

From: Foi Enquiries <FoiEnquiries@aberdeencity.gov.uk>

Sent: 03 December 2019 10:22

Subject: FOI-19-1479 - Cultural Strategy

Thank you for your information request of 04 November 2019. Aberdeen City Council (ACC) has completed the necessary search for the information requested. Our response is now detailed below.

Why does Aberdeen need a Cultural Strategy? And what are its restraints of having a Cultural Strategy?

What makes an Art organization fundable?

How does the council support Art organizations?

It has been said in the Strategy keeping doors open for creativity. How open are the doors to Aberdeen's Creative Sector? There must be restraints to creating.

Why does Aberdeen focus funding more on Festivals?

What does Culture bring into the city that other sectors don't?

Is Aberdeen on track to hit the goals they have set?

Aberdeen is one of the cities that will be deeply affected by Brexit. How will Brexit affect Aberdeen and its creative industrials and its Cultural Strategy?

Where can I find the old strategy to see what has been done in the past? As the new 10-year plan has mentioned it a little in the introduction.

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 provides public access to recorded information held by the council at the time a request is made and does not cover officer's opinions, comments or ongoing conversations.

We are unable to provide you with information on **your questions regarding Aberdeen City Council's Cultural Strategy** as it is not held by ACC. In order to comply with our obligations under the terms of Section 17 of the FOISA, we hereby gives notice that this information is not held by us.

As part of our duty to provide advice and assistance, please find attached ACC's former cultural strategy and the Cultural Asset Map produced by BOP regarding Aberdeen cultural infrastructure, ref: [FOI-19-1479 Vibrant Aberdeen April 2010](#) and [FOI-19-1479 Aberdeen Cultural Map - BOP Report](#)

The current cultural strategy is online at:

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/leisure-culture-and-parks/culture-aberdeen-cultural-strategy-2018-2028>

ACC will be publishing a record of the 2018/19 and 2019 awards and grants to cultural organisations and individuals later this month on the website and you will be able to view them soon.

If you wish to discuss Aberdeen City Council's Culture Policy with our City Growth Team please contact markbremner@aberdeencity.gov.uk

INFORMATION ABOUT THE HANDLING OF YOUR REQUEST

We handled your request for information in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Please refer to the attached PDF for more information about your rights under FOISA.

We hope this helps with your request.

Yours sincerely,



Jennifer McDonald | Access to Information Officer

Aberdeen City Council | Access to Information Team | Customer Feedback

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Cultural mapping of Aberdeen

Aberdeen City Council

Final report
July 2013

BOP
CONSULTING



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1. Executive Summary

Aberdeen is one of the most economically successful cities in the United Kingdom. The oil and gas industry, an emerging high-tech energy sector, and the city's status as the regional capital of the North East of Scotland, have given the city a buoyant private sector economy. Unemployment and poverty are both relatively low, though pockets of deprivation remain, and the quality of life is very high.

Yet the city faces challenges if it is to maintain this success. It needs to continue to attract a highly skilled workforce; to improve the appeal of the city to residents and visitors alike, especially that of the city centre; and to maintain a sense of community and social cohesion in a fast-changing world.

There is an increasing recognition in Aberdeen, both in the City Council and in bodies like ACSEF and the universities, that culture and the creative industries have an important role to play in addressing these issues. Culture has not been a priority for the city in recent decades, despite its rich cultural and architectural heritage. There now seems to be an acceptance that this has to change if Aberdeen is to achieve its full potential. The bid for UK City of Culture 2017 is an encouraging sign in this respect, but the evidence of this report is that such work will need to be sustained over a number of years if it is to achieve lasting results.

This piece of research is designed primarily to be a 'mapping' of Aberdeen's cultural assets. It has collected information on some 204 assets in a number of art forms to get a sense of the level of activity in the city (the full list is contained in an accompanying Excel spreadsheet). The list has then been supplemented by a number of other elements, including a data and literature review; an online survey of those responsible for many of the assets; interviews with key stakeholders; an assessment of the city's creative industries; and a comparative analysis of four other

cities with similarities to Aberdeen (Stavanger, Bergen, Turku and Norwich). This report details the findings of these various elements.

For each of the principal art forms – theatre, music, multi-purpose venues, visual art, film/cinema, dance, museums, libraries and archives, and festivals – and for the creative industries in general we (BOP Consulting) have added to the data by making an assessment of the quality of Aberdeen's 'offer' in each field. This has fed into a SWOT analysis, and then into a series of conclusions and recommendations for taking the cultural agenda forward.

The report finds that there is much to commend in Aberdeen's cultural life, but that it is not achieving the impact it needs to make if it is to contribute fully to the city's success. The report reaches five conclusions about Aberdeen's cultural offer.

1. Infrastructure is strong but content is weaker

For a city of its size, Aberdeen has an unusually large number of cultural venues, though several of them are in a poor state of repair. The consequence of this is that Aberdeen has existing spaces available from which it could carve out a strong offer in any of several art forms, if it wishes to commit the appropriate level of support.

But it is noticeable that the breadth and depth of venues is not matched by similar riches in terms of producers and practitioners. There are no national or producing companies of scale in the city, so there are few opportunities for retention of aspiring producers. The knock-on effect trickles down to arts and creative industries graduates who must leave to seek producers for their work. This is a serious issue for the city.

2. Aberdeen should aim to develop (and become known for) a specialism

The research into comparator cities suggests that cities have won a reputation for their culture by building a diverse offer, but with a specialism in a particular art form. We would suggest that Aberdeen has the necessary diversity, with a reasonable offer in theatre and literature, and better than average offers in film and visual art. Its main opportunities, however, seem to lie in dance and, especially, music. In music it seems to have almost a 'full-spectrum' offer, with strong amateur activity, a flourishing university department (at the University of Aberdeen), a range

of venues of different sizes, a lively commercial music scene and some high-quality festivals. The glaring weakness in its offer is the absence of a major professional company, for which the visits by the likes of Scottish Opera offer only partial compensation. In the current economic climate it is possible that organisations may be open to relocating as funding support is lost – Aberdeen might make attracting such a company a high priority.

Contemporary dance is a much more niche activity, and while Aberdeen has real strengths here with CityMoves and the DanceLive festival, in the current tough economic climate, contemporary dance may lack the mass appeal necessary to justify making this the city's flagship art form. Nevertheless, it is worth serious support – in particular, to find CityMoves a better home.

3. The city centre is distinctive but lacklustre

There is broad agreement among residents and businesses that the city centre of Aberdeen has become uninviting, especially in and around Union Street. While we at BOP feel that this belief is unnecessarily gloomy – the city centre's historic architecture remains more striking and distinctive than that of many places – the perception can be self-fulfilling. The sense of a lack of 'buzz' is reinforced by the relatively low level of residential and office density in the city centre.

Culture can play a role in revitalising the city centre. Many of the city's key cultural venues lie on or near to Union Street, and they could provide a way out from the Street's downmarket retail offer. If combined with ideas such as those of Robert Gordon University to increase the residential density of the district, it could offer the area a 'post-retail' future. A more imaginative use of public spaces like Castlegate and the east end of Union Street, or the Marischal College quadrangle, could be an important part of this effort.

Aberdeen needs to make more of its architectural heritage. The architecture (and its history) is striking, and the city needs to tell that story about itself better. Being the third city in Scotland perhaps leads Aberdeen to compare itself too much with Edinburgh or Glasgow, rather than with cities of comparable size.

4. There is a need to improve linkages and connectivity

The city needs to build better linkages both within the cultural sector and between the cultural sector and other parts of the city's economy and institutional life. There are four areas in particular where there is potential for better linkages.

- The **universities** have chosen to locate their campuses outside the city centre in recent years, but still have much to offer the city at a strategic and programming level as RGU's recent report on the city centre showed¹. There are opportunities for the cultural sector in the release and reconfiguration of the universities' property portfolios. Talent development is an area where the universities and the college might work more closely with ACC. More practically, ACC and the University of Aberdeen might develop a plan for the cultural spaces in Marischal College – the Mitchell Hall and Marischal Museum– that are currently inaccessible.
- Stakeholders who participated in workshops suggested that **the cultural sector is somewhat fragmented**. The sector needs to market itself more coherently. People work within their own art forms and fields and are sometimes unaware of good work going on elsewhere. ACC is just starting to introduce a more coordinated and strategic approach to its grants which may help here. Stakeholders also felt that contemporary or alternative practitioners often lack the resources (financial or skills) to make themselves more visible and to reach a wider audience. All these factors mean there is no sense yet of a critical mass of activity in the city, in the stakeholders' view.
- **Boost creative industries activity** – Aberdeen's creative industries are slightly underperforming, though many of the conditions for success seem to be in place. Networking is relatively weak, not just between creative businesses themselves, but between them and potential customers. Expensive office and studio space makes it difficult for creative (micro) businesses to get established. There is a shortage of the sort of hub or co-working space in the city centre that might

¹ Robert Gordon University (2013) *Regenerating Aberdeen: A Vision for a Thriving and Vibrant City Centre*

encourage more of a critical mass of businesses to develop. Creative entrepreneurship could be strengthened further, though Aberdeen College in particular, already pays attention to this.

- **Northern Arc** – there is a perception in the city that the Northern Arc offers real potential for collaboration and exchange (much more so than links with other energy cities). The Northern Arc territories, by which we mean Ireland, the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (including Orkney and Shetland), Iceland, Scandinavia, and Atlantic Canada, share cultural, trade and transport links. The relatively small population of most of these territories means that Aberdeen counts as a major city among these: it is bigger than the likes of Inverness, Stavanger, Trondheim, Reykjavik or St John's (Canada), and only a little smaller than Bergen. Building further links through music, for example, would help create a distinctive flavour to Aberdeen's cultural offer.

5. Committed municipal leadership is vital

The comparator cities have all benefited from municipal leadership that is happy to 'bang the drum' for culture, and that has prioritised culture for many years. ACC is starting to do this, as shown by its continued support for culture funding in tough economic times, its commitment to the refurbishment of the Aberdeen Art Gallery and above all by its backing of the UK City of Culture bid. If the Council is to harness cultural policy for wider social and economic development, it will need to continue to raise the profile of culture. There is an understandable desire in the current climate to move to a more partnership-based model for the sector, with the council working in a 'behind the scenes' capacity. Developing partnerships with and capacity in the sector is an important goal, and should not be neglected. However, the lesson from the comparator cities and indeed other UK cities that have used culture as way to turn their image around, such as Newcastle-Gateshead, is that the local authority has to be pro-active, taking the lead and supporting its ambitions with substantial investment. The City of Culture bid is encouraging, and the attitude that underpins it provides a basis for achieving lasting change, but it will need to be sustained over several years.

Based on these conclusions, we have made some recommendations for Aberdeen City Council to consider. They come as a series of actions, grouped under five broad headings set out in chapter 9. The headings are:

- 1. Develop the producers, experiences and content that will help Aberdeen to stand out**
- 2. Prioritise key cultural infrastructure projects**
- 3. Revitalise the city centre through a cultural place-making approach**
- 4. Emphasise Aberdeen's distinctive heritage**
- 5. Scope the cultural potential of existing international linkages with Northern Arc and other cities**

Aberdeen undoubtedly has much potential, with a significant base of cultural assets on which to draw. With appropriate investment, and with commitment from its civic leaders, it can begin the process of realising that potential, and of further improving the city's already strong quality of life.

Cultural mapping of Aberdeen

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2. Introduction

BOP Consulting was commissioned in 2012 by Aberdeen City Council to map the cultural assets of the city. The reporting of that work takes two forms: an Excel spreadsheet (the Assets Map) listing the assets identified, with details on each of them, and this report, which summarises both the Assets Map and a range of other information and data collected in support of the Map itself. The Assets Map and this supporting report are intended to provide an evidence base for Aberdeen City Council on which it can build strategy going forward, and to contribute towards the city's bid for UK City of Culture 2017. They are not strategy or policy documents in their own right.

Between them, the two provide an insight into the composition of the sector and into issues such as accessibility, supply and demand, and the health and condition of the sector, both in general terms and for individual venues.

There have also been a number of consultations carried out as part of this current project. BOP has conducted face-to-face interviews with several key stakeholders in the city and beyond, and has conducted an online survey of venues and organisations, both public and private. BOP has made its own assessment of the consultations and the data, but these have been underpinned by the Assets Map findings.

This report is divided into several sections. It begins with a data and literature review that sets the Assets Map work within the wider context of Aberdeen's evolving society and economy. This is followed by a chapter exploring the findings of the online survey.

Next we take a more detailed look at a number of individual art forms and their principal venues in Aberdeen, drawing on the Assets Map, the online survey and the face-to-face interviews. This is followed by a short section looking at the wider creative industries in Aberdeen.

This in turn is followed by an analysis of the cultural assets of four comparator cities: one in the UK, two in Norway and one in Finland. These

cities were chosen for certain similarities they have with Aberdeen. All four have also either won or bid for important cultural titles.

These various elements all inform the SWOT analysis and the set of conclusions and recommendations which end our report. We hope you find it stimulating.

Cultural mapping of
Aberdeen

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3. Aberdeen in perspective

“ The city is a creative and imaginative construct, held together as much by ideas and stories as by roads and buildings. Fintan O’Toole²

3.1 Introduction

Aberdeen has been the commercial capital of the North East of Scotland for centuries. Its position on the coast between the estuaries of the Dee and Don rivers has made it a gateway to the world for its region.

The North East has long depended on its natural resources for its wealth. Farming, fishing, forestry and the quarrying of granite, along with related industries such as textiles, paper, leather and shipbuilding, have powered its economy, and helped fuel the expansion of the city in the 19th century. Combined with an emphasis on education – Aberdeen had two universities, King’s College and Marischal College, at a time when the whole of England also only had two – these provided the basis for the city’s success. Yet by the second half of the 20th century some of these advantages were beginning to fade, as traditional industries declined.

The discovery of North Sea oil and gas from the late 1960s onwards transformed Aberdeen. The city’s status as the UK’s energy capital is reflected in everything from its hotel prices to its heliport. The oil and gas industry has brought renewed prosperity and a new cosmopolitanism to Aberdeen, but has also brought a different set of challenges, as a more

transient population of ‘oilmen’ has failed to put down long-term roots in the city.

The industry has powered the recent success of Aberdeen, but is now maturing and changing. UK North Sea oil production peaked in 1999, and had been expected to decline over the coming years. However, new technologies are opening up new sources of oil and gas, and investment in exploration has increased again in the last year. This suggests that oil will remain an important part of the city’s economy for many years yet. All the same, Aberdeen is preparing for a future where it is less dependent on oil.

In many ways, it starts this journey from a position of strength. In 2011, Mercer Consulting ranked the city the 54th most liveable in the world (and third-best in the UK),³ while in 2012 HSBC named Aberdeen one of the eight ‘supercities’ that will drive the UK’s economy forward.⁴ The Office for National Statistics produced figures in 2012 indicating that Aberdeen’s residents were the happiest of any city in the UK.⁵ A recent survey by PwC rated Aberdeen the best city in Scotland for ‘good growth’ (a mix of quality of life and economic success).⁶

Unemployment and poverty are low by Scottish standards, although deprivation remains a challenge for the city. Aberdeen has two thriving universities. Much of its built environment in the city centre and Old Aberdeen is strikingly handsome. Aberdeen’s businesses are already starting to make the adjustment to a world less dominated by North Sea oil, with new high-tech engineering start-ups being formed,⁷ and smaller oil companies coming in to augment the industry’s ‘majors’. In 2011 the city was home to five of the ten largest companies in Scotland, according to Scottish Business Insider magazine.

Cultural mapping of Aberdeen

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1. ² O’Toole, F. (2013) ‘Cultural hubs: attracting intelligent tourism to Dublin requires a holistic approach’, *Irish Times*, April 13

³ Findings quoted in ACSEF (2013) *Building on success: The Economic Action Plan for Aberdeen City and Shire 2013-2018*

⁴ Findings quoted by BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-20002820> (accessed 11 March 2013)

⁵ Findings quoted by STV: <http://local.stv.tv/aberdeen/news/112340-aberdeen-ranked-as-happiest-city-in-britain-in-new-nationwide-survey/> (accessed 11 March 2013)

⁶ Findings quoted in <http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/aberdeen-is-named-best-city-to-live-in-scotland.19463187> (accessed 11 March 2013)

⁷ The Economist (2011) *Aberdeen after oil: Seeking the next wave*, May 5

Aberdeen's economic future seems to lie in high technology, especially related to the energy business, and the city has ambitious plans to become a world centre for energy technology.

To realise this vision, though, the city will have to address a number of challenges. Two in particular stand out. High-tech firms need a highly skilled workforce in order to succeed, but retaining such workers has proved hard for Aberdeen in the past. PwC has estimated that by 2022 Aberdeen has to attract around 120,000 new recruits if it is to realise its potential as a global energy capital.⁸ How can the city be made more appealing to such people?

The second major challenge was mentioned in a survey of the CEOs of Aberdeen's top 50 firms (representing 75% of the workforce) by Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum (ACSEF), a public-private partnership that promotes economic growth for the city and shire. The CEOs suggested that 'quality of life' was seen as the city's key asset, but that Aberdeen was being let down by an unwelcoming and declining city centre.

There are many elements which will play a part in addressing these two challenges, but it is clear that the role of culture and the creative industries could be significant. They can contribute much to 'place-making', giving a city the energy and buzz it needs to attract educated, younger workers in particular. (Place-making is an approach to urban planning that aims to design and manage public spaces in such a way as to make them more attractive and appealing for residents. It emphasises what is distinctive about places, and has become a key part of many cities' efforts to brand themselves.)

Their role is potentially especially important in Aberdeen because of the particular characteristics of its city centre. Both of the universities have moved out of the city centre in recent years, taking their students with them, while the density of office and residential space in the city centre is relatively low. In other cities, these elements have often contributed to city-centre regeneration, by bringing people and energy into the centre. In Aberdeen their effects are more muted. The large majority of the city's key cultural assets, on the other hand, remain in the centre. Improving

Aberdeen's cultural offer could also therefore help address the weakness of the city centre too.

The authorities in the city have recognised the opportunity culture and the creative industries offer. From its work with the CEOs, ACSEF has realised that culture and creative industries have to be priority sectors for the city. The City Council too has embraced this, as indicated by its bid to become UK City of Culture 2017.

The following sections review Aberdeen's position before the report turns to examine its cultural offer in more depth.

3.2 Data and literature review

Aberdeen's 220,000 people make it Scotland's third largest city, behind Glasgow and Edinburgh. In the last forty years Aberdeen has found a new source of wealth as it has become the capital of the UK's (and arguably Europe's) oil and gas industry. Much of Aberdeen's rural hinterland shares in this prosperity. Most of those attracted to the city by the opportunities the oil business brings do not live in the centre of Aberdeen, preferring either suburbs or locations further afield in Aberdeenshire. Average gross weekly earnings in the city were estimated at £572.40 in 2011, higher than the averages for Edinburgh (£550.50), Glasgow (£481.10) or Scotland as a whole (£466.60).⁹

Levels of deprivation remain lower than the Scottish averages. The Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation for 2012 suggest that Aberdeen has seen a relatively large decrease in its share of the most deprived neighbourhoods since 2009, implying the city is weathering the recession rather better than many other places in Scotland. Within that figure, 10.9% of Aberdeen city residents are classed as income-deprived, compared with 16.2% in Scotland, while 8.8% are classed as employment-deprived, compared with 12.8% in Scotland.¹⁰ The percentage of people claiming key benefits is also significantly lower in Aberdeen than in the country as a

⁹ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2011, quoted in *Behind the Granite: Aberdeen Key Facts 2012*, Aberdeen City Council

¹⁰ SIMD 2012 website: <http://simd.scotland.gov.uk/publication-2012/> (accessed 11 March 2013)

⁸ PwC (2012) *Northern Lights: Where are we now?*

whole.¹¹ Nevertheless the squeeze on benefits and the continuing slow growth of the economy mean that problems of poverty are likely to persist, and will remain a challenge for the city authorities.

In order to ensure that Aberdeen can sustain its economic success, an ambitious project has been initiated by ACSEF. *Energetica* aims to create the world's greatest concentration of energy technology companies, as well as new housing and leisure facilities. The project will cover a large area, stretching 30 miles north from Aberdeen to Peterhead.

This project is seen as a unique scheme, because it is not just focused on business, but is being described as a 'lifestyle corridor', including housing, education and health services, and leisure.

Clearly, such an ambitious scheme has the power to re-shape the city and give its economy renewed dynamism in the next decade. However, it will also involve re-shaping the city's culture and leisure offer.

The role of culture in urban life

Culture's contribution to urban life has long been recognised, but has come in for renewed attention over the past two decades. Thinkers such as Richard Florida and Charles Landry have drawn attention to the role of culture in 'place-making' and attracting skilled workers to a city. Florida¹² has argued for the importance of strong cultural offers, both formal and informal, in making a place attractive to 'knowledge workers', especially those he labels the 'creative class'. These people are, in his view, key drivers of modern urban economies, and increasingly make their choices about where to live based on the character of a city, rather than following their job wherever it takes them. In a world in which people rarely work for the same company for all their working life, these wider lifestyle factors have much more impact on location decisions. The presence of more 'bohemian' sub-cultures in a city is often an indicator, Florida argues, of the tolerance of difference that such workers are looking for – they want to be able to 'be themselves', and they look for evidence of diversity and a lively cultural life in their choice of location.

Charles Landry has made similar arguments in his work, arguing that culture and creativity are keys to the success of contemporary cities. Aberdeen City Council commissioned a profile of the city from him in 2011. Landry's research examined Aberdeen, but also explored the approaches of other 'energy cities' (including Houston, Calgary, Perth, Abu Dhabi, St John's and Stavanger) to culture. For him, as for Florida, culture is a way of attracting the bright people a city needs to thrive economically. He observed that all energy cities are engaged in a global battle for talent. 'Since place matters more than ever it is the level of attractiveness, liveability, and cultural richness and vitality that determines urban success'. Landry's report examined the strategies the 'energy cities' were taking to securing their economic futures. He identified five themes that were emerging across the cities:

- A rediscovery of strategic planning
- A desire to make great contemporary places
- Putting culture centre stage
- Iconic communication and branding
- Future proofing and resilience.

Five of the eight cities in his study had very ambitious cultural plans, as part of an effort to broaden and improve perceptions of their cities.

While Aberdeen has many cultural strengths, it also faces some challenges in this respect. Landry observed that Aberdeen is a successful place and a beautiful city but goes on to note that 'ugliness and blandness have invaded the city'. He sees the decline of Union Street, the city's most important street, as emblematic of these problems.

It would seem that this is a problem recognised by the wider business community too. In ACSEF's survey of the CEOs of the 50 top companies in the area (representing 75% of the workforce) they were asked what attracted them to Aberdeen and what would make them leave. While they praised the city's quality of life, many pointed to the city centre as an eyesore to which they would not bring visitors, and described Aberdeen as a high-tech city where the city centre has failed to keep up. A recent news article quotes Sandy Clark of the engineering firm, AMEC, as saying: 'Our poor city centre is often cited as a major obstacle in attracting people

¹¹ Nomisweb Labour market profile of Aberdeen City <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432121/report.aspx> (accessed 11 March 2013)

¹² Florida, R. (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Basic Books, New York

and investment ... The city must have a vibrant attractive centre as a focal point for its many other quality of life attributes'.¹³

Aberdeen's people are increasingly able to compare Aberdeen's cultural offer with that of other cities. The population in city and shire may be relatively small but is well-travelled: more so than the rest of the UK population on average¹⁴. The community is cosmopolitan, with significant inflows of migrant workers from eastern Europe in recent years.

With a sophisticated population and implicit support from the business community, there is a strong case for re-positioning the cultural offer.

3.3 Aberdeen's cultural strategy

Perhaps the key document describing Aberdeen's approach to culture is its cultural strategy, *Vibrant Aberdeen*,¹⁵ written in 2010. This sets out some of the challenges facing the city. The report begins by stating that Aberdeen is

[A] city where good practice does exist, a city with a unique cultural heritage, a city where talented and passionate individuals and organisations produce magnificent work. It is clear that Aberdeen is a city full of cultural potential.

It goes on to acknowledge, though, that Aberdeen has historically had other priorities. The strategy argues that the city 'will not fulfil its cultural potential without setting out a vision for the future and more importantly putting the resources and structures behind this vision in order to make it a reality'. It notes that 'significant progress' is required in the cultural sector to achieve this, and proposes its own vision: that 'Aberdeen will be a vibrant, creative and ambitious city'.

The strategy argues that the lack of vision is a reflection in part of the city's policies since the oil and gas industry began its expansion. Higher education, retail and leisure were prioritised ahead of culture, with the

result, it says, that Aberdeen has low cultural participation rates and low levels of awareness and understanding of the city's culture. The strategy concludes that Aberdeen has lost its 'collective cultural identity'.

