



A Cultural Strategy for Aberdeenshire Council 2018-2028

From mountain to sea

A CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL 'WORKING TOGETHER FOR FAIRER BETTER LIVES'

A foreword from Councillor Gillian Owen, chair of Aberdeenshire Council's Education and Children's Services Committee.

This is an exciting time for Cultural development in Aberdeenshire, as we recognise and celebrate the immense diversity across our communities and the many opportunities that brings. This strategy for real change will be made possible through the strong partnerships between Aberdeenshire Council, our key partners, third sector organisations and the dedicated and passionate people in our communities.

INTRODUCTION

The word 'culture' means many things to many people, but it touches us all; whether reading a book, watching a movie, visiting the theatre or a museum, setting up your own Youtube channel or joining a local knitting group. Each one of these activities, and countless more, have one thing in common - they allow us all to engage in something we enjoy, which helps us to continue learning throughout life, and which can inspire us.

The strategy recognises how valuable the cultural sector can be in supporting economic development, from cultural tourism, through the creative industries, to creative learning opportunities. Cultural activities can also be the most effective tool for supporting the most vulnerable in our communities, promoting social connections and achievement.

Aberdeenshire has the richest variety of cultural resources – local heritage societies, contemporary artists, traditional musicians, Doric culture, crafts workers, writers – the list is endless. This strategy is focused on supporting individual creators and producers, and partner organisations, and making the most of the council's own services, to ensure the most effective impact on the council's priorities, particularly improving the health & wellbeing of everyone. In doing this, it recognizes the natural assets for which Aberdeenshire is rightly well known, including its built and natural heritage and the interaction with land use planning.

In delivering this strategy and its outcomes we are driven by Aberdeenshire Council priorities. The key priorities, identified as being most relevant to Cultural services, through the engagement process, are:

- **Provide the best life chances for all our children and young people by raising levels of attainment and achievement.**
- **Encourage active lifestyles and promote well-being with a focus on obesity and mental health**
- **Support the delivery of the Health & Social Care Strategic Plan**

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WHAT IS CULTURE?

For the purposes of this strategy we include all cultural activities and services taking place in Aberdeenshire. For Aberdeenshire Council this includes; Libraries and Information Services, Theatres and performances, Arts Development and Media Unit, Museums, Macduff Marine Aquarium and our Built Heritage.

We also include groups and cultural activities provided by the voluntary and private sectors, acknowledging the incredible diversity of provision and activities that exists across the whole of Aberdeenshire.

Equally important is the wealth of key partners, stakeholders, artists and performers who produce and provide cultural programmes, as we strive to develop connected and cohesive communities through culture. This strategy also recognises the huge and valued contribution that Aberdeenshire's schools make to our cultural life.

WHAT ARE THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES?

For the purposes of this strategy the 'Creative Industries' uses the government's definition of 13 distinct industries, which are; advertising, architecture, art and antiques, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, and TV and radio.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2016 Aberdeenshire's population was 262,190. The population has gradually been increasing since 2001. Households in Aberdeenshire are likely to increase from 108,000 in 2014 to 135,000 by 2039.

On average Aberdeenshire residents are likely to be employed and economically active, live longer and healthier lives and experience less crime than residents of Scotland as a whole. They are also likely to remain relatively healthy for a greater part of their lives. However Aberdeenshire is an area of contrasts with areas of deprivation in which 13% of children live in poverty, 39% of households live in fuel poverty and 6% of the total population are categorised as income deprived. These contrasts, predominantly in the North of the district, present challenges and opportunities around developing Cultural Services over the next ten years.

Other challenges considered in developing this strategy are around supporting the increases in population at either end of the age spectrum, the challenges of rural transport and, in some areas of Aberdeenshire, variable digital connectivity which can create barriers to economic opportunities, contribute to isolation and have a negative impact on services for an increasingly ageing population living in remote areas. In

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tackling these challenges this strategy recognises that cultural participation is a uniquely effective tool for bringing people together and building stronger communities.

Aberdeenshire's child population is also above the Scottish national average and growing steadily with a predicted rise of 13.8% of 0-15 year olds between 2012 and 2037. Aberdeenshire is committed to giving our children the best start in life, with creative activities being a vital part of this.

