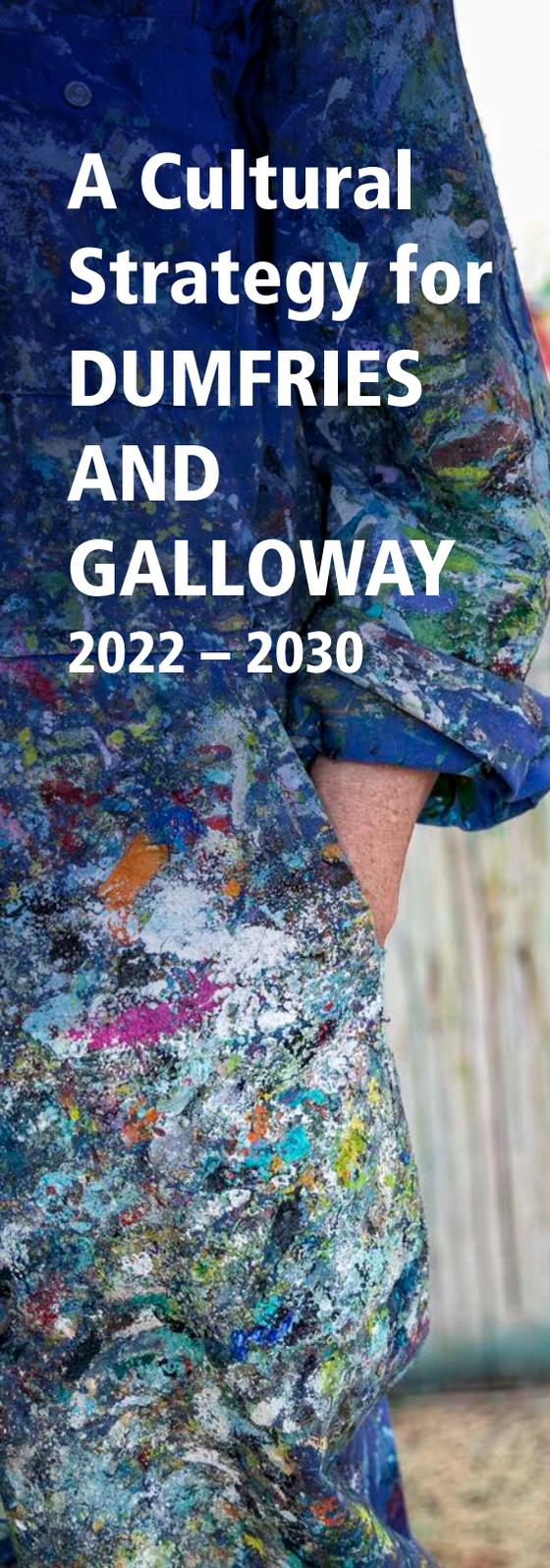
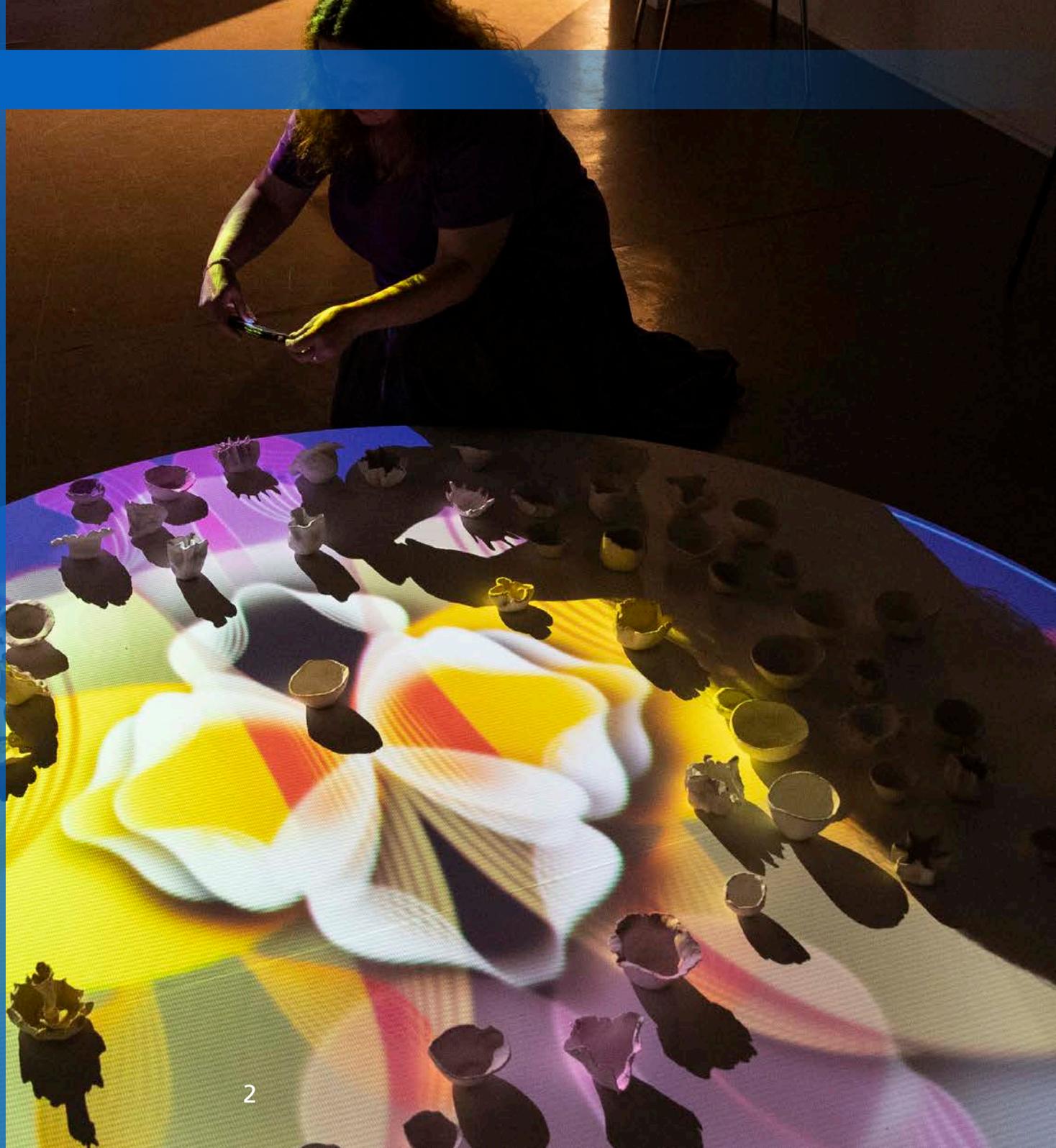


**A Cultural
Strategy for
DUMFRIES
AND
GALLOWAY
2022 – 2030**



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Foreword

“Scotland is a place where culture is valued, protected and nurtured. Culture is woven through everyday life, shapes and is shaped by society and its transformative potential is experienced by everyone. Scotland’s rich cultural heritage and creativity of today is inspired by people and place, enlivens every community, and is celebrated around the world.”