Five strategic objectives were identified for the city to try and remedy this:

- Establish a cohesive cultural sector
- Increase community engagement in cultural activity
- Improve the city's cultural profile
- Increase investment in culture
- Effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of culture

It could be argued that developments since then – such as the commitment to supporting the cultural budget in tough economic times, the backing of the UK City of Culture bid and the funding commitment for the Aberdeen Art Gallery refurbishment – represent the outlines of a vision for culture in the city.

Charles Landry made some comments in his research that have a bearing on Aberdeen's approach to culture. He believes that Aberdeen may be focusing too much on the issue of cultural participation, and may be overlooking the 'more high-status, representational or image driven benefits that the arts can offer'. Secondly, he feels that those responsible for culture need to be much better connected with other areas of Aberdeen life, such as the business community or economic development, while similarly noting that engaging the oil and gas industries with civic society and leadership is necessary. He went on to suggest the establishment of a multi-stakeholder entity to benefit Aberdeen's cultural offer moving forward.

Landry also notes the potential benefits to Aberdeen in operating as a city region, especially given the combined population of city and shire is just 500,000, and of capitalising on the 'Northern Arc' in which it sits – stretching from Murmansk in the east to Northern USA and Canada in the west.

Spending on arts in Aberdeen

According to data from CIPFA, Aberdeen is relatively generous in its support for the arts. Aberdeen City spent £16.38 on the arts per head of

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¹³ Cities Today (2013) *A Tale of Two Cities*, 20 January

¹⁴ Aberdeen airport reports that the average number of flights taken amounts to over five per person per annum for the catchment area of the airport. This is well over double the average of other UK airports.

¹⁵ Aberdeen Cultural Forum (2010) *Vibrant Aberdeen: A Cultural Strategy for Aberdeen*

population in 2010/11, ranking it 6th out of 28 respondents in Scotland. The figure had grown from £13.63 in 2008/09 though Aberdeen's relative ranking had not changed in that time.

Aberdeen is home to two of Creative Scotland's 44 foundation organisations: Peacock Visual Arts and CityMoves.

Growing Audiences North East (GANE) is a partnership between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, supported by Creative Scotland, which contracted HI-Arts to deliver a three year Audience Development programme across the North-East of Scotland from 2009 to 2012.

Private and business investment in the arts

Arts & Business does not publish figures at city-wide level, but it has calculated that for Scotland as a whole private and business investment amounted to just under £70m in 2010/11. Individual giving accounted for £47m, with £11.2m coming from trust and foundations. Business sponsorship brought in a further £10m. While these are valuable contributions, they imply that the public sector remains the most important source of funding for much cultural activity in Scotland. The evidence from our interviews suggested that while some of the larger companies in Aberdeen do sponsor cultural activity, the level of business sponsorship of the arts in Aberdeen overall is modest.

Aberdeen's cultural assets

Aberdeen's cultural assets have been studied before, as part of the research findings of a feasibility study for a cultural centre.¹⁶ This looked in more depth at the specifics of Aberdeen's cultural offer. While the report is a little dated now, a number of its conclusions recurred in conversations conducted for the current research, so are worth revisiting.

The report suggested that Aberdeen's cultural sector is potentially stronger than it might at first appear. The city and shire have a relatively affluent population, with above average concentrations of groups that (according to segmentation analysis) are more likely to attend arts events.

The distribution of facilities and the number of seats per head were found to be broadly similar to those of Norwich and Southampton, two comparable cities.

The report found that the main needs for the city were for:

- Office, storage, and workshop space for arts development and education
- Dance rehearsal, tuition and workshop space
- Flexible space for small-scale dance productions
- Music rehearsal and workshop space
- Drama rehearsal and workshop space
- Flexible space for small-scale drama productions
- New visual arts space to achieve vision of Peacock Visual Arts
- Presentation of small- to mid-scale music performances.

UK City of Culture bid

ACSEF's just-published Economic Action Plan 2013-18¹⁷ aims to secure Aberdeen's place as one of Britain's most economically successful cities. The report identifies the UK City of Culture 2017 bid as a key element of place promotion, and as a strategic priority for the city and shire. As part of this, the cultural profile of Aberdeen city and shire will need to be raised.

Aberdeen contemplated a bid for UK City of Culture 2013. Research¹⁸ for that proposal found that the process of developing such a bid, if done in partnership with other city bodies, can be a catalyst for lasting change. While Aberdeen only produced an outline bid for the 2013 competition, the feedback from the DCMS was positive, with the quality of the city's cultural infrastructure being recognised.

The research for the 2013 proposal goes on to note that a City of Culture bid can help a city 'make significant progress on delivering their vision for the future'. A UKCC bid can provide a focus with the potential to transform

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¹⁶ Richard Gerald Associates (2006) *Feasibility Study for a Cultural Centre in Aberdeen: Research Findings*, Aberdeen City Council

¹⁷ ACSEF Building on success: The Economic Action Plan for Aberdeen City and Shire 2013-18

¹⁸ Cited in Aberdeen City Council Committee UK City of Culture 2017 report ECS/12/030

a city. Aberdeen has decided therefore to pursue a bid for UK City of Culture 2017.

Another report, from the Institute of Cultural Capital¹⁹ confirmed some of these arguments. It examined the experience of three cities which had taken part in, but not won, the UK City of Culture 2013 competition. The report found that ‘the UKCC competition acted as a powerful catalyst in galvanising cities to think more strategically about their cultural offer, identity and heritage within a national context and in comparison to other drivers’. The report went on to note that the ‘experience of bidding for a cultural title seems to generate a shared feeling that ‘culture is good’ and is worthy of celebrating’.

3.4 Demand analysis for cultural activity

This report primarily looks at cultural activity through the prism of the supply of cultural assets. However, the cultural offer of a place is also determined by the demand for culture. This section will therefore explore what is known about cultural demand within the Aberdeen area.

The last major Scotland-wide survey of cultural activity was carried out in 2009/10, as part of the Scottish Household Survey.²⁰ The survey found that 83% of the adult population in Aberdeen had attended one or more arts or cultural activity during the previous 12 months, compared with 74% in Scotland as a whole.

Figure 1 Percentage of people taking part in:

	2009/10	2009/10	2007/08	2007/08
	Aberdeen City	Scotland	Aberdeen City	Scotland
Participation in Cultural activities	74	71	75	72
Attendance at cultural events	83	74	80	75

Source: Scottish Household Survey

Aberdonians are most likely to go to the cinema (60%), with the theatre (32%), the library (31%) and live music events (29%) also being popular. Aberdeen residents attended these four activities in higher proportions than did Scottish residents as a whole. These figures partly reflect Aberdeen’s well-qualified population: 94% of those with degrees attended a cultural event in that year.

When participation is considered, the Aberdeen data indicates that reading for pleasure is the most popular activity (65%), followed by dance (21%), and crafts and arts (13%). Aberdeen is slightly above the Scottish average for these three activities, but for the majority of activities it is little different from Scotland as a whole. Overall, 74% of Aberdeen residents took part in a cultural activity, compared with 71% in Scotland in 2009/10.

It should be noted that other surveys may reach different conclusions: *Vibrant Aberdeen* quotes data from the Scottish Arts Council’s *Taking Part* survey of 2008, suggesting that cultural participation rates were lower in North East Scotland (including Aberdeen) than in Scotland as a whole.

¹⁹ Wilson, K. and O’Brien, D. (2012) *It’s not the winning ...*, Institute of Cultural Capital

²⁰ A later Scottish Household Survey, conducted in 2011 and published in 2012, does not include data broken down by local authority area

3.5 MOSAIC analysis

In 2011 Culture Sparks conducted an analysis of Aberdeen's population on behalf of the National Theatre of Scotland. The research²¹ looked at the people who live in the postal sectors that cover the Aberdeen City Council area, though it should be noted that these sectors stretch outside the boundaries of the city itself to some of the small towns in its periphery – the assessment covered just under 250,000 people. Culture Sparks used Experian's MOSAIC analysis system to do this, a method of classifying people into groups and types that also gives some indication of their cultural tastes.

Culture Sparks' research found that the population was broadly but evenly spread across a number of categories. The four largest, each accounting for between 12 and 14% of the households in the population, were Country Lifestyles, Upper Echelons, Renters now Owning, and Urban Sophisticates.

- Country Lifestyles neighbourhoods tend to combine country quiet with accessibility to urban centres, and often become prime commuting territory (Cults in Aberdeen is a good example, according to Culture Sparks). Income levels in such places often vary considerably.
- Upper Echelons tend to be successful middle-aged couples with families mostly living in suburban neighbourhoods such as Milltimber. Such people are informed and well-travelled, but are less likely to be interested in the arts than some other groups.
- Urban Sophisticates tend to be singles or young childless couples living in city centre locations. Culture Sparks states that in Aberdeen they are often found in the city centre and in central areas of Old Aberdeen. Such people value diversity and personal mobility and are enthusiastic consumers, including of culture. Their lifestyle is partly expressed through the clubs and pubs they go to, and the music they listen to.
- Renters now Owning tend to be living in ex-council housing in reasonably pleasant neighbourhoods. Typically they are families with

young or teenage children. The group has mid-market consumer and leisure tastes, such as attending multiplex cinemas.

This is not to suggest that Aberdeen does not have poor people living in it. For one thing, the MOSAIC analysis looks at households rather than number of people: average household size may be smaller among, say, Urban Sophisticates than among other groups. Two categories, State Beneficiaries and Low Income Families, account for almost 8% of households between them. Nevertheless, Culture Sparks concludes that Aberdeen's population is 'one of affluent families living a mixture of suburban and rural lifestyles, balanced by downtown urbanites and younger couples now owning their council housing'.

3.6 Audience development

BOP facilitated a discussion on audience development with ACC and stakeholders as part of the study process. It was felt that in theory a satisfactory amount of cultural activity exists to meet demand in Aberdeen. But a number of factors mean that this cultural activity often appears to be limited, and practitioners fail to maximise their audiences. The stakeholders suggested that:

- The cultural sector is fragmented: people work within their own art forms and fields and are sometimes unaware of good work happening elsewhere. This assertion seems to be supported by our survey findings, where people tended to rate the quality of their own art form in Aberdeen more positively than the city's general cultural offer.
- There is no sense yet of a critical mass of cultural activity in the city
- Contemporary or alternative practitioners often lack the resources (financial or skills) to make themselves more visible and to reach a wider audience
- So far there is little cross-promotion and cross-marketing of cultural activities between different audiences (unlike, say, the Cheltenham Festivals joint brand and marketing programme)

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²¹ Culture Sparks (2011) *Aberdeen Extreme: Nothing to See Here* profile

- National media focus on Glasgow and Edinburgh events and broadcasts, suppressing awareness of activity in Aberdeen. Paradoxically, local media too are sometimes thought to downplay the city's cultural offer.

It was suggested that, as a result of this dislocation, Aberdeen audiences may be fragmented into avid followers of specific art forms or organisations who are unaware of activity elsewhere. It was noted that even creative students take a while to locate the city's scenes, which makes them more likely to leave and to build careers elsewhere.

Audiences can therefore be developed by resolving structural problems of the sector: overcoming its fragmentation and coordinating marketing. This would be supported by capacity building for promising contemporary or alternative practitioners. The overall goal would be to increase the visibility and reach of all Aberdeen's cultural organisations, thus further building demand and audiences in the city.

4. Survey of Aberdeen's cultural offer

Before we consider the individual art forms we will review the assessment made in the online survey of the overall strengths of Aberdeen's cultural offer, and of the associated facilities which indirectly support it.

The survey link was emailed to those cultural assets for which we had a valid email address and which it made sense to survey – we did not try to gather responses related to public art or parks, for example. A link to the survey was also posted on the Aberdeen City Council website, allowing anyone with an interest in the sector to give their views.

There were two versions of the survey. One was for people responsible for venues, the other for those who led organisations which do not have a permanent base of their own (which are mostly amateur groups). Three responses were received after the official deadline for closure of the survey. These have not been included in this chapter's analysis, but have informed the discussion of individual assets in the chapter that follows.

In all, 41 responses were received (a full list is shown in Appendix 2). While the number of responses is not huge, it nonetheless included almost all the key cultural venues and organisations in the city, including the three APA venues, the AECC, Aberdeen Art Gallery, the Maritime Museum, the Central Library, the two universities, Peacock Visual Arts, Satrosphere Science Centre, the Belmont Picturehouse, CityMoves Dance Agency, the Aberdeen International Youth Festival and the sound festival.

The venues' survey received 26 responses. Eight came from primarily visual arts venues, four from libraries, two each from theatres, heritage attractions and rock and pop venues, with the balance coming from other art forms.

Looking first at the 26 'venues' survey responses, overall, their opinions of their venue's condition varied, with 'good' being the most common response for both external and internal condition.

Figure 2 Condition of venue (self-reported)

	External structural condition	Internal structural condition
Very good	15.4%	19.2%
Good	42.3%	38.5%
Neither good nor poor	23.1%	19.2%
Poor	15.4%	19.2%

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

There seem to be more problems with administrative, storage and rehearsal space. Here, the percentage reporting 'poor' or 'very poor' is a large minority of the responses.

Figure 3 Suitability of premises:

	Admin/office space	Storage needs	Rehearsal needs
Very good	16.0%	12.0%	18.2%
Good	48.0%	24.0%	27.3%
Neither good nor poor	8.0%	20.0%	18.2%
Poor	24.0%	28.0%	27.3%
Very poor	4.0%	16.0%	9.1%

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

While respondents gave varied responses to questions around accessibility by transport, two issues recurred in comments made. Firstly, parking is a problem. This applies to customers – there is no free parking in the city centre, and most of the commercial car parks close in the

evening, before night-time events have finished – and to loading and unloading. There are similar problems with public transport: trains and buses do not run late at night, restricting the night-time economy.

It should also be noted that this analysis is inevitably somewhat subjective, and shaped by the particular audience the venue is aiming to attract. Thus the answers about accessibility by public transport differed even for venues that are in close proximity to each other.

Figure 4 Accessibility of venue by:

	Public transport	Physical accessibility
Very good	32.0%	20.0%
Good	48.0%	48.0%
Neither good nor poor	16.0%	20.0%
Poor	4.0%	8.0%

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

Almost two-thirds of respondents (65.4%) carry out education or outreach work of some kind.

Two-thirds of them (64.0%) also have plans to develop their premises, though only a fifth are contemplating changing their programming.

Figure 5 Do you have plans to:

	Develop premises	Change type of programming
Yes	64.0%	20.8%
No	16.0%	79.2%
N/A	20.0%	

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

Next, people were asked to assess aspects of Aberdeen’s cultural life more generally.

Most of those who responded regarded Aberdeen’s cultural offer in their primary art form as either very good or good for a place of its size.

Audience demand for that art form was also typically regarded as either very good or good. However, when asked to consider the cultural offer in Aberdeen more generally, the majority thoughts it was only average for a city of its size. Clearly, respondents generally rate their own art form higher than the culture in general.

Figure 6 Quality of offer

	Offer in your primary art form	Demand for culture in Aberdeen	Overall cultural offer
Very good	44.0%	28.0%	4.0%
Good	32.0%	48.0%	28.0%
Average	20.0%	16.0%	52.0%
Poor		8.0%	8.0%
Very poor	4.0%		8.0%

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

Finally, people were asked to assess the quality of related activities in Aberdeen. The majority rated pubs and bars, restaurants and retail in the city as good (or better), though a sizeable minority rated them ‘average’. Only a handful rated the offer as poor or very poor, with pubs/bars most likely to be so mentioned.

Figure 7 Assessment of related activities

	Pubs/bars	Restaurants	Hotels	Retail
Very good	12.0%	8.0%		
Good	52.0%	56.0%	60.0%	62.5%
Average	24.0%	28.0%	40.0%	29.2%
Poor	8.0%	8.0%		8.3%
Very poor	4.0%			

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

A smaller group of 12 responses were received from the organisations without a venue. The large majority of these are amateur organisations. Half of them were classical music groups; the remainder included theatre, visual art and opera.

The groups performed or exhibited at a range of venues across town, including the Music Hall, the Art Gallery, the Lemon Tree, the Arts Centre and various churches and cathedrals (most notably Queen’s Cross Church and St Machar’s Cathedral). Churches were the most likely venues to be cited as rehearsal or practice spaces.

The majority were satisfied with the venues they used for these activities.

Figure 8 The condition of:

	Usual performance space	Usual rehearsal space
Very good	41.7%	20.0%
Good	33.3%	50.0%
Neither good nor poor	16.7%	20.0%

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

The groups were also generally happy with the accessibility of their performance spaces.

Figure 9 Accessibility of performance venue

	By public transport	Physical accessibility
Very good	58.3%	16.7%
Good	41.7%	66.7%
Neither good nor poor		8.3%
Poor		8.3%

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

Ten of the 12 respondents carried out education or outreach work. When asked what barriers they faced to increasing audiences, the concerns that were raised tended to focus on marketing and funding: raising the visibility of small groups and of meeting costs for venue hire, for example.

Ten of the 12 had no plans to change their programming significantly.

Next, they were asked to consider the quality of the cultural offer in Aberdeen. As with the first group of respondents, people generally rated their own art form’s offer as being better than that of Aberdeen overall.

Figure 10 Quality of offer

	Offer in your primary art form	Demand for culture in Aberdeen	Overall cultural offer
Very good	45.5%	25.0%	8.3%
Good	45.5%	41.7%	58.3%
Average		33.3%	25.0%
Poor	9.1%		8.3%

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

Finally, people were asked for their views on the wider offer of Aberdeen. A majority thought it was good or very good in most respects.

Figure 11 Quality of related activities

Column header	Pubs/bars	Restaurants	Hotels	Retail
Very good	16.7%	16.7%	8.3%	16.7%
Good	66.7%	41.7%	58.3%	66.7%
Average	16.7%	41.7%	33.3%	
Poor				16.7%

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

5. Cultural assets by art form

The detailed mapping of cultural assets can be found in the database that accompanies this report. In all, we identified 204 assets across a range of art forms agreed with ACC. There will be a few gaps, and it is likely that some amateur activity in particular has been missed. We have also focused on those venues which are used primarily for cultural activity: those venues which are used only occasionally for such activity, such as community centres, have been excluded. The selection process focused on publicly accessible forms of culture.

Given that the city's culture is constantly evolving – new venues or organisations open, other venues close – this list is inevitably just a snapshot taken at a particular time. Nevertheless, the database provides a good sense of where the bulk of Aberdeen's cultural offer is happening.

It should also be pointed out that the database does not set out to capture creative businesses (with some exceptions for commercial art galleries and commercial music venues and promoters), which are dealt with in a separate section of this report; nor does it look at creative individuals, on the grounds that they are mobile and could easily leave the city should they want to; or venues or organisations that affect the city's cultural offer, but which are based outside the city. Thus Woodend Barn in Banchory is not included, even though Aberdonians attend cultural events there, and nor are Scottish Ballet or Scottish Opera, which are regular visitors to the city but are not based here.

We will now look in turn at Aberdeen’s offer in a number of areas in more detail: theatre, music, multi-purpose venues, visual art, film/cinema, dance, museums and libraries, and festivals. This draws in part on the assets database, with the assessments of conditions and accessibility coming from the online survey.

5.1 Theatre

Figure 12 Summary of characteristics of principal theatrical venues

	His Majesty’s Theatre	Lemon Tree (160 seat studio theatre and music venue)	Tivoli theatre
Venue condition (self-rated)	V.good externally/good internally, except for poor storage space	Poor externally and internally	Currently closed
Accessibility inc. transport	Good for public transport, good for physical accessibility	Good for public transport, neither good nor poor for physical accessibility	Close to main bus and train station
Nature of output	Theatre, opera, dance, visual art	Rock/pop music, theatre, dance	Due to host opening event in Sept 2013; subsequent programming intentions unclear
Education/ outreach work?	Yes	Yes	
FTE staff employed	145 across all thee APA venues	APA venue	
Number of volunteers	15 across APA venues	APA venue	
Plans for future	No sig. physical development necessary, ambitions to improve repertoire	Sig. physical repairs needed, programming to be improved, would like to be festivals hub	Seeking grants for continued restoration

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

5.1.1 Principal venues

His Majesty's Theatre (HMT) is a 1,470 seat theatre in the city centre. It opened in 1906, in a decade which saw a wave of theatre-building in Scottish cities. The rise of cinema-going and changing tastes brought it close to closure in the early 1930s, but it was bought by a local cinema owner, James Donald, and remained in his family's hands until 1975, when the Council purchased it. His Majesty's Theatre has been refurbished in recent years and is generally in very good condition, though there is a lack of storage space. HMT's programme is a mix of mainstream fare, such as pantomime and jukebox musicals, with visits from national companies such as Scottish Ballet and Scottish Opera. While it is primarily a venue for performing arts (theatre, opera and dance) it also hosts visual arts exhibitions in its dress bar.

Aberdeen Performing Arts is responsible for three venues: HMT, the Music Hall and the Lemon Tree. It has recently recruited the highly regarded Jane Spiers as its chief executive, who has a track record of success in Perth and Stirling. HMT is part of the Number One touring circuit. It is primarily a receiving theatre, though it does occasionally produce shows, such as *The Cone Gatherers*.

No major redevelopment of the building's physical structure is necessary. However, there are ambitions to improve the programming at the venue, by exploring opportunities to produce and commission in the performing arts as well as presenting touring work. To achieve these ambitions, HMT will require additional financial investment, the support of Creative Scotland and the sector.

Lemon Tree: 160 seats in a studio theatre. It also has a lounge (with bar) for music, which can hold 550 standing. The Lemon Tree was in a poor condition, but the council and APA have this year committed significant investments to make the property wind- and water-tight, and to upgrade the heating systems controls. Although it has been a successful venue in the past, it was thought to have 'lost its way' before it was incorporated into Aberdeen Performing Arts (APA). It now has a focus on alternative entertainment, including stand-up comedy and music, theatre, dance and children's shows. While it attracts a broad spectrum of customers, there is a focus on the under-30s.

Lack of resources is an issue for the Lemon Tree. Creative Scotland has withdrawn £200,000 of funding in the last two years and its future is uncertain without further investment in the physical fabric of the building and in programming. APA feels that it is not in a position to continue underwriting losses at the Lemon Tree as it (APA) is facing cutbacks itself.

APA would like to develop the Lemon Tree as a festivals hub for the North East, and build relationships with key regional and national festival partners. It is also exploring the potential for the Lemon Tree to be a hub for new writing for the stage. If it had the programming funds, APA would like to develop more adventurous programming, especially for younger audiences.

The Tivoli theatre is a privately owned and historic former theatre. Opened in 1872 as Her Majesty's Theatre, its interior was later transformed by the celebrated theatre designer Frank Matcham, and it re-opened in 1910 as the Tivoli theatre, specialising in variety. It was used as a bingo hall from 1966 to 1998, but it has been 'dark' since then. The Tivoli Theatre Trust was set up in 1999 by arts and music organisations in Aberdeen to try and buy the property but this has proved unsuccessful. However, the theatre's current owner, Brian Hendry, has held talks with the Trust, and there are apparently plans to restore the theatre, creating a 450-seat auditorium, a cafe and a gallery, for use by professional touring theatre, music and dance companies, and local non-professional companies. The building's facade has been restored, and the building made watertight, but further progress will depend on funding being secured from the likes of the Heritage Lottery Fund. An application for capital funding to Creative Scotland was unsuccessful.

The consensus among those we spoke to was that the city lacks a good mid-sized performing arts space to, for example, support an enhanced festivals offer. Although the Tivoli is scheduled to have an opening event in the autumn of 2013, as far as BOP is aware there are no firm plans yet for it to be used regularly for theatrical productions, and it is unclear what the venue's long-term prospects might be.

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5.1.2 Other activity

University activity:

- **University of Aberdeen.** The Student Show is an annual revue that has week-long residency at His Majesty's Theatre. There is a student drama society, which stages four productions a year, often at Aberdeen Arts Centre. There is also a musical theatre society, Treading the Boards, and a Gilbert & Sullivan Society.
- **RGU:** RoGUES is RGU's Drama Society. It produces plays, and has performed at the Lemon Tree.

Amateur activity: The city also has a number of amateur theatre groups, including Phoenix Theatre/Phoenix Youth Theatre, Act2 youth theatre and Attic Theatre Company. These perform in a number of venues, including the Aberdeen Arts Centre.

5.1.3 Assessment of offer quality

The city has three potential professional theatre spaces of differing sizes (HMT, the Lemon Tree and the Tivoli), as well as a venue for amateur activity in Aberdeen Arts Centre. Were all these sites to be repaired they would amount to a strong infrastructure base for theatre in Aberdeen (at the moment, only HMT is in good condition). However, the costs of the repairs are likely to be significant, and in the current economic climate may be hard to realise. The plans for the Tivoli have been rejected by Creative Scotland, and it seems unlikely that, as things stand, it will become a regular theatrical venue in the near future. While APA has planned a more ambitious programme of theatre for the Lemon Tree, it remains a small-scale venue. The city's current theatre offer is therefore largely dependent on His Majesty's Theatre.

There is a lack of a producing culture in Aberdeen theatre. Jane Spiers has ambitious plans to develop APA's producing culture but this may take some time to bear fruit. Past in-house productions such as The Cone Gatherers have failed to reach hoped-for audiences in the city.

