

# Vote for Culture

*Culture Aberdeen's Manifesto for the  
Aberdeen City Council elections 2022*





## Aberdeen – Our city; our culture

*“A melting pot of wonderment and exceptionalism, a place of beautiful contradictions” @therealnicolinae, Instagram*

Aberdeen – a city with a rich and unique culture, which is formed and shaped by its location, its diverse people, and which is as much part of the city as the famous sparkle in the granite.

Our culture is manifested in world class venues renowned across Scotland and beyond, and artists and creative organisations who are engaged and committed to providing entertaining, enchanting, and enriching experiences for the people of the city. Communities are at the heart of everything we do, and the cultural sector contributes and commits to improving the lives of everyone in the city and to regeneration.

The Granite City as we know it, is on the move again. The march toward a renewable, sustainable, and secure future for our global industries is in progress and is traced through our sector expertise and ambitions within energy transition, life sciences innovation, food and agriculture, digital entrepreneurship, and tourism. These are championed sectors for the growth and success of our city of Aberdeen, but an obvious yet critical omission in that powerhouse of industries, is our creative and cultural industries. Aberdeen’s creative capital, its cultural community and connected vision must be championed from the centre of our administration and integrated at the core of the city’s developmental plans for people, place, and economy.

Our city thrives on its culture. We are confident, vibrant, immersive, and we have an inclusive cultural footprint which creates a catalyst for all. Because of this we are an attractive place to visit, live, work, and play in. We create opportunities for all, and are building a strong community filled with civic pride and hope for the next phase of our beloved Aberdeen’s story.

The Creative Industries not only feed the cultural capital of our city, but they also enable us to prosper as a community, as an economy, and as a fantastic place to be for all. The Creative & Cultural Industries are a fundamental cog in our city’s present and future transformation.

Aberdeen is a year-round festival city offering a unique collection of events which are authentically rooted in the cultural heritage of the area but viewed and presented through a unique contemporary lens. We connect old and new with our universities and our UNESCO-accredited archives.

Framed as it is by the Cairngorms to the west, the North Sea to the east, and sandwiched between two rivers – the stunning architecture of Aberdeen is built around a beach and harbour within the city, and beautiful green spaces. It is a city where you can walk, bathed in the expansive northern light unique to the region.

Transient workers pass through, but many put down roots here – it is a city which can instantly “feel like home” – and has a diversity and depth which is unmatched. Our people are our strength – naturally humble, but fiercely protective people who take a stand. We love words, we love music and we have a unique and beautiful language.

Aberdonians ‘and those who reside here’ are fabulous storytellers, we create memorable, magical experiences, and we are a city and people with culture in our veins.





## Our Vision for the Future

Culture Aberdeen is ready to power Aberdeen's emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our organizations have proven their resilience throughout these last two years and are now committed to playing a role in creative and visible growth in Aberdeen as we rebuild and remake our communities and city. Our membership is broad, and our reach is even broader. Working together we can be crucial to helping Aberdeen City Council deliver its vision for the future.

Culture is inherent in Aberdeen's past, present and future successes as a vibrant, appealing, and innovative UK and international city. We want to connect and collaborate with the city, its communities, and its people so that creativity is embedded in their lives and so that they feel they can learn, grow, stay, and succeed in a city that is stimulating, forward thinking and assured of its place in the world as an innovator.

Culture is ready to be at the forefront of Aberdeen's regeneration following the pandemic. We can tell the stories needed to drive the city to Net Zero, as we deal with the worsening effects of the Climate Emergency. Culture can build knowledge and skills in Aberdeen's young people and marginalized communities, so that our city's public life is diverse and inspiring. Culture can meaningfully show creativity as a force for social good.

## Our Sector...

- Is confident and optimistic for the future of Aberdeen.
- Celebrates creativity as a source of social good and a means of including people in the fabric of life in Aberdeen.
- Recognises and values the role of the creative practitioner in our society.
- Shares our knowledge and is open and transparent in our communication, and about our challenges.
- Is forward thinking and uses digital platforms to make our work and organizations accessible to all.
- Continues to develop sustainable models, so that our organizations can thrive and inspire others across the city.
- Makes a tangible contribution to the regeneration of the city by driving footfall and helping associated economic sectors to prosper.
- Will curate an Aberdeen-specific narrative in our journey to Net Zero.
- Offers experiences that directly enhance mental health and well-being for all residents of the city.
- Creates opportunities for young people to develop skills and to prosper, driving real social change.



## Our Ask of Candidates

- 1** Include the creative and cultural industries as a key sector within both the Regional Economic Strategy and future City Region Deal and that culture should be an identifiable strand in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

*Reflecting the Government's acknowledgement of the Creative and Culture sector as a key growth sector, which positively impacts on the whole economy and has a significant role in the levelling up agenda. Our local plans should include and represent our cultural sector and creative practitioners.*

- 2** Recognise the importance of cultural activity in mental health and wellbeing through developing a new partnership between the Health and Social Care Partnership and the cultural sector.

*Recovery from the pandemic must include actions to support individuals to restore their mental health and wellbeing. Building upon the significant body of evidence which demonstrates the positive links between engagement and participation in cultural activities and mental health and wellbeing and the role it plays enabling people to access these services.*

- 3** Engage creative practitioners in the community development work underway within the City as part of the Just Transition.

*Harnessing culture's proven ability to facilitate transformation, improving the lives and opportunities for societies most disadvantaged. Culture has a role in providing communities with a voice, a sense of identity as well as the means to empower local social and economic development and to deliver fair-work.*

- 4** Strengthen the involvement of the cultural sector work with young people and in education settings.

*It is established that cultural participation leads to a range of positive outcomes for children and young people, enhancing wellbeing, shaping values, and informing approaches to life-long learning. It is vital therefore every school child in Aberdeen is guaranteed access to a diverse range of high-quality cultural experiences.*

- 5** Strategically support the City's international cultural ambitions.

*The City's cultural strategy recognises the power of culture to positively influence perceptions of place. The cultural sector will assist organisations and individuals to represent and present Aberdeen on a global cultural stage through the use of strategic national and international funding.*

- 6** Investing in a strong independent cultural sector and employment opportunities for freelance practitioners.

*Recognising the value that the cultural sector plays in making the City a vibrant and attractive place to live, work, study and visit and the role that local authority funding plays in leveraging support from national funding streams.*

- 7** Appoint a Chief Officer for Culture within Aberdeen City Council.

*Appreciating the importance of similar roles within other UK cities to strengthen the reputation of their cultural offering - this post would act as a bridge between Council services and the independent cultural sector.*



We look forward to developing our shared vision for the cultural and creative sector in Aberdeen with elected members over the coming years.





## **Our Members**

**AB+ and Civic Forum**

**Aberdeen Arts Centre**

**Aberdeen City Council -  
Art Gallery & Museums**

**Aberdeen City Council -  
Creative Learning**

**Aberdeen City Council -  
Cultural Policy and Partnerships Team**

**Aberdeen City Council –  
Library and Information**

**Aberdeen Performing Arts**

**Aberdeen Science Centre**

**All In Ideas**

**Beach Ballroom**

**Belmont Filmhouse**

**Big Noise Torry**

**Centre for Moving Image**

**Citymoves Dance Agency**

**Creative Scotland**

**Curated Place**

**The Elphinstone Institute**

**Grampian Hospitals Art Trust**

**Gray's School of Art**

**Jazz Aberdeen**

**Look Again**

**NESCoI**

**Open Road**

**Peacock Visual Arts**

**Pushing Out the Boat**

**Robert Gordon University**

**SHMU**

**Sound Festival**

**University of Aberdeen**