This is the vision laid out in the Culture Strategy for Scotland published in February 2020. In launching our own cultural strategy for Dumfries and Galloway, we are no less ambitious in our own vision for how culture and creativity will make a difference for people and places across our region over the next eight years.

We intend that by 2030 our region’s distinctive creativity, culture and heritage will have an international profile and be renowned for its contribution to the region’s economy and quality of life.

The strategy is built on extensive engagement with our region’s cultural sector and other key stakeholders, whose input has shaped its vision, aims and objectives. It is launched as we are emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic into a world economic uncertainty, widening inequalities and climate crisis. These challenges will require bold and innovative responses if we are to overcome them, and culture and creativity will have a vital role to play.

Through our strategy we will work with partners across the region’s creative cultural and heritage sector, and beyond, to make sure that Dumfries and Galloway achieves its full potential as a place where culture and creativity flourish, and wellbeing and prosperity, social, economic and environmental, thrive as a result.

By the end of the strategy period our expectation is that our region will be a place where everyone has a chance to participate freely in the cultural and creative life of our communities, and we will all be able to enjoy the benefits this brings us as individuals and our region as a whole.

We extend our thanks to all the voices that have contributed to the strategy, in particular our Cultural Strategy reference groups, and we look forward to seeing the strategy put into action by our new Cultural Partnership for Dumfries and Galloway.



Councillor Ian
Blake, Chair of
Communities
Committee



Councillor Jackie
McCamon,
Vice-Chair of
Communities
Committee



Introduction

Dumfries and Galloway: a place where culture, creativity, and heritage flourish.

This strategy sets out a bold vision and contains a road map to help achieve it. It's a statement of intent to empower and provide direction for all of us - young people, supporters, participants, creative and heritage practitioners, organisers, deliverers and funders.

Its purpose is to unlock the potential of culture, creativity and heritage to make a positive difference to people's lives in Dumfries and Galloway. It champions the role and positive contribution our sector makes to enhancing our physical health and wellbeing; strengthening educational opportunities for people of all ages; regenerating our communities and building cohesion within them; helping the region's economy to grow; and showcasing our region as a vibrant and culturally rich place to live or visit.

It seeks to influence and challenge how we do things. It encourages us to interrogate why we do what we do, so that we can do it better. It urges us to become smarter, collaborate more and continue to develop new partnerships, including those with non-cultural bodies, for public benefit.

This strategy reminds us that the culture, creativity and heritage of our region are important contributors to the cultural identity of Scotland. It has the ambition to grow the cultural footprint of the 148,290 people that live here in Scotland's third largest local authority area.

This strategy aims to inspire, to re-ignite confidence where it has waned, and encourage those already confident to flourish and go on to achieve even greater things.

It provides the framework for our culture, creativity and heritage sector to enhance its sustainability, and to continue to grow. It will support the next generation of cultural, creative and heritage practitioners and will widen and increase access so that more people and more communities benefit from the transformational power of culture, creativity and heritage.

This strategy aims to expand our culture, creativity and heritage sector's already significant contribution to our economy, but it also seeks to ensure that this contribution is acknowledged and valued.

In a nutshell, we encourage everyone involved or with an interest in the culture, creativity and heritage of our region, to sign up to this strategy's vision and help with the process of delivering its key objectives. By doing so, it will empower us to move forward together, and create the conditions in which Dumfries and Galloway's reputation as a place with an enviable quality of life, and vibrant cultural offer will be acknowledged across Scotland and beyond.

Dumfries and Galloway Cultural Strategy Reference Group



“a place where culture, creativity, and heritage flourish”



CASE STUDY

The Stove Network (TSN) is an arts and community organisation that has pioneered a Creative Placemaking approach in Southwest Scotland. Creative Placemaking is a community-led approach that uses creative activity to support collective decision-making and positive change for people and the places they live.

Operating a venue in the heart of Dumfries, which acts as a creative, community hub for the town, TSN works across the wider region through a creative placemaking network, 'WWDN'.

What We Do Now (WWDN) supports partnerships between artists and community organisations across the region, co-creating with communities to develop new projects, local plans, training, and enterprise. (www.whatwedonow.scot)

This strategy represents our region's commitment to enhancing the contribution that creativity, culture and heritage make to the health, wealth and wellbeing of Dumfries and Galloway.

The strategy is both a statement of confidence and intent.

It provides the framework to build upon our successes and learning. It's the start of a long-term commitment to enhance, widen and deepen the sector's contribution to the health, wealth and wellbeing of Dumfries and Galloway.

This strategy doesn't get side-tracked by making the case. The case has already been proven through extensive research undertaken across the world, evidencing the value and importance that culture has on society and individual lives.



What do we mean by culture?

In preparing this strategy we have deliberately taken a fully inclusive approach and set out to be as holistic as possible in recognising what constitutes culture, creativity and heritage. The aim is to champion them all equally, acknowledging that some may go beyond traditional definitions.

Culture, creativity and heritage activities are referenced throughout this strategy. These terms are used to capture the broadest interpretation of culture.



CASE STUDY

Upland provides a network for learning and sharing, offering opportunities and support to artists and makers whilst aiming to inspire and educate a wide range of audiences to participate in and be supportive of visual arts and crafts.

Upland's flagship event, Spring Fling Open Studios, enables artists and makers across the region to open their studio doors each year, welcoming visitors from far and wide. Forming a crucial part of our year-round programme, the event demonstrates our strong sense of place and fulfills our aim to highlight, celebrate and contribute to our unique region and its creative community.



How we got here



The development of this strategy began in 2018 when the Council's Communities Committee agreed a plan of action to fulfil the Council's commitment to *"introduce a Cultural Strategy to make sure it puts public resources to best use in supporting our important creative industries."*¹

In June 2019, the Council established a small project team, which included regional arts network DG Unlimited². The team established two reference groups consisting of representatives from the culture, creativity and heritage sector and members of the region's Community Learning and Development Partnership. Combined they have played a pivotal role in firstly guiding and informing the engagement phase, and subsequently the drafting and finessing of this strategy.

¹ [Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan, 2017 - 2022](#)

² [DG Unlimited](#) champions, advocates and supports the arts in every part of Dumfries and Galloway by working closely with artists, creative practitioners and stakeholders to provide a strong and independent voice for the region's creative sector.

434 people participated in the engagement process through a range of activities including an online questionnaire, focus groups, roadshow events in partnership with [Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway](#), in-depth one-to-one interviews, and sector specific discussion groups.

A Cultural Strategy Engagement Report³ was published in March 2020 but work on the strategy then paused because of the global public health crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

The project team reconvened in August 2021. DG Unlimited, in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council, conducted some further research during August and September 2021 to better understand the impact of the pandemic on the region's cultural and creative industries. These findings have been taken into consideration in the development of this strategy.

³ [Cultural Strategy for Dumfries and Galloway, Engagement Report, March 2020](#)

CASE STUDY

DGU is a membership organisation that provides a voice for Dumfries and Galloway's creative and cultural sector. We seek to help make Dumfries and Galloway the blueprint for excellence in rural arts.