University and amateur activity is present in the city, but does not appear to be unusually active. Neither of the universities has a particularly strong reputation for drama.

Aberdeen's theatre offer thus appears to be unexceptional for a city of its size, although there is potential for improvement.

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5.1.4 Music

Aberdeen has a wide range of music assets, ranging from the major venues listed below to commercial live music venues and promoters, amateur orchestras and choirs, and rehearsal studios. Some venues classed under other headings in this survey, including Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre and the Lemon Tree, are also important parts of the city's music offer.

Figure 13 Summary of characteristics of principal music venues

	Music Hall	Cowdray Hall	Mitchell Hall
Venue condition (self-rated)	Poor internally and externally	Discussed in section 4.4	Currently closed
Accessibility inc. transport	Good for public transport/average for physical accessibility		
Nature of output	Classical music, rock/pop music, dance		
Education/ outreach work?	Yes		
FTE staff employed	145 employed across APA venues		
Number of volunteers	15 (across APA)		
Plans for future	Major renovation planned, to upgrade auditorium, create new spaces and to tackle backlog of repairs. Programming changes too.		

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

5.1.5 Principal venues

The Music Hall is a category A listed Georgian building in the heart of the city centre, on Union Street. It holds around 1,300 at seated shows and almost 1,500 at standing ones. It offers a mix of events ranging from classical, pop and folk concerts to comedy gigs.

The building is spectacular, with very good acoustics, but is in need of major redevelopment. There is a need to upgrade and restore the auditorium, improve access and circulation, and to create a new bar and foyer, office accommodation and storage, and learning space. There are also more general needs to upgrade backstage areas and undertake essential repairs and maintenance.

Given the architectural and historic significance of the building, the project may be able to secure funding from heritage bodies. A business plan has already been written, and a number of milestones have already been set: the selection of architects by the end of February 2013, Stage B designs by May 2013, Stage D by March 2014, onsite Jan 2015. The project needs to have £5m of funding in place by October 2014. Application will be made to ACC, Creative Scotland and the HLF. Support from ACC is particularly important if this project is to be realised.

If the project happens, APA also hopes to improve the programming at the Music Hall. Among its ambitions are more commissioned music; more unique curated music programming; signature events and niche programming strands unique to Aberdeen; to introduce some literature programming; and some more classical sessions.

Cowdray Hall: The Cowdray Hall is also centrally located, originally being built as an extension to Aberdeen Art Gallery. It is a concert venue with 300 seats in its auditorium. Although its acoustics are reportedly excellent, its small stage with a permanently placed piano and no other facilities means that, as a performance venue, it is suitable only for chamber music. Other events, such as art workshops and dances are also held in the Hall.

Refurbishment of the Cowdray Hall is included as part of the ambitious plans proposed for Aberdeen Art Gallery.

The Mitchell Hall at Marischal College has 400 seats, a piano and two organs. The north wing of the College, which includes Mitchell Hall, has been retained by the original owner, the University of Aberdeen, but is currently closed. (The remainder of the College is also owned by the University, but has been leased to Aberdeen City Council.)

The lack of a mid-sized venue that can be used by larger ensembles means that the likes of the Scottish Ensemble perform at **Queen's Cross Church** when they visit Aberdeen, though that in turn is still too small. This lack of a good mid-sized venue may help explain why Aberdeen has no resident ensemble, while there are five nationally funded ones in Glasgow and Edinburgh. **St Machar's Cathedral** also hosts music events.

5.1.6 Other activity

University activity:

The university is currently conducting options appraisals looking at the case for an on-campus venue for performance and rehearsal, and (with the City Council) a possible on/off campus collections storage facility.

- The University of Aberdeen hosts a biennial international music prize (for new works for a string quartet), and hosts a weekend of workshops, masterclasses, talks and concerts around the prize-giving.

Its Music Department also houses the World Music Centre. It puts on workshops, concerts and master-classes throughout the year.

The music department is home to the Electro-acoustic Music Studio, which among other things runs a series of electro-acoustic concerts. The University of Aberdeen has a number of music groups, including a Symphony Orchestra, Chapel Choir and various chamber ensembles. The University's Choral Society and Concert Band are open to the general public to join, as well as students.

- RGU has two music societies: RGU Music and the Live Music Society

Amateur activity:

There is a strong history of amateur music performance and appreciation in the city, dating back at least to 1748, when the Aberdeen Musical Society was founded. (It was for several decades one of Scotland's main platforms for the promotion of concert music.) This rich tradition

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continues to this day. There are opportunities both for musicians – Aberdeen Sinfonietta, Aberdeen Chamber Orchestra, Learig Orchestra – and singers: Aberdeen Opera Company, the Aberdeen Bach Choir and the Aberdeen Chorus of Sweet Adelines (barbershop), among others.

Commercial activity:

For live pop music there are a number of commercial music venues, including The Tunnels and Cafe Drummonds. The Blue Lamp pub is a venue for live jazz. A number of the city’s clubs also host guest DJs.

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5.1.7 Assessment of offer quality

Music appears to be a real strength of Aberdeen’s. It potentially has a range of venues of different sizes, from the AECC to the Music Hall, HMT, the Lemon Tree and the Cowdray Hall, though some of these are in need of significant repair. The plans for the Music Hall redevelopment are at an advanced stage, with a competition having been held to select an architect.

The city also has a number of commercial venues – pubs and clubs – which support live music, including some more niche activity, such as live jazz at the Blue Lamp. There are several music promoters and small record labels in the city (though the latter have not been included in the Cultural Assets Map, as they are regarded as part of the creative industries). The city and shire have produced a number of singer-songwriters, among them Annie Lennox and Emilie Sandé.

Amateur activity is strong with a range of societies supporting both the performance and appreciation of music in a variety of forms, including traditional Scottish folk music. Aberdeen University in particular has a strong music department, with an expanding number of students and staff. The University department is one of the focal points of an emerging electronic music scene in the city.

The city also supports a number of music festivals: among them the Sound Festival, Aberdeen International Youth Festival and the Aberdeen Jazz Festival. These festivals are all quite ‘niche’, however; Aberdeen lacks a mass celebration of its musical heritage. The long-standing absence of a professional music company in the city is also striking, given Aberdeen’s status as Scotland’s third city.

5.2 Multi-purpose venues

The flexibility of multi-purpose venues means they can support different aspects of Aberdeen's cultural offer.

Figure 14 Summary of characteristics of principal multi-art form venues

	Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre	Aberdeen Arts Centre	Beach Ballroom
Venue condition (self-rated)	Poor externally and internally	Poor externally, average internally	Average externally, good for internal admin space/poor for storage space
Accessibility inc. transport	Good for public transport, though road signage is an issue; very good for public accessibility	Good for public transport, average for public accessibility	Average, but needs better disabled access
Nature of output	Comedy, Sporting events, Dinner dances, Exhibitions, Conferences, Meetings, Award Ceremonies, rock and pop, theatre	Classical music, opera, theatre, dance, design, craft, TV and film, visual arts	Visual arts, Classical Music, Opera, Rock/pop music, Theatre, Dance, Design, Heritage, Craft, TV/film
Education/ outreach work?	No	Yes	No
FTE staff employed	64 (plus many casuals)	6	10
Number of volunteers		80	None
Plans for future	Covered by Aberdeen City Council lead development plans	Internal redesign and refurbishment	Ongoing refurbishment to maintain and win new business

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

5.2.1 Principal venues

A number of Aberdeen venues serve multiple art forms. They vary considerably in size and type, with the largest being the **Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre**, with an arena capacity of 4,800 seats or up to 8,500 standing (depending on the configuration). It hosts rock and pop concerts and comedy shows, as well as major trade shows for the energy sector, exhibitions and conferences. It is able to attract major acts; recent performers have included Gary Barlow, JLS, Eddie Izzard and Florence and the Machine.

The conference part of the Centre has been refurbished, and a viewing tower built. In May £26m owed to the City Council by AECC was written off (by the Council). There are now proposals to extend the capacity of the venue. The current hall is 27 years old, and the AECC reportedly has to turn down some acts. The auditorium at the venue is in need of both internal and external repairs. It is estimated a new arena might cost £20m.

There has been a suggestion recently that AECC (along with Aberdeen FC) will move to a new site at Dyce, closer to the airport.

Aberdeen Arts Centre is a multi-arts venue towards the centre of town, occupying a category A-listed converted church close to the Lemon Tree. It provides a mix of comedy, drama, dance, musicals and cabaret, primarily for amateur groups. The Arts Centre's condition is no more than adequate, and is not thought suitable for major professional performers. The Centre is fifty years old this year, and there are plans for a total internal redesign and refurbishment of both the Arts Centre and the Children's Theatre buildings. Plans have been drawn up for this, and costings done.

The Beach Ballroom was built in the 1920s when Aberdeen's beach was enjoying something of a boom. The Ballroom has survived when other buildings of the time, such as the Beach Pavilion, have not, and currently consists of a large ballroom and five other function rooms. Nevertheless, it needs major capital investment to make the building 100% wind- and water-tight, and to take the building back to its former art deco glory.

On a smaller scale, there is on-going refurbishment to maintain and win new business particularly in the wedding and conference markets.

The Beach Ballroom is looking to change its programming, by opening the venue for all kinds of business, including as a music venue, for weddings and exhibitions, art exhibitions and public shows and heritage.

5.2.2 Assessment of offer quality

Once again, Aberdeen infrastructure is potentially strong but in need of repair. The AECC is a major asset, but its location means it has only a limited effect on the city centre. It is nevertheless a major driver of hotel-room demand across the city.

Aberdeen Arts Centre supports amateur activity well but is not fit for purpose for professional production.

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5.3 Visual art

Aberdeen's public-sector art venues are supplemented by a range of commercial art galleries and artists' studio spaces.

Figure 15 Summary of characteristics of principal visual art venues

	Aberdeen Art Gallery	Peacock Visual Arts	RGU exhibition spaces
Venue condition (self-rated)	Average externally, poor internally, with storage space being very poor	Very poor, both internally and externally	Good
Accessibility inc. transport	Average by public transport, poor for public accessibility	Very poor –venue is hidden away and in what some consider an off-putting location	Good
Nature of output	Visual art, design, heritage, craft, decorative arts	Visual art-led, but with rock and pop, dance, design, TV and film	Visual art, heritage, craft, literature/publishing, digital tech/games
Education/ outreach work?	Yes	Yes	Yes
FTE staff employed	39 based at gallery only	10	Approx. 40 (inc. the library in which the exhibition spaces are)
Number of volunteers	10, plus Friends organisation	Changing pool of 10 or so	
Plans for future	Major transformation project proposed; programming changes too	Lease due to expire in March 2015 – need to find new location	Significant changes planned, including more ambitious programming

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

5.3.1 Principal venues

Aberdeen Art Gallery is a major provincial art gallery, with a strong collection of 19th and 20th century English and Scottish art as well as striking examples of contemporary art, including pieces by Damien Hirst, Gilbert and George and Tracey Emin. (For what it's worth, it also has the longest description allotted to it of any of Aberdeen's cultural attractions in the *Rough Guide to Britain*.)

The art gallery's holdings form part of one of Aberdeen's two recognised collections (see section 5.7.1).

The Art Gallery nonetheless faces challenges. Accessibility to the venue needs to be improved. The Gallery also has some problems in attracting repeat visitors, and in getting people through the door in the first place: the entrance is seen by some as intimidating, and some feel that visual art is 'not for the likes of us', according to the gallery itself.

The Art Gallery has proposed a full-scale transformation project for the Gallery and the adjoining Cowdray Hall. Both the interior and exterior will be renovated, a new floor will be added, environmental controls will be improved, greater opportunities for exhibition programming and learning will be created, and the visitor experience will be improved. The art gallery has just successfully applied for £10m from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the redevelopment and to create a Museums Collections Centre. The total cost of the project is estimated at £33m over the next four financial years, with the balance to be raised from the council and corporate/individual fundraising.

The Gallery also intends to improve its programming, primarily by making more of a connection between art and music.

Peacock Visual Arts: Peacock describes itself as a centre for contemporary art. It is the longest established printmaking studio in Scotland, having been set up in 1978 by graduates of Gray's School of Art. PVA organises an annual programme of national and international contemporary art exhibitions, as well as talks and workshops. They also hire out their printmaking workshops, video equipment and photography darkroom. PVA claims this is the widest range of openly available media

anywhere in Scotland. PVA sees itself as the only independent cultural organisation in Aberdeen.

There have been many discussions about moving from their current location (which when they started out was a rough part of town, and is still off-putting for some visitors). The curatorial team is currently looking at whether they need a 'white cube' at all or whether they are better off without the burden of a gallery building.

Minor venues: there are a handful of other galleries found within other spaces. These include a small gallery within Aberdeen Royal Infirmary Hospital, and BP's Atrium gallery, in its offices.

Grampian Hospitals Arts Trust is currently building a bespoke art gallery in the centre of the main Aberdeen Royal Infirmary site. This will also provide arts for patients sessions. GHAT has a substantial collection of 4,500 items, including installations and public art pieces.

There are several commercial art galleries in Aberdeen such as Oil and Glass, which sells affordable art and craft, and Gallery Heinzl, which focuses on contemporary Scottish art. The city also has a number of cafes and restaurants which have some gallery space within their premises, such as Kilau Coffee in the High Street.

There are two sets of artists' studios run by Wasps (a Scotland-wide network), in Langstane Place and Shore Line Studios. Wasps remains open to opportunities in Aberdeen should suitable properties become available but has no plans to expand in the city in the short term. Wasps says that there appears to be strong demand for their units in Aberdeen, and report that there is a low turnover of artists in their studios. The Langstane Place studios include a retail outlet on the ground floor, run by a local arts organisation, Project Slogan.

5.3.2 Other activity

University activity:

- **The University of Aberdeen** has a 1% for art scheme whereby 1% of the budget of new buildings goes to the commissioning of new art works. This has resulted in a number of public art works across the campus.

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There is a student Art Society.

- **RGU: Georgina Scott Sutherland Library/ Faculty of Health & Social Care Level 2 Exhibition Space**

There are plans to refurbish the Georgina Scott Sutherland Library, including exhibition space, and the opening of a new event/exhibition area in the foyer of the new University Library is due in autumn 2013. There is also an intention to develop more dynamic programming aimed at a wider audience beyond the University community.

RGU has an art and craft society (Chameleon Colours).

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5.3.3 Assessment of offer quality

The city seems to have a strong visual art offer, with a high-quality municipal gallery, a large collection owned by the Grampian Hospital Art Trust, several other gallery spaces in public-sector buildings – the hospital, the universities – and a number of small commercial galleries, often with a focus on Scottish and contemporary art. Peacock Visual Arts is one of only two Foundation organisations in the city. The presence of Gray's School of Art, one of four art schools in Scotland, is a great source of strength for visual arts in the city, even though it is no longer based in the city centre. The oil companies provide a market for art – corporate buyers are a significant presence in the city's art market, and BP even has a gallery in its headquarters.

However, high studio and house prices make it a challenging location for artists, especially young and/or emerging ones. Aberdeen's relative distance from the UK's major art centres, such as London and Glasgow, may also be a disadvantage. Peacock Visual Arts is thinking carefully about its future direction, and Gray's School of Art, while still a high-quality school, does not have the profile in the contemporary visual art scene of, say, the Glasgow School of Art. As in theatre, Aberdeen is more of a consumer of art rather than a producer. If Aberdeen is to realise the potential of visual art for the city, it needs to find ways to build up its strength in this area.

5.4 Film/cinema

Figure 16 Summary of characteristics of principal film venue

	Belmont Picturehouse	Cineworld Aberdeen Queens Link	Cineworld Union Square	Vue Aberdeen
Venue condition (self-rated)	Good			
Accessibility inc. transport	Good/average	Free parking, disabled access	Parking, disabled access, autism-friendly screenings	
Number of screens	3	9 (1.864 seats)	10 (2.382 seats)	7 (1,520 seats)
Nature of output	Independent, subtitled and mainstream films		Mainstream films	Commercial films, special events, Bollywood films
Education/ outreach work?	Yes			
FTE staff employed	14			
Number of volunteers	None			
Plans for future	Mural, and a potential redesign of its box office			

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

5.4.1 Principal venues

As in the rest of Britain, film-going became a hugely popular activity in the interwar years. A number of large cinemas were built in the city centre, among them the Capitol in 1932 and the Astoria in 1934.

The steep decline in cinema-going triggered by the spread of television has now been arrested, and cinema-going has again become popular, albeit not on the scale of the 1930s or '40s.

Aberdeen has three mainstream commercial cinemas – two Cineworlds and a Vue – with 26 screens between them. All are fairly centrally located in the city.

Cineworld Aberdeen Queens Link has nine screens with capacities ranging from 118 to 560 seats (total capacity of 1,864 seats). It is located in a leisure park close to the beach and the city centre, alongside restaurants and a bowling alley/amusement arcade. It has a 900 space (free) car park. The venue can be hired privately and has a licensed bar with space for 100 people,

Cineworld Union Square is Aberdeen's biggest cinema, with 10 screens and 2,382 seats. It is based in the Union Square shopping centre, just south of Union Street. The venue can also be hired privately, and has a licensed bar that can hold 200 people. Its customers have access to the mall's car parks.

Vue Aberdeen is a seven screen cinema with 1,520 seats. It is located on Ship Row, just off Union Street. It has a licensed bar and can be used for conferences or private screenings.

The cinemas show a range of commercial films and have also begun to host special events: the Vue, for example, hosts screenings of operas from London's Royal Opera House and plays from London's National Theatre.

Aberdeen also has a centrally located arthouse cinema, the **Belmont Picturehouse**, with three screens, which shows a mix of mainstream and independent films, including foreign-language ones. The building in which the cinema is housed is owned by the City Council, while the Picturehouse group supplies the programming. The Belmont also receives funding support from the Council.

Picturehouse is currently the subject of a take-over bid by Cineworld. The implications of such a take-over for the Belmont are not entirely clear at this stage, though the venue will remain a cinema.

The Belmont has plans for a mural for its foyer, and a potential redesign of its box office. It also hopes to become a film education hub.

5.4.2 Media production

Aberdeen has a number of film production companies, some of which are mentioned in the analysis of creative industries which follows in the next chapter. It also has a community media project: the Station House Media Unit.

This organisation works with the residents of the seven regeneration areas in Aberdeen to produce community media in a variety of forms: radio and video production, publications and music production. It is planning either to develop its existing premises or move into a 'fit for purpose' premises which would be bigger and able to house the growing numbers of staff and volunteers. If these plans can be delivered they would help raise the profile of SMHU among local residents.

University activity:

The University of Aberdeen has a film-making society, Cinergi, as well as a film appreciation society (CineClub).

RGU has a World and Independent Cinema Society.

5.4.3 Assessment of offer quality

Aberdeen's film offer seems better than average for a British city – the arthouse fare of the Belmont is more typically found in larger cities than Aberdeen, while the three centrally located mainstream cinemas have more than 5,700 seats between them. The Picturehouse chain has recently been taken over by Cineworld, and it is unclear at this stage what the implications are for the Belmont Picturehouse are. It is important for the diversity of Aberdeen's film offer that the Belmont remains an audience hub for arthouse cinema in some form.

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5.5 Dance

Figure 17 Summary of characteristics of principal dance venues

CityMoves Dance Agency	
Venue condition (self-rated)	Very good externally, very poor internally
Accessibility inc. transport	Very good, though city centre parking can be an issue
Nature of output	Dance
FTE staff employed	7
Number of volunteers	30
Education/ outreach work?	Yes
Plans for future	Needs more space

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

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5.5.1 Principal venues

Aberdeen has one professional dance agency, **CityMoves**. The council is currently exploring possible options for their future – should they remain with the council, become part of APA or move to independence? Their current space at Triple Kirks has been their home for 15 years. It functions satisfactorily for dance classes and the youth company, and is centrally situated (opposite the Art Gallery and Cowdray Hall, and just along from HMT) but they have outgrown it and it is too small for professional rehearsals or productions. CityMoves has presented work to critical acclaim at HMT but the venue is generally too large for their audience

For their recent production the company rehearsed in Edinburgh which proved cheaper and more convenient for central-Scotland based dancers than Aberdeen, where rehearsal space is scarce and accommodation costs can be high.

CityMoves is a Creative Scotland foundation organisation and their issues around rehearsal and performance space are raised in the recently published Creative Scotland Dance Sector Review. It is recognised that they have the potential to be a producing company, with the ability to draw on excellence in dance across Scotland and the world from an Aberdeen base. However, Creative Scotland regards their current base as inadequate to develop that potential.

Aberdeen also has the **danscentre**, which offers dance training and studio space and runs courses, but does not produce professional performances.

University activity

RGU has a Modern Jive Dancing Society, while the University of Aberdeen has a Dance Society and a Scottish Dance one.

Amateur activity: Aberdeen and the surrounding shire have a wealth of traditional dancing activities, and classes are held in other dance forms, such as ballet and tap.

5.5.2 Assessment of offer quality

Dance is unusual in Aberdeen in being an art form in which the city has a nationally significant company. It also has a niche festival DanceLive – the

only festival of contemporary dance in Scotland – and has regular visits from Scottish Ballet. Aberdeen also has a thriving amateur scene.

Contemporary dance would seem to be the art form in which Aberdeen is closest to having a nationally significant presence, and is also the one most likely to address Charles Landry's point about Aberdeen needing to pay attention to the 'more high-status ... or image driven benefits that the arts can offer'. However, its appeal will inevitably be limited: Aberdeen City Council cannot expect contemporary dance to build a mass audience within the city, and while dance shows can attract audiences from well outside Aberdeen's boundaries, the numbers from there too are likely to be modest. The flipside of this is that it may be easier to attract top-level contemporary dance companies to visit than it would be to get top companies in other art forms.

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5.6 Museums, libraries and archives

Aberdeen has a number of notable museums examining aspects of the city's life and history, though it does not have a 'Museum of Aberdeen' as such. The University of Aberdeen is home to a number of small museums and some historically important collections.

Aberdeen has a sizeable library network and two nationally important archive collections.

Figure 18 Summary of characteristics of principal museums, libraries and archives

	Aberdeen Maritime Museum	Satrosphere Science Centre	Gordon Highlanders Museum	Central Library
Venue condition (self-rated)	Good externally, average/poor internally	Poor externally, average internally	Very good both internally and externally	Good externally, average internally
Accessibility inc. transport	Average by public transport, good physical accessibility. Parking in vicinity is a problem.	Poor by public transport, but good physical accessibility	Very good, though lack of signage an issue	Good
Nature of output	Heritage, visual art, craft	Science	Heritage, plus visual arts, theatre, heritage, craft, TV/film, digital	Library and information services, including local history and archives
FTE staff employed	18.5	22	10	107
Number of volunteers	Varies depending on project		180	
Education/outreach work?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Plans for future	Redevelopment of oil and gas galleries by March 2013	Hope to create UK's first energy science centre	Redevelopment of tea room and shop in Spring 2013.	Redesign of internal spaces, children's library redesigned in next two years

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

5.6.1 Principal venues

Aberdeen has two collections that are counted as recognised collections by the Scottish Government (a scheme managed by Museums Galleries Scotland). They are:

The collection cared for by Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums, which is split across three venues:

- Aberdeen Art Gallery
- Aberdeen Maritime Museum
- Provost Skene's House

Maritime Museum: The museum is on the harbourside (and includes Provost Ross's House, a 16th century building). The Museum has a highly regarded collection covering shipbuilding, fast sailing ships, fishing and port history, as well as the North Sea oil and gas industry. The Museum has won awards, and is rated a five-star museum by Visit Scotland. Admission is free.

The oil and gas galleries will be redeveloped by March 2013. They have no immediate plans to change their programming. However, if Aberdeen Art Gallery closes for redevelopment this will impact on the programming at the Maritime Museum

Provost Skene's House: The House dates from 1545, and houses a series of period rooms, furnished to show how people lived in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. The House is classed as a four-star historic attraction by Visit Scotland. Admission is free. (The House is closed for a year as an adjacent building, St Nicholas House, is demolished.)

The second recognised collection is the **museum collection of the University of Aberdeen**. Parts of the collection are over 500 years old, and connections are made between them and the University's libraries and archives. The University of Aberdeen is responsible for seven museums and collections.

There are two main displays within this. The Marischal Museum collection includes Scottish art and history, archaeology and coins. As the museum is closed, most of this collection is in store. However, temporary exhibitions are held in the King's Museum which draw on the collection.

There is also a Marischal Virtual Museum resource, which allows online access to the full collection.

The second museum is the Zoology Museum, the only large collection of zoological specimens in the north of Scotland.

The University is also home to the Cruikshank Botanical Gardens, which are open to the general public. There is a public lecture programme related to the Garden.

The University of Aberdeen and its campus in Old Aberdeen embrace a number of historic buildings. Among them are the Old Town House has recently been restored by the University of Aberdeen and is now in good condition, as is the King's Museum, a small museum that exhibits archaeological or ethnographic objects.

