

Plaques Policy

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May 2021	Policy replaces 2002 Guidance documentation for the Erection of Commemorative Plaques and reflects requirements of Corporate Policy Template.

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1 Purpose Statement

- 1.1 From the 19th century, plaques have been erected in Aberdeen commemorating people and places which have shaped the city, Scotland or beyond – people who have made outstanding achievements in their field, or buildings or events of historic significance. The City Council have overseen the erection of these plaques since 1978 when it first developed a scheme.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the criteria Aberdeen City Council will apply to applications from citizens, officers and elected members nominating an individual, building or event for commemoration on a plaque within Aberdeen under the Council's Plaques scheme. It will guide the decisions of Council officers and Committees on whether a person, event or building should be recognised with a plaque.
- 1.3 This policy will mitigate the reputational risk of unfair and inconsistent decision making about who or what should be recognised with a plaque. In addition it will mitigate the reputational risk of unsuitable plaques (such as those connected with discriminatory activity) being erected and associated with the interests of Aberdeen City Council.
- 1.4 This policy is in line with national guidance from [Historic Environment Scotland](#) and the Council's [Listed Building consent procedures](#).

2 Application and Scope Statement

- 2.1 This policy will guide the decisions of Council officers and Committees on whether a person, event or building should be recognised with a plaque.
- 2.2 The scheme encompasses yellow circular plaques commemorating individuals (which we will refer to as People Plaques) and their connection to a particular building; and black rectangular plaques (which we will refer to as Place Plaques) that mark historical sites and events.
- 2.3 Other commemorative plaque schemes exist at a local and national level. These include the University of Aberdeen's maroon plaques, Historic Environment Scotland and UK wide organisations such as the Institute of Physics. These plaques are not covered by this policy but we encourage information sharing and collaboration for the public benefit.

3 Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Chief Officer - City Growth is the owner of this policy and accountable for overseeing its application by Aberdeen Archives, Galleries and Museums (AAGM) staff.
- 3.2 The scheme is administered by officers in AAGM. They review nominations and make recommendations to the Chief Officer and relevant Committee (currently City Growth and Resources).

3.3 Decisions on whether to accept a nomination are subject to the approval of the relevant Committee.

3.4 Under delegated powers, the Chief Officer - City Growth can, following consultation with the Convener of the City Growth and Resources Committee, decline applications that do not meet the criteria set out in sections 5.1-5.2 of this policy.

3.5 Responsibilities of the Nominator

The nominating person or body is responsible for:

- Submitting a clear argument for recognising an individual, place or event.
- Proposing a location for the plaque to ACC to obtain confirmation that site is appropriate prior to approaching building's owner.
- Seeking written consent from the building owner to allow ACC to erect the plaque (this can be via email). The building owner is responsible for informing the residents of any planned installation of plaques in line with their tenancy agreements.
- If appropriate, gaining listed building consent for the plaque.
- Making payment to ACC for full cost of production and installation of the plaque (invoices can be provided).
- On approval of the proposal, the Nominator will re-confirm in writing, agreement with the building owner (and tenants if applicable) and pass confirmation to AAGM.

NOTE: the Council will determine the final location of the plaque, following consultation with building owners and following the completion of a Health & Safety risk assessment.

Joint nominations by several organisations working in collaboration are welcomed.

3.6 Responsibilities of Aberdeen City Council

- Submitted nominations will be reviewed by relevant AAGM Officers. Equality considerations will be taken into consideration during this review, and an Integrated Impact Assessment completed for each nomination.
- Recommendations to Committee will be based on assessment of relevance to Aberdeen, uniqueness and importance of the achievement and suitability of the proposed location for the proposed plaque.
- Decisions will be taken based on these recommendations and are subject to final approval by the appropriate Council Committee (at present City Growth and Resources).
- The Chief Officer – City Growth will refuse, following consultation with the Convener of the City Growth and Resources Committee, applications for plaques if they do not meet the Council's criteria and these will not ordinarily be presented to the City Growth and Resources Committee for determination.

On approval of the plaque application the AAGM officers will:

- work with the Nominator to agree final wording of the plaque.
- arrange for the production of the plaque.