Creatives Unlimited is contributing to this ambition by supporting creative practitioners and organisations to help themselves and each other; providing career and practice development opportunities; training; mentoring; guidance; resources, and networking events. All activities are designed around these themes:

Growing Leaders – nurturing existing and emerging creative leaders

Growing Ambition – stimulating artistic ambition and building capacity

Growing Visibility – increasing visibility of the sector's offer and impact



DG Unlimited

How the Strategy fits in

Dumfries and Galloway Council and its partners are committed to advancing equality of opportunity for all people within our community.

In delivering this strategy we will challenge the barriers that people face arising from discrimination and disadvantage in line with the nine protected characteristics identified within the Equalities Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Our work will be informed by our partners' Equalities Outcomes and the following regional strategies: Poverty and Inequality Strategy, Strategic Health Commissioning Plan, Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, and the COVID Recovery Plan.

The project team and reference groups considered a wide range of strategies, research and policy documents in developing this strategy which is closely aligned to the following key documents and initiatives:



- The [South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy](#) 2021-2030
- The [Dumfries and Galloway Major Festivals and Events Strategy](#) (2018-2021 and 2023-2026)
- [A Culture Strategy for Scotland](#): prepared by the Scottish Government
- The [Dumfries and Galloway Community Learning and Development Strategy](#)
- [Dumfries and Galloway Climate Emergency Action Plan](#)
- [Scotland's Economic Strategy](#): prepared by the Scottish Government
- Dumfries and Galloway [Regional Tourism Strategy](#) (2016-2020)
- [Scotland Outlook 2030 Responsible Tourism for a Sustainable Future](#): prepared by Scottish Tourism Alliance
- [South of Scotland Enterprise Operating Plan](#) (2021-2022)
- [Borderlands](#) Inclusive Growth Deal

CASE STUDY

Paragon is an inclusive arts charity that believes music and the arts have the power to transform lives. We use the arts as a tool to encourage socialisation, self-expression, and enhance confidence and wellbeing in people with additional support needs. The main elements of Paragon's programmes are participatory workshops, performances, and one-to-one mentoring.

In October 2022, Paragon hosted the region's first annual "All In" conference at the Catstrand, New Galloway. Its purpose was to raise the profile and awareness of inclusive practice across the region and create a stronger network of partners who can work together to improve access to arts activities and services for people with additional support needs.



The Strategy Vision

By 2030 Dumfries and Galloway's distinctive creativity, culture and heritage will have an international profile and be renowned for their contribution to the region's economy and quality of life.

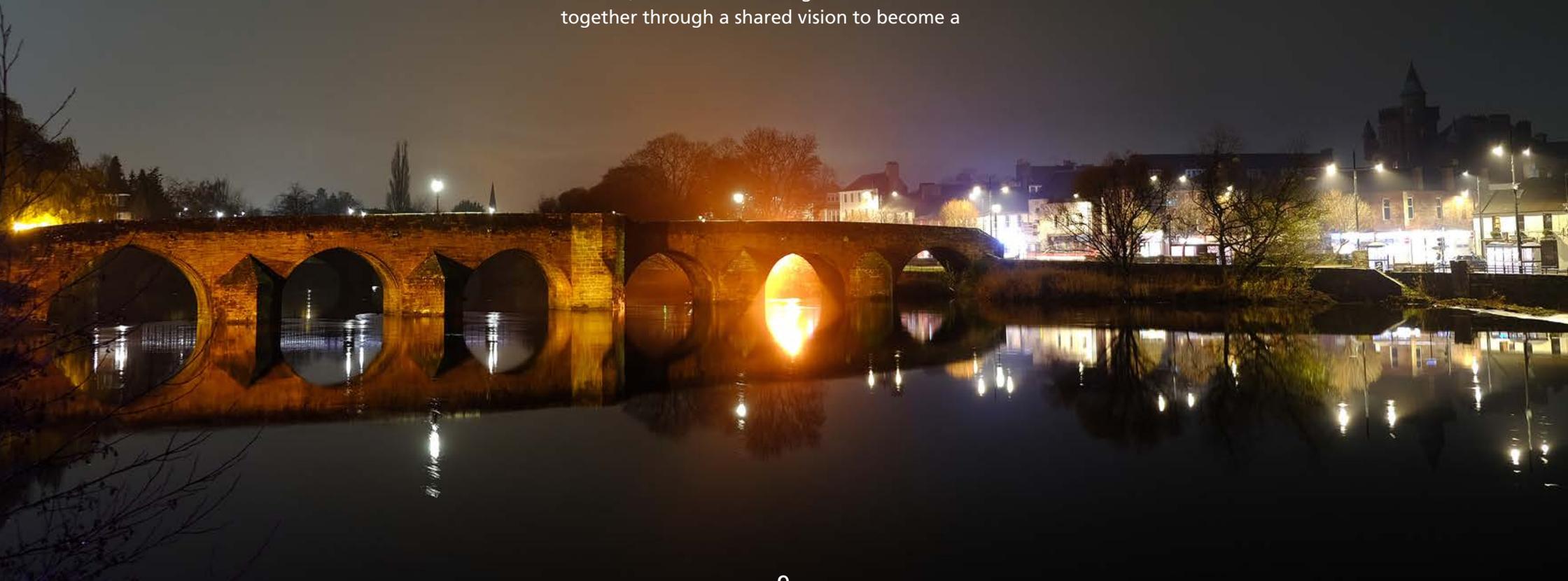
To achieve this aspirational vision this strategy lays the foundations for Dumfries and Galloway to achieve a national and international reputation as a place where creativity, culture and heritage are supported to flourish, and to make a positive difference for people and places across our region.

We seek to open doors, remove barriers and create a clear pathway for the creative, cultural and heritage sector to grow, develop and help make our region a better place to live, work and visit.

We aim to create an environment where our creative, cultural and heritage sector works together through a shared vision to become a

blueprint for world-class provision in a rural geography. Our region will speak with a unified voice while embracing our individual strengths and differences.

This strategy will help define a region that champions the value of creativity, culture and heritage, advocating how these can positively impact on our people and our places. Our region will be a place that supports our creative, cultural and heritage sector to be the best version of itself and ensures that it has an equal seat at any table.





Our Ambitions

The following three ambitions, and their subsequent objectives, have been formulated in response to what people told us was important to them through the engagement phase.

AMBITION 1: Our people

Our region will support creative and heritage practitioners to explore, grow and take risks in the pursuit of excellence. Dumfries and Galloway will be well-known for community-led cultural activity, where barriers to take part and enjoy culture are removed, and where people of all ages have access to creativity, culture and heritage to support their learning and wellbeing.

AMBITION 2: Our places

Places across Dumfries and Galloway will celebrate, preserve and promote our natural, built and living heritage, where culture shapes and transforms the areas we live in.