The University finds that efforts to target hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups can occasionally be hampered by the perception that the campus is an intimidating place or that events may be too intellectual.

Satrosphere Science Centre: The Science Centre was opened in 1988. It is intended to be a 'fun and educational' day out, aimed primarily at families and younger children. Its exhibits are mostly 'hands on'. It is a run as a non-profit organisation funded by admission fees and corporate sponsors. It is rated a four-star visitor attraction by Visit Scotland.

The Science Centre faces challenges. The internal layout of the building and an ageing visitor experience are key challenges which the Centre hopes to address.

They hope to redevelop the entire centre and in doing so create a contemporary space focused on 'energy' science. This would be the UK's first energy science centre. They have recently completed a feasibility study for this work. The planned redevelopment is anticipated to cost approximately £7m.

Gordon Highlanders Museum: Based in the former home of a well-known artist, Sir George Reid, the independent museum records the history of the Gordon Highlanders regiment, and puts on related exhibitions.

Aberdeen has a number of other museums. For the most part these are small and fairly narrow in their remit, such as the **Tolbooth Museum**, a

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former gaol and one of the city's oldest surviving buildings, which focuses on crime and punishment, and local history. The Tolbooth will be extending in opening hours and seasons while Porvaost Slen's House is closed.

A heritage trust has been set up to manage the archive and materials of Aberdeen Football Club. The trust manages and preserves the archive and eventually intends to create a museum in the proposed new stadium to exhibit its collection.

Libraries: Aberdeen has an established library network. The city's 16 libraries include the Central Library, opened in 1892, which includes a media centre and the Aberdeen College learning centre.

The Central Library is in need of some repairs, and a redesign of the information centre and other internal spaces is planned for this spring. A redesign of the children's library is planned within two years.

The condition of the network of community libraries varies, with some such as Woodside being considered poor.

The University of Aberdeen has recently built a new library building. Unusually, it is open both to students and the general public. It is part of a wider effort by the University to engage more deeply with the city. The University also has smaller specialist libraries for medicine and law.

Archives: The city has two major archives. The first of these is the Aberdeen City Archives. It holds the most complete collection of medieval and early modern burgh records in Scotland, including a series of registers (minutes). The burgh registers, which date from 1398 to 1509, were recognised by UNESCO in July 2013 as being of outstanding historical importance to the UK, as they are the oldest and most complete set of such records of any Scottish town. The registers are held at Charter Room at the Town House, with further City and all the Aberdeenshire Council Archives being held at Old Aberdeen House.

The University of Aberdeen also has a major archive, housed in its Special Collections Centre. It too is particularly strong in medieval and early modern records.

Aberdeen has considerable strengths in this area. It has some significant collections and some smaller museums which draw on the city's history in interesting ways. It has been suggested that the city lacks a Museum of Aberdeen – a venue in which all its history is explored in a comprehensive way. Many places have such city museums, but they are rarely central to a city's cultural or tourist offer. In any case, the Maritime Museum explores several elements of the city's history, including the oil and gas industry.

Those spoken to for this report argued that Aberdeen's archives are a treasure, but relatively little is made of them. While archives will never have mass appeal, the city needs to be more imaginative in the way it promotes them.

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5.6.2 Assessment of offer quality

5.7 Festivals

Figure 19 Summary of characteristics of principal festivals

	Aberdeen International Youth Festival	Sound Festival
Venue condition (self-rated)	Perform at Music Hall and many others –average for performance, U of A for rehearsals - good	Lemon Tree, Cowdray Hall, King's College, Art Gallery, MacRobert Building (University), St Machar's Cathedral and many others – generally good
Accessibility inc. transport	Very good by public transport, good physical accessibility	Good for [public transport, average for physical accessibility
Nature of output	Classical music, plus rock and pop, theatre, visual art, opera, dance	Classical led, but many other music forms as well as dance
FTE staff employed	3	1.5
Number of volunteers	Seasonal	10
Education/ outreach work?	Yes	Yes
Plans for future	More community engagement, more venues	We are going to be promoting a limited number of concerts throughout the year as well as during the festival itself. We are also offering an increased education/outreach programme during the year.

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

5.7.1 Principal festivals

Aberdeen hosts a number of festivals each year. Perhaps the best known of these is the **Aberdeen International Youth Festival**. This has been running for forty years, and bills itself as ‘one of the world’s biggest celebrations of youth arts’. The festival focuses primarily on classical music, but has broadened its remit over time to include other performing arts: theatre, dance, world music, opera and jazz. Its events are a mix of performances, workshops and masterclasses. The performances take place both in Aberdeen and in the surrounding towns and villages.

The Youth Festival attracts participants from across the world, and aims to provide local young people with a chance to experience different cultures and art forms through performances and workshops.

The Youth Festival is not planning to change its programming significantly, but does intend to introduce more community engagement events and projects where possible, to use new venues, and to develop a professional programme to complement and showcase emerging talent.

Several of Aberdeen’s other festivals also have a music focus. Perhaps the most notable of these is the **Sound Festival**, an ambitious programme designed to introduce audiences to new contemporary (classical) music. It is run by a network of local arts and culture organisations, led by the University of Aberdeen and Woodend Barn. (The Sound Festival is based in Aberdeenshire, though it receives funding from Aberdeen City Council.) The festival notes that it finds it difficult to get local visibility; indeed, they believe they are better known outside the region than within it, due to the national coverage they attract from the likes of the *Scotsman*, the *Herald* and the BBC.

The Sound Festival runs a mix of performances and workshops. The festival develops themes each year – 2012’s include new opera and ‘conversations with composers’.

The Sound Festival is planning to make a number of changes to its programming. It hopes to promote a limited number of concerts throughout the year as well as during the festival itself. They are also offering an increased education/outreach programme during the year. The festival also observes that Aberdeen is seen as having conservative

audiences, making promoters wary of bringing new music to the city outside of the festival. This thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

There are festivals for other art forms too. **Dance Live** is the only dance-specific festival in Scotland, and is organised by the CityMoves Dance Agency. It aims to bring new work from guest companies to Aberdeen, and has been running since 2006. In 2012 it hosted performances at HMT, the Lemon Tree and CityMoves Studio, as well as talks and masterclasses. The 2012 programme is recognised as the strongest to date, consolidating the event as a dance festival for Scotland.

The Word Festival ran from 2009 to 2011 at the University of Aberdeen. In 2012 it took a break, as the British Science Festival came to the University for the first time in almost 50 years. It will be replaced in 2013 by the **May Festival**, a three-day festival spanning a wide range of disciplines: science, literature, music, film, Gaelic, and food and nutrition.

Each September Aberdeen University also hosts **Tech Fest**, the only festival of science and technology in North East Scotland. The Festival has strong links with the Satrosphere Science Centre.

Aberdeen also hosts some more general celebrations, such as **Tartan Day** in July, which celebrates ‘all things Scottish’ with a parade through the city centre and a number of supporting events. Tartan Day is one of several regular events organised by the City Council’s events team – others include the Winter Festival and Aberdeen’s Highland Games.

5.7.2 Assessment of offer quality

Aberdeen festival offer, though varied and often strong, is rather ‘niche’ in its appeal – indeed, its strongest elements are often its most specialised. There is also a degree of fragmentation in its programme – there are several festivals which focus on music (the Aberdeen International Youth Festival, the Sound Festival and the Jazz Festival among others, for instance) which might benefit from a more coherent or unified umbrella brand to support them.

While the climate of the city is not necessarily conducive to a major outdoor events programme, there are spaces in the city centre that would lend themselves to public events. At the moment, outdoor events tend to be held in outlying areas, including the parks: ACC could usefully think

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about creating 'event-ready' spaces in the city centre, such as Castlegate and the eastern end of Union Street, or the Marischal College quadrangle. The lack of major mass celebrations – a Hogmanay, or an Aberdeen equivalent of Stonehaven's Fireballs or Shetland's Up Helly Aa – in the city represents a gap in its cultural life.

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5.8 Other and intangible culture

5.8.1 The city's urban fabric

“ Aberdeen is a different kind of city. Nowhere else has granite been used with such abandon.

James Naughtie²²

This report was intended to look primarily at individual cultural assets. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of a city is often shaped as much by its urban fabric and the character of particular neighbourhoods as it is by individual assets – the Georgian elegance of Edinburgh or Bath, for instance, or the life and energy of London's Soho.

For Aberdeen, the key characteristic has been its developers' use of granite. This has given the city its enduring nickname, the Granite City. The large, handsome Georgian and Victorian buildings of the city centre give it a sense of scale and solidity, and their quality (along with those of buildings from other time periods) have been recognised in the city's large number of listed buildings.

In all, 68 properties (or groups of properties) in the Aberdeen City Council area are rated as category A by Historic Scotland, including the Aberdeen Arts Centre, Provost Ross' House, the Brig O'Balgownie, Queen's Cross Church and the Girdleness Lighthouse. A further 681 properties are rated category B. There are 44 scheduled monuments, including the Mercat Cross and Torry Battery, while Duthie Park is listed in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (of nationally important sites).

The city also has several notable statues, including a series on Union Terrace that includes King Edward VII, Prince Albert, William Wallace and Robert Burns, as well as a statue of Queen Victoria that now stands in

Queen's Cross but which for many years was a city landmark at the corner of Union Street and St Nicholas Street. There are also a number of important churches in the city centre, including St Nicholas Kirk (the Mither Kirk) and St Mark's.

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5.8.2 Union Street and Union Terrace Gardens

The surveys conducted by ACSEF and the study by Charles Landry both identified the decline of the city centre as one of the key problems facing the city. At the heart of those concerns lies the deterioration in Union Street, historically the city's most important street. This short section reviews Union Street's significance in Aberdeen.

Union Street was built between 1801 and 1805. It was intended to open up the cramped medieval old city, by linking it to the land on the west side of the Denburn river (what is now the West End of Aberdeen). To cross the Denburn Valley ravine a bridge (Union Bridge) was built. The ravine itself became Union Terrace Gardens, a public park.

Many of the buildings on Union Street were designed by two celebrated Aberdonian architects, Archibald Simpson and John Smith. Their neoclassical designs, built in local white granite, soon won acclaim, and Union Street was compared with the likes of Regent Street in London and Grey Street in Newcastle. Although originally intended to be primarily residential, it attracted retailers, professionals such as lawyers and accountants, and education institutions.

In recent decades, the Street has declined. A number of key buildings were demolished, especially during the 1960s and '70s. The St Nicholas and Bon Accord Centres have 'hollowed out' much of the retail offer. Many of the shops that remain are chain store multiples – a 2010 book²³ identified only three locally-owned shops on the street.

The universities have moved away from the Union Street area to new sites. Licensing policy in the city has created a concentration of pubs and bars at the street's western end. In the 1990s Aberdeen played on this, marketing itself as the Entertainment Capital of the North, an image which

²² Naughtie, J. (2000) 'Introduction' in Fraser, W.H. and Lee, C.H. (eds) *Aberdeen 1800-2000: A New History*, Tuckwell Press, East Linton

²³ Morgan, D. (2010) *The Granite Mile: The Story of Aberdeen's Union Street*, Black and White Publishing, Edinburgh

revolved around its pubs and clubs, but nowadays this is felt to be hindrance to the city's image and reputation.

Union Terrace Gardens stands close to the mid-point of Union Street, and has long been one of the focal points of the town centre. It has been a public park for two centuries, and was very popular for most of that time, in part because the steep sides of the original ravine afforded some protection from the elements. The Gardens are overlooked by some of the city's most notable buildings, including His Majesty's Theatre and the Monkey House, as well as the statuary of Union Terrace.

However, from the 1980s onwards, Union Terrace Gardens developed a reputation as a haunt of drunks and, especially, drug addicts. For some, it became a no-go area.

More recently, two schemes have been proposed to revive the Gardens. The first was put forward by Peacock Visual Arts in 2008, but this was soon superseded by another much more ambitious scheme, backed by an offer of £50m from a local oil tycoon, Ian Wood. Versions of the scheme were hotly debated for four years until in late 2012 they were finally rejected.

5.8.3 Parks

Aberdeen is deservedly proud of its parks, a number of which date from the city's Victorian boom period. The city has three times more public parkland per head of population than either Edinburgh or Glasgow. Hazlehead Park, at 180 hectares, is the largest, and became a public park in 1920.

In addition to their attractive landscapes, the parks contain a number of significant buildings or sculptures, from Duthie Park's Winter Gardens to the Piper Alpha memorial in Hazlehead Park. The parks have also been the backdrop to the floral displays which have helped Aberdeen do so well in Britain in Bloom competitions over the years, earning it in some quarters the nickname of the 'Rose City'. The success of such a northerly city in this competition suggests what Aberdeen is capable of when it focuses on a goal.

5.8.4 Old Aberdeen

Old Aberdeen, to the north of the city centre, has been an important place since the Middle Ages (it was originally a separate burgh). Some buildings from that period still survive, including King's College Chapel and St Machar's Cathedral, along with a larger number of buildings from the 17th to 19th centuries, among them the Old Town House. The area centred on the High Street and College Bounds is now, in effect, the campus of the University of Aberdeen.

5.8.5 The Beach

Aberdeen is also a seaside town, and its character has partly been shaped by the beach and sea. A beach resort was established in the 1890s, following the lead of the likes of Blackpool, and was marketed as 'The Silver City by the Sea'. The resort became popular in the interwar years, when Aberdeen's leading variety star, Harry Gordon, had many successful summer seasons there, and the Beach Pavilion, Beach Ballroom and Codona's amusement park were built. By the 1950s it was billed as the 'Silver City with the Golden Sands', and was popular with people from the West of Scotland, especially during the Glasgow Fair. Although the resort then began to decline, as overseas package holidays began to become popular, Codona's and the Beach Ballroom still survive on the beachfront.

5.8.6 Universities

As we have seen, the two universities host and run a number of publicly accessible venues and events. Indeed Aberdeen University in particular is keen to partner more with the City Council. They have already combined in a Single Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to deliver the Sports Village.

RGU, meanwhile, is looking to develop a role as a thought leader, a catalytic role to help spur debate and cultural engagement with the arts and creative industries. Its recent report on the city centre is the first example of its engagement in this capacity; it sees this fitting well with the City of Culture bid.

However, the universities' main value to Aberdeen's cultural offer is as incubators of talent for the city and as drivers of demand for culture,

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through their growing numbers of students. This next section therefore briefly reviews the universities.

The city's two universities are solid performers, and have a combined student population of around 40,000. **Robert Gordon University** (RGU) is ranked 35th in the UK out of 120 in the 2013 Guardian Good University Guide (fifth in Scotland – the best of the 'new' universities) while the University of Aberdeen ranks 38th in the UK (sixth in Scotland). RGU includes Gray's School of Art, which was founded in 1885 and is one of four specialist art schools in Scotland. The School of Art has around a thousand students. RGU ranks 37th in the UK for art and design on the Guardian's calculations, but is fourth for media studies and communications.

The **University of Aberdeen** is one of the UK's oldest universities, with its founding parts, Marischal and King's Colleges, being established more than 500 years ago. Its subject programmes emphasise physical and life sciences, but also has a number of creative/arts programmes. The Music department at the University is expanding at a time when other music departments are contracting, and is attracting highly regarded staff. It now has around 250 students on its undergraduate programme. There are also a number of courses in media-related subjects at the University, such as Film and Visual Culture.

Many students are active in student societies – Aberdeen University has 19 performing arts societies, in everything from *a cappella* to big band music, Scottish dancing to juggling.

Graduate retention is an issue for Aberdeen, as it is for many university towns. Salaries offered in oil and gas are so favourable that it is a big influence on decisions, and many who might otherwise go into creative industries or culture are lured away.

5.8.7 Further education

Aberdeen College is the largest further education college in Scotland. It provides a number of creative and creative industries courses, in fields such as art, design, fashion, computer animation as well as TV, Radio and Sound Production.

5.8.8 Traditional and Doric culture

As Francois Matarasso has pointed out,²⁴ the Aberdeenshire area has a strong 'immaterial' culture: 'Aberdeenshire's working folk have tended to channel their creativity into ... the dances, airs, stories and ballads that cost nothing to produce'. This finds expression in the city too: there are a number of societies and clubs devoted to supporting traditional music and dancing, and the universities too have student societies in this field. A number of pubs in the city host traditional or folk music sessions.

One distinctive aspect of Aberdeen's traditional culture is its use of the Doric dialect. Doric has played an important part in the culture of the North East of Scotland for centuries. There is an extensive body of poetry, ballads and songs written in it. The trio responsible for the well-known comedy revue, *Scotland the What?* performed in Doric throughout their long careers, and a number of contemporary writers and poets continue to use it.

Elphinstone Institute: This is a University of Aberdeen facility dedicated to the research and study of cultural traditions in the North East of Scotland, including writing and music. It has an associated online resource, Elphinstone Kist, which aims to promote writing in Doric.

Her Majesty's Theatre recently put on a production of the Doric play, *The Cone Gatherers*. However, Doric continues to have a much lower profile in Scotland than, say, Gaelic.

5.8.9 Literature and poetry

The city has a writers' group and a poetry society (Poetry Aberdeen). Book signings and readings are held at Waterstone's bookshop and at Books and Beans, a café in the city.

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²⁴ Matarasso, F. (2013) *The Pinning Stones: Culture and Community in Aberdeenshire*

6. Aberdeen's creative industries

6.1 Creative industries in the UK

The cultural venues described above in the sections on the individual art forms are perhaps the most visible elements of Aberdeen's cultural and creative offer. However, in the last 15 years the term 'creative industries' has been coined to capture the wider economic impacts of creativity – especially those industries which exploit intellectual property. A definition of the creative industries drawn up by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 1998 remains influential:

Those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.

While definitions of the creative industries vary over time, and from organisation to organisation, there is a general acceptance that they contribute significantly to the UK economy. A recent estimate by NESTA,²⁵ for instance, suggests that there are 2.5m people employed within the creative economy in 2010 (amounting to 8.7% of the workforce), of whom 1.3m worked in the creative industries themselves. (The remainder are people working in creative occupations but for 'non-creative' businesses – an example might be a graphic designer working for a law firm.) The researchers found that creative economy employment had grown by 9.0% between 2004 and 2010 – more than five times the rate of the 'non-creative' workforce.

The DCMS²⁶ used a much narrower definition of the creative industries in its most recent creative industries economic estimates than the NESTA paper does, though the DCMS definition is currently under review. In

particular it chose to exclude much of the computer software sector, a decision which may well be reversed when the review is complete. As a result, its figures are significantly lower than those reported by NESTA.

Its estimate indicated that just under 900,000 people worked in the creative industries (including the self-employed), with a further 600,000 creative people employed in 'non-creative' companies. The DCMS analysis also suggested that creative activity was heavily concentrated in London and the greater South East of England – Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland had fewer creative enterprises combined than the East of England.

The reasons for this concentration are thought to include the strength of the private sector more generally in London and the South East – a large proportion of 'creative' sales are made business-to-business – good transport links (road, rail and air), access to highly skilled labour, and 'buzzy' town or city centres, providing opportunities for entertaining customers and attracting staff.

6.2 Creative industries in Scotland

A recent study by DC Research and partners²⁷ examined the situation in Scotland more closely, looking at arts and creative industries employment across the country, using a definition drawn up by Creative Scotland. The definition is somewhat broader than that used by the DCMS for the UK as a whole.

DC Research found that Aberdeen City accounted for 6.3% of Scotland's creative employment, with Aberdeenshire accounting for 2.6% (in 2010). Aberdeen was, with Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee, one of only four places to have above average intensity in creative employment – in other words, their relative share was above the national average. Given that creative industries tend to concentrate in cities, that is not perhaps an unexpected finding.

²⁵ Bakhshi, H., Freeman, A. and Higgs, P. (2012) *A Dynamic Mapping of the UK's Creative Industries*, NESTA

²⁶ DCMS (2011) *Creative Industries Economic Estimates*

²⁷ DC Research (2012) *Economic Contribution Study: An Approach to the Economic Assessment of Arts and Creative Industries in Scotland*, Creative Scotland

BOP has also carried out its own analysis of creative industries data in order to examine the situation in Aberdeen in more detail. We have adopted the definition of the sector currently used by the DCMS, which excludes some important 'cultural' activity, such as employment in museums, galleries, libraries and heritage attractions. Because of the limitations of national surveys such as the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) at local authority level, the numbers reported can fluctuate from year-to-year, irrespective of the state of the economy.

It also should be noted that many creative businesses are likely to be missed by surveys such as the BRES, as they are too small to be registered for VAT, which is the main way such firms appear 'on the radar' of such surveys. As a result, it is often better to look at the trends within the data, rather than absolute numbers.

With those provisos, the figures suggest that Aberdeen's share of Scotland's creative industries employment (as defined by the DCMS) was 6.9% in 2011, with Scotland itself accounting for 5.0% of Great Britain's creative industries employment.²⁸ For comparison, Aberdeenshire's share of Scotland's creative industries employment was 1.9%.

Within the overall total, Aberdeen is disproportionately strong in four SIC codes within Scotland. They are:

- Artistic creation
- Publishing of newspapers
- Radio broadcasting
- TV programming and broadcasting

Some of these are clearly related to Aberdeen's role as a regional capital: it is home to the Aberdeen Press & Journal, BBC and STV operations and a trio of commercial radio stations: Northsound 1, Northsound 2, and Original 106.

Total creative industries employment in Aberdeen was 1,910 in 2011 (again remembering that this DCMS definition is unusually narrow).

Aberdeen significantly underperforms in a number of the larger SIC codes, including:

- Film and TV production/post-production/distribution
- Magazine/journal publishing
- Advertising
- Photography

For many of the other SIC codes, Aberdeen sits near the Scottish average. However, given that creative industries businesses tend to cluster in cities, and Aberdeen is the third largest Scottish city, it arguably should be doing better than simply matching the Scottish average in these fields.

6.3 Analysis by business model

Another way of looking at this data is to categorise the creative industries by business model. This approach was developed by BOP, the Manchester Institute of Popular Culture and NESTA²⁹, who produced a model of the creative industries which recognised the differences in market structures, distribution mechanisms and consumption patterns across the sector, by dividing the creative industries up into four groups: creative content, services, originals and experiences. This classification is inevitably somewhat approximate, but it suggests that compared with both Scotland and Great Britain, Aberdeen's creative employment is somewhat concentrated in content, such as broadcasting and publishing, and is under-represented in creative services, such as advertising and architecture.

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²⁸ Employment here includes both employees and sole traders etc.

²⁹ BOP, MIPC and NESTA (2006) *Creating growth: how the UK can develop world class creative businesses*

Figure 20 Percentage of employment by sector

	Aberdeen City	Scotland	Great Britain
Content	52.5%	44.1%	48.9%
Experiences	16.9%	16.7%	11.3%
Originals	2.0%	3.3%	2.2%
Services	28.6%	35.8%	37.7%

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

Creative services firms usually sell their services to other businesses. Such firms tend to cluster where there is a strong private sector economy (creative businesses are small, and tend to sell to local or regional markets), where rents are affordable, and where there are opportunities for interaction with others in the sector – places for socialising with clients, or for bumping into potential collaborators or employees. Aberdeen has the strong private sector economy, but it may well be that the unusually high concentration of employment in the large organisations in Aberdeen makes it a difficult market for creative businesses to sell to. A multinational oil firm, for example, is unlikely to source its advertising from a small local firm. The high rents associated with the city may also be making things difficult for creative firms. Finally, the relative lack of appeal of the city centre may also make the city less attractive to creatives as a place to work, as it provides fewer opportunities for the benefits of clustering to be felt. This is particularly so given the absence of any ‘secondary’ centres in the city that might substitute for the weaknesses of the city centre.

Nevertheless, there are a number of creative firms which have succeeded in Aberdeen, and in some cases have branched out to other cities as well. They include:

- Founded in 1991 in Aberdeen, **Fifth Ring** focuses on brand and strategy development, PR, digital media and advertising. It has built up a specialism in the energy sector, and now has branches in Aberdeen, Inverness Dubai and Houston. It has around 80 staff.

- **AVC Media Enterprise** specialises in website design, mobile apps, advertising, media production and PR. It employs just under 90 staff in Aberdeen.
- **Mearns and Gill** offers a ‘full-spectrum’ communications service to its clients, and employs 25 staff.
- **Tern TV** is a TV production company that was founded in Aberdeen, but which now has branches in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Belfast and London. It has a total staff of 32.
- **Eyeline Media** is a TV production company with an arts and culture focus. Its six staff produce programmes in English and Gaelic.
- **Platform magazine** (Oil, Gas and Renewable Technical Review). Launched in 1998, and targeted at the energy sector, Platform has built up a circulation of 7,000.

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6.4 Creative occupations

While measuring the number of people employed in the creative industries is important and useful, it is nonetheless not an entirely complete picture. There are many ‘creative’ people working in ‘non-creative’ industries: a graphic designer, say, working for an oil company would not be counted in the earlier analysis.