- inform the Nominator when the plaque is ready to be installed, and indicate clearly where the plaque is to be sited on the proposed building.
- write to the owner of the building to confirm a date for installing the plaque.
- install the plaque.
- ensure that any opportunities for promotion and publicity are managed appropriately with the Nominator.
- update the online catalogue of Commemorative Plaques and send specific link to Nominator.
- Any damage to a plaque by ACC or by any other third party will be repaired by ACC as funds allow unless it is caused by the building's owner, in which case the building owner will be liable for any costs of replacement or repair, or if damage occurred due to criminal intent, in which case repair and replacements costs will be sought.

3.7 Feedback on this policy should be directed to plaques@aberdeencity.gov.uk.

3.8 A summary of this process is provided in appendix 1.

4 Supporting Procedures and Documentation

4.1 Documentation to support adherence to the policy and guide nominators is available on the City Council website at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/aagm. This comprises:

- [Application Form and Guidance Notes for Applicants](#).
- [Examples of existing plaques](#) in eMuseum.

5 Policy Statements

5.1 People Plaques

Plaques commemorating an individual should meet the following criteria.

The person should have:

- died at least 20 years ago AND have been born more than 100 years ago. This is to ensure that the decision whether to erect a plaque is made with a sufficient degree of hindsight.
- contributed to the rich social, political and cultural heritage of Aberdeen or have been an Aberdonian who impacted the world through their achievements, words or deeds.
- made a major contribution to their field within a Scottish context as a minimum. (This could be as judged by their peers, such as an established award or prize; as judged by the public, where their achievements generate commercial success or popular acclaim; or based on informed assessment of the impact and legacy of their work to their field, by suitably qualified peers).

They should normally also have:

- lived or worked in Aberdeen for at least five years;
- or
- been born in Aberdeen;

or

- made their discovery or achieved their accomplishment in Aberdeen.

Collective applications for groups of individuals will be considered against the same criteria.

5.2 Place Plaques

Plaques commemorating an event, site or building should meet the following criteria.

The event should:

- have occurred at least 50 years ago. This is to ensure that the decision whether to erect a plaque is made with a sufficient degree of hindsight.
- have impacted on a significant number of Aberdeen residents.
- reflect the rich social, political or cultural heritage of Aberdeen.
- be specifically associated with the location at which the plaque is to be erected.

The building or site should either:

- be of particular architectural importance.
- be historically important as a survival of a particular period.
- have a connection with a series of historic events; or
- have a connection with a significant business or industry.

5.3 Location

For People Plaques the location of the proposed plaque should be such that:

- the person was born or lived within the same building upon which the plaque will be fixed, or they worked there for a significant period (at least 5 years).

Or

- an existing and appropriate building on site of the former building (in point above).

Where buildings have been radically altered or demolished, we consider the relationship between person and building to have been broken. However the policy would allow “on this site” to be used in such a situation, if appropriate wording could be agreed, otherwise no plaque will be erected.

For Place Plaques the location should be such that the event or site is focussed near or at the vicinity of the proposed plaque (for existing examples please see <http://emuseum.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites>)

Technical specifications as to the siting and style of plaques are detailed in appendix 2.

5.4 Cost

The cost of any applications for permissions, production and installation will be met by the nominator. Aberdeen City Council does not hold a budget for the creation of new plaques within the city. Council officers can suggest possible sources of funding to

support applications for nominators who will struggle to meet these costs (for example the Council's Culture Grants Programme).

5.5 Reappraisal

There may be rare cases where a significant reappraisal of an individual's contribution occurs after a plaque has been erected (for example, where a connection to criminal or inappropriate activity comes to light). Where this is the case, applications to review and revise the wording of plaques by AAGM officers will be submitted to the relevant Committee following consultation with the original nominator/sponsor if known and the building's owner(s).

In some instances, plaques will be retained but all reasonable efforts will be made to highlight new assessments of an individual or event through the Council's plaques database and website. Other opportunities may be explored if planning permission and/or funding allows.

Periodic review of existing plaques will be carried out by ACC to ensure our plaques database and website contains up to date research or new information.

6 Definitions

6.1 Nominator: The individual or group nominating an individual, event or building for recognition with a plaque.

6.2 People Plaques: commemorating the lives of outstanding individuals who have contributed to the development of the city, the history of the region or who are of international standing. Previously referred to as a Commemorative Plaques. For a full description of the style and location restrictions, please see Appendix 3.