AMBITION 3: The difference we make

Our region will enable our cultural sector to work with others to create inclusive and sustainable growth in our local economies and enhance the wellbeing of our communities

Ambition 1: Our people

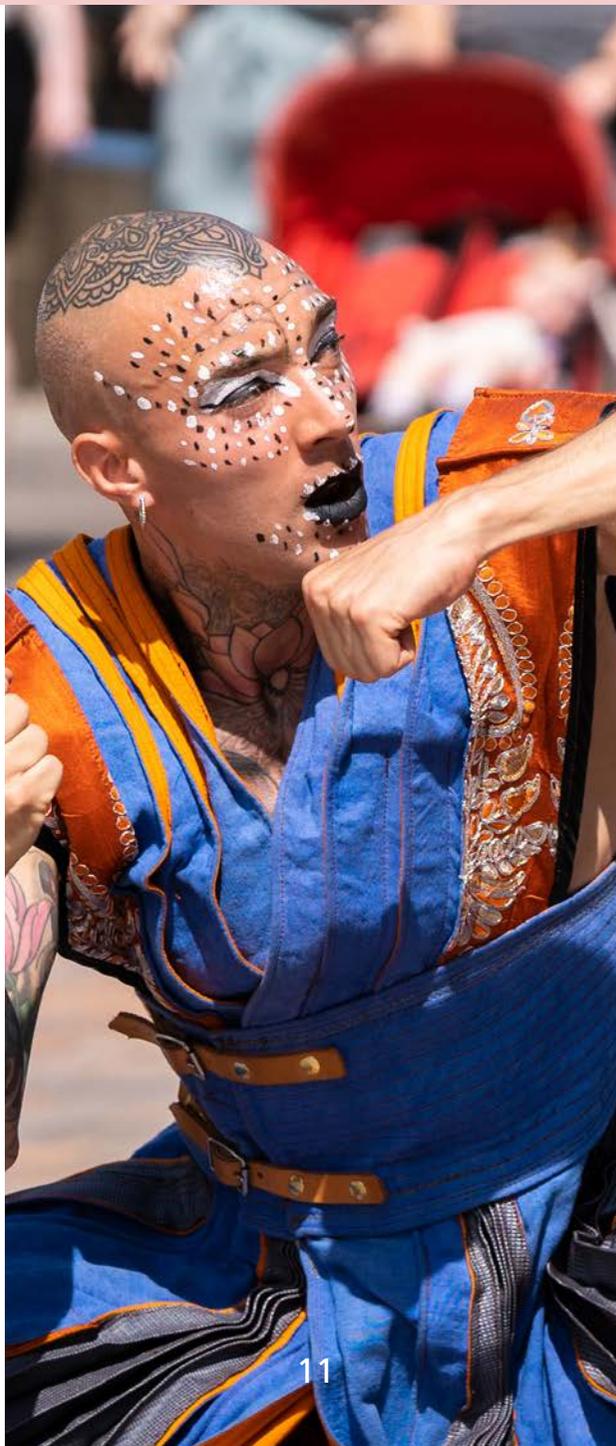
Our region will support creative and heritage practitioners to explore, grow and take risks in the pursuit of excellence. Dumfries and Galloway will be well known for community-led cultural activity, where barriers to take part and enjoy culture are removed and where people of all ages have access to creativity, culture and heritage to support their learning and wellbeing.

Dumfries and Galloway is a place that has been a magnetic draw for people, to visit and relocate for many generations. They are drawn here by its beautiful and diverse landscape, quality of life, relative affordability, low levels of crime, its sense of community and by its vibrant rural creativity, culture and heritage ecology. This is also why people born here choose to stay, and for many who move away, to return later in life.

With the region's population projected to decrease by 2.8% by 2028⁴ the successful delivery of this strategy will play a key role in helping reduce migration out of the region, and to make Dumfries and Galloway a desirable place to move to, or to set up business.

The strategy has strong foundations on which to build, and it seeks to broaden and deepen the reach and positive impacts that creativity, culture and heritage have on the lives of our people and communities.

4 [National Records of Scotland](#)



The Strategy is built on the belief that everyone should be able to engage in creativity should they so choose. It advocates the conditions that enable the creative, cultural and heritage sector to reach out to those most likely to benefit and those least likely to engage.

It will work towards removing any perceived or real barriers (such as cost, transport, venue accessibility and language) so that more people can participate, including those experiencing social and rural isolation, poverty, loneliness, mental health issues or people who are cared for by others.

As part of its commitment to equalities the strategy will champion greater diversity at all levels so that people with minority protected characteristics are included at all levels of creative, cultural and heritage activity, including participation, creation and decision making at board level.

We have some exceptional creativity, culture and heritage professionals in our region. Some were born here, and others have chosen to live here. We also have some exceptional cultural organisations who bring world-class artists to our region such as **Absolute Classics**, **Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival**, **Big Burns Supper** and **Wigtown Festival Company** amongst others.

Ambition 1: Our people

We recognise that it is often unpaid volunteers that we are heavily reliant upon and without whom much of our cultural offer wouldn't happen. This army of selfless individuals operates across every aspect of our creativity, culture and heritage sector from writing business plans and applications for funding, to opening community venues and cleaning up after activities and events.

Perhaps unsurprisingly many volunteers are in the older age brackets. The skills, knowledge and experience of these older volunteers are highly valuable assets, but in the longer-term issues may arise around sustainability and succession planning. The population of our region continues to be one of the oldest in Scotland with almost one in five (18.7%) of the region's residents aged 70 or over with the average age projected to increase⁵

Combine this with the trend of people increasingly having to work until they are older than they currently do and there's a real possibility this could lead to fewer people supporting the volunteer-led creativity, culture and heritage sector unless young people are given opportunities and are supported to get involved.

A healthy cultural ecology needs these volunteers, but it also requires an experienced and diverse workforce.

⁵ [National Records of Scotland](#)



“This army of selfless individuals operates across every aspect of our creativity, culture and heritage sector”



This strategy seeks to support the professional development of workers and volunteers and encourage experimentation and innovation by creative practitioners. It underlines the importance of working with education providers such as [Dumfries and Galloway College](#) and others, to promote our sector as a viable career path and finding ways to retain and attract talent.

It intends to raise awareness of the need to

implement [Fair Work](#) principles. This is especially important for a sector that is often driven by the 'gig' economy. Sole traders, freelancers, creative micro-businesses and volunteers are the backbone of our region's cultural economy.

the following objectives for the benefit of our region:

Objectives

1. Create, nurture and support a diverse workforce within Dumfries and Galloway's creative and cultural sector that has the skills, knowledge and experience to involve and engage local communities and audiences (local, national and international) in cultural activity.
2. Support the development of high-quality creative, cultural and heritage activity programmes that give our creative and culture sector the opportunity to develop their potential.
3. Work to retain and attract talent to our region and support opportunities for young people to create and engage with creative, cultural and heritage activity in their local area.
4. Make sure that people experiencing inequalities have opportunities to create and engage with creative and cultural activity in Dumfries and Galloway that are accessible to everyone and are informed by an understanding of our communities' interests and aspirations.
5. Apply Fair Work principles across the cultural, creative and heritage workforce – in particular, ensuring freelancers, sole traders, volunteers and professionals working to support the sector have equal rights and representation.

Ambition 2: Our places

Places across Dumfries and Galloway will celebrate, preserve and promote our natural, built and living heritage, where culture shapes and transforms the areas we live in.

This strategy celebrates Dumfries and Galloway as a region that is renowned for the breadth and quality of its cultural offer. It sets out to create the conditions for our region to stand out above others as a blueprint for vibrant, innovative and sustainable rural creativity, culture and heritage

Dumfries and Galloway is made up of a great many distinct communities and diverse landscapes. Our cultural ecology consists of individuals, organisations, groups, businesses, venues, charities and public services. Combined they are bigger than the sum of their individual parts.

