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**Ibrox inquest**  
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# THE SCOTSMAN

## Do not leave history to rot, Scots heritage chiefs warned

◆ HES facing tough choices over iconic sites such as Fort George

Alison Cairns  
 Heritage Correspondent

Scotland's national heritage body has been told it must continue to protect lesser-visited historic properties and not leave them "to rot" amid concerns over a bold new plan which could lead to a loss of investment in some sites and others left to naturally decay in the landscape.

Historic Environment Scotland has launched a strategy for the future management of the 300 properties it runs on behalf of Scottish ministers, as the organisation faces growing pressures over rising visitor numbers, accelerated deterioration of monuments caused by climate change, increased costs and a lack of traditional skills to maintain its assets.

Dr David Mitchell, director of

cultural assets at HES, said that "emotional and difficult decisions" had to be taken over the properties, with the strategy stating that "not all sites are equally important" and that "it may not be possible or necessary for us to be the custodians of a place forever".

An major exercise is now under way to measure the "significance" of HES sites, which will no longer be valued solely on their historic and cultural value but also their worth in economic, social and environmental terms. Management plans will then be drawn up for each property.

The "big hitter" sites such as Edinburgh Castle, Urquhart Castle and Stirling Castle are unlikely to be affected given the revenues they raise, which then support the rest of the HES portfolio, but the

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**Dame Jilly Cooper**

February 21, 1937 – October 5, 2025

Tributes have been paid by numerous figures – including the Queen – to the best-selling author Dame Jilly Cooper, who has died suddenly at the age of 88 following a fall  
 Full story, page 11

Renewables must 'equal pace of 70s North Sea boom'

Martyn McLaughlin

The transition to renewable energy must aspire to the "pace of progress" during the first North Sea oil boom, according to the governor of the Bank of England.

In a keynote speech to Scotland's Global Investment Summit, Andrew Bailey heralded the "exciting" opportunities in the country, and said it was vital to match the "efficiency of

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Concerns after fraction of funds given to shipyard

Alistair Grant

SNP ministers have been told to stop making "excuses" after it emerged just £570,000 out of a promised £14.2 million has been committed to the Ferguson Marine shipyard so far.

Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes published the figures in a letter to a Holyrood committee following

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◆ Many female Fortune 500 chief executives played sport but the 'gender play gap' remains, writes Carol Chandler-Thompson



In recent months, women's sport has enjoyed a game-changing surge in popularity. In September, the Women's Rugby World Cup Final drew a peak UK audience of 5.6 million, with a record-breaking 81,885 fans in the stadium. Before that, in July, the Women's Euro 2025 Final was the most-watched UK TV moment of the year. The conversation around women's sport is undergoing a welcome revolution. And yet, as Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Week kicks off, a gender 'play gap' still exists for young girls.

A Women and Equalities Committee report last year stated that inequalities between activity levels of boys and girls at school persist. More boys than girls spend at least an hour being physically active each day. Recent research shows that girls aged 11 to 18 miss out on 280 million hours of sport annually compared to boys.

Other figures confirm the reality witnessed daily in schools: The universal interest in sport seen in primary years suffers a severe drop-off among girls when puberty hits. A Scottish Health Survey revealed that adherence to physical activity guidelines is lowest in the 13-to-15 age group. Just 12 per cent of Scottish girls aged 15 meet physical activity standards.

A key part of the problem is also systemic – a dominant focus on competitive team sport can alienate those who are more drawn to recreational physical activity that is non-competitive. The competitive environment can actively drive young girls away at key points during adolescence.

Competitive sport offers huge benefits. It fosters a spirit of teamwork, resilience, determination and leadership too – it's no coincidence that a Deloitte survey showed that 80 per cent of female Fortune 500 CEOs played sport in their formative years.

My 25-plus years in girls-only and co-ed education confirms that too often the system offers little reward or valued alternative to those girls who simply want to be active without the pressure of being 'elite'. Equal focus must be put on the value of physical activity for wellbeing. Research has shown that the adolescent who plays sport is also eight times more likely to be physically active at age 24, with lower rates of anxiety and depression.

For young girls, there are also still too many barriers, creating a widening gender play gap that starts younger than we think. Emerging evidence shows that playgrounds aren't always designed with girls in mind. As early as



## The message that sport is for boys damages girls' careers

age five, boys can dominate open spaces. Physically active, stronger boys often dominate the central part of the school yard for football, leaving girls on the periphery.

Twenty-nine per cent of girls say boys' teams get priority booking for pitches and facilities, and girls' teams are often relegated to inconvenient time slots, leftover spaces and inferior equipment – leading many to disengage by the age of 11, according to new research.

The implicit message is that boys sport is more important. This is why, in 2024, the Scottish Government proposed that co-educational schools introduce time slots for girls to use sports equipment to ensure equality of access.

A further barrier is also seen in practical issues, such as how uniform can impact on body image. A Cambridge University study linked school uniform policies to students getting less exercise, as skirts and dresses are impractical for active play.

Finally, there is also a structural bias, what Baz Moffat, a thought leader in female sport and health, calls the "male-shaped system". The good news here is that high-profile men are now using their platform to champion equality.

Primary school girls often participate in sport but participation rates fall off dramatically in the 12-to-15 age group

Andy Murray is a crucial example of a mainstream voice addressing inequalities in funding and coverage.

At St George's School, we balance performance with participation and enjoyment, maintaining high-quality competitive teams while equally supporting the non-elite pathways. We are seeing progress by valuing collective fun and enjoyment of physical activity.

In Primary 3, a 'FUNdamentals Club' focuses purely on encouraging girls to be active, not competitive. The fastest growing girls' sport in our fixture list over the last five years has been cricket. This growth – from no club to clubs in every year group – was facilitated by Cricket Scotland festivals with inclusive games designed to ensure everyone is involved and welcomed.

Competitive sport is right for many girls, but we ensure every student finds a valued place by evolving our co-curricular programme to be inclusive. This includes introducing new activities like spin bike classes and running social sports clubs where senior girls can just play without being coached.

We have also removed practical barriers. Our primary-aged children

wear sports kit all-day on PE days, meaning valuable activity time is not lost to changing, and we have found that offering skorts (shorts and a skirt combined) as a PE option made girls feel more confident.

At age 18, we're proud to have 90 per cent of girls participating in sport and physical activity – way beyond the national average which sadly sees young girls dropping out many years earlier.

As an independent school, we are acutely aware that the opportunities we create cannot exist in a silo. A rising tide lifts all boats, which is why we work to extend our facilities and programmes to the wider community. Partnerships with City of Edinburgh Netball Association, Badminton Scotland and Lacrosse Scotland have made our spaces available to girls across the city, providing valuable role-modelling.

We regularly host local clubs and primary school clusters from both the state and independent sectors for sports events, ensuring our dual-excellence model can inspire and benefit hundreds of other girls.

Carol Chandler-Thompson is headteacher of St George's School in Edinburgh