A different dataset allows us to say something about such people. The Annual Business Survey analyses working people by their occupation rather than by the business they work for. The results for the year ended September 2012 suggest that there are 2,400 people working in ‘Creative, Media and Sport’ occupations in Aberdeen (at local authority level this is the most detailed category available for the creative sector).

This figure amounts to 5.5% of Scotland’s creative, media and sport employment. This is the third largest total, but is some distance behind the shares for Glasgow (20.3%) and Edinburgh (18.0%).

6.5 Survey of creative businesses

In 2012 the Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce³⁰ conducted a survey of creative and cultural businesses. They received 35 responses, from a mix of creative industries firms (39%), the arts (26%), tourism (19%) and culture (16%). Half their respondents came from the Aberdeen City Council area. The majority of organisations were micro or small businesses.

More than 60% of respondents were optimistic that demand for arts and culture would grow, and business opportunities in the North-East would improve. Just over half (52%) expected their business to grow in the next three years, while 45% expected things to stay broadly the same. Only 5% thought they would shrink.

6.6 Assessment of Aberdeen's creative industries

Aberdeen's creative industries present something of a puzzle. Aberdeen's status as a regional capital and the strength of its private-sector economy, along with the many talented students of creative subjects at the city's universities and college, ought to be providing opportunities for its creative firms by creating a market for their services and providing a workforce for them. Yet the industries have only a modest presence in the city. Reasons for this include the competition from Edinburgh and Glasgow – Scotland's population is relatively small, and there is a limit to the number of large creative centres it can realistically support – the energy sector's demand for bright people of all kinds, including creative people; and the unusual profile of Aberdeen's economy: its high proportion of large, often multinational, companies may be hard for small creative firms to engage with.

There are things Aberdeen might do to try and tackle this. Networking is thought to be relatively weak in the city, not just between creative businesses themselves, but between them and potential customers.

Expensive office and studio space makes it difficult for creative (micro) businesses to get established. There is a shortage of the sort of hub or co-working space in the city centre that might encourage more of a critical mass of businesses to develop. Creative entrepreneurship could be strengthened further, though Aberdeen College in particular pays attention to this.

Finally, the low profile of culture in the city's planning (until very recently, at least) perhaps sends a sub-conscious signal to creative people that Aberdeen is not really a city which takes them and their concerns seriously enough.

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³⁰ Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce Culture and Creative Network (2012) *North-east Culture & Creative Survey 2012*

7. Comparator cities

7.1 Introduction

Aberdeen City Council asked BOP to prepare case studies of four cities which have some similarities with Aberdeen. Three of the cities are Nordic: Stavanger and Bergen in Norway and Turku in Finland, while one, Norwich, is British. These cities were chosen through dialogue between BOP and Aberdeen City Council.

The four cities:

- Are similar to Aberdeen in terms of size / economy / peripheral geography – and none are capital cities
- Have all participated in city culture competitions. Bergen, Stavanger and Turku have all been European Capitals of Culture (ECoC), while Norwich has bid for both ECoC and UK City of Culture.
- Have ambitions for culture and may offer relevant lessons about sustaining and developing cultural assets and audiences.

Norwich was felt to be the UK city which most closely matched Aberdeen and could offer lessons for developing and sustaining cultural assets within the UK political and funding context. The three Nordic cities offered the chance to investigate if Aberdeen does indeed share cultural characteristics with other cities in the 'Northern Arc', and to source fresh ideas from outside the UK.

The case studies detail for each city:

- Key population and economic dynamics
- Narrative on their cultural development over the last 10-20 years
- Listings of the principal cultural assets, under headings of: performing arts venues, visual arts venues, film and media, multi-art form venues, museums, festivals, universities, other and intangible assets.

A Key Findings section at the end of the chapter suggests some cross-cutting themes and lessons that emerge from all four case studies.

We have also summarised some of the data at the beginning of this chapter in Figure 21 to enable comparisons to be made between Aberdeen and the four comparator cities in some key respects.

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Figure 21 Key comparators

City	Aberdeen	Bergen	Norwich	Stavanger	Turku
Population in city	220,420	268,200	122,000	126,469	180,314
Population in greater urban region	468,020	394,600	195,000	217,000	246,312
Major economic sectors	Energy, high tech (eng. and electronics) life sciences	Energy , maritime industries and creative industries	Diverse service based economy, retail, science and research	Hub of the Norwegian energy industry	Shipbuilding, biotechnology and information technology
Creative industry strengths	Strong in TV, radio broadcasting and newspaper publishing	Strong in media, design and music, home to Norway's largest commercial TV station headquarters	Strong in the audiovisual and media sector with the headquarters of BBC TV East, Anglia TV and Archant	Small sector, with the exception of film	Strong CI sector, 14% of Turku businesses, internationally competitive in industrial and art design
Distinctive cultural strengths	Music, dance, visual art	,Music: the Bergen Wave	UNESCO City of Literature	Stavanger Film Wave	Logomo Exhibition Centre: 23,000m2 culture centre
Most visited museum or gallery	Aberdeen Art Gallery: 200,000	Bergen Art Museum: 80,000 visits	Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery: 146,000 visits	Norwegian Petroleum Museum: 95,000 visits	Aboa Vetus and Ars Nova Museum: 170,000 visits
Annual admissions at top performing arts venue	His Majesty's Theatre: not known	Den National Scene: 120,000 admissions	Theatre Royal: not known	The Rogaland Theatre: 110,000 admissions	Castle Theatre: 130,000 admissions
Estimated attendance at main annual festival	Aberdeen International Youth Festival: 30,000	Bergen International Festival: 60,000 visitors	Norfolk & Norwich Festival: 320,000 visitors	Gladmat Food Festival: 200,000 visitors	Ruisock rock festival: 100,000 visitors
University/HE students (approx.)	40,000	25,000	19,000	8,000	35,000

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Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

7.2 Stavanger case study

Key points

- Sustained municipal support for culture since the 1960s: initially to counter the 'oil city' image/brand and more recently to support economic diversification away from the oil industry
- Strong focus on international partnerships and exchange, increasing the international visibility of its cultural sector and reflecting the city's international workforce
- Used Stavanger2008 ECoC programme to invest (substantially) in local cultural institutions, develop their international links and encourage them to use new and non-traditional venues
- Policy of developing a diverse cultural asset base, with a particular focus on encouraging new festivals and a specialisation in classical music

7.2.1 City dynamics

Population in city: 126,469 (Norway's fourth largest city)

Population in Greater Stavanger: 217,000

Hub of the Norwegian petroleum industry

Creative industry strengths: Small creative industry sector, with the exception of film.

7.2.2 Cultural development

Stavanger is one of the richest cities in Norway and has less than 1% unemployment. Stavanger does not have a strong cultural heritage, but municipal support of cultural institutions has been strong since its emergence in the 1960s as Norway's oil capital. This has been a deliberate branding strategy to counter an external image of a purely materialist and 'nouveau riche' city. The city issued its first culture plan in 1969, which

broke new ground at the time as a municipal plan with a broader vision of culture.

As a result of its position as the oil and energy industry of Norway, Stavanger is home to 150 nationalities and has many international business connections. This is reflected in the type of cultural assets present in the city (the International Cultural Centre, the French Cultural Centre and international festivals) and in the content presented by the city's cultural institutions. Moreover, the city has invested in international cultural exchange. For instance, it signed agreements with Rio de Janeiro and Bilbao in 2002 covering artist exchange, co-production of travelling exhibition, and educational exchanges.

Unlike Liverpool 2008 or Marseilles 2013, Stavanger's successful bid for 2008 European Capital of Culture was not driven by a culture-led urban regeneration strategy. Its bid for ECoC was part of a policy to prepare the region for a future where it is less reliant on the oil industry.

Internationalism was one of the drivers of the bid for ECoC. Stavanger's concept was a themed programme known as 'Open port' of collaboration between local and international artists: Tel Aviv's Inbal Pinto dance company, the Oskaras Korsunovas theatre company from Lithuania, the Belgian experimental opera group Transparant and the Handspring Puppet workshop of South Africa all performed in the city. The aim of the international exchange programme was to establish enduring networks in the cultural sector. Stavanger is also twinned with Aberdeen (and has direct flights there), which has led to, for example, links between Aberdeen Jazz Festival and Stavanger jazz groups.

A budget of about £37 million (including £19 million of public funding) was allocated to cultural projects across the wider region for the ECoC programme, which had a significant impact on the cultural sector. In a recent evaluation of Stavanger 2008, cultural institutions thought the ECoC had allowed them to demonstrate internally and externally that their organisation could tackle large-scale productions. Institutions also indicated that ECoC helped them develop their international networks and generated ideas for using new and unfamiliar venues to present cultural activities.

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There has been criticism that funding for the 2008 ECoC ignored parts of the regional cultural scene, especially the 'free scene' (non-institutionalised, often young artists). However, this criticism seems to come from local artists who did not receive funding or whose projects were not accepted as part of the early open call for projects that the city made. The Director of Stavanger 2008, Mary Miller, sees it as something that opened 'a can of worms'. She believes that there should have been better communication of the goals of the project, and a wider consultation should have been held. Her advice for future ECoCs is to pay particular attention to communication with local communities about the programme while keeping the organisation transparent.

7.2.3 Principal cultural assets

Performing arts venues

The Rogaland Theatre: established in 1947, is one of the leading theatres in Norway, presenting 10-14 productions each year, 450 performances on four different stages with 375 seat overall capacity, attracting up to 110,000 people per year

Stavanger Concert House: a concert hall with 1,070 seats

The **New Regional Concert Hall:** under construction to meet the growing demand in the area. The concert hall will contain an orchestral auditorium with 1,500 seats and a multipurpose hall which will be used mainly for performance of rock/pop music and musical theatre and which can accommodate up to 2,000 spectators. A large outdoor amphitheatre will be located south of the concert hall. A school of culture and a secondary school for music, dance and drama will be built north of the new concert hall.

Sandnes Performing Art Centre: region's main venue for contemporary dance, opera, music and drama with 300 seating capacity. Opened in 2006.

Haugesund Theatre: one of the first Norwegian theatres to produce its own New Circus performances, it has extensive international partnerships

Visual arts venues

Rogaland Art Centre: institution for the promotion of visual arts and handicrafts with two exhibition halls.

Rogaland Museum of Fine Arts: major regional institution showing temporary exhibitions as well as the Halvdan Hafsten Collection, which consists of about 2,000 artworks from the 1800s through until today.

Stavanger Art Museum: opened in 1991 in a landmark building and run by the municipality, has a collection of 2,000 artworks and two exhibition halls for temporary exhibitions.

SIC (Stavanger International Collection): the first and largest private collection of international contemporary art in the region.

Stavanger Art Association, Sandnes Art Association, Sølvsberget, Haugesund Picture Gallery and Hå Old Parsonage are other prominent institutions concerned with the presentation and promotion of the visual art sector in the region.

Film and media

Stavanger has **two cinemas:** one with 11 screens and another in Stavanger Cultural Centre with 8 screens (giving a total of 19 screens in the city)

Stavanger Film Wave: the film scene of Stavanger has been growing in recent years with the city becoming known for the 'Stavanger wave'. Since 1995, the municipality has been actively supporting and provided grants to filmmaking in the region. It has also provided considerable operating support to the **Southwest Film Forum**, an organisation of film workers in the region established in 1992 to increase the skills of film workers and promote filmmaking in the region. Stavanger now has about 15 film production companies as well as nine companies concentrating on specialised film related services (sound, lighting, engineering, scenography). Several nationally successful films have been produced in Stavanger since 2000 and three of them have received international recognition.

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Multi-art form venues

Stavanger Cultural Centre (Stavanger Kulturhus Solvberget): Opened in 1987, this 16,000m² area at the centre of the city has been established as a central cultural venue in the region and houses the Stavanger library, a cinema, the Norwegian Children's Museum (Norsk Barnemuseum), children's workshop (Barnas Kulturverksted) and cafes.

Tou Scene; A converted brewery which officially opened after five years of refurbishment in 2005 as a centre for contemporary art in fields such as music, visual art, film and dramatic art. The premises are rented out to artists and commercial cultural enterprises.

International Cultural Centre: the region's most important cultural and information centre with two exhibition halls at its heart, as well as a new 900m² hall with 250 seats most often presenting international plays

Museums

Stavanger is home to about 25 museums. Among them are:

Norwegian Petroleum Museum: opened in 1999, it has a unusual architecture, which has made it a landmark. It is one of the most popular museums in Stavanger attracting up to 95,000 people per year.

Stavanger Museum: established in 1877 and run by the municipality, it is a large museum with a zoological department and department of cultural history. It is the one of the region's oldest museums.

The Stavanger Museum municipal organisation also runs seven further museum facilities: the **Norwegian Children's Museum**, the **Medical Museum**, the **Norwegian Museum of Printing**, the **Maritime Museum**, the **West Norway Museum School**, **Breidablikk Museum** and **Ledaal Museum**.

Norwegian Canning Museum: one of Stavanger's most popular museums, a living museum about the history of and production of sardines.

Stavanger Museum of Archeology: part of the University of Stavanger, this is the largest museum in Stavanger containing over 12,000 archaeological findings and attracting around 45,000 visitors per year

Missionary Museum: established in 1864, this is Stavanger's oldest museum and it offers about 5,000 objects of ethnographic and historical interest about Norwegian missions around the world

Oglaend Museum: popular museum showing the development of Norway's largest bicycle factory

Norwegian Emigration Centre: collects, documents and exhibits information about Norwegian emigration history

Festivals

Stavanger has made a conscious effort during the last few decades to establish and develop festivals. Stavanger is now a leading festival city, with over 60 large and small festivals on very diverse subjects.

Nuart Contemporary Art Festival: this annual contemporary street and urban art festival is known as 'the Cannes festival' of street art and attracts more than 100,000 people per year

Stavanger International Biennial of Video Art and Experimental Film: established in 2008 as part of ECoC programme, the first of its kind in Norway

International Chamber Music Festival (ICMF): started up in 1990, it has become an annual meeting place for top-class young performers from many nations

Maijazz festival: held for the first time in 1989, it attracts approximately 12,000 visitors per year with 38 concerts presented over five days

Numusic electro music festival: established in 2000, it takes place in small rooms with no more than 300 standing capacity and attracts big name acts, which has made the festival famous among music fans as an opportunity to get 'up close and personal' with some of the scene's biggest names.

Norwegian Film Festival: established in 1973, it is Norway's largest international film festival

The Gladmat Food Festival: one of the most popular festivals, taking place over three days and attracting approximately 200,000 people per year

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Kapittel, Stavanger International Festival of Literature and Freedom of Expression: the second largest literature festival in Norway, it has a strong focus on international literature, social issues and freedom of speech.

Great Norwegian Comedy Festival: established in 1992, this five day festival is Norway's largest comedy festival

Universities

Arts and Education Faculty of the University of Stavanger: it includes the Institute of Music and Dance, the Stavanger Culture School, Film and Media courses (University of Stavanger has 9,000 students and is the largest of its type in Norway)

Art School of Stavanger: HE private visual art school established in 1978 with only 40 students

Other and intangible assets

Stavanger has Europe's largest number of wooden built houses in one continuous area: **Old Stavanger**.

Stavanger Symphony Orchestra: one of the most important orchestras in the country, which goes back to 1930. It plays an important part in the cultural life of the city.

Bjergsted Music Park; since the 1970s, the park has been a meeting place for large music institutions and amateur music in Stavanger. From 1920 until 1969, the park was used for trade fairs and exhibitions. Two of the exhibition halls were subsequently converted into the Stavanger School of Music and the Stavanger Concert House. Bjergsted became the home of the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, Stavanger School of Culture, University of Stavanger's Institute of Music and Dance, Norwegian Institute of Recorded Sound (not a teaching institution but one of Europe's biggest collections of recorded sound) and other musical organisations, the Stavanger Culture School, the Rogaland Music Council and a venue for festivals.

Norwegian Institute for Cultural heritage Research (NIKU): foundation created in 1994 as a national and international centre of expertise in cultural heritage

Stavanger is also home to the **French Cultural Centre** and **Centre for Inter-Cultural Communication**, two unique centres in Norway.

Anthony Gormley's *Broken Column*- this work of public art has received international attention. It comprises 23 stylised full-scale (1.95 m) casts of the artist's body. These are installed at different locations, at a constant difference in altitude equal to the height of the statues, so that they would form an unbroken column if they were in the same place. All the sculptures face the same direction.

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7.3 Bergen case study

Key points

- Balance between traditional and contemporary assets and art forms – for instance the historic Den National Scene theatre plus the converted United Sardines Factory; and traditional art forms plus a heavy metal festival and street art scene
- Substantial municipal cultural budget and a very 'involved' leadership style including plans for specific art forms
- Support for establishing development agencies dedicated to sectoral networking and to audience development.

7.3.1 City dynamics

Population in City: 268,200 (largest city in the west of Norway)

Population in Greater Bergen: 394,600

Top three economic sectors: Energy (oil, gas and renewable energy), maritime industries, creative industries (Media, design and music)

Creative industries strengths: strong in the audiovisual sector with Norway's largest commercial TV station headquarters (TV 2)

Number of University students: 30,000

7.3.2 Cultural development

Bergen is a city of rich heritage. It has always benefited from the presence of national cultural institutions in the city, such as the Den National Scene and Carte Blanche, as well as the presence of a home-grown community of artists.

The city of Bergen was European Capital of Culture in 2000, the culmination of a ten-year programme of strengthening the city's cultural life. The City Council has led the process of cultural development, writing a number of cultural plans and policies since the 1990s, always with the

involvement and co-operation of cultural organisations in the city. The City Council also contributed to major cultural infrastructure programmes, such as the substantial expansion of the Bergen Museum in 2003. The City Council has ensured that its cultural policies cater for all genres of the cultural spectrum, and has created and implemented specific plans for each art form. The latest plan focuses on street art. It aims to ensure that 'Bergen will be a leading centre for graffiti as a form of expression, both in Norway and Nordic countries'.

Apart from the increased visibility in the media and increased visitor footfall, Bergen's tenure as ECoC had a significant impact on local political support for culture. It inspired a new wave of civic plans and the council's cultural budget increased permanently from 2000.

Since 2002, cultural policy has also been seen as a key instrument to attract productive labour, especially 'creatives'. The city considers creative industries as a part of the cultural sector, not isolated from the professional non-commercial sector. The city council developed an innovative strategy in the 2000s to develop its creative industry sector and cultural life based on three actions. The first action was to promote incubation for creative industries by developing cultural clusters and supporting new uses for former industrial centres such as the United Sardines Factory. The second action was to assist in the development and funding of network organisations. The third was to establish an Audience Development Company to analyse and build cultural audiences, and also to understand and develop the significant 'lifestyle' and consumer base for culture.

7.3.3 Principal cultural assets

Performing arts venues

Den National Scene: largest theatre in Bergen and one of the oldest permanent theatres in Norway (founded in 1850), a state property, housing three stages/venues and presenting approximately 20 productions each year (80-450 seats) and attracting about 120,000 people per year

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Grieg Hall: 1,500 seat concert hall opened in 1978, home of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and the Bergen Woodwind Quintet. The Grieg Hall recording studio is famous within the 'black metal' community, as several of the most important Norwegian 'black metal' albums were recorded there.

Hordaland Theatre: 160 seats regional theatre established in 1988 with some plays in local Nynorsk dialect

Logen Theatre: refurbished in 1997, this non-profit charity runs chamber music hall in a heritage building has a 400 seat capacity. It offers about 260 concert and theatre performances per year attracting about 62,500 people per year

Troidhaugen/Troldsalen: inaugurated in the former home of composer Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), this chamber music hall has a 285 seat audience capacity and hosts more than 300 concerts per year.

Fyllingsdalen New Theatre: 200 seat theatre focusing on work for children and young people.

Ole Bull Theatre: 462 seats theatre mostly dedicated to comedy shows

Håkonshallen: 750 years old royal banquet hall with a 430 seat capacity now used as a venue for choral and chamber music concerts

Visual arts venues

Bergen Kunsthall: one of the leading venues for contemporary art in Norway, built in time for the 2000 ECoC programme and housing three exhibition halls with work from both local and international artists

Film and media

Magnus Barefoot Cinema Centre: five screens, main venue of Bergen International Film Festival, 1,048 seats

Konsertpaleet Cinema: 12 screens, 1,456 seats

Bergen is home to the headquarters of Norway's largest commercial TV station headquarters (TV2)

Multi-art form venues

United Sardines Factory (USF): a 12,000 m² former sardine factory converted into a fjordside contemporary arts complex in 1997, one of the largest cultural centres in Norway, housing 120 cultural enterprises, 80 artists studios, and five stages for performance arts.

Museums

Bergen is home to over 30 museums, reflecting the strength of its cultural heritage.

Bergen City Museum: municipal organisation established in 2005 running different sites, this is a merger of several previously independent museums and monuments in the city of Bergen including the **Alvøen Museum, Bergen School Museum, Bryggen museum, Damsgård Manor, Hordamuseet** and **Rosenkrantz Tower**. Altogether they attract about 170,000 visitors per year.

Hanseatic Museum and Schotstuene: large museum on the Hanseatic heritage of the city established in 1916

Bergen Maritime Museum

Old Bergen Museum (Gamle Bergen): open air museum with more than 40 wooden houses representative of Bergen architecture in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries

Bergen Art Museum: owned by the city, this is one of the largest art museums in Scandinavia and offers in three buildings art from the 1400s to the present day. It has expanded since 2003 as part of a municipal policy of an 'arts and cultural axis' in the city centre.

West Norway Museum of Decorative Arts; building presenting craft pieces from the past 500 years. It has also a considerable collection of Chinese art

The Bergen Museum: an integral part of the University of Bergen, this is one of the most important Norwegian collections of archaeology, ethnography, geology and zoology, also has a botanical garden with the country's largest collection of plant species

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Norwegian Fisheries Museum of Bontelabo: museum covering all aspects of the exploitation of fishery resources through the ages

Festivals

Bergen hosts around 30 festivals per year. Half of them are dedicated to music and most of them are 50% funded by the city council.

Bergen International Festival: annual international music and cultural festival, started in 1953. It is the largest of its kind in the Nordic countries, with more than 150 events in 15 days attracting 40,000 visitors to indoor events and 20,000 visitors to outdoor events.

MusicaNord: 10 week summer festival with 60 concerts and a main focus on composer Edvard Grieg

Bergen International Film Festival: arranged as part of ECoC in 2000, it is now the largest film festival in the nation in terms of number of films, with 150 films and 45,000 attending in 2010

Night Jazz Festival: one of the largest jazz festivals in Norway established in 1972

Psycho Holiday; one of the largest heavy metal music festivals in the Scandinavian region (Bergen is known for being home to many successful metal bands)

Bergen International Comics Festival: the most important Norwegian festival dedicated to comics literature

Phono Festival: established in 2005, this festival is now considered one of the most important national music events, capitalising on the Bergen Wave (see below)

Universities

Grieg Academy (formerly the Bergen Music Conservatory) is part of Faculty of Humanities at the University of Bergen. It was founded in 1905 and welcomes 200 higher education students per year

Bergen Academy of Art and Design: one of the two independent institutions of higher learning in the visual arts and design in Norway. The institution has 300 students and 100 staff members; three departments:

Department of Fine Art, Department of Design and Department of Specialised Art.

Art education has a long tradition in Bergen, as the first school of art was established here in 1772, modelled on the Academy of Art in Copenhagen.

Other and intangible assets

The Bryggen: Bergen is well-known for its harbour, the Bryggen, which was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1979. The city also has 61 protected buildings.

Bergen is the birthplace of Edvard Grieg, considered the most important Norwegian composer.

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra: one of Norway's two national orchestras and one of the oldest orchestras in the world, with a history dating back to 1765. The orchestra has played all over the world and has recorded several albums.

BIT Teatergarasjen (BIT): theatre and dance company, one of the main producers and co-producers of international contemporary theatre and dance in Norway

Carte Blanche: Norway's only permanent and fully funded national contemporary dance company

Bergen Wave: during the late 1990s and 2000s, a series of successful pop, rock, electronic and metal bands/artists emerged in Bergen, some of them making international breakthroughs (e.g. Roysopp, Kings of Convenience, Annie, Bjorn Torske); what the Norwegian press referred to as the 'Bergen Wave'

Bergen is considered the '**Street Art Capital**' of Norway. Banksy visited the city in 2000 and his work on the city walls inspired many. The 2009 city councillor for culture protected some of his work with plexiglass. The municipality launched an action plan for street art in 2011. Today, many up-and-coming street artists are using Bergen as a base.

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7.4 Turku case study

Key points

- Broad range of cultural assets reflecting its status as a former capital of Finland, with no particular art form specialism
- Supportive city council unafraid to take risks and to showcase underground and alternative scenes – for instance opening the ECoC programme with a Tom of Finland retrospective
- Economic strategy to position Turku as the hip creative hub of the Baltic Sea Region, helped by investing in established cultural assets as well as alternative / underground scenes.