Our region is the 3rd largest of Scotland's 32 local authority areas⁶. Given our small population size, this means that our cultural infrastructure is as much about partnerships, volunteers, innovative creative communities and regeneration-driven initiatives as it is about buildings and physical resources. Our strengths include committed creative and community leaders who champion creativity, culture and heritage and are catalysts for making things happen locally.

⁶ [Scottish Local Government Financial Statistics](#)

Home-grown cultural initiatives and programmes help make Dumfries and Galloway a better place to live. A good example is Scotland's exemplar rural arts touring programme, [Arts Live](#), a network of community venues and practitioners that brings communities together to experience high-quality performing arts.

Our region is a beacon of best practice for Creative Placemaking initiatives demonstrating the power of co-creation between arts, heritage and community groups and the contribution they can make to the regeneration of our towns and villages. [The Stove Network](#) is recognised nationally as a leader in this field, and we're proud to applaud them and others such as the three winners of Creative Scotland's prestigious Creative Place Awards⁷ - [Creetown](#), [Moniaive](#) and [Wigtown](#).

Individual and community empowerment through creativity is further demonstrated through our region's involvement in two national initiatives - Culture Collective⁸ and Creative Communities⁹, which support creative practitioners to co-design and co-produce projects with local communities and create wellbeing, enterprise and place-based impacts.

⁷ Creative Scotland's [Creative Place Awards](#) were established to recognise communities where people work together to celebrate and promote their town, village or area through the arts and culture. The awards enabled them to build on their strengths and to try new things.

⁸ [Culture Collective](#) is a network of 26 participatory arts projects, shaped by local communities alongside artists and creative organisations.

⁹ [Creative Communities](#) aims to support and empower communities to develop cultural activities.



Ambition 2: Our places

This strategy provides the framework to bring places and people together, so that they can collaborate and work in partnership for the benefit of our communities. It advocates the importance of networks to enable cultural organisations and communities to work more closely together to ensure that the creativity, culture and heritage of our region are more visible to, and connect with, residents and visitors.

This strategy adopts a grassroots approach, superbly illustrated by Dumfries and Galloway's [Fèis an Iar Dheas](#), Scotland's most southerly member of [Fèisean nan Gàidheal](#). The Fèisean movement is unique and the envy of countries across the world for its approach and commitment to keeping our indigenous language and culture living and alive from one generation to another. The promotion of [Scots language](#), its potential to enhance young people's education and its contribution to cultural tourism through the region's association with Robert Burns is an important cornerstone of this strategy.

Dumfries and Galloway's creativity, culture and heritage sector has shaped the identities of many of our towns and villages, raising their profile and making them destinations in their own right. From [Wigtown Book Town](#) to [Annan The History Town](#) to [Kirkcudbright Artists Town](#), these and other place-based cultural initiatives contribute to making our region a desirable place to live, work and visit.

“the framework to bring places and people together”





Ambition 2: Our places

Objectives

1. Support the development of creative, cultural and heritage venues across Dumfries and Galloway where people can come together to create and share creative and cultural experiences.
2. Support the development of a hybrid approach to the development of cultural activity embracing both physical and digital spaces.
3. Provide opportunities to experience, understand and shape the identity of Dumfries and Galloway by enabling the history and stories of our places to be explored, shared and re-imagined.
4. Support creative placemaking within communities to unlock aspirations, facilitate positive change, and use culture and heritage to help revitalise our towns and rural communities.
5. Support the development of events that enhance and showcase the heritage, creative and cultural uniqueness of our places.

Our council is determined to make Dumfries and Galloway the best place in rural Scotland in which to plan, manage, deliver and visit great events. This commitment is evidenced in its [Major Festivals and Events Strategy](#) which is delivered in close cooperation with [EventScotland](#) and designed to help grow creative, memorable and sustainable festivals and events in our beautiful region.

Simply put, our creativity, culture and heritage sector punches above its weight. This strategy champions what it does and aims to consolidate, extend, broaden and deepen its impact on the health, wealth and wellbeing of our communities across Dumfries and Galloway.

By implementing this strategy, we seek to achieve the following objectives for the benefit of our region:

AMBITION 3: The difference we make

Our region will enable our cultural sector to work with others to create inclusive and sustainable growth in our local economies and enhance the wellbeing of our communities.

Creativity, culture and heritage make an important contribution to regenerating communities, villages, towns and cities. They help grow local¹⁰ and national¹¹ economies, and contribute to inclusive growth¹². They help people of all ages to achieve their ambitions and fulfill their potential. Creativity, culture and heritage bring learning, fun and joy into people's lives. Getting involved reduces social isolation and loneliness and helps prevent the negative impact these can have on mental and physical health.

Creativity, culture and heritage help build stronger communities by bringing people together through activities and events that help nurture pride in the places where we live. Taking part helps our children become more confident, responsible, successful and effective contributors to their family, class, school and wider society.

10 In 2012 the creative sector in the South of Scotland was estimated to generate revenue of almost £60m per annum, employing 1,337 FTEs. This equates to an estimated GVA of £37-£39m per annum. This data did not include the contribution of many sole traders and creative micro businesses. Source: Ekos,

[Creative Sector in the South of Scotland](#), May 2012

11 Scotland's creative industries contribute to the Scottish economy every year. The Scottish Government's Economic Strategy identifies creative industries as a growth sector where Scotland can build on existing advantages to increase productivity and growth. Source: [Scottish Government](#)

12 Inclusive growth is economic growth that is distributed fairly across society and creates opportunities for all.

Recognising the contribution that our creativity, culture and heritage sector has on the life of our region doesn't mean that we can be complacent. It does not mean that our job is done. This strategy is evidence that the sector has always had to be inventive, resilient and bold, never more so than in response to the extraordinary challenges presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

This strategy takes the pandemic into consideration and sets out a number of entwined pathways which collectively, will enable our sector to play an important part in our region's social and economic recovery.

The many benefits of engaging with creativity, culture and heritage are well documented, but we accept that on a local level there are some gaps in our knowledge, awareness and understanding. In some areas there's a lack of empirical data, or it's out of date. Our creativity, culture and heritage sector has a thirst to do more, to be better, and improve what it does.

This strategy advocates the need to plug those knowledge gaps and collate relevant data where it's needed. This will help our creativity, culture and heritage sector lever further investment, and more clearly evidence the value it adds.

