

RSCDS Strategy 2025-2029

Introduction

The RSCDS Management Board (with a lot of help from members) has put together a new strategy to help guide our organisation over the next few years. Simply put, this is a plan that helps everyone—no matter our role—understand where we’re all headed and how we’re going to get there, together.

The main idea is to make sure our big-picture goals aren’t just words on paper but actually shape what we do every day. These goals are built around the four important aims that the Society’s Management Board previously agreed after member feedback. To make these aims more practical, in the plan we’ve broken them down into specific activities with achievable targets. Each of these targets is designed to be clear, realistic, and set within a certain time frame. We’ll also be keeping track of our progress so we know if anything is falling behind and we know what’s working and what might need a different approach. It should also help us decide which projects to tackle first and improve communication, both within the organisation and with the wider public.

When are we doing this?

Right now, this strategy mostly covers the first three years, from January 2025 to December 2027. We’ll take what we learn during this time to plan out the final two years—so by the end of 2027, we’ll have a detailed plan for the full five-year period, ending in December 2029.

How was the plan developed?

To get things started, members of the Management Board got together for a special planning session—an “Away Day”—on February 24th, 2024, where they took a good look at where we are now. This gave us a solid starting point for moving forward with the new strategy.

The first draft of the plan was shared with the RSCDS Management Board in February 2025, and after their feedback and approval, we wanted to hear what you thought too. So, in March, we sent the draft out to all members, along with a survey about the main parts of the plan. We also encouraged everyone to share their thoughts in their own words.

Plus, we held four Zoom meetings in March with members from around the world. The conversations were lively, and we picked up even more great ideas.

A big thank you!

Thanks to you, we got a ton of helpful input—over 1,250 comments, suggestions, and new ideas! We’ve now included your feedback in the final version of the plan, which you can read below. We’ll also be keeping track of how things are going and will keep you updated as we move forward.

The first table below shows the well-known missions and aims of the Society. We've also added a new vision for the future and a set of guiding principles.

Table 1: The Society's Mission, Vision, Aims and Principles

Mission	Growing a vibrant worldwide community of Scottish Dance and Music Object 1. To advance the education of the public in traditional Scottish country dancing and its music Object 2. To preserve and further the practice of traditional Scottish country dancing and its music
Aims	Aim 1. To promote Scottish Country Dance and related dance forms as a living tradition offering inclusive, healthy and exciting activities and enable enjoyable and high-quality Scottish country dance opportunities for all ages and abilities worldwide Aim 2. To build the capacity and networking of branches and other dance groups who share our aims, to help them grow and deliver SCD activity more effectively Aim 3. To maintain and develop high quality of teaching of Scottish country dance and music, including the development of dance and music for all ages and abilities Aim 4. Strengthen and improve the RSCDS, including its governance and long-term financial viability, to enable it to deliver on the above aims
Vision	A thriving Society building a global community of all ages, that celebrates the joy of Scottish country dancing and its music
Guiding principles	Overarching purpose – Building a worldwide, interconnected community of Scottish country dance and music Leadership and learning – Ensuring leadership and continuous learning for the Society and its members Preserving – Safeguarding the cultural heritage of Scottish country dance and music while evolving with the times Financial sustainability – Delivering adequate financial returns in the short and long term while generating positive value for the organization and society

SWOT analysis

A helpful next thing to do is make a SWOT analysis using the main points from the Management Board's initial review, like the one shown in Table 2 below. This kind of analysis shows what the organisation is doing well, where it could improve, what chances it has for growth, and any challenges it might face.