7.4.1 City dynamics

Population in City: 180,314

Population in Turku urban region: 246,312

Top three economic sectors: Shipbuilding, biotechnology and information technology

Creative industry strengths: 9,000 people employed in creative industries, 14% of all Turku businesses; internationally competitive in industrial design and art design

Number of University students: 34,511

7.4.2 Cultural development

Turku has always been the highest profile city in Finland for culture – it used to be the capital of the country and is the oldest city in Finland. Turku has diverse and substantial cultural assets resulting from its historical status, consistent public investment in culture over the past 40 years, and the presence of strong private cultural organisations in the city. The scale of its cultural institutions have pushed some to call it a city punching ‘above its weight’, and the 23,000m² Logomo cultural centre is the type of cultural asset more usually to be found in global cities.

One of the most interesting aspects of the city’s cultural policy over the past decade is the attention given to the underground scene. There is a strong support from the city council for marginal and new art forms that contribute to a creative urban environment. The electronic music scene has been active in Turku since the 1980s and remains a vital field of its culture at present. The theme of Turku’s time as European Capital of Culture (in 2011) expressed this twin-track approach, embracing the city’s cultural heritage and its contemporary alternative scene. The ECoC programme was called ‘Turku on Fire!’ implying that Turku was hot with creativity while also referring to the fires that mark its history.

‘Turku on Fire!’ aimed to unearth the local underground scenes and bring them to the broader public. The activities of the Turku 2011 Foundation emphasised, for instance, the strengthening of more marginal fields, such as puppet theatres and animation. The opening exhibition of the programme was a major retrospective for Tom of Finland, an artist known for his graphic homoerotic art.

Turku has also been a national pioneer in creative industries policy. The city council sees its role as a facilitator of networking opportunities for creative industries development. It established a Development Centre for Creative Industries and Cultural Export in 2006. The support it lends to underground art activities has also helped to make Turku attractive to creative companies around the Baltic Sea Region, for which Turku aims to be the principal creative economy hub.

7.4.3 Principal cultural assets

Performing arts venues

Turku City Theatre: founded in 1946, it is the oldest municipal theatre in Finland and has three performance spaces with about 1,000 seats. It presents 20-30 productions and about 420 performances to an audience of about 65,000 people per year.

Turku Swedish Theatre: Finland’s oldest theatre built in 1827 with four formal stages, a 500 seat capacity, presenting about 300 performances to an audience of about 50,000 per year

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Castle Theatre: performance space located in Turku castle and offering about 730 performances and concerts to an audience of up to 130,000 people per year

Aurinkobaletti Theatre: established in 1981, this theatre is located in a 1860 factory building and showcases the work of the local Aurinkobaletti contemporary dance company, which produces a diverse repertoire of 170 performances to an audience of about 30,000 people per year

Eri Dance Theatre: dance theatre established in 1989 presenting about 3 productions and 130 performances per year

Turku has 14 further smaller theatres, usually offering performances on a weekly basis.

Visual arts venues

Turku Art Museum: opened in 1904 in its Art Nouveau building, the museum is renowned as a national treasure and offers one of the finest art collections in Finland attracting up to 80,000 visitors per year

Waino Aaltonen Museum of Art: Museum established by the city in 1967, this museum consist of six large exhibition halls presenting contemporary art work, sculpture and promoting local art

Turku has 18 non-commercial art galleries.

Film and media

Turku has two cinemas with a total of 10 screens and 1,718 seats.

The **National Audiovisual Archive of Finland** is located in Turku.

Multi-art form venues

Logomo Exhibition Centre: a huge former warehouse and railway maintenance shed converted in time for Turku's ECoC year into a 23,000 m² culture centre, concert hall, exhibition space, restaurant and collection of artists' studios.

Manilla Culture Centre: former industrial complex run by the private Pro Manilla Foundation hosting three theatres, and 40 different cultural

enterprises, such as traditional art and handicraft workshops, photography and digital media studios, galleries and exhibitions

Museums

Turku Castle/City of Turku Historical Museum: the Castle offers various exhibitions about the region's history, and attracts up to 121,000 visitors per year

Luostarinmaki Handicrafts Museum: Turku's handicrafts history and outdoor museum. attracts up to 45,000 visitors per year

Aboa Vetus and Ars Nova: Turku's most popular museum. It is both a museum of archaeology and history displaying the quarters of old Turku that have been buried underground and a modern art museum. It attracts up to 170,000 visits per year.

Forum Marinum: the national marine and navy history museum and marine centre, attracting up to 120,000 visitors per year

Kuralan Kylamaki: this small village area is the City's museum of living history where visitors can experience the daily life of the people of Southwestern Finland in the 1940s and 1950s.

Pharmacy Museum and Qwensel House: built in the 16th century, this house is the oldest surviving merchant's house in the city.

Turku Cathedral & Museum: the museum presents the history of the cathedral and ecclesiastical life and attracts up to 173,000 visitors per year.

Libraries

Turku City Library: it received 1.2 million visitors in 2010 and became Finland's busiest library in terms of visitor numbers.

Festivals

Turku is the official '**Christmas Capital**' of Finland and many events are organised by the city during this holiday period.

Turku Music Festival: annual three day classical music festival attracting an audience of about 35,000 people

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Down by the Laituri City Festival: organised in Turku's city centre, it is the largest and oldest festival to be organized in a city centre in Finland, attracting up to 70,000 people per year

Ruisock: founded in 1970, the second oldest rock festival in Europe, attracts up to 100,000 visitors per year

New Music Festival: annual electronic festival organised for the first time in 2004 with 5,000 people capacity, it has managed to attract top names such as Justice and M83.

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Universities

The city boasts one of Finland's best art academies, the **Arts Academy** of the Turku University of applied sciences.

Other and intangible assets

Turku's Philharmonic Orchestra: the oldest orchestra in Finland and one of the oldest orchestras in the world that is still performing. In 2011, the City's Philharmonic Orchestra gave 151 concerts to an audience of 140,360 people.

7.5 Norwich, UK

Key points

- Some gaps in the cultural offer, especially in visual arts and festivals, but particular strengths in heritage and literature
- Unsuccessful bids for ECoC and UKCoC are credited with creating consensus and confidence, and securing investment
- Efforts to include smaller organisations in cultural planning, via the Cultural Communities Consortium (est. 2008)

7.5.1 City dynamics

Population in City: 122,000

Population in Norwich urban area: 195,000

Top economic sectors: diverse, mostly service based economy, retail, science and research

Creative industry strengths: strong in the audiovisual and media sector with the headquarters of BBC TV East, Anglia TV and Archant (the largest independent regional newspaper group in the UK)

7.5.2 Cultural development

Norwich has a wealth of heritage assets, with over 1,500 listed buildings, but the city also has some gaps in its cultural offer – in particular, no city centre visual arts institution.

Norwich bid unsuccessfully for both the European Capital of Culture title for 2008 and the UK City of Culture title for 2013. However, the bidding process helped the city council and cultural organisations to develop consensus and to secure funding, and created the confidence to apply for UNESCO City of Literature designation (awarded 2012).

The Cultural Cities Research Network that was formed to examine the experience of bidding for cultural titles, notes that:

“ Simply bidding for ECoC and UKCoC in succession helped the city council to understand the value of culture, which is now firmly embedded as part of its corporate plan. Some of the same people were directly involved with each bid, and the positive energy generated by ECoC, in particular media attention from outside the city – “we couldn’t have paid for the column inches it generated” – helped to fuel participation in the UKCoC 2013 competition. The city felt “reinvigorated” by this new opportunity – this was especially true as the bidding team did not have to “go over the same arguments” that had been won during ECoC bid, as the city’s cultural profile and confidence had already been significantly raised.

The Norwich Cultural Communities Consortium, developed following ECoC 2008 in response to a need to “look beyond Arts Council regularly funded organisations” and the established cultural order, to create a mechanism for smaller community-based arts organisations to become involved with city-wide cultural decision-making and planning. This created an added enthusiasm for UKCoC 2013, with more organisations ‘feeling involved’.

Norwich members commented on the on-going support they have received from [DCMS, Arts Council and such bodies] which they believe to be a direct result of their involvement with ECoC and UKCoC competitions and relationships created.

7.5.3 Principal cultural assets

Performing arts venues

Theatre Royal: Has a 250-year history, currently a 1,300 seat art deco ‘receiving’ theatre. It underwent a £10m refit in 2007 and is run by Theatre Royal Trust, a charitable trust.

Norwich Playhouse: 300 seats contemporary theatre

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Maddermarket Theatre: 310 seats theatre opened in 1921 and staging contemporary plays

Norwich Puppet Theatre: nationally unique venue dedicated to puppetry. It currently houses a 185-seat raked auditorium, 50 seat Octagon Studio, workshops and an exhibition gallery.

The Garage: 110 seats studio theatre

Platform Theatre: theatre on the grounds of the City College Norwich, raked and seating about 250 seats

Sewell Barn Theatre: 100 seats small theatre with unusual staging

The Waterfront: a 1,000 capacity private live music venue/nightclub, mostly offering contemporary rock, pop and alternative live music

UEA LCR: 30 year old standing room only venue at the University of East Anglia which has a capacity of 1,550 and where acts such as Coldplay and Eurhythmic have performed

John Innes Centre: modern 300 seat concert hall, mostly offering classical chamber music concerts

Visual arts venues

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, UEA: modern art and decorative/fine art from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Housed in Norman Foster building on the University campus (some way outside the city centre), it attracts about 60,000 visitors a year. Opened 1978.

Film and media

Cinema City: the country's oldest independent art house cinema, it offers three screens and 350 seats

Odeon Norwich: 18 screen multiplex cinema with about 3,000 seats

Hollywood Cinema: commercial cinema with 4 screens

Vue Norwich: eight screens multiplex cinema with over 1,800 seats

Multi-art form venues

Norwich Arts Centre: small, independently-run venue with charitable status. Offers broad range of performing and media arts, especially photography and new digital, but is also a music venue (290 seating capacity). Started by local enthusiasts in 1976, it moved to its current location in 1980 and was redeveloped with capital grant from National Lottery in 1999.

Museums

Norwich Castle museum and art gallery: regional museum with art, archaeology, and natural history collection, 146,000 visitors in 2011

Bridewell Museum: heritage building with collection about Norwich's history

Thursford Collection: old-fashioned indoor fairground setting with fairground rides which date back to the Victorian era and housing the world's largest collection of steam engines and organs

Dragon Hall: heritage building with collection about medieval Norwich

Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum

City of Norwich Aviation Museum

John Jarrold Printing Museum

Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service Costume and Textiles Study Centre: contains extensive collection of more than 20,000 items

Libraries

The Forum (includes Millennium Library, BBC East Regional HQ, a public square and other leisure facilities). The decision was taken to create a broader community facility to replace the previous library after it burnt down. One of nine Landmark Millennium buildings in the country, it was opened in 2001. Building costs funded by Millennium Commission, Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council and the business community. Run by Forum Trust. Busiest public library in the country for several years running.

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Festivals

The city holds over 20 festivals per year.

Norfolk & Norwich Festival: one of the oldest city festivals in England; classical music, circus, dance, visual arts and children's events. The Festival organisation works on creative learning schemes across Norfolk with support from Arts Council England and Norwich and Norfolk councils and has received funding to become a 'bridge' organisation for Arts Council England. The 2010 edition managed to attract about 320,000 people

Spring Literary Festival: taking place over five months and run by the University of East Anglia

Lord Mayor's Celebration: Norwich City Council event taking place over four days

Autumn Literary Festival: taking place over four months and run by the University of East Anglia

North Norfolk Music Festival: three-day charity-run classical music festival

Universities

University of East Anglia: founded in 1963. 17,300 students (including more than 3,000 postgrads). Campus based two miles outside city centre.

Norwich University of the Arts: specialist college with 1,500 students in Norwich.

Other and intangible assets

Norwich has been a city since 1194 and still has 1,500 listed buildings within the city walls.

Norwich Cathedral: 550,000 visitors a year, was the first to have a refectory and an audio-visual facility

Norwich 12: an initiative by Norwich Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust to develop 12 of Norwich's most iconic buildings into an integrated family of heritage attractions which act as an internationally important showcase of English cultural development over the last 1,000 years

The Norwich Twenty Group: a select group of 60 artists based in Norwich arranging two major exhibitions in Norwich per year. Since its creation in 1946, the Norwich Twenty Group Artists have shown their artwork at 140 exhibitions, 93 in Norwich, 40 outside Norwich and 7 abroad.

Writers Centre Norwich: literature development agency funded by Arts Council England and the City Council and County Council, seeking to explore the artistic and social power of creative writing through pioneering and collaborative projects with writers and other partners. The Centre aims to nurture a new generation of prize-winning literary talent as well as attracting the best international writers to the region, while offering a wide range of community engagement projects. The Centre led on Norwich's bid to become UNESCO City of Literature and is developing England's new National Centre for Writing.

In May 2012, Norwich became England's first **UNESCO City of Literature**.

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7.6 Key findings from case studies

The evidence from the case studies suggests a number of recurring themes. They are:

7.6.1 Diverse asset base plus a specialism

Each city's history has shaped the cultural asset base it enjoys today – for example Bergen and Turku have both played important national roles in the past, and Norwich has been a wealthy regional capital since the 12th century. Much of Stavanger is much newer. But despite these differences all the cities enjoy a diverse cultural asset base and therefore a broad cultural offer. All of the Nordic cities have a good-sized concert hall, a range of museums and festivals, at least one nationally significant art collection, a major library, a contemporary visual arts centre and a dance company. (Norwich's offer is a little less broad than that of the other cities.)

Most cities have also proactively developed specialisms – something they do that is truly distinct and of national and international significance. The specialisms include classical music in Stavanger, street art in Bergen, literature in Norwich and electronic music in Turku.

7.6.2 Committed municipal leadership and investment

All four cities benefit from committed, long term support by a proactive city council. The councils have taken a strong lead (in Bergen, even developing art form specific plans) but have taken care to engage local cultural organisations of all sizes, and to develop consensus.

As well as providing leadership, city councils have invested substantially in cultural infrastructure and programming. They have also encouraged and supported networks, agencies and international exchange opportunities that can support organisations to develop.

All four cities link culture to economic development, thus justifying their investment in culture. Stavanger and Bergen have worked hard to escape the negative image associated with oil cities and to help diversification towards tourism and the creative industries.

7.6.3 Risk taking

All four cities, led by their city councils, seem to have an unusual appetite for risk taking. This manifests itself in two main ways:

- Supporting and showcasing underground and alternative art forms and scenes, alongside traditional forms. This helps efforts to develop distinctive specialisms and to counter the staid 'oil city' image.
- Investing time, money and political capital in speculative bids for ECoC, UKCC and UNESCO titles.

However, bidding (and winning) titles has been good for all four cities. The three Nordic cities used ECoC to focus and accelerate their cultural development – creating new consensus and confidence, forming new international links, increasing investment, and developing new venues and festivals. Interestingly, Norwich's unsuccessful bids for ECoC and UKCC brought similar benefits. Norwich's bids led to the city receiving 'consolation' funding and publicity as part of the DCMS Urban Cultural Programme, as well as a renewed focus on its key strength of literature. Following a successful bid for UNESCO City of Literature status, Norwich is now due to house the new National Centre for Writing.

7.6.4 Is there an oil city or Nordic model?

At a general level, the main commonality between the three Nordic oil cities is that all have found culture helpful for rebranding and diversifying. At a more detailed level, each city can probably suggest some specific tactics that Aberdeen might employ for cultural development, for instance in terms of engaging the private sector, or encouraging alternative or underground scenes to shake off their staid image.

The three cities do not have strong cultural links with each other yet, though Aberdeen and Stavanger are already twinned with some modest cultural exchange taking place. There may be an opportunity for Aberdeen to create stronger cultural ties. In this, Norwich's aim to better network the various UNESCO Cities of Literature may offer some lessons.

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8. SWOT

The review of the cultural asset base suggests that Aberdeen has some real strengths as well as a few gaps, and the city faces a number of challenges and opportunities. We have sought to crystallise the key points in the form of a SWOT analysis. These have helped inform the conclusions and recommendations set out in chapter 10. It should be noted that, like the rest of this report, this section focuses on assets – it does not consider the strengths and weaknesses of artistic programming in the city.

8.1 Strengths

- Aberdeen’s oil and gas industry makes it a well-known, high-profile place (both in the UK and internationally) for a city of its size
- Aberdeen’s quality of life is very high, and it is on average a prosperous city
- It has a distinctive and handsome built environment, with many important buildings
- It has two well-established thriving universities, with strong and expanding art and music provision
- Aberdeen dominates its region, and has a large hinterland in the Shire from which to draw audiences
- For a city of its size it has a good stock of cultural infrastructure buildings
- The city has several sizeable and attractive parks
- Aberdeen (and the wider Shire) has a rich culture of amateur and community activity on which to draw, with distinctive elements such as its folk traditions

8.2 Weaknesses

- Aberdeen has not been able to support permanent producer bodies in any number
- There is a shortage of affordable rehearsal/tryout space
- The cost of hotel accommodation is high, deterring visiting artists (though it is lower at weekends)
- The relative isolation of Aberdeen, both geographic and its absence from some touring circuits, makes it harder for touring companies to visit
- There is no well-known ‘signature’ asset or provision for which the city is famous
- The city centre, where many key cultural assets are clustered, is perceived by many as uninviting. Transport links to the centre are also weaker than they might be.
- The city struggles to hold onto talented creative young people
- While there are some successful niche festivals, there is no festival with wide popular appeal to residents
- Quality of small and mid scale live music venues is thought to be comparatively poor
- Amateur cultural activity is strong but the pathways between amateur activity and professionalism are weak
- ‘Soft’ infrastructure is missing within the city’s cultural and creative sector – there is a lack of networks and ‘joined-up’ thinking
- There is something of a diffidence about banging the drum for culture – a reluctance in the city to boast about what it does well
- The city’s intangible culture could be expressed more clearly

8.3 Opportunities

There are a strikingly large number of proposals for improving the cultural fabric of the city under consideration. They include:

- Redevelopment of the Aberdeen Art Gallery
- Redevelopment of the Music Hall
- An expanded or relocated arena at the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre
- The universities' rationalisation of their estates is also opening up opportunities. The University of Aberdeen is considering developing its Arts Lecture Theatre into a music performance and rehearsal space. The Kings Pavilion (a disused swimming pool) is also a potential cultural space.
- RGU's move out of the city centre may also release the Schoolhill and Clark buildings which could be adapted for cultural or incubator use either as part of a university venture, or a co-venture with the City.
- Aberdeen has strong trade and some significant transport links with Northern Europe and Canada/northern USA (the Northern Arc)
- Stakeholders rated their own art forms more highly than the general cultural offer, suggesting the city may be underplaying the quality of its assets
- Vacant retail units in the city centre offer a chance for some novel cultural/public realm interventions

8.4 Threats

- Weak relationships and networking make for a fragmented cultural sector
- Maintenance needs become critical at some of the key cultural infrastructure in the city
- City's cultural life is heavily reliant on a few talented individuals
- Demographic trends: the city's population continues to shift to the suburbs and/or the Shire, and the city's population ages
- High costs of living make the city difficult for artists to afford to live and work in.

9. Summary of cultural demand and offer

This section summarises the evidence around the demand for culture in Aberdeen and the quality of the offer that is presently trying to meet that demand. It draws in particular on chapters 3 and 5 of this report.

9.1 Demand for existing cultural offer

The evidence of the Scottish Household Survey in 2009/10 (the most recent such survey with data broken down by local authority area) suggests that Aberdeen's residents are more likely both to attend cultural events and participate in culture than are Scottish people as a whole. This partly reflects the level of education of many Aberdonians: higher educational achievement is associated with higher cultural attendance.

Overall, 83% of the city's residents attended at least one cultural event in 2009/10, compared with 74% of Scots. Aberdonians are most likely to go to the cinema (60% of them did this), with the theatre (32%), visiting the library (31%) and live music events (29%) also being popular. Aberdeen residents attended these four activities in higher proportions than did Scottish residents.

MOSAIC analysis suggests Aberdeen's population profile includes large numbers of the types of households with a propensity to attend cultural events.

9.2 Participation in culture

The Scottish Household Survey data indicates that reading for pleasure is the most popular activity (65%) among Aberdeen residents, followed by dance (21%), and crafts and arts (13%). Aberdeen is slightly above the

Scottish average for these three activities. In all, 74% of Aberdeen residents took part in a cultural activity, compared with 71% in Scotland (in 2009/10).

9.3 Quality of city's cultural offer

Chapter 5 looked at Aberdeen's cultural offer in a number of key art forms, before going on to make an assessment of the overall quality of that art form in the city. In this section we summarise the main points from those assessments.

Theatre

While the city has a number of venues in various states of repair, its theatre offer appears to be unexceptional for a city of its size. There is, however, potential for improvement, and there are plans to upgrade both the infrastructure and the producing base within the city. There is also a range of amateur activity on which to draw.

Music

Music appears to be a real strength of Aberdeen's. It has a range of public venues of various sizes, as well as a number of pubs and clubs that support live music. There are several music promoters and small record labels in the city. Amateur activity is strong with a range of societies supporting both the performance and appreciation of music in a variety of forms, including traditional Scottish folk music. Aberdeen University has a strong music department, which is one of the focal points of an emerging electronic music scene in the city.

Visual arts

The city seems to have a strong visual art offer, with a high-quality municipal gallery, several other gallery spaces in public-sector buildings – the hospital, the universities – and a number of small commercial galleries. Peacock Visual Arts is one of only two Foundation organisations in the city. The presence of Gray's School of Art is also a great source of strength, even though it is no longer based in the city centre. The oil companies provide a corporate market for art.

However, high studio and house prices make it a challenging location for artists, especially young and/or emerging ones. Aberdeen's relative distance from the UK's major art centres, such as London and Glasgow, may also be a disadvantage. As in theatre, Aberdeen is more of a consumer of art rather than a producer.

Film

Aberdeen's film offer seems better than average for a British city – the arthouse fare of the Belmont is more typically found in larger cities than Aberdeen, while the three centrally located mainstream cinemas have more than 5,700 seats between them. It is important for the diversity of Aberdeen's film offer that the Belmont remains an audience hub for arthouse cinema in some form.

Dance

Dance is unusual in Aberdeen in being an art form in which the city has a nationally significant company. It also has a niche festival DanceLive – the only festival of contemporary dance in Scotland – and has regular visits from Scottish Ballet. Aberdeen also has a thriving amateur scene. However, contemporary dance's appeal will inevitably be limited: it will not build a mass audience within the city.

Museums, libraries and archives

Aberdeen has considerable strengths in museums, libraries and archives. It has some significant collections as well as some smaller museums which draw on the city's history in interesting ways. Many of those spoken to in the course of this research argued that Aberdeen's archives in particular are a treasure, but that relatively little is made of them.

9.4 Summary of demand and quality

The evidence of the Scottish Household Survey suggests that Aberdeen residents are more likely to attend and participate in cultural events than are Scottish people in general (though the Survey is unable to say whether that attendance always takes place in Aberdeen itself). Yet the cultural sector stakeholders spoken to during this research suggested that

audience development in the city was weak (see section 3.6), reflecting a fragmented sector with little cross-promotion and –marketing, a low media profile and a lack of a critical mass. This suggests there are opportunities for the city. There is an audience for culture in Aberdeen, but the sector may not fully be reaching it.

The assessment of the quality of the offer indicates that there are areas of potential strength which could be supported. Music, visual arts, archives, film and dance are all potentially strong, while theatre, museums and libraries are also of reasonable, if lesser, quality.

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10. Conclusions and recommendations

The report to date has collected a wide range of evidence, from interviews, previous research, online surveys, and official government (both UK and Scottish) data. Here we offer BOP's reflections on the evidence, informed by our experience working with other cities and cultural organisations in the UK over the last 15 years. A series of recommendations follow. These are intended to help ACC shape its vision for Aberdeen as a city in which culture plays a prominent role.

10.1 Infrastructure is strong but content is weaker

For a city of its size, Aberdeen has an unusually large number of cultural venues, though several of them are in a poor state of repair. The consequence of this is that Aberdeen has existing spaces available from which it could carve out a strong offer in any of several art forms, if it wishes to commit the appropriate level of support.

But it is noticeable that the breadth and depth of venues is not matched by similar riches in terms of producers and practitioners. There are no national or producing companies of scale in the city, so few opportunities for retention of aspiring producers. The knock-on effect trickles down to arts and creative industries graduates who must leave to seek producers for their work. This is a serious issue for the city.

10.2 Aberdeen should aim to develop (and become known for) a specialism

The research into comparator cities suggests that cities have won a reputation for their culture by building a diverse offer, but with a specialism in a particular art form. We would suggest that Aberdeen has

the necessary diversity, with a reasonable offer in theatre and literature, and better than average offers in film and visual art. Its main opportunities, however, seem to lie in dance and, especially, music. In music it seems to have almost a 'full-spectrum' offer, with strong amateur activity, a flourishing university department (at the University of Aberdeen), a range of venues of different sizes, a lively commercial music scene and some high-quality festivals. The glaring weakness in its offer is the absence of a major professional company, for which the visits by the likes of Scottish Opera offer only partial compensation. In the current economic climate it is possible that organisations may be open to relocating as funding support is lost – Aberdeen might make attracting such a company a high priority.