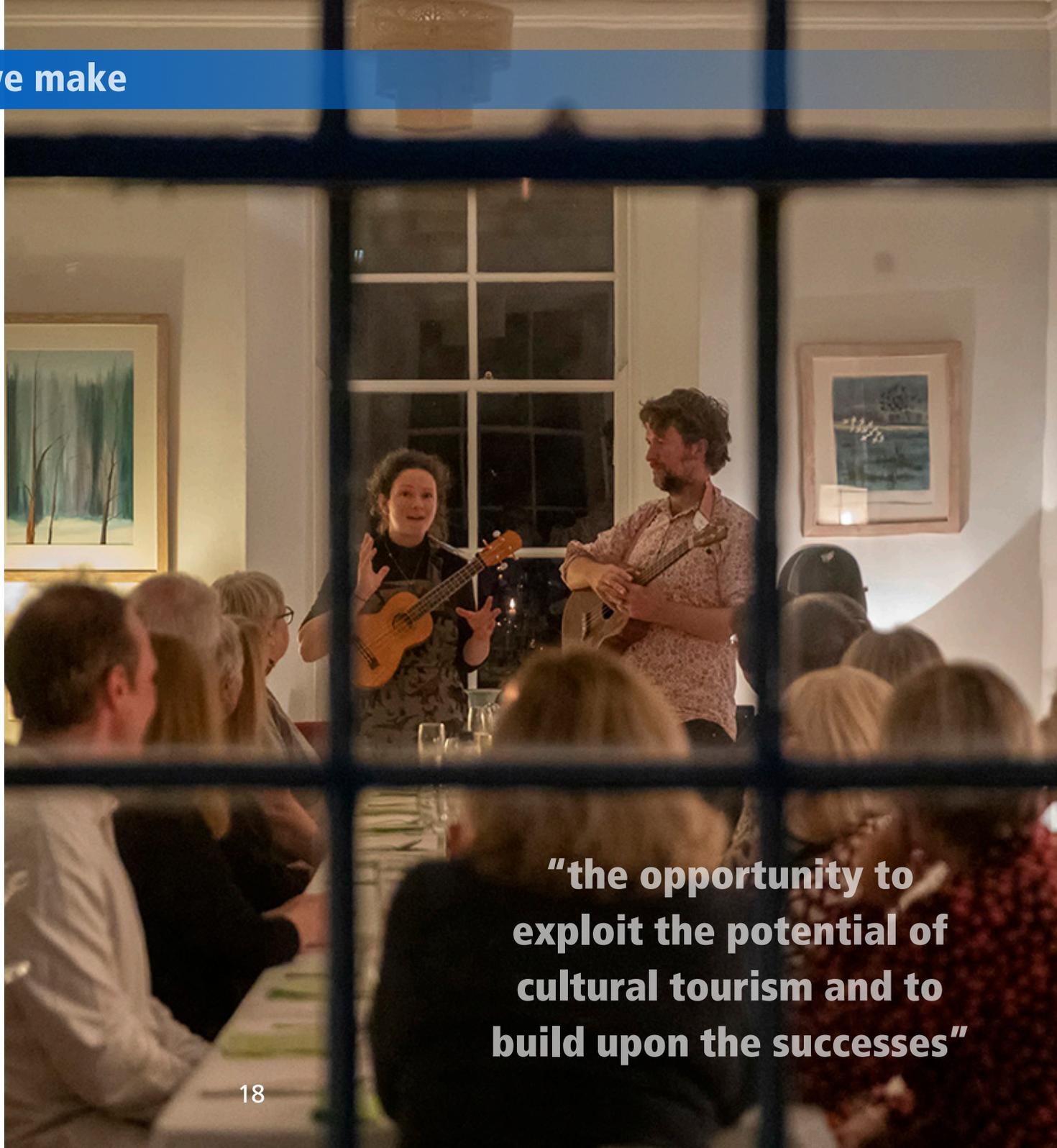


Ambition 3: The difference we make

This strategy accepts that there are some unavoidable by-products of living in a beautiful, sparsely populated and disparate rural region. However, it recognises there are opportunities to explore other ways of doing things that will further improve the experience of living in or visiting Dumfries and Galloway.

This strategy calls upon our sector leaders and professionals to investigate, develop and implement fresh solutions across a range of areas such as transport services and timetabling, to explore new initiatives such as car-share schemes; to encourage innovation and improvements to our digital infrastructure, including access.

It promotes the opportunity to exploit the potential of cultural tourism and to build upon the successes, such as historical places of interest like [Burns House](#), Upland's [Spring Fling](#) open artists' studios trail, and the Galloway Hoard Viking-age Treasure at [Kirkcudbright Galleries](#). This strategy indicates the need to support and improve connections with the region's hospitality industry so that jointly we can capitalise on the opportunity afforded by cultural tourism to encourage more people to visit, and when they do, to stay longer, to see and experience more of what our beautiful region has to offer.



“the opportunity to exploit the potential of cultural tourism and to build upon the successes”

The impact of climate change and measures to move towards achieving net zero carbon status is an issue that many in our sector already have a strong affinity with. This strategy aims to help our creativity, culture and heritage sector successfully make this transition and by doing so help achieve the commitment made by Dumfries and Galloway Council on 27 June 2019 when it declared a Climate Emergency¹³ with the publication of a 12-point plan to help the region become carbon neutral by 2025.

The publication by the Scottish Government in February 2020 of A Culture Strategy for Scotland¹⁴ has helped change the discourse around the idea that creativity, culture and heritage are simply a 'nice thing to do if you can'.

Through this strategy we will champion the value and validity of culture. Working together with other sectors and organisations we will extend the reach and positive impact of creativity, culture and heritage for our people and our places.

13 [Dumfries and Galloway Council's Climate Emergency Declaration](#)

14 [A Culture Strategy for Scotland](#), prepared by the Scottish Government, 2020



By implementing this strategy, we seek to achieve the following objectives for the benefit of our region:

Objectives

1. Through advocacy and partnership working identify, promote and deliver opportunities for creativity, culture and heritage to contribute to other key priority areas such as the region's economy, wellbeing, education and community development.
2. Invest in creative, cultural and heritage assets that will sustain and enhance the region's creative and cultural offer.
3. Make use of the region's creative and cultural identity to promote its distinctiveness, character, people, places, lifestyle offer and exceptional quality of life, attracting people to the region to live, work, visit and learn.
4. Support and promote the use of creative and cultural activity to support health and wellbeing outcomes through initiatives such as social prescribing.
5. Support the cultural and heritage sector in the transition to achieving net zero carbon status and ensure culture enables communities to have their voices heard and be actively involved in shaping a sustainable and low carbon future for our region.
6. Support culture and creativity as an engine of innovation that will drive enterprise and societal change in our region.

Enablers



Throughout the engagement phase people expressed many opinions and provided lots of ideas and solutions. Sometimes these views and thoughts were in direct contrast to each other, but often they aligned. Through careful analysis some patterns began to emerge. A shared voice has percolated through, identifying the following three enablers:

- Capacity
- Connectivity
- Communication

These enablers summarise what people told us needs to be improved so that the creativity, culture and heritage sector can make a bigger difference and realise its full potential.

CASE STUDY

Founded in 1999, the 10-day Wigtown Book Festival is now one of the UK's best-loved literary events and this year has more than 200 events and activities for all ages, including music, theatre, food and visual arts. The festival, which has won a Scottish Power Foundation Award for Community Engagement, Sunday Herald Scottish Culture Awards 2018 Cultural Event of the Year, Thistle Award for tourism, the Arts & Business (Scotland) Community Award and a Creative Places Award, welcomes writers from far and wide. It also celebrates the rich history and landscape of Galloway.



Wigtown
BOOK FESTIVAL

Capacity

The region's creativity, culture and heritage community requires support so that people have the skills and resources they need to create and share what they do for public benefit.