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Historic significance and associated traditions	1. Static number and limited range of members - high median member's age, lack of diversity
2. Charitable status	2. Website is dated and unwieldy
3. Worldwide organization with very active international branches	3. Inadequate visibility of the Society and its activities at Branch level
4. Impressive commitment from volunteers	4. Falling membership numbers at Scottish Branches in particular
5. Enthusiasm amongst teachers and group leaders to share ideas and practices	5. Branches and 12 Coates Crescent not working together to promote membership
6. Effective and proactive Management Board	6. Too technical approach to classes and teaching still prevalent in some places
7. Well trained teachers and musicians and motivated members who promote membership	7. Over reliance on membership income and events for financial sustainability
	8. Suboptimal relationship with affiliated groups
	9. Institutional resistance to change
Opportunities	Threats
1. Rebranding to become a more modern and relevant organisation	1. Financial sustainability under ,5 due to lack of external funding
2. Enhanced outreach activities to other dance groups, government, businesses and local communities (e.g partnerships with Ceilidh clubs)	2. Disaffected members and branches who are insufficiently informed about internal RSCDS activities
3. Giving branches information, assets and selling points: switch focus from what do I get from membership, to what does my membership do?	3. Lack of knowledge about Scottish country dancing among the general public
4. Training for branches on safeguarding	4. Changing social media environment
5. Publicising the social, physical and mental health benefits of SCD	5. General public sees promotion of RSCDS rather than highlighting SCD itself
6. Targeting specific audiences: empty nesters, children, young people, families, newly retired, returning dancers, university groups, schools	6. Scottish country dance seen as old fashioned and not seen as in vogue or "cool" by the general public
7. Clarify the benefits of membership and simplified membership sign up and renewal	7. Falling number of new musicians from external sources
8. Improve Facebook and Instagram presence and expand communication types (e.g. TikTok)	8. Magazine is not cost effective as hard copy due to external factors beyond our control
9. Offer wider range of classes: different timings, weekends, ceilidh to develop interest in SCD	9. Competition for leisure time – other dance types & social/leisure activities, busy lifestyles
10. Harnessing the power of being a charity	10. Declining levels of social interaction globally
	11. Fear of dancing or of appearing stupid

Beneficiaries & Stakeholders

One important part of assessing an organisation is figuring out who benefits from its work and who else is involved. “Beneficiaries” are the people who actually receive the organisation’s products or services. “Stakeholders” are groups or individuals who can really influence how well the organisation does. You can see the beneficiaries and stakeholders for the RSCDS listed in Table 3.

Table 3: RSCDS Beneficiaries and Stakeholders

Beneficiaries	Stakeholders
RSCDS branches and members	RSCDS volunteers
Affiliated groups	Linked groups and non-member dancers
RSCDS event attendees	Donors
Teachers and musicians	Scottish Government (Scottish Culture, Health and Social Care Directorates and Education Scotland)
School pupils, university and college students	Our Royal Patron
Recipients of RSCDS funding	Friends of the Society
RSCDS staff	Wider Scottish Society and diaspora
Clients with health needs	Tourists
Website and social media visitors	Regulators – OSCR and HMRC

Strategic Aims and objectives

The RSCDS’s plan for 2025 to 2029 is organized into main aims and specific targets, which you can see in Table 4 below. Some of these targets were decided during our Management Board’s Away Day, while others were created to address important points from our strengths and weaknesses review. For each goal, we explain how it connects to this review. Next to each goal, we list the specific steps or activities we’ll take and how we’ll measure success. Finally, the last column shows who is in charge of each task, whether it’s an individual, a committee, or a working group.

The plan includes the development of a number of new resources, initiatives and toolkits for use by branches. The need for them was clear from the members’ survey comments.