6.3 Place Plaques: commemorate a significant historic event that took place in that building or site; or to highlight the part played by such a building or site in the history of the city. Previously known as Court Plaques. For a full description of the style and location restrictions, please see Appendix 3.

7 Risk

7.1 This policy and its supporting documentation will mitigate the following reputational risks to the council:

- risk the Council's decisions on plaques are inconsistent;
- risk that the plaques are erected for unsuitable candidates, which could create negative publicity and complaints for the Council by association;
- risk of customers being disappointed at an unsuccessful application.

The policy mitigates these risks by establishing clear criteria and ensuring a sufficient degree of hindsight is applied to the assessment of whether an individual or event's achievements or significance makes them worthy of marking with a plaque.

7.2 This risk will be monitored through application success rates: if the policy is successful it should mean that no applications are rejected because they do not meet the specified criteria.

8 Policy Performance

8.1 By providing clear criteria for applicants to meet, this Policy should reduce the number of unsuccessful applications for plaques, saving the time of both Council staff and nominators. It should also reduce the number of complaints from citizens or organisations about plaques and unsuccessful applications.

8.2 Nomination, approval and rejection rates will be monitored, along with feedback from service users, to measure the effectiveness of the policy.

8.3 Existing plaques will be reviewed periodically to ensure the website and plaques database includes up to date research or new information.

9 Design and Delivery

9.1 Plaques contribute to the city centre as a visitor destination linked to heritage tourism, specifically supporting the following areas of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26 (pg 13 and 14):

- “We will seek to develop a City of Learning approach that empowers people and communities to put lifelong learning at the heart of their civic and cultural identities.”
- “1.1 Diversification of the economy into other growth sectors including wider energy related sectors; tourism; food and drink; life sciences; health and social care and construction.”

9.2 This Policy should increase the diversity of people recognised as contributing to the heritage of the City, supporting the Council’s Equality Outcomes 2 and 3 (an increased sense of safety and belonging in their neighbourhood and City for diverse communities, and representation of people with protected characteristics in civic participation).

9.3 This policy fits with the aspirations of the Council’s Operating Model to improve processes to reduce inefficiency, guided by people at the front line.

10 Housekeeping and Maintenance

10.1 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by officers in City Growth.

10.2 This policy replaces the guidance for the erection of commemorative plaques adopted by the Education and Leisure Committee in November 2002.