For generations, our region has had home-grown creative people. It's also been a magnetic draw for cultural professionals to move here and establish creative businesses, helping our people and places flourish.

Our sector is an increasingly important contributor to society on many levels. In order to sustain and develop its contribution we need a resilient and expanding creative economy.



People who took part in the engagement phase told us what is required to help achieve this including working closely in partnership with [South of Scotland Enterprise](#); advocating support for the creative workforce to receive a fair wage and wider employment benefits and facilitating cultural professionals to develop their practice and business skills.

They expressed views on the need for creating a rural infrastructure to help develop the next generation of practitioners; working with education providers across all tiers; increasing the prominence of cultural activity within the curriculum and promoting it as a viable career option; broadening training opportunities beyond compulsory education for young people and those seeking a second or third career later in life.

Understandably there was a call for increased investment particularly for core funding, but there was also recognition of the need to make better use of existing resources through sharing and partnership working. Covid too has had a disproportionate impact on the sector at all levels and sector-level recovery is needed.

People acknowledged that other sectors also require support to build capacity so that they can take advantage of cultural opportunities which would help meet shared outcomes.

CASE STUDY

Big Burns Supper is a grass roots social co-operative currently based at the Loreburn Hall as part of a pop up cultural hub which includes an 80 seat cinema, weekly participatory projects like Dumfries Community Choir and Scotland's foremost Burns Night celebration which is broadcast to a global audience of 400,000 per year. The organisation focusses on the development of the cultural economy through its flagship project Producers of the Future which has engaged more than 150 young people in live projects lasting six months or more and has been used by British Council at their international producing academy.



Big Burns Supper

CASE STUDY



Connectivity

The region's creativity, culture and heritage community needs support to become better connected, making it easier for people to get involved, collaborate and achieve shared goals.

Dumfries and Galloway is predominantly a rural geography with an extensive coastal border. It's a gateway to the rest of Scotland, and to England. The European Union is a short ferry journey away to Ireland, making our region well positioned to grow an international outlook.

The geography of our region can present challenges, but we also understand it's one of the reasons why people choose to live or visit here. In every part of it you will find clusters of creativity, culture and heritage attractions, creative professionals, publicly funded organisations, council services, volunteers and voluntary groups, entrepreneurs, sole traders and creative micro businesses. Collectively these are all vital to our region but consequently the nature of this ecosystem means it's not always particularly easy to target as a single entity.

People who took part in the engagement phase made it clear that improving connections across multiple levels needs to be addressed if the ambitions of this strategy are to be met.

Fundamentally, we need to be better connected between ourselves as a sector to improve planning, increase efficiency and make best use of available resources. We need to be better connected to our communities so that we can increase our understanding of the needs of participants and audiences.

For disabled people and people with limited access to transport, the opportunity to take part in online creative, cultural and heritage activity during the COVID-19 period removed significant barriers to participation. Maintaining and further developing this connectivity is an important consideration as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Galloway Glens Scheme is an initiative of the Council's Environment Team, running between 2018 and 2023. The scheme has overseen more than £5m in expenditure that sought to 'connect people to our heritage', while boosting the local economy and supporting sustainable communities. Primarily funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the scheme is also supported by the Biosphere and Drax, the owners of the Galloway Hydro Scheme. The Scheme has supported a range of projects up and down the Ken/Dee valley, from building refurbishment to employment programmes. It included the visit of a band of Vikings to Crossmichael in summer 2021, coinciding with the return of the Galloway Hoard to Kirkcudbright.



The Galloway Glens SCHEME



We need to enhance and develop new connections with colleagues from other sectors such as [Visit Scotland](#) in relation to tourism and other representative bodies within education, hospitality, health and social care to achieve shared outcomes and deepen the reach and impact of the creativity, culture and heritage sector. There was wide agreement of the need for our sector to be outward looking and plugged into what's happening outside the region.

By looking at our cultural ecology from all of these different perspectives we can begin to see how things are joined-up, where things are fragmented, where we excel and areas in need of development.

Communication

The region's creativity, culture and heritage sector requires support to improve how information is shared, leading to more effective planning, more awareness of what's available, the development of new partnerships with other sectors, and the ability to influence policy makers.

Communication was one of the most frequently discussed topics by contributors to the engagement process and all agreed of the benefit that increased, improved and more cohesive communication would have on our sector, the region's residents and visitors, our health and wealth, and on how Dumfries and Galloway is viewed by the rest of the world.



CASE STUDY

Whithorn ReBuild is a social enterprise, originally created by the Whithorn Trust, which offers paid training to unemployed young people, learning traditional skills in woodworking, stone construction, metal and glass work. Thanks to Whithorn's remarkable archaeology and our network of experts, we are able to provide high quality cultural opportunities for these young people to engage with our heritage, which dates back 1600 years. As their skills develop, they are reconstructing some of Whithorn's dilapidated buildings using hot lime and hand hewn beams, but they are also looking to future Green jobs, by learning about energy retrofitting in heritage buildings.



CASE STUDY



Communication is possibly the most critical of the three enablers: any significant improvements in relation to communication are likely to assist and underpin further changes and differences made in relation to the other two enablers – capacity and connectivity.

Effective communication is rooted in cooperation and shared goals, and these principles will play a key role in meeting this strategy's aspirational vision.

Throughout the engagement phase people told us of the need for the creativity, culture and heritage sector to raise its profile above the waterline, making it more visible to those within the region, and beyond it by enhancing and developing new partnerships with national and regional agencies such as [South of Scotland Destination Alliance](#).



There was a widely shared view of the need to continue to develop new working partnerships with other sectors not only to achieve shared goals but also with the ambition that they will champion our sector's potential to make a difference to Dumfries and Galloway. There's a strong appetite for establishing joint marketing initiatives and networks to make it easier to reach audiences and participants, and to share information on the social and economic impact of our sector's activities within the sector and the wider public.

This strategy will seek to make creativity, culture and heritage more accessible for people for whom English is a second language, or who rely on language aids. In addition, it will strive to find ways to support understanding of effective ways to use the communication tools readily available including new and emerging digital technologies.

StoryTrails is a unique immersive storytelling experience where untold stories from the past are brought to life through ground-breaking augmented and virtual reality to reanimate public spaces. During the showcase two-day event at the Ewart Library in July 2022, visitors joined free guided tours with performers and experienced history were it actually happened, learning untold stories from the archives. The ongoing legacy of this event includes the augmented reality trail, new technology for the library service and a programme of local history and story telling projects.

StoryTrails was led by StoryFutures Academy and The Reading Agency and funded by DCMS.



StoryTrails
AT THE EWART LIBRARY



Getting started

This strategy is an empowering document. It sets out our shared aspirational vision, three strong ambitions and three expansive enablers, which combined create the framework for achieving success.

We encourage everyone with an interest in, or involved with cultural activities, or who are currently sitting on the side lines, to share our excitement, our hope and enthusiasm for the opportunities that this strategy advocates. We urge creativity, culture and heritage service providers and others arranging cultural activities to consider within their planning cycles the ambitions of this strategy and to align what they do to help realise the strategy's vision.

Dumfries and Galloway Partnership for Culture

The first step in the process of delivering this strategy will be to establish a Dumfries and Galloway Partnership for Culture.