Table 4: RSCDS Strategic Aims and Objectives

Table 4: Presentation of RSCDS Aims and Objectives	Activities		
	Description	Performance measure/Target value or date	Responsible person(s)
Overarching Mission Statement: To advance the education of the public in Scottish country dancing and its music and to preserve and further the practice of traditional Scottish country dancing and its music			
Overarching vision statement: A thriving Society with a growing and active membership whereby generations come together to enjoy Scottish country dancing			
Aim 1: To promote Scottish country dance (SCD) and related dance forms as a living tradition offering inclusive, healthy and exciting activities and enable enjoyable and high-quality Scottish country dance opportunities for all ages and abilities worldwide			
Objective 1.1: Encourage and enable the Society at all levels to be more outward-facing (This objective addresses Opportunities Nos. 1 and 2 as well as Threats Nos. 3,4,5 and 9)	Creation of a specific outreach strategy for the Society	Draft document by 3Q 2025	Chair and Chair-Elect
	Develop a list of prospective target organisations, local businesses, government entities, international institutions, embassies or other stakeholders.	Draft list by 4Q 2025/20 high priority targets	Chair and Chair-Elect
	Engage with international branches to develop an appropriate list of such targets outside the U.K.	2Q 2026	Chair and Chair-Elect
	Develop a plan which rebrands or re-imagines the Society as a more modern and relevant organization by: ▪ Highlighting the applicability and benefits of SCD and its music to a wide range of ages and abilities, ▪ Expressing the joy, fun and community aspects of SCD ▪ Dispelling its current old-fashioned image ▪ Modernising communication language	Plan by 3Q 2025 Launch plan in 4Q 2025 or 1Q 2026 % increase in younger members: 18 – 50/5% per annum	Chief Operating Officer, Management Board, 12 Coates Crescent staff and outside third-party contractor with input from interested members
Objective 1.2: Promote the health and well-being aspects of Scottish dance (This objective addresses Opportunity No. 5)	Record and disseminate webinar on the physical and mental health benefits of SCD and its music	Feb. 2025/posted on 3 platforms	Health Strategy Working Group, 12 Coates Crescent staff
	Document the East End of Glasgow beginners' class as a potential model of the social benefits of SCD (could be a case study appended to the toolkit)	4Q 2025/80% of attendees reporting benefit	Health Strategy Working Group
	Design toolkit on the health benefits of SCD for use by branches, customized to GPs, physiotherapists etc.	4Q 2025/suite of 10 to 15 resource materials	Health Strategy Working Group
	Follow-up on target outreach contacts with other relevant organisations and individuals in the U.K. and internationally	End 2025/7 key targets	Health Strategy Working Group, interested branches

Table 4: Presentation of RSCDS Aims and Objectives	Activities		
	Description	Performance measure/Target value or date	Responsible person(s)
Objective 1.3: To enable enjoyable and high-quality Scottish country dance opportunities for all ages and abilities worldwide (This objective addresses Strength No. 5, Weakness No. 4 as well as Opportunities Nos. 2, 6 and 9 and Threats Nos. 3, 6 and 9)	Create toolkit for branches and teachers on how to optimise their class and dance offerings to meet criteria of sociability, inclusivity, sense of community, fun atmosphere, supporting and welcoming teacher, avoidance of too technical approach to instruction	End 2026	Education and Training, Membership Services and Youth Services Committees. (This Toolkit will also serve as a template for all RSCDS Toolkits)
	Reinvigorate and expand the range of events offered by the Society to target new audiences and contribute to the rebranding of the organisation: e.g. Dance Weekends, Family Day, Pride Day, Inter-college Ceilidh. Also building on the very successful international events such as Southern Fling, Blue Ridge Scottish Dance School	End 2026/2 – 3 new events	Events Working Group
	Promote networking and outreach to the Scottish Government, as well as groups and professionals relevant to young dancers building on Scottish Schools Working Group activities	4Q 2025	Youth Services Committee, Scottish Schools Working Group
Aim 2: To build the capacity and networking of branches and other dance groups who share our aims, to help them grow and deliver SCD activity more effectively			
Objective 2.1: Facilitate efficient two-way communication between Coates Crescent and branches (This objective addresses Opportunities Nos. 3, 4, 6 and 9 as well as Weaknesses Nos. 1 and 4 and Threats No. 2, 3, 10 and 11)	Establish the Membership Working Group with remit to investigate and refine the Society's offering to members	Feb 2025	Membership Services Committee
	Expand Zoom calls with branches in the U.K. and internationally, including Management Board members	Ongoing/2 calls per year	Chief Operating Officer and Management Board
	Give branches toolkits of information, assets and selling points: switch focus from what do I get from membership, to what does my membership do? (Explain the value of Membership clearly and ensure international relevance)	2Q 2026/pilot each toolkit at 3 branches	Membership Services Committee & Membership Working Group, interested branches
	Promote the formation of branch networks within specific geographic regions (e.g., East Midlands, Southwest England) to facilitate collaboration and events.	Ongoing/2 networks per annum from 2026	Branches Membership Services Committee, interested branches
	Incorporate the role of branches within the Society aims	1Q 2026	Constitution and Governance Panel, interested branches