Families are increasing generally, with inward migration accounting for part of this growth, including families from Eastern Europe moving to work in the district in local industries. There is evidence locally of the valuable contribution cultural activities makes in promoting community cohesion and the strategy commits the service to supporting and celebrating the diversity of cultures and lifestyles within Aberdeenshire.

In Aberdeenshire, the percentage of school leavers moving in to further education, training or employment is 95.5% which is 1.8% above the national average.

Aberdeenshire has a strong volunteer base with approximately 32% of adults in Aberdeenshire volunteering each year through formal volunteering. In addition to this are the 'informal' volunteers who help out at cultural activities, facilities, craft groups, events, community activities, social groups etc. performing a valuable social service in our communities.

Data from Visit Aberdeenshire shows that 1,332,000 people visited Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen in 2016, generating a visitor spend of £337m. 22% of visitors were from overseas and 36% stated History and Culture as their reason for visiting. These statistics show a real opportunity for cultural activities to contribute to Cultural Tourism in the North East.

Through the delivery of the strategy we will embrace the population changes and take into account the challenges of the geographical and economic differences to ensure a fair and equitable provision across Aberdeenshire.

HOW WE DEVELOPED THE STRATEGY

This strategy has been developed through an engagement process called "The Big Listen". We talked to:

- Elected members
- The public
- Local cultural and community organisations
- Public partners such as the NHS and the National Park
- National development agencies
- Staff

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As well as online engagement and paper surveys, two “Big Listen” events were also held across Culture and Sport facilities in Aberdeenshire. As a result some 5,440 comments were captured.

What we learned from this extensive engagement process has informed the strategic outcomes and actions which follow.

WHAT WE WILL DO

Strategic Outcome 1 – The Wider World

A Place known for our distinctive culture

- Our unique Doric culture will be promoted and celebrated.
- We will celebrate our places and people, such as; Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Thomas Blake Glover, Joan Eardley and Emeli Sandé
- We will work to support a national and international cultural profile for Aberdeenshire, including our built heritage.
- We will develop our collections and local history and provide digital access around the world.

Strategic Outcome 2 – Our Sense of Place

A Place where communities will be stronger and more connected.

- We will use culture to tackle inequalities and promote diversity in our communities.
- We will develop opportunities for people to come together to share, learn and create.
- We will help close the gap in attainment through targeted interventions using culture.
- We will support the promotion and protection of the natural and historic features that give our communities a sense of place and contribute to their identity.

Strategic Outcome 3 – Our Local Economies

A Place where our towns and villages are vibrant and thriving

- We will work with the economic development service and regional economic bodies to support a strong and diverse creative industry in the region, working with others to attract inward investment.
- We will support a thriving programme of performances, exhibitions, classes and events and adopt a fair but entrepreneurial approach to maximising income.
- We will use culture to help make Aberdeenshire a “must visit” tourist destination.
- We will support volunteering, modern apprenticeships, accredited learning and other initiatives to support people in to work.

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Strategic Outcome 4 – Health and Wellbeing

A Place where lives are enriched and where people are happier and healthier

- We will encourage and promote learning and literacy.
- We will work with healthcare providers to support programmes which promote good mental health and improve life chances.
- We will use cultural activity to help older people live rich and independent lives for longer.

HOW WILL WE DELIVERY THE STRATEGY?

- Through strong and meaningful cultural partnerships to maximise opportunity.
- Through focusing our resources to deliver the services our communities will need in the future; rationalising our estate and investing and developing venues and facilities.
- Through support to a strong and dynamic third and voluntary sector.
- Through ongoing engagement, across our communities, in the planning and delivery of services.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'VE SUCCEEDED?

- There will be an increase in people participating in, and benefiting from, cultural activity.
- The Council and its partners will develop detailed action plans with measurable outcomes, which will be reviewed annually.
- A detailed review of the success of this strategy will be undertaken in five years.



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IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE, OR BECOME INVOLVED IN DELIVERING ON ABERDEENSHIRE'S CULTURAL STRATEGY, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH...

This Cultural Strategy sees us embarking on a ten year journey. If you or your organisation can contribute to the success of the strategy, we would love to hear from you.