Our Council will facilitate the creation of this Partnership, whose role will be to oversee the delivery of this strategy. Various partnership models are possible, and it will be for the new group to explore the most effective framework for delivery of the plan.

We envisage that the Dumfries and Galloway Partnership for Culture will provide a forum for collaboration and strategic planning, bringing together our Council, sector representatives and key partners to deliver the vision for this strategy.

The Partnership for Culture will develop and endorse an initial action plan for delivery against the strategy ambitions, building on the feedback, recommendations and ideas gathered during the extensive engagement undertaken in the preparation of this strategy.

The Dumfries and Galloway Partnership for Culture will prepare two further delivery plans, one for each three-year cycle of the nine-year strategy. This approach creates opportunities for reflection, review, and adjustment, ensuring that plans for delivery evolve and remain relevant.

CASE STUDY

Dumfries & Galloway Arts Festival are passionate about engaging with communities across the region at a grass roots level and are working with local Community Consultant DJ McDowall to ensure that this becomes an integral part of their work.

The team are taking forward new approaches to community engagement, investing in staff development in this field and celebrating the diversity of voices that our communities offer.

They envisage this work as a central element in all our future work; a golden thread that runs through our planning, programming, delivery and evaluation of our Festival and year-round activities; enabling us to further understand the needs and aspirations of the region and identify any barriers to participation in its cultural life.



Dumfries and Galloway ARTS FESTIVAL

Ownership and implementation

A key purpose of the Dumfries and Galloway Partnership for Culture will be to connect the strategy with the creativity, culture and heritage sector across Dumfries and Galloway. This strategy will work parallel to the individual business plans and artistic ambitions of all stakeholders.

The creation of Dumfries and Galloway Partnership for Culture will be facilitated by the Council and, collectively with each of the group's members, this new sector-led group will lead on developing, or will be the catalyst for the strategic interventions needed to meet this strategy's ambitions. The partnership members together will assume responsibility for implementing a delivery plan and monitoring its progress and success.

Guiding principles

In achieving the goals of this strategy, the Dumfries and Galloway Partnership for Culture will consider the way that it collaborates with our people, places and partners. To reflect this, the spirit of the partnership will be to encourage:

- Collaboration and not competition
- Resilience and growth
- Mutual support whilst accepting differences
- Funders to support and invest
- Equality and diversity
- Evidence based decision-making
- Trust and integrity

Outpost Arts delivered a pilot Art Journal Project during lockdown, allowing 15 Langholm residents to connect with creativity, enhance wellbeing and combat isolation by forming a supportive 'micro-community'; and creating pathways towards personal/professional development via skill-building. Participants noted transformative positive impacts including less reliance on medication, development of self-management tools, increased resilience and self-confidence, and creative skills advancement. Following OPA's subsequent research and development project which identified stakeholder needs, barriers and aims, graduates will return as Peer Mentors in Phase 2 - a region-wide programme of artist-led creative wellbeing activities. OPA will also co-ordinate a cross-sector Creative Wellbeing Network to support collaborative approaches.





The sweet smell of success

This strategy will be successful if all stakeholders work together towards achieving our shared vision and ambitions. We all have a part to play and something to contribute.

To help measure success we will design and implement different monitoring and evaluation methods specific to each intervention described within the detailed delivery plan that the Dumfries and Galloway Partnership for Culture will develop.

This strategy's three ambitions and enablers form the spine of the framework for measuring success. In addition to project specific evaluation, we will:

- Monitor media coverage
- Gather evidence through funding reports, case studies, commissioned research
- Maintain and grow political and public support
- Engage new working partnerships with stakeholders from other sectors for example, tourism, health, and education
- Use our collective voice to influence decision-makers
- Ensure a positive legacy and communicate the difference this strategy makes to our people and places

CASE STUDY

Kirkcudbright Galleries is a regional gallery of national significance and the newest of the Council's museum and gallery sites.

Opened in 2018 it was designed with the highest security and best environmental conditions to enable the site to host significant loans from national collections. It has held exhibitions celebrating Pablo Picasso and Sir Edwin Landseer as well as The Galloway Hoard: Viking Age Treasure from the National Museums Scotland which attracted more than 40,000 visitors even as we emerged from the challenges of COVID-19. The Galleries also runs a programme of events both in the building and in spaces around the town.



KIRKCUDBRIGHT GALLERIES

Image credits

Cover	Anne Butler in her studio for Spring Fling Open Studios	Colin Tennant/Upland CIC	16	Cruck Cottage	Doors Open Days
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Cover	In Memory of Loved Ones Lost at Sea by Charie Easterfield	DGC	19	Outpost Arts	Lucy MacLeod/Outpost Arts
2	Earthlight by Ruth Elizabeth Jones & Emma Varley, Spring Fling 2022	Colin Tennant/Upland CIC	20	Annan Pipe Band	Richard P Long / Shutterstock.com
3		DGC	20	Wigtown Book Festival	Colin Hattersley
3	Tower of Light at Dumfries Museum	Stew Gibson/Odin Aerial Solutions	21	Jessie King drawer, Kirkcudbright Galleries	Andy Jardine
4	Crawick Multiverse	Mike Bolam	21	Producers of the Future	Big Burns Supper
5	Bippity by Performance Collective Stranraer	Kim Ayres	22	Guid Nychburris 2019	Chris Brown
5		Sebastian Summers	22	Crossmichael Vikings	Duncan Ireland/ Galloway Glens
6	The Kippford Mermaid by PAMIS and the Arts End of Somewhere	Kim Ayres	23	Whithorn Rebuild Team	Whithorn ReBuild
6	Anne Butler in her studio for Spring Fling Open Studios	Colin Tennant	23	Mihai and his Tagelharpa	Whithorn ReBuild
7	Maxwell String Quartet at the Crichton	Mike Bolam	24	Performance of 'Whuppie'	Moniaive Young Theatre Makers
7	ICC award holder Peter Roberts	DG Unlimited	24	DJ McDowall creative practitioner with Ewart Library Visitors	Angela Chan/StoryTrails
8	Eilidh Elizabeth Molly performing at Paragon's 'All In' Accessibility Conference, Catstrand.	Mike Bolam	24	StoryMap of Dumfries	Ruaridh Thinsmith/ The Imaginarium
9	Devorgilla Bridge at night	Julian Gillespie	25	Storm in Dumfries (Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival)	Julian Gillespie
10	Nithraid Salty Coo	Julian Gillespie	25	Time Machine by Jordan & Skinner	Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival
11	Oceanallover at Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival	Ruari Barber-Fleming/ Oceanallover	26	Castle of St John Costume Day	DGC
12	Into the Nicht	Colin Tennant	26	Art Journal Project	Lucy MacLeod/Outpost Arts
13	Birchvale Players Alice in Wonderland	Susan Moseley/Birchvale Players	27	Activity at Kirkcudbright Galleries	Andy Jardine
14	Burns Statue	DGC	27	Kirkcudbright Galleries	Ashleigh Building Ltd
15	Gardens at Wigtown Book Festival	Colin Tennant/ Wigtown Festival Company			
16	Crossmichael Vikings	Duncan Ireland/ Galloway Glens			