Contemporary dance is a much more niche activity, and while Aberdeen has real strengths here with CityMoves and the DanceLive festival, in the current tough economic climate, contemporary dance may lack the mass appeal necessary to justify making this the city's flagship art form. Nevertheless, it is worth serious support – in particular, to find CityMoves a better home.

10.3 The city centre is distinctive but lacklustre

There is broad agreement among residents and businesses that the city centre of Aberdeen has become uninviting, especially in and around Union Street. While we at BOP feel that this belief is unnecessarily gloomy – the city centre's historic architecture remains more striking and distinctive than that of many places – the perception can be self-fulfilling. The sense of a lack of 'buzz' is reinforced by the relatively low level of residential and office density in the city centre.

Culture can play a role in revitalising the city centre. Many of the city's key cultural venues lie on or near to Union Street, and they could provide a way out from the Street's downmarket retail offer. If combined with ideas such as those of RGU to increase the residential density of the district, it could offer the area a 'post-retail' future. A more imaginative use of public spaces like Castlegate and the east end of Union Street, or the Marischal College quadrangle, could be an important part of this effort.

Aberdeen needs to make more of its architectural heritage. The architecture (and its history) is striking, and the city needs to tell that story about itself better. Being the third city in Scotland perhaps leads Aberdeen to compare itself too much with Edinburgh or Glasgow, rather than with cities of comparable size.

10.4 Need to improve linkages and connectivity

The city needs to build better linkages both within the cultural sector and between the cultural sector and other parts of the city's economy and institutional life. There are four areas in particular where there is potential for better linkages.

- The **universities** have chosen to locate their campuses outside the city centre in recent years, but still have much to offer the city at a strategic and programming level as RGU's recent report on the city centre showed. There are opportunities for the cultural sector in the release and reconfiguration of the universities' property portfolios. Talent development is an area where the universities and the college might work more closely with ACC. More practically, ACC and the University of Aberdeen might develop a plan for the cultural spaces in Marischal College – the Mitchell Hall and Marischal Museum– that are currently inaccessible.
- Stakeholders who participated in workshops suggested that **the cultural sector is somewhat fragmented**. The sector needs to market itself more coherently. People work within their own art forms and fields and are sometimes unaware of good work going on elsewhere. ACC is just starting to introduce a more coordinated and strategic approach to its grants which may help here. Stakeholders also felt that contemporary or alternative practitioners often lack the resources (funding or profile) to make themselves more visible and to reach a wider audience. All these factors mean there is no sense yet of a critical mass of activity in the city, in the stakeholders' view.
- **Boost creative industries activity** – Aberdeen's creative industries are slightly underperforming, though many of the conditions for success seem to be in place. Networking is relatively weak, not just between

creative businesses themselves, but between them and potential customers. Expensive office and studio space makes it difficult for creative (micro) businesses to get established. There is a shortage of the sort of hub or co-working space in the city centre that might encourage more of a critical mass of businesses to develop. Creative entrepreneurship could be strengthened further, though Aberdeen College in particular, already pays attention to this.

Northern Arc – there is a perception in the city that the Northern Arc offers real potential for collaboration and exchange (much more so than links with other energy cities.) The Northern Arc territories, by which we mean Ireland, the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (including Orkney and Shetland), Iceland, Scandinavia, and Atlantic Canada, share cultural, trade and transport links. The relatively small population of most of these territories means that Aberdeen counts as a major city among these: it is bigger than the likes of Inverness, Stavanger, Trondheim, Reykjavik or St John's (Canada), and only a little smaller than Bergen. Building further links through music, for example, would help create a distinctive offer for Aberdeen.

10.5 Committed municipal leadership and investment

The comparator cities have all benefited from municipal leadership that is happy to 'bang the drum' for culture, and that has prioritised culture for many years. ACC is starting to do this, as shown by its continued support for culture funding in tough economic times, its commitment to the refurbishment of the Aberdeen Art Gallery and above all by its backing of the UK City of Culture bid. If the Council is to harness cultural policy for wider social and economic development, it will need to continue to raise the profile of culture. There is an understandable desire in the current climate to move to a more partnership-based model for the sector, with the council working in a 'behind the scenes' capacity. Developing partnerships with and capacity in the sector is an important goal, and should not be neglected. However, the lesson from the comparator cities and indeed other UK cities that have used culture as way to turn their image around, such as Newcastle-Gateshead, is that the local authority also has to be pro-active, taking the lead and supporting its ambitions with

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substantial investment. The City of Culture bid is encouraging, and the attitude that underpins it provides a basis for achieving lasting change, but it will need to be sustained over several years.

10.6 Recommendations

Overleaf we provide recommendations for how to creatively address the issues above, grouped under five broad actions. We have suggested the lead organisation and the timeframe for each action. It is noticeable that many of the actions have to start with ACC playing the committed and inventive leadership role played by local government in our comparator cities of Stavanger, Bergen and Turku.

Figure 22 Recommendations for action

Action	Potential partnership	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the producers, experiences and content that help Aberdeen to stand out – Foster a producing culture, especially in performing and visual arts. Support producers and companies that can deliver excellence locally alongside those of national significance (e.g. CityMoves Dance Agency) – Consider the location of a national company (new or existing) to Aberdeen – Develop Aberdeen’s significant higher education offer in creative courses. Build on the work of Aberdeen College and the universities to ensure further and higher education offers work together – Encourage entrepreneurship and retain, encourage the return, Aberdeen’s creative graduates. Build a welcoming graduate environment via business support, affordable workspace, networking and showcasing opportunities – Build on the universities’ engagement in city life by encouraging public access to University facilities and partnerships with local organisations – Develop talent among residents, especially young people. A producing culture – particularly one that embraces underground and alternative artforms alongside traditional ones - encourages both audience and creative development 	<p>ACC with Creative Scotland support</p> <p>ACC and CS</p> <p>Universities and College</p> <p>Universities (with ACC support on workspace and business support)</p> <p>Universities, cultural organisations</p> <p>Cultural organisations (with ACC support)</p>	<p>Long term (but quick wins possible e.g. CityMoves)</p> <p>Long term</p> <p>Long term</p> <p>Long term</p> <p>Long term (quick wins possible around capital development by Universities)</p> <p>Long term</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise key cultural infrastructure projects – While retaining a diverse asset base, prioritise capital projects that have momentum and will support excellence and production e.g. Music Hall, Art Gallery/Cowdray Hall – Support CityMoves to address its performance, rehearsal and office space needs – Develop affordable rehearsal , studio and production space in the city 	<p>ACC with Creative Scotland & HLF support</p> <p>ACC / Creative Scotland</p> <p>ACC / Universities / cultural organisations e.g. Peacock, Wasps</p>	<p>Short term wins</p> <p>Short term</p> <p>Long term</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalise the city centre through a cultural placemaking approach – Focus on the city centre, particularly Union Street and the Harbour. Aim to transform less hospitable public spaces into cultural spaces by embedding the arts into the public realm (installations, artist-designed street furniture and lighting schemes, event-ready spaces) and developing a ‘meanwhile uses’ programme for vacant city centre shops and buildings as production spaces and showcasing venues. Unlock planning gain to support cultural activity – Connect new spaces and opportunities with underground or alternative cultural scenes and artists in the city; and link with the Shire’s cultural offer to showcase local production – Think about consequences for cultural venues of planning, licensing and parking policies. ACC needs a corporate approach that cuts across the work of various teams 	<p>ACC / cultural organisations</p>	<p>Long term but with major short term wins possible e.g. meanwhile uses</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasise Aberdeen’s distinctive heritage – Develop the existing and potential festival offer building on the likes of Doors Open Days, Dance Live and including mass celebrations such as Hogmanay – Consider high profile commissions inviting artistic responses to Aberdeen through storytelling, film, performance and public art – Use public realm interventions including heritage trails, physical interpretation boards and online platforms (such as urban gaming) 	<p>ACC / Visit Aberdeen / Creative Scotland support</p>	<p>Long term but short term wins possible – particularly through UKCC bid and programme</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope cultural potential of existing international linkages with Northern Arc and other cities – Learn from other cities about how Aberdeen’s cultural offer can help rebrand the city and diversify the economy – Develop partnerships with other northern cities via artist exchanges – Seek international partners for local developments, building on existing work as well as fostering new collaborations (for example, community led project work with Argentina/ Aberdeen University Music Department; Buenos Aires/Aberdeen sound mapping; and Aberdeen/Bergen/St Petersburg projects – and Aberdeen’s twinning with Stavanger) 	<p>ACC / Universities / cultural organisations</p>	<p>Long term but short term wins through support for existing University music links, and festivals</p>

10.7 Capital investment priorities

We have pulled all this information together to rank various proposed capital investments which might be supported by the City Council and external funders. The scores reflect both the evidence gathered for this report and the assessment of that evidence by BOP Consulting. As always in such exercises there is an element of subjectivity and individual judgement to the scoring. It should also be made clear that we are looking here at the cultural impact of such investment. The City Council may have other criteria it would wish to take into account which fall outside the scope of this research, such as the quality of the management of the organisations.

We have looked at a number of projects which are in need of renovation or improvement and which are potentially recipients of external funding from outside the city. This list therefore does not include His Majesty's Theatre, which is in good condition.

The assessment criteria consist of two criteria related to deliverability and four criteria derived from four of the five recommendations for action shown in Figure 22. (The fifth recommendation is to prioritise cultural infrastructure projects, which is the purpose of this whole section.) Each potential project is given a score of 0, 1 or 2 for each criterion depending on its strength in each category. The two 'deliverability' scores are then doubled, so that they have equal weight with the remaining four categories. The total scores (out of 16) can be used to rank the projects in terms of their priority in terms of capital investment.

We have also included an assessment of a notional public realm programme designed to improve the Union Street/Union Terrace/Schoolhill area. We envisage this as a one-year programme of interventions designed to enliven the cityscape. They might include local and/or national artists working on public art works or interpretations of heritage, outdoor performances, artist-designed street furniture or signage. Such a programme might cost £500,000 and be funded from a range of council budgets and from Creative Scotland.

We also looked at a notional programme to increase the amount of creative workspace available in the city centre, either on a temporary or permanent basis, perhaps with the support of Scottish Enterprise. The

council might lease five vacant properties and convert them into spaces for creative start-ups. The example of 'Seventeen' perhaps provides a template for such work. The universities may be willing to be partners in such a scheme.

The assessment suggests that the Music Hall is the capital investment most likely to realise some of the city's wider cultural priorities, together with the Art Gallery development, which is already well-advanced. A potential programme of public realm improvements also scores highly, as would an upgrade of Peacock Visual Arts. CityMoves also does well, although there is considerable uncertainty about the direction in which the company will head.

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Figure 23 Capital investment priorities

Possible ACC investment	Urgency of upgrade needs	Opportunity for external funding	Contribution to encouraging local talent	Contribution to cultural placemaking	Contribution to Aberdeen's distinctive heritage	Contribution to international links	Score (out of 16)
Music Hall	2	1	1	1	2	1	11
Art Gallery and Cowdray Hall	1	2	1	1	1	2	11
Peacock VA	2	1	2	0	1	1	10
CityMoves	2	0	2	0	0	2	8
Public realm programme	1	1	1	2	1	0	8
Aberdeen Arts Centre	1	1	2	1	1	0	8
Lemon Tree	2	0	2	0	0	1	7
Creative workspaces	1	1	2	1	0	0	7
AECC	1	0	0	1	0	1	4
Beach Ballroom	1	0	1	0	0	0	3

Source: BOP Consulting (2013)

We have summarised the argument for each asset below:

Music Hall: The Hall is in need of major redevelopment and detailed plans have been drawn up, though funding has yet to be secured. The building is category A-listed, and is on Union Street – a successful Music Hall will help revive the city centre.

Art Gallery and Cowdray Hall: While the art gallery was not in need of urgent major repairs, the building does have significant limitations which its ambitious transformation project is designed to address. This has received funding support from HLF, and will enable the Gallery to make an even greater impact on Aberdeen life.

Peacock Visual Arts: There is general agreement that the present building and location do not serve Peacock well. It is less clear how this might be addressed – a number of possibilities have been put forward over the years, none of which has come to fruition. Peacock does have considerable impact on Aberdeen’s cultural life.

CityMoves: As with Peacock VA, there is general agreement that its current venue is unsuitable. There is, however, uncertainty about the company’s future direction, which is still under discussion.

Public realm programme: If funding could be secured, such a programme could do much to enliven the city centre. By supporting a range of activity it also allows for a degree of targeting at particular areas of the city centre.

Aberdeen Arts Centre: Housed in a historic converted church, Aberdeen Arts Centre occupies a striking site in the city centre. Plans have been drawn up for an internal refurbishment. It currently supports local and amateur activity; depending on the scale of the refit it may be able to house small-scale professional performances too.

Lemon Tree: The building has been in poor condition, though recent investments from ACC and APA have led to significant improvements. The Lemon Tree has been a key venue for Aberdeen in the past and could be an important small-scale venue in the future, if it can secure major investment from somewhere. It is an important source of support to local artists and musicians and has some international links through its programming and ambitions to be a festivals hub. APA is developing more adventurous programming at the venue.

Creative spaces: These would represent a way of encouraging local talent while having a limited place-making impact too. This option is hard to cost, however.

AECC: while this undoubtedly contributes to the overall cultural offer of Aberdeen, its location outside the centre and the scale of acts it attracts means that its contribution is not especially distinctive, nor does it develop local talent.

Beach Ballroom: The Ballroom is in regular use, but would need major investment to bring it back to its former glory. Its mix of activities primarily appeals to a local audience.

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11. Appendix 1: Interviewees

The brief for the project noted that the cultural sector has been consulted on a number of occasions in connection with research projects. BOP was therefore asked to keep the consultations with external stakeholders to a fairly tight group this time. To date, we have spoken with:

Jane Spiers, Chief Executive, Aberdeen Performing Arts

Rita Stephen, Development Manager, Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (ACSEF)

Albert Rodger, Vice-Principal & Head of College (Head of Public Engagement Group), University of Aberdeen

Paul Harris, Head of Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon University

Susie McKenzie Brooks, Sector Manager - Creative Industries & Tourism, Aberdeen College

Lindsay Gordon, Director, Peacock Visual Arts

Steve Harris, Chief Executive, Visit Aberdeen

David Wright, Service Manager (Assets & Finance), Aberdeen City Council

Dawn Schultz, City Promotions Manager (Events Team), Aberdeen

Andy Howitt and Jennifer Philips, CityMoves Dance Agency

Pete Stollery, Head of Music, Aberdeen University and Composer, Performer and Chair of Sound Festival

Iain Munro, Director of Creative Development, Creative Scotland

Anita Clark, Portfolio Manager (inc. Dance), Creative Scotland

Andrew Dixon, Chief Executive, Creative Scotland

12. Appendix 2: Survey respondents

Responses to the online survey were received from the following cultural venues and organisations:

Visual Art:

Aberdeen Art Gallery
Peacock Visual Arts
Gallery Heinzel
Grampian Hospitals Art Trust
Richard Colquhoun Gallery
Oil and Glass
RGU (Georgina Scott Sutherland Library/ Faculty of Health & Social Care Level 2 Exhibition Space)
The SMART Gallery
Create Aberdeen
Kilau Coffee and Gallery
Aberdeen Artists Society
Gasworks Studio

Music:

The Music Hall
Sound Festival
Aberdeen Chamber Music Concerts
Bon-Accord Silver Band
Aberdeen Bach Choir
Aberdeen Sinfonietta
The Forte Music School
Aberdeen Sinfonietta
Learig Orchestra
Aberdeen International Youth Festival
Captain Toms Music
Snafu/The Athenaeum/The Big Beach Ball Festival

Museums:

Aberdeen Maritime Museum
The Gordon Highlanders Museum
Satrosphere Science Centre

Multi-purpose venues:

Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre
ACT Aberdeen (Aberdeen Arts Centre & Theatre)
Beach Ballroom
Station House Media Unit

Theatre:

His Majesty's Theatre
Lemon Tree
Phoenix Theatre & Phoenix Youth Theatre

Cinema:

The Belmont Picturehouse

Dance:

Citymoves Dance Agency

Libraries:

Central Library
Kaimhill Library
Woodside Library
Kincorth Customer Access Point and Library

University of Aberdeen:

King's College venues

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VIBRANT ABERDEEN: AN INTRODUCTION

This is 'Vibrant Aberdeen' the cultural strategy for the city of Aberdeen. Developed by the city's Cultural Forum through consultation with hundreds of individuals and organisations, this is the document which sets out a vision for a brighter cultural future for Aberdeen.

The need for this brighter cultural future stems from an analysis of Aberdeen's current cultural health. This is a city where good practice does exist, a city with a unique cultural heritage, a city where talented and passionate individuals and organisations produce magnificent work. It is clear that Aberdeen is a city full of cultural potential. However it is also a city which historically has had other priorities, one which will not fulfil its cultural potential without setting out a vision for the future and more importantly putting the resources and structures behind this vision in order to make it a reality.

'Vibrant Aberdeen' like all cultural strategies, has its limits and words alone cannot produce creativity and vibrancy. Instead this is a document that aspires to be an overarching framework. It aims to provide the guidance and order to ensure that resources and skills are used effectively in order to create an environment where creativity and vibrancy are part of the city's fabric.

This will be no easy task. Significant progress is required and the creation of this strategy is only a small step in the right direction. The debate, consultation and research that has been carried out by all the individuals and organisations involved in developing 'Vibrant Aberdeen' is a positive starting point. However, the challenge now is to follow this through and while particular responsibilities lie with the partners within the Cultural Forum, it is clear that this is a strategy for the entire city. The development that is required cannot be achieved without harnessing the knowledge, skills and passion of the entire city. Only by working together can Aberdeen transform itself into the vibrant, creative and ambitious city it has the potential to be.

ABERDEEN: A SNAPSHOT

Aberdeen is a lively and prosperous city situated in the North East of Scotland. It is a city which has been shaped by its unique history and heritage and one which is driven forward towards fulfilling its undoubted potential. It has long been a city of national and international significance, playing important roles in pivotal historic events such as the spread of Quakerism, the Jacobite Rebellions and the Enlightenment. Aberdeen's position as a major Royal Burgh since the 12th century also highlights the city's importance in national and international trade and industry. While its traditional industries include fishing, farming, ship building and granite it has, since the 1960's, been transformed by the development of the oil industry and is now recognised as the energy capital of Europe. The expansion of the oil industry has been central to the change in the city's dynamic, creating significant economic expansion and increasing and diversifying the population of Aberdeen and surrounding areas. As a result, the cost of living has increased dramatically and there are significant levels of social deprivation throughout the city.

Along with the development of the oil industry, Aberdeen has prioritised and driven forward the development of the higher education, retail and leisure sectors, all of which continues to shape the city and its future. While this development has provided extensive benefits the failure to prioritise culture to the same extent during this period of significant change has created a city with low cultural activity participation rates and low levels of awareness and understanding of the city's culture. This has ultimately led to Aberdeen losing its collective cultural identity, with the perception of the city as being primarily industrial consistent locally, nationally and internationally. This is significant as Aberdeen is so much more; it is a city with a culture and heritage to be proud of and to be recognised by. With its significant architecture, prevalent history, distinct dialect, diverse communities, engaging individuals and exclusive cultural activities and infrastructure, Aberdeen is a city with a unique and celebratory culture and should be identified as such.

The challenge for Aberdeen is to recognise the benefits of culture and to prioritise its preservation and development in order to create an environment where habitual access allows culture to enrich the life of all residents and visitors to the city.

ANALYSIS: WHERE ARE WE NOW AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?

'Vibrant Aberdeen' has been developed through extensive research and consultation carried out to fully examine the current cultural climate of the city. This analysis took various forms including consultation with cultural organisations and the public, as well as research into local and national research papers and statistical records. The aim was to discover where the city's cultural strengths and weaknesses lay and what the challenges and opportunities are for future cultural development in Aberdeen.

The results from the research and consultation were significant. Not only was the response provided by individuals and organisations both passionate and constructive but displayed remarkable consistency with the findings from evidence based information. This consistency has thus allowed for the shared priorities and overall vision for the city to be clearly established.

The following section of 'Vibrant Aberdeen' provides a snapshot of this work, providing summaries of the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that were identified.

STRENGTHS

Presented below is a summary of Aberdeen's key cultural strengths as identified in the research and consultation. While these have been highlighted as strengths, the analysis has also shown that they are not all being fully utilised and benefited from. This must be addressed in order to develop culture in Aberdeen.

ACTIVE COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS

The city possesses a strong infrastructure to support cultural activity in local communities and schools. The work delivered by a range of individuals and organisations throughout the city has created communities and schools which have regular opportunities to engage in cultural activity and develop an appreciation and understanding of culture and its benefits.

AN ACTIVE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Aberdeen has a highly motivated and diverse voluntary sector which supports cultural projects throughout the city. There is no doubt that without the dedication, talent and enthusiasm of the some 300 recognised voluntary groups and thousands of individuals, the cultural climate of the city would suffer greatly.

HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

Aberdeen has been identified as an area with a very high quality of life. Results from the Scottish Household Survey in 2008 found that 94% of Aberdeen residents thought their neighbourhood was either a 'very good' or 'fairly good' place to live. The quality of life for residents of the city is a key component in attracting and retaining individuals and organisations to the city.

PRESTIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Aberdeen is home to prestigious educational establishments which bring a series of major benefits to the city. The University of Aberdeen, one of the nation's ancient universities, has a significant reputation in various fields including literature, music and history while The Robert Gordon University, home to the Gray's School of Art, is widely recognised as one of the top modern universities in the United Kingdom. Aberdeen College is the largest further education college in Scotland, providing full and part-time courses in various subjects including art, design, fashion, music and computer animation.

QUALITY CULTURAL VENUES

The city is equipped with an extensive range of quality cultural venues including concert halls, libraries, museums, community centres, schools, art workshops, cinemas, parks and open spaces. This range of venues and spaces provides the city with a solid venue infrastructure which has the scope and ability to successfully develop and expand.

SIGNIFICANT COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

The city is home to a diverse range of significant local, national and international collections and archives. Aberdeen Art Gallery hosts one of the finest art collections in Britain with paintings, sculpture and graphics from the 15th century through to the present day while the Aberdeen Maritime, Gordon Highlanders and Tolbooth Museums are home to unique collections relating to the city and its culture. Aberdeen also has nationally important archives with the city archive and University of Aberdeen possessing archives of unparalleled quality and significance including the oldest and most complete set of Burgh records in Scotland.

DIVERSE CULTURAL PROGRAMME

Despite the aspiration to significantly improve the cultural life of the city, Aberdeen currently has a diverse cultural programme from which to build. The city has a range of festivals, events, venues, activities and heritage sites which are both distinct and of high quality. This has been highlighted as a key strength, as the ability to provide such a strong and diverse programme with limited resources in comparison to other similar sized cities illustrates a capacity for development.

UNIQUE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The city's history, its role in military conflicts, industry, medical science and art has shaped a distinct and unique cultural heritage. This heritage can be sensed in the values, beliefs and customs of its residents and through the distinct Doric dialect which is still widely spoken across the North East of Scotland. The city is also home to numerous archaeological and historical sites ranging in date from 8000 BC to the 1960's AD which, along with its significant archives, illustrate Aberdeen's distinct heritage and rich contribution to all the great fields of human endeavour.

WEAKNESSES

The list below provides a summary of Aberdeen's major cultural weaknesses as identified through the research and consultation. It is a diverse list, ranging from high level strategic issues, through to more particular problems within the current cultural climate of the city. It is clear that these are all intrinsically linked and in the context of future development must be considered collectively.

BELOW AVERAGE PARTICIPATION RATES

The Scottish Art Council's 'Taking Part' Study from 2008 showed that the North-East of Scotland has the lowest participation rates in cultural activity in the whole of Scotland. Results in the study show lower than average participation figures across all ages and the majority of art forms. This includes a figure of 51% for adult participation in cultural activity which is significantly lower than the national average of 71%. While these results are taken from a single study and there are examples of improving participation figures, it is clear that the city suffers from proportionately low levels of participation in cultural activities.

DIFFICULTY RETAINING CREATIVE SKILLS

There is clear evidence that significant numbers of young people leave the North-East upon gaining qualifications to find work in the cultural sector in the central belt of Scotland. This includes artists graduating from the Gray's School of Art and University of Aberdeen graduates in subjects such as history and archaeology. There is also difficulty in retaining young people who gain an introduction to cultural activity through work with voluntary organisations in Aberdeen but whom leave for graduate qualifications or employment elsewhere.

LACK OF COLLECTIVE VOICE

It has been identified that the city lacks a powerful collective voice which provides leadership, speaks with authority and has the ability to advocate for the development of culture in Aberdeen with significant political influence. The structures to create this are not currently in place and this has led to a fragmented cultural sector where working in relative isolation remains common.

