

FRIENDS Annual Report 2025-26

It's been another busy and challenging year.

The purpose of the Friends is to support the Museum. The Friends main challenge has been to navigate this support amidst the Museums financial insecurity and management change. By January the Museum secured additional financial support from the Scottish Government as well as other sources. The museum moves ahead with repairs, renovations and working hard to secure a financial stability for the museum.

Governance

The Friend's committee has met regularly. Our activities are guided by our constitution and strategy paper. For most of the year we have operated without a treasurer. We have found a treasurer, Audrey Simpson. In February Kay Barratt resigned as secretary as did Jack Barnett as minutes secretary. We have operated with reduced capacities. Membership records have been updated and continues as a work in process. Thanks to Ray McGookin.

Support to the Museum

The special edition of Coalface (December 2025) was a collaborative edition with the Friends and Museum Trust. The aim of this special edition was to promote the Museum's fundraising programme. There was a wider distribution across Scotland including all MSPs and Midlothian Councillors.

Sponsorship - Fun Day 2025 - £500

Support to the museum garden - £250

Contributions in regular exchanges with museum staff concerning the museum developments.

Facilitated building local connections for museum staff to support understanding of local contexts.

Financial support agreed for fun day 2026 8th August £1375

A Friends representative is invited to attend the Museum Trust board meetings – Gael Robertson. In June 2025 the Friends strategy paper was presented and accepted by the Board.

A Friends representative is represented on the Collections Trust - Robbie Laird. Currently there are discussions ongoing to renovate the winding engine. The cage project remains to be developed.

In December 2025 agreement was reached for Friends benefits 10% in cafe and shop.

The Friends continue to work with Oaklea Elftstrom to convert her master's dissertation 'This Was a Mining Community. We've Lost the Mining': An Exploration of Justice in Scotland's Coal Transition into a book. This will be published by the Friends with production costs covered by the Friends (£1000) and the Mining Institute Scotland Trust (£2300). The book will contribute to the museums ongoing work of documenting experiences from mining communities within the context of the energy transition.

There has been another successful year for the Friday 'talks at eleven' with a series of interesting talks. Thanks to Jim Waugh. Thanks to Helen Kingwell for managing the teas and coffee.

Coalface has continued to be published quarterly. Thanks to Robbie Laird editing and producing Coalface.