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	Description	Performance measure/Target value or date	Responsible person(s)
	Provide a toolkit of training materials to branches and affiliated groups on safeguarding, taking account of both U.K. and international regulations	1Q 2026	Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer, Youth Services Convenor
	Develop a toolkit for branches on how to increase class attendance and membership through advertising (e.g. social media, partnerships, outreach), including case studies that share best practices on recruiting and retaining new members / branch committee members	2Q 2026/5 key mechanisms	Membership Services and Events and Marketing Manager, interested branches
	Develop a toolkit of guidance for branches on how to increase engagement with local communities and organizations	1Q 2026	Chief Operating Officer and Chair-Elect, interested branches
	Evaluate degree of toolkit and uptake of other initiatives	-Nos. of each toolkit adopted by branches/10 per annum -%. of each toolkit considered successful/50%	Membership Services Committee
	Create the Scottish Commission to investigate how to address specifically Scottish branches and their falling membership numbers, including possible merging of branches	2Q 2025	Scottish Commission Chair: William Williamson
	Group will initially formulate areas for discussion with Branches.	2Q 2025	Scottish Commission
	Chair of the group will visit every branch in Scotland over a twelve-month period beginning June 2025.	2Q 2025 – 2Q 2026/40 branches	William Williamson
	A report will be prepared for the Management Board, June 2026.	2Q 2026	Scottish Commission
Objective 2.2: Promote networking and collaboration among branches (This objective addresses Opportunity No. 7, Weakness No. 8, as well as Threat No. 2)	Continue and expand Zoom calls between Chief Operating Officer and branches worldwide by introducing joint sessions and an annual virtual Branch Conference at which branches can share experience	Ongoing: 1 call per quarter Annual Virtual Conference from 2027	Chief Operating officer
Objective 2.3: To engage or integrate better with affiliated groups (This objective addresses weakness No. 8)	Investigate Society's model for engagement with affiliated groups. Depending on model, improve or reconfigure the Society's offering to affiliated and linked groups: e.g. alternative membership category	Report available by 2Q 2026 4Q 2026	Membership Services Committee, interested affiliated groups