LACK OF EVIDENCE FOR BENEFITS OF CULTURE

Aberdeen has difficulty in fully communicating the impact of culture across the city, particularly the wider social and economic benefits it brings. Organisations and individuals consistently record and monitor the impact of their activity, however there is a limited framework in place which allows for this information to be collated in order to present a city-wide outlook. Further to this, there are few mechanisms which allow for the monitoring of the less tangible impacts of culture and this has led to a culture of reporting and monitoring which is driven by quantifiable targets and measurable outcomes.

RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL OF CULTURAL INVESTMENT AND AMBITION

Historically, other cities throughout the United Kingdom have invested in Culture to a greater extent than Aberdeen. This has led to a climate of maintenance in order to guarantee a consistent cultural output. There is also a general adversity to committing the type of investment which could be perceived as higher risk but which has significantly benefited many other cities.

OVER RELIANCE ON CURRENT CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

While the current cultural programmes and venues currently stand as a strength, the over reliance on this relatively small infrastructure has developed into a cultural weakness. There is an inherent need to significantly develop our existing cultural infrastructure through better use of existing public and private space, redeveloping key venues and introducing new cultural activities. Additionally, there is a requirement to create new venues and there has been strong support for the creation of a contemporary art centre, museum of Aberdeen and increased levels of affordable gallery and studio space.

PERCEPTION OF THE CITY

Aberdeen's identity as the 'Energy Capital of Europe' and as the 'The Granite City' has provided the city with a common perception as an industrial city. This perception has been a key factor in highlighting the need to establish a stronger cultural identity. Additionally the city's position in the North East of Scotland has also led to a perception that it is nationally and internationally isolated from the main cultural centres.

POOR COMMUNICATION OF CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Aberdeen has suffered from an inability to raise sufficient awareness of the range of cultural opportunities that are available for both residents and cultural deliverers in the city. The consultation highlighted a public perception of difficulty in establishing what opportunities were available, while organisations and individuals directly involved in delivering cultural activities felt that while progress had been made there are insufficient structures and resources in place to raise awareness as extensively as desired.

OPPORTUNITIES

Presented below is a summary of the main opportunities that were highlighted during the research and consultation process. These were considered in the context of how they could be seized upon to help maximise our strengths, develop our weaknesses and overcome the challenges ahead in order to achieve our vision of becoming a vibrant, creative and ambitious city.

CREATIVE SCOTLAND

The creation of Creative Scotland as a new cultural governing body provides Aberdeen with the opportunity to re-engage on a national level. With revised national priorities and the potential for increased local representation, this represents an opportunity for Aberdeen to improve its national profile and raise awareness of its culture and the quality and diversity of its cultural programme.

INTERNATIONALISM

Aberdeen traditionally has strong international links mainly established through industry, education and specific cultural activities. There is significant scope to build on these links in order to develop the cultural life of the city. Increasing international links can play a crucial role in the development of artists, the creation of new work, cultural tourism, audience development, cultural understanding and the development of creative businesses. Additionally increasing international programming helps to attract new audiences, inspire the local arts community and break down cultural stereotypes.

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The opportunity exists for Aberdeen to increase engagement with national organisations in order to expand the cultural activities available in the city as well as preserving and nurturing our existing cultural programme and cultural heritage. Currently, organisations such as The Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Scottish Ensemble, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Ballet and Scottish Opera all hold annual performance programmes in the city which have the potential capacity for development.

OLYMPIC AND COMMONWEALTH GAMES

With the 2012 Olympic Games in London and the Commonwealth Games coming to Scotland in 2014, there is a unique opportunity for sport and the arts in Aberdeen to work together to capitalise on the increase in the nations international profile. With increased allocation of funding assigned towards both

games, there is a particular opportunity to forge partnerships which will bring additional investment towards cultural activity in the city.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND DEBATE

The consultation and debate over the future of Union Terrace Gardens and the UK City of Culture opportunity has clearly shown that the residents of Aberdeen are passionate about the cultural future of the city. There is a clear opportunity to engage more frequently and in a more structured manner in order to clearly establish and understand the wants and needs of Aberdeen and its residents.

UK CITY OF CULTURE

The launching of a UK City of Culture competition by the UK government provides an opportunity and a goal for cities with a strong cultural vision such as Aberdeen to work towards a prestigious, national cultural accolade. The introduction of a national cultural award recognises the wider economic, social and community benefits that focusing on culture can bring to a city and follows on from Liverpool's successful year as European City of Culture in 2008. The first such award will be made in 2013 and on a four year cycle thereafter.

WORK WITH ABERDEENSHIRE

The joint Cultural Pathfinder project in 2007/8 funded by the Scottish Government highlighted a number of ways the two authorities could work more closely. Audiences for the arts, and the creative practitioners who live and work in the region, do not distinguish between the two authorities and there are good practices and common areas for development in which it makes sense to share in a more formal and structured way.

THREATS

This list provides a summary of the main threats identified during the research and consultation. While the impact of these threats can only be estimated, there is a requirement for Aberdeen to be progressive and flexible in order to minimise this impact and in certain circumstances turn threats into opportunities.

INABILITY TO ACCESS EXTERNAL FUNDING

With potential reductions in allocations to local government there is increased competition and pressure to attract external funding to support and develop cultural provisions. This threat is also exacerbated by a general reduction in external funding streams available for culture with private sector sponsorship, fund awarding bodies and trusts also facing reduced budgets and alternative priorities such as the Olympic and Commonwealth games.

CHANGES IN ACCESS TO CULTURE

While culture in its broadest sense is innately engaged with, there have been significant changes in the way that particular strands of culture are accessed. The rise of the internet and other technologies has created new ways of accessing information and communicating. This has led to a climate where cultural organisations and individuals have to continually review and adapt the ways in which they deliver and communicate. The significant level of flexibility and resources required to continually monitor and successfully adapt to these changes represents a significant risk to developing culture in the future.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

There are significant changes in the city's future demographic make-up which represents a potential risk in developing culture in the city. The proportion of people aged over 65 is projected to rise from the current level of 15% to 27% in 2031 while the number of school aged children has fallen significantly with further declines anticipated over the next few years. The risk lies in the requirement to successfully assess this change and adapt in a manner which does not negatively affect the cultural life of the city.

ENGAGING WITH HARD TO REACH GROUPS

In 2006 the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation indicated that 10% of 267 Aberdeen City zones were among the 15% poorest in Scotland. Addressing the poverty of aspiration, health and income which exists for some of the City's communities remains a priority for the city. The threat to developing culture lies

in our ability to successfully identify the cultural requirements within these areas. This must be achieved in order to provide activity and a cultural understanding which is relevant and accessible and which subsequently allows for culture to play a prominent role in addressing these issues.

LOCAL AUTHORITY BUDGETS

The current financial climate within local authorities is one of reduced expenditure across the majority of services. This reduction is predicted to continue for several years and this represents a significant threat to developing culture in the city. There is a potential shift in the level of cultural activities delivered directly by Aberdeen City Council which could change the role of the local authority within the cultural programme of the city. This is recognised within national discussions which have outlined the requirement on local authorities to adapt and increasingly become partners, stakeholders and commissioners in the delivery of cultural provision.

POTENTIAL CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT

With a General, Scottish and Local election all scheduled to take place over the timeline of 'Vibrant Aberdeen' there is the potential for significant political changes. While the specific impact this could have on the cultural sector in Aberdeen is impossible to gauge, the threat lies in the requirement to be flexible to adapt to potential changes in policies, budget priorities and general cultural approaches that changes in local and national political leadership can bring.

REDUCED EXPENDITURE ON CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

While the impact of the global recession may not have directly impacted Aberdeen to the same extent as other areas of the country, its current and potential impact on the cultural sector in the city cannot be underestimated. With increased levels of unemployment and a general climate of reduced expenditure there is the potential for a negative effect on particular cultural activities. The common perception of expenditure on cultural activities as non-essential further adds to this threat which has the potential to heavily impact on already below average attendance and participation rates.

ABERDEEN'S VISION

*Aberdeen will be a vibrant,
creative and ambitious city*

This vision, as it should be, is one of great aspiration. It is a vision which acknowledges the need for developing culture in Aberdeen and one which signals a will for a brighter cultural future. It is a vision which sets the tone for a shift in Aberdeen's priorities, advocating for the development of culture as one of the key components towards a prosperous future for the city.

The vision was established from the key themes, which shone through during the development of 'Vibrant Aberdeen'. The key requirements and the main objectives that were identified clearly presented a vision of the city becoming more culturally vibrant with increased levels of creativity and a general sense of cultural ambition.

There is no doubt that significant progress is required to achieve such a vision however there is also no doubt that Aberdeen is a city with huge cultural potential which should have no reason not to successfully achieve such ambitions.

However, a vision is, after all, only words and these are words which mean little without the necessary actions to make them a reality. By being a document which will provide strategic actions, provide the framework for individual work plans and act as a basis for collective monitoring and recording, 'Vibrant Aberdeen' seeks to be a pivotal first step in Aberdeen's development towards becoming a 'vibrant, creative and ambitious city'.

OBJECTIVES

The 'Vibrant Aberdeen' research and consultation allowed for the key requirements in developing culture in the city to be established. These requirements were considered and have acted as the basis for the development of the five main strategic objectives of 'Vibrant Aberdeen'.

The five main objectives of 'Vibrant Aberdeen' are presented below with a summary of the key requirements identified within each. It is crucial to note that these objectives and the requirements categorised under each are intrinsically linked to all other objectives. It is because of this that these objectives must be considered collectively and the ability to successfully meet our vision of becoming a 'vibrant, creative and ambitious' city requires successfully meeting each objective.

ESTABLISH A COHESIVE CULTURAL SECTOR

A key requirement identified was the necessity to increase communication throughout the cultural sector in the city. With the increased importance of partnership working through joint projects and the sharing of resources, knowledge and skills it was clear that the structures were not in place to ensure that this happens as consistently and extensively as required.

Within this requirement it was identified that communication between cultural organisations in terms of how they facilitate joint working opportunities and share resources was inconsistent due to the lack of structured communication and networking opportunities. Further to this, individual cultural practitioners identified a requirement for a more structured approach to raising awareness of opportunities to work collaboratively with cultural organisations. Specifically organisations often have difficulty gaining an understanding of the skills available in the city while individuals often lack the confidence and knowledge to approach organisations about potential opportunities for collaboration.

Finally it was also highlighted that creating a cohesive cultural sector was the only way to directly address the identified weakness of a lack of a collective voice. There is a requirement to create a structure which allows all individuals and organisations to communicate consistently and effectively. From this structure, information can be collated collectively and presented in a manner which is representative of the city and carries increased authority in advocating for culture as a priority.

INCREASE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN CULTURAL ACTIVITY

The low participation rates highlighted as a weakness clearly illustrate the requirement to increase community engagement in cultural activity. Within this objective, several key overarching requirements which cut across all the objectives were identified including the need to increase support to our existing cultural programme, to introduce new cultural opportunities and to increase collaborative working.

More specifically another requirement was identified in successfully increasing community engagement in cultural activity. The research and consultation clearly highlighted that there is a lack of knowledge and understanding on the causes of low participation across all demographic groups and areas throughout the city. It was identified that there was a crucial lack of collective research which allowed for a clear picture of these causes and barriers to be established. This often prevents remedial actions to address low participation rates from being successfully developed and implemented.

The identification of poor communication of cultural opportunities as a weakness represents a direct issue in increasing engagement in cultural activity. There is a requirement to extend the ability of organisations and individuals involved in culture to raise awareness of opportunities as extensively as possible. This requirement covers all objectives however also relates directly to the lack of information which allows them to advertise in a manner which is relevant and accessible to their specific target groups.

IMPROVE THE CITY'S CULTURAL PROFILE

It is clear from the analysis undertaken that there is a requirement to increase the city's profile locally, nationally and internationally. The low participation rates and levels of cultural tourism along with the common industrial perception of the city provide stark evidence for the requirement for Aberdeen to increase its cultural profile.

Within this objective, several major requirements were highlighted. The city has a culture and cultural programme which has been identified as a key strength and clearly there is an inherent need to increase the level of awareness of this. This relates directly to the need to improve communication of cultural opportunities however it also links into the need for the city to increase engagement both nationally and internationally.

While some existing aspects of the city's culture and cultural programme possess a significant national and international reputation, there is a requirement for the

city to increase its media coverage of this and also increase its presence amongst major partners in order to attract increased levels of significant national and international events and collections to the city.

INCREASE INVESTMENT IN CULTURE

While the current financial environment is not advantageous for the objective of increasing investment in culture, it was identified that Aberdeen requires significant additional investment in order to develop and meet its cultural potential.

It is generally accepted that it is unrealistic to expect significant additional investment from local authority or central government. Thus there is a requirement to increase engagement with external funding providers. It was identified that there is a general lack of collective information on the current level of additional investment in cultural activity in the city and how this sits in a national context.

Along side this there is a lack of knowledge on where any additional funding is coming from and what opportunities the city is not fully exploring. There is also the requirement to increase the level of support provided to assist cultural organisations and individuals within the city to successfully attract additional funding. Currently there is a lack of knowledge on available opportunities as well as a lack of training opportunities to provide the necessary skills and confidence which are required.

Another key requirement in the need to increase investment in culture is to improve the understanding of culture not as a separate concept but instead understanding the essential role it can play in enhancing other services, projects, investments and to the city as a whole.

EFFECTIVELY MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF CULTURE

As identified in the analysis there is a lack of evidence for the benefits of culture in Aberdeen. While this is not a problem which is unique to the city, it is symptomatic of the lack of effective collective monitoring and evaluating. There is no doubt that the inability to effectively monitor, evaluate and communicate the impact of culture is central to several of the city's cultural weaknesses as identified during the development of 'Vibrant Aberdeen'.

Individuals and organisations currently record information on their specific activity. However this information, while regularly used internally or to provide evidence to funding providers, is not based upon a set structure and is not collated to help present a beneficial city-wide perspective.

While 'Vibrant Aberdeen' aspires to address this requirement by providing a structure and framework which will allow consistent information to be collated there is still a significant requirement to offer additional support to organisations and individuals. Providing the resources, knowledge and skills to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of culture provides a range of benefits to the respective individual or organisation and to the city as a whole.

CULTURAL FORUM ACTIONS

The cultural forum has identified five key strategic actions which as a collective group it can lead upon. These actions will be led and monitored by the Cultural Forum however they will require working closely with partners who sit outside the current forum membership. The Cultural Forum will include detailed progress updates on each action as part of its annual 'Vibrant Aberdeen' progress report.

DEVELOP AND EXPAND THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CULTURAL FORUM

The Cultural Forum acknowledges its potential to play a pivotal role in developing a more cohesive cultural sector, however the forum also recognises its current limitations and the need to develop and expand its current role and functions. In order to do this the forum is committed to implementing two main actions.

The first action will be to review the current forum membership in order to establish if there are any gaps in knowledge, skills and representation which could be addressed in order enhance the core Cultural Forum function. Following this review, identified organisations or individuals will be invited to join the Cultural Forum.

While this review will be beneficial, the Cultural Forum is still limited in its current capacity and a second action will be to develop and facilitate a network of smaller sub-groups based around particular areas within the cultural sector and specific objectives within 'Vibrant Aberdeen'. This network will be open to all relevant individuals and organisations providing increased opportunities to communicate with partners as well as playing a crucial role in meeting the objectives of 'Vibrant Aberdeen'.

DELIVER EXTENSIVE RESEARCH INTO CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

As a key strategic action the cultural forum will lead extensive research into cultural participation in Aberdeen. This will take various forms including the collation of information that is recorded throughout the city along with extensive public engagement.

This research will aspire to cover a wide range of issues related to cultural participation including current cultural participation rates and barriers to participation across all areas and demographic groups in the city. Tangible measurements such as attendances at events or the number of residents who

read regularly will be balanced with intangible elements such as recording the comments in relation to the enjoyment of an event or the identified benefits of reading.

The results from the research will be presented in a report which can be utilised throughout the city to assist with developing individual action plans towards increasing engagement in cultural activity.

LEAD BID FOR UK CITY OF CULTURE 2017

The Cultural Forum is committed to leading the potential bid for UK City of Culture in 2017. As an initial step the forum will lead on the delivery of a feasibility study which will present all the factors to be considered prior to submitting the bid. This will be complimented by full consultation with the city's residents in order to establish a collective view on the feasibility of submitting a bid and the wants and needs for both a year of culture programme and future legacy.

This lead role indicates a commitment to develop any bid in full partnership with local, national and international partners from both within and out with the cultural sector. In particular the forum will be required to establish a framework for a team which would be capable of submitting and delivering a successful bid.

COMMISSION RESEARCH INTO EXTERNAL INVESTMENT

In order to directly impact upon the objective of increasing investment in culture the forum will commission research into external investment. This research will have the remit to establish the current levels of external cultural investment, mapping out current trends and good practice examples. Further to this the research will aspire to identify gaps in external funding which could be pursued as well as the required training in order to provide relevant individuals and organisations with the required resources and skills. The research will also include investigation into the creation of alternative structures which could be beneficial in collectively attracting additional external funding including the feasibility of developing a cultural foundation for Aberdeen.

This will initially involve internal research but will be developed by working with specialist consultants. This research will produce a report which will lead to a structured action plan in order to address the issues highlighted. This is likely to include the creation of a structured programme of training and information sessions and networking opportunities in order to support cultural organisations and individuals to attract additional external funding.

RECORD AND MONITOR THE IMPACT OF 'VIBRANT ABERDEEN'

Following the launch of 'Vibrant Aberdeen' the forum will begin work on establishing the measurement criteria and recording and monitoring tools that are required to successfully measure against the stated objectives.

A review of the current recording and monitoring both locally and nationally will be carried out to gain a full understanding of the information that is currently being collected. From this it will be identified where current recording and monitoring can be adapted or developed to ensure consistent and accurate monitoring of 'Vibrant Aberdeen's' objectives.

As 'Vibrant Aberdeen' outlines a series of new objectives, it will be crucial that following the establishment of an appropriate recording framework baseline figures based around the objectives are produced. It is from these baseline figures that the impact of 'Vibrant Aberdeen' will be monitored. These results will be presented in an annual 'Vibrant Aberdeen' progress report.

INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANS

While the cultural forum actions will provide benefits towards meeting the objectives of 'Vibrant Aberdeen', the individual action plans of organisations, groups and individuals within the cultural sector of the city will be the central component in successfully meeting these objectives.

'Vibrant Aberdeen' is a partnership document and thus does not provide a list of individual actions. Instead it provides a framework from which individual action plans can be based and the partners within the cultural forum all already committed to adopting 'Vibrant Aberdeen' as a joint strategy. The partners within the forum are committed to:

- Creating action plans which allocate resources towards meeting 'Vibrant Aberdeen's' objectives.
- To recording and presenting information to allow for consistent and accurate monitoring on the objectives presented in 'Vibrant Aberdeen'.
- Where appropriate working collaboratively to share resources, knowledge and skills in order to work towards successfully achieving 'Vibrant Aberdeen's' objectives.

While this commitment is a useful starting point it is acknowledged that the Cultural Forum partners do not fully represent the cultural output of the city. The forum welcomes engagement with organisations, groups and individuals who wish to work towards achieving the objectives within 'Vibrant Aberdeen'. In order to do this, any interested group or individual can contact the Cultural Forum through any of the contact details provided to discuss planning and monitoring around the 'Vibrant Aberdeen' framework.

APPENDIX 1: DEFINING CULTURE

The question of defining culture is one which has led to a never ending pursuit for the sole definition that finds unanimous agreement and understanding. In truth, there is no right, wrong or definitive definition of culture. Ultimately culture is so all encompassing and subjective that on an individual level there is little requirement for, or any validity in, providing a definition.

The nature of culture is such that if asked to provide a definition we would all undoubtedly provide an exclusive response based upon our own interpretation. This interpretation, shaped from the unique environments and experiences that surround us throughout our lives, is often impossible to clearly communicate in words. Some may provide an answer based upon tangible aspects of culture such as visual arts, literature, museums or architecture. Others may consider intangible elements; memories, experiences or a sense of personal or community identity. The difficulty in communicating our understanding of culture is that it is so extensive, surrounding each aspect of our lives to the extent that we often don't realise it's there. This is perhaps summed up in one of the more creative attempts at defining culture provided by German author Hans Magnus Enzensberger who stated that "Culture is a little like dropping an Alka-Seltzer into a glass - you don't see it, but somehow it does something".

While culture is clearly subjective on an individual level, within 'Vibrant Aberdeen' it is crucial to adopt a definition in order to provide clarity on the scope of the document. In order to be consistent with national policy and strategy documents, 'Vibrant Aberdeen' has adopted the definition provided by the United Kingdom Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This definition covers both tangible and intangible dimensions of culture providing a suitable representation of the scope of 'Vibrant Aberdeen'.

The two-part definition provided by the DCMS is:

MATERIAL DIMENSION

Performing and Visual arts, craft and fashion: media, film, TV, video and language: museums, artefacts, archives and design: libraries, literature, writing and publishing: the built heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology: children's play, playgrounds and play activities: tourism, festivals and attractions: informal leisure pursuits

VALUE DIMENSION:

Relationships, shared memory, experience and identity: diverse cultural, religious and historic backgrounds: standards, and what we consider valuable to pass on to future generations.

The DCMS also considers sporting activity and open spaces as part of its definition. While these are not specifically covered in 'Vibrant Aberdeen' but in 'Fit for the Future' the sister strategy on sport and physical activity in Aberdeen, there is an acknowledgement of crossover elements such as the link between heritage trails and physical activity.

APPENDIX 2: WHY CREATE VIBRANT ABERDEEN ?

This is a crucial question and it is one that was continually considered during the development of 'Vibrant Aberdeen'. With several local and national policies and strategies which directly and indirectly impact culture in Aberdeen there was a real need to be clear on the benefits of developing a specific cultural strategy.

The DCMS within its 'creating opportunities paper' identified the benefits that localised cultural strategies can bring. The paper outlines that localised strategies provide the necessary flexibility, level of local level engagement and tailored strategic direction to allow a city or region to develop towards its own unique ambitions. Having considered this, it was clear that a specific cultural strategy for Aberdeen would bring significant benefits. Aberdeen is city with its own culture, blessed with unique individuals, communities, architecture and heritage and it became clear that national policies did not fully reflect this uniqueness or the level of our cultural aspirations.

The aim of 'Vibrant Aberdeen' is to present a shared vision for Aberdeen and to outline the key objectives which lie behind successfully working towards this vision. The document does not provide an exhaustive list of actions nor does it have a specific art form focus. Instead it provides the strategic framework which organisations and individuals will utilise to develop their cultural output shifting the emphasis away from, what a strategy can do for us towards asking what we can do to deliver the strategy.

This document therefore outlines shared objectives, providing the framework through which cultural providers will base action and work plans in order to meet these objectives. These action plans will contain specific tasks and targets which will be reported consistently to initially allow for baselines to be established and development to be monitored.

This strategy aims to:

- Provide a framework for cultural providers to base action plans where allocations of resources and skills will be set.
- Enable a collaborative approach to the development of cultural activity throughout the city.

- Create and communicate a shared vision for the cultural development of the city.
- Generate discussion and debate based around current and future cultural issues.
- Establish a shared census for recording and monitoring the development of culture in Aberdeen.

APPENDIX 3: DEVELOPMENT OF VIBRANT ABERDEEN

The Cultural Forum for Aberdeen, created as part of city's first community plan in 2001, has led the development of 'Vibrant Aberdeen'. Aberdeen's community plan identified key challenge areas, outlining the specific challenges within each and set targets to address these. Fourteen challenge forums were created, bringing together relevant partners from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to progress these targets. Developing culture was identified as one of the key challenges within the city and the Cultural Forum was formed with a remit of developing a city-wide cultural strategy.

The Forum initially developed the strategy through to draft stage through various workshops, internal consultation and the establishment of a strategy sub-group. Following the completion of a draft, 'Vibrant Aberdeen' was opened up for public consultation. This consultation took the form of an on-line survey, individual consultation meetings and a range of question and answer sessions delivered throughout the city. The level and enthusiasm of the responses received during the consultation was excellent and reaffirmed that the people of Aberdeen are passionate about developing culture in the city. This feedback has been incorporated into the final version you are reading now to provide a document which is truly reflective of the whole of the city.

THE CULTURAL FORUM CURRENTLY CONSISTS OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM:

Aberdeen Arts Centre; Aberdeen City Council (Museums and Galleries, Libraries and Information Services, Arts Development, Arts Education, Dance, Events, Strategy and Economic Development); Aberdeen College; Aberdeen International Youth Festival; Aberdeen Performing Arts; Aberdeenshire Council; The Civic Forum; Cultural Enterprise Office; Creative Cultures Scotland; Gordon Highlanders Museum; Grampian Hospital Arts Trust; Multi Ethnic Aberdeen Ltd; NEAT (North East Arts Touring); Peacock Visual Arts; Robert Gordon University; Scottish Culture and Traditions; Station House Media Unit; Scottish Arts Council; The Tivoli Trust and The University of Aberdeen