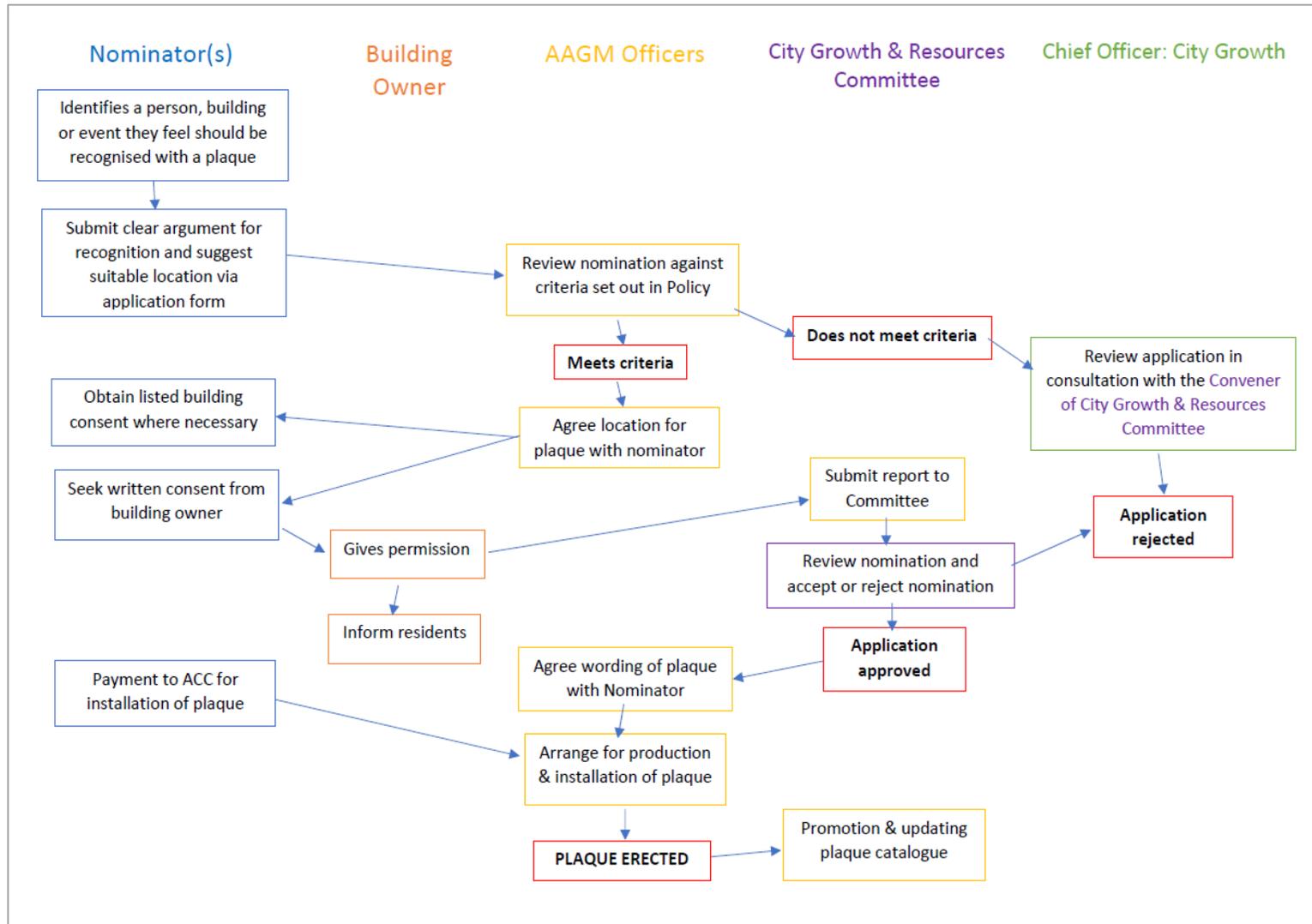
11 Communication and Distribution

- 11.1 The policy and supporting guidance will be made available on the Council's website and supplied to those interested in nominating an individual, building or event for a plaque.

12 Information Management

- 12.1 Information generated by the application of the policy will be managed in accordance with the Council's Corporate Information Policy and supporting Procedures.

Appendix 1: Process & Responsibilities



Appendix 2: Technical specifications for plaques

General specifications

The following specifications concerning location and style must be met for both People and Place Plaques.

Location

The location should be such that:

- members of the public will normally be able to view it from a public road or street without needing to enter upon private property.
- it is freely visible, in a distinct uncluttered location and is not in close proximity to obligatory Health and Safety notices and other signage.
- It is not always possible to place plaques at a height that is accessible to wheelchair users, but images and supplementary information will also be made available online to increase accessibility.

Where plaques are proposed to be attached to a listed building:

- It is the responsibility of the applicant to apply for Listed Building Consent.
- Listed building consent will be required unless all the following five criteria are met:
 1. It is only on a category B or category C listed building. Category A listed buildings will normally require consent;
 2. It does not exceed 500mm in diameter;
 3. It is located not below 1m from entrance level and not more than 3m above;
 4. It is the only plaque on the building;
 5. It is secured in place using non-ferrous fixings positioned into the mortar joints.
- To find out whether the building is listed or what category of listing it is, please see Historic Environment Scotland's website:
<https://hesportal.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=18d2608ac1284066ba3927312710d16d>
- Please note that features such as boundary walls may be included in a listing, even if not explicitly mentioned in the list description – for clarification, please contact pi@aberdeencity.gov.uk.

Style

- The wording on the plaque should be in plain English (exceptions may include where book title is being indicated) and consider those with additional communication needs. Refer to existing examples for guidance. Content will be dependent on size and location of plaque.
- Plaques were formerly in block capitals but this is a barrier to those with visual impairments, so sentence case will now be used.
- The role or contribution should be kept brief to ensure the plaque is legible – AAGM officers will advise and help to reduce to a suitable length. Further detail can be added on the Plaques webpages.