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	Description	Performance measure/Target value or date	Responsible person(s)
Aim 3: To maintain and develop high quality of teaching of Scottish country dance and music, including the development of dance and music for all ages and abilities			
Objective 3.1: More communication with teachers to provide information and development (This objective addresses Strengths Nos. 5 and 7, Opportunities Nos. 2, 4 and 9, as well as Threats Nos. 6, 10 and 11)	Provide new teacher training, exam process and Continual Teacher Development (CTD) opportunities and resources	Introduction throughout 2026	Education and Training Committee and 12 Coates Crescent staff
	Maintain effective communication with teachers and instructors worldwide to inform them on training programmes, teaching resources and support networks	Ongoing	Education and Training Committee
	Maintain effective communication with teachers, staff and volunteers supporting dance in Universities and Schools, updating on available resources, support and educational materials	Ongoing	Youth Services Committee
	Encourage dedicated branch Ceilidh classes where appropriate and break down barriers between dance forms: Partnerships with Ceilidh/Reeling clubs	2026/15 branches participating	Membership Services and Education and Training Committees, interested branches
Objective 3.2: Promote the use of live music (This objective addresses Threat No. 7)	Run workshops for a wide range of musicians (including classical musicians and musicians playing for other forms of dance activities) to engage and familiarize them with SCD music	1 workshop per quarter from 3Q 2025	Music director
	Depending on the success of such U.K. workshops, consideration will be given to running some internationally	2027 onwards	Music Director
Objective 3.3: Provide SCD music in digital form to branches and members	Explore the best platform for disseminating SCD music digitally	End 2025	Music Director
Aim 4: Strengthen and improve the RSCDS, including its governance and long-term financial viability, to enable it to deliver on the above aims			
Objective 4.1: Ensure the RSCDS follows best practice in charity governance, its management structure is fit for purpose and its decision-making processes are effective This objective addresses Strength 6, Weaknesses Nos. 3 and 5 and Threat No. 2)	Conduct review of current mission, vision, aims, governance practices, policies and procedures as well as roles and remits of Management Board, Executive team, committees, Working Groups, panels and Coates Crescent staff	Completion by 1Q 2026	Constitutional and Governance panel, Management Board, Executive Team
	Implement improvements based on abovementioned review	3Q 2026	Management Board, Executive Team

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	Description	Performance measure/Target value or date	Responsible person(s)
	Ensure the RSCDS adheres to best practice in relation to corporate governance and that it has organisational structures, policies and practices which support effective decision making in line with charity law, legislation and agreed Society arrangements.	Completion by 3Q 2026	Constitutional and Governance panel
	Review existing corporate governance processes including The Articles and Rules and Procedures and governance policies to ensure that they are consistent and support the strategic direction and corporate decision making of the Society.	Completion by 3Q 2026	Constitutional and Governance panel
	Review organisational structures and the roles and remits of the Society groups/committees, up to and including the Management Board, to ensure they work effectively in delivering the Society's strategy and plans, functioning within prevailing financial limits.	Completion by 3Q 2026	Management Board/Executive Team
	Seek agreement to the proposed outcomes from the above reviews and look to implement the outcomes	4Q 2027	Management Board, Executive Team, Constitutional and Governance panel
	Replace website and Customer Relationship Management system	2Q 2026/website and CRM	Chief Operating Officer, 12 Coates Crescent staff
Objective 4.2: More diversified income streams (This objective addresses Strength No. 2, Weakness No. 10, Opportunity Nos. 2, 6, 7 and 11 as well as Threats Nos. 1 and 8)	Rent out available lower floor area of Coates Crescent	1Q 2025	Chief Operating Officer
	Optimize utilization of 2025 expected legacies	2Q 2025	Chief Operating Officer
	Develop alternative membership categories and associated fees	Nov. 2025	Membership Working Group
	Hire a qualified fundraiser onto Coates Crescent staff	End 2Q 2025/income: 2026: £20K 2027: £40 – 60K 2028: £80 – 80K	Chief Operating Officer
	Capitalise on alternative membership categories to enhance income	1Q 2027	Membership Working Group, Chief Operating Officer
	Implement new opportunities for the Society to receive donations and grants as a charitable entity	End 2025/2 mechanisms	Chief Operating Officer, Finance Manager and Fundraiser

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	Description	Performance measure/Target value or date	Responsible person(s)
	Migrate the Magazine to be predominantly digital	2Q 2026/£30K savings per annum	Editorial team, Membership Services Committee
	Review and reconsider shop sale offerings and avenues	4Q 2025	Membership Services Committee, Administrative Officer
	Investigate the offerings of Summer School (e.g. half week option) to attract more and more varied participants and increase revenue	3Q 2025	Events Working Group, Schools Subcommittee
	Create a Working Group to examine the long-term future of Coates Crescent and other options for housing HQ and potential AGM, Autumn Gathering, class and dance space	End 2026	Management Board
	Make decision on the future of Coates Crescent	End 2027	Management Board