- Content is subject to review by Aberdeen City Council (ACC).
- The plaque will conform to the normal dimensions of other plaques within Aberdeen City.
- No notice of sponsorship will occur on the plaque, nor will logos be included in the design (Notice of sponsorship can be included on the plaques webpages).

Applications that celebrate the contribution of Aberdeen's diverse communities to the City, particularly individuals with protected characteristics, will be welcomed.

People Plaques Specifications

Style

The Text should follow the convention of: Name, years of birth - death, significant role/contribution, was born here/lived here/worked here (with dates).

For consistency of style, the following guidance should be followed:

- Married status titles such as Mr/Ms/Miss/Mrs will not be used.
- Single given/earned titles such as Dr/Sir/Lady will be included.
- Honorifics and awards can be added at the end of names such as QC, OBE, VC – space allowing.
- Use first name and last name only; use familiar or abbreviated names or initials if that is how they were commonly known.

Appendix 3: People and Place Plaques

People Plaques

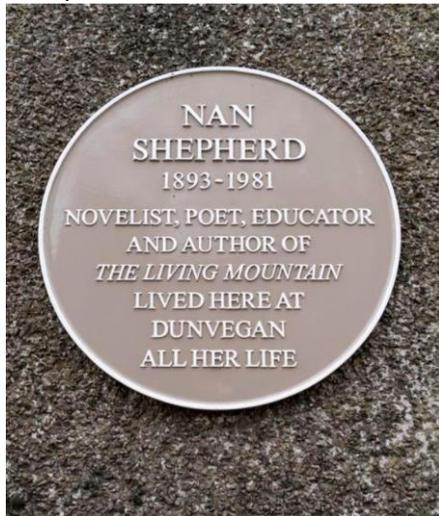
Size & shape: Circular; 20 inches or 500mm in diameter.

Material: Metal plaque; cast with raised lettering and detail.

Colour: Usually coloured in yellow/fawn tone, colour previously approved by the planning department to better reflect the city's granite backdrop.

Purpose: To commemorate the lives of outstanding individuals who have contributed to the development of the city, the history of the region or who are of international standing.

Location restrictions: Affixed to a building within the public realm (visible without entering private property); the building should be closely associated with the life of the individual, specifically that they were born there, or worked or lived there for a significant or important period of their life.



1 Close up of the Nan Shepherd People Plaque at Dunvegan, 503 Deeside Road, Cults



2 Wider view of Nan Shepherd plaque on wall of 503 Deeside Road, Cults

Place Plaques

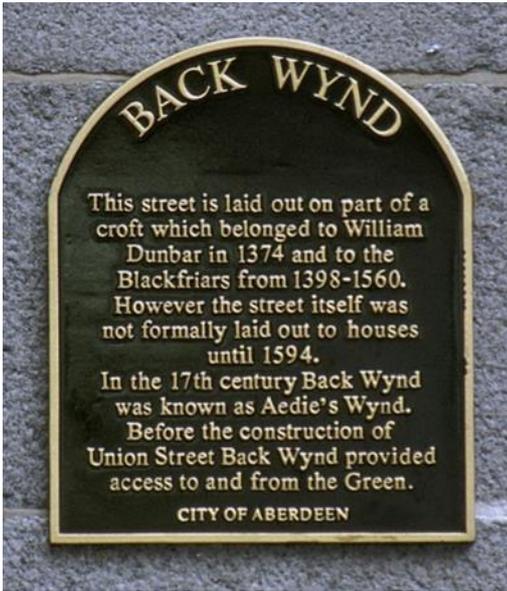
Size & shape: Rectangular or arched; varying sizes.

Material: Metal plaque; cast with raised lettering and detail.

Colour: Usually coloured in black, colour previously approved by the planning department to better reflect the city's granite backdrop.

Purpose: To commemorate a significant historic event that took place in that building or site; or to highlight the part played by such a building or site in the history of the city.

Location restrictions: Affixed to a building within the public realm (visible without entering private property); the building should be closely associated with the events commemorated.



3 Close up of Back Wynd Place Plaque, explaining the history of the street



4 Wide view showing position of Back Wynd plaque on granite wall of St Nicholas Kirkyard, at the corner of Back Wynd and Union Street