

A CULTURAL STRATEGY **for** DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY **2022 - 2030**

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OUR VISION, THE THREE AMBITIONS AND ENABLERS**OUR VISION**

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

AMBITION 1: OUR PEOPLE

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

AMBITION 2: OUR PLACES

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

AMBITION 3: THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE

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

THE THREE ENABLERS

This strategy acts as a catalyst for a forward-looking commitment and process to enhance the contribution of creativity, culture and heritage to the health, wealth and wellbeing of Dumfries and Galloway.

The following three enablers have been identified through the engagement phase. They are derived from feedback on perceived barriers and potential solutions to achieving this strategy's aspirational vision. They indicate the three most significant areas of improvement required to help deliver the ambitions of this strategy.

CAPACITY

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

CONNECTIVITY

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

COMMUNICATION

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

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

It provides the framework for our culture, creativity and heritage sector to enhance its sustainability, and to continue to grow. It will support the next generation of cultural, creative and heritage practitioners and will widen and increase access so

that more people and more communities benefit from the transformational power of culture, creativity and heritage.

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

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

Dumfries and Galloway Cultural Strategy Reference Group

DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

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

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

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

An Engagement Report³ outlining the process was published in March 2020 which included high level analysis of the engagement phase and detailed findings. Further development of this strategy was paused at this point due to the global public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

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

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

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

Policy context

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

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

Dumfries and Galloway Council and its partners are committed to advancing equality of opportunity for all people within our community. In delivering this strategy we will challenge the barriers that people face arising from discrimination and disadvantage in line with the nine protected characteristics identified within the Equalities Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Our work will be informed by our partners' Equalities Outcomes and the following regional strategies: Poverty and Inequality Strategy, Strategic Health Commissioning Plan, Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, and the COVID Recovery Plan.

Defining culture

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

References such as *culture, creativity and heritage activities* are referenced throughout this strategy, and they are used as shorthand to capture the broadest interpretation of culture.

THE GIST OF IT...our strategy in brief

OUR VISION

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

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

We seek to create a region where doors are open, barriers are removed and there's a clear pathway for the creative, cultural and heritage sector to grow, develop and help make our region a better place to live, work or visit.

We aim to create an environment where our creative, cultural and heritage sector work together through a shared vision to become the blueprint for world-class provision in a rural geography. A region that speaks with a unified voice but embraces our individual strengths and differences.

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

OUR AMBITIONS

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

These objectives aim to start the process of delivering the ambitions of this strategy, and contribute to the three enablers – *Capacity, Connectivity* and *Communication* [see Enablers section pages 22 – 25].

AMBITION 1: OUR PEOPLE

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

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

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

⁴ [National Records of Scotland](#)

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

It is built on the belief that everyone should be able to engage in creativity should they so choose. It advocates the conditions that enable the creative, cultural and heritage sector to reach out to those most likely to benefit and those least likely to engage. It will work towards removing any perceived or real barriers (such as cost, transport, venue accessibility and language) so that more people can participate, including those experiencing social and rural isolation, poverty, loneliness, mental health issues or people who are cared for by others.

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

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

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

Perhaps unsurprisingly many volunteers are in the older age brackets. The skills, knowledge and experience of these older volunteers are highly valuable assets, but in the longer-term issues may arise around sustainability and succession planning. The population of our region continues to be one of the oldest in Scotland with

almost one in five (18.7%) of the region's residents aged 70 or over with the average age projected to increase⁵

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

A healthy cultural ecology needs these volunteers, but it also requires an experienced and diverse workforce. This strategy seeks to support the professional development of workers and volunteers and encourage experimentation and innovation by creative practitioners. It underlines the importance of working with education providers such as [Dumfries and Galloway College](#) and others, to promote our sector as a viable career path and finding ways to retain and attract talent. It intends to raise awareness of the need to implement [Fair Work](#) principles. This is especially important for a sector that is often driven by the 'gig' economy. Sole traders, freelancers, creative micro-businesses and volunteers are the backbone of our region's cultural economy.

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

AMBITION 1: OUR PEOPLE	
Objectives	
1	Create, nurture and support a diverse workforce within Dumfries and Galloway's creative and cultural sector that has the skills, knowledge and experience to involve and engage local communities and audiences (local, national and international) in cultural activity.
2	Support the development of high-quality creative, cultural and heritage activity programmes that give our creative and culture sector the opportunity to develop their potential.

⁵ [National Records of Scotland](#)

3	Work to retain and attract talent to our region and support opportunities for young people to create and engage with creative, cultural and heritage activity in their local area.
4	Make sure that people experiencing inequalities have opportunities to create and engage with creative and cultural activity in Dumfries and Galloway that are accessible to everyone and are informed by an understanding of our communities' interests and aspirations.
5	Apply Fair Work principles across the cultural, creative and heritage workforce - in particular, ensuring freelancers, sole traders, volunteers and professionals working to support the sector have equal rights and representation.

AMBITION 2: OUR PLACES

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

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

Dumfries and Galloway is made up of a great many distinct communities and diverse landscapes. Our cultural ecology consists of a myriad of individuals, organisations, groups, businesses, venues, charities and public services. Combined they are bigger than the sum of their individual parts and make up our region's cultural infrastructure; one that is not always a tangible entity.

The size of our region, which is the 13th largest out of Scotland's 32 Local Authorities⁶, combined with its population size, means that our rural cultural infrastructure is perhaps less about buildings and physical resources and more about partnerships, volunteers, innovative creative communities and regeneration-driven initiatives. It's made up of committed creative and community leaders who champion creativity, culture and heritage, and are catalysts for making things happen locally.

It's an infrastructure that consists of a number of mean indigenous? Or home-grown cultural initiatives and programmes that help make Dumfries and Galloway a better place to live. We are home to Scotland's exemplar rural arts touring programme, [Arts Live](#) which consists of a network of community venues and practitioners that brings communities together to experience high-quality performing arts.

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

Dumfries and Galloway as a place that supports individual and community empowerment through creativity is further demonstrated through involvement in two national initiatives - Culture Collective⁸ and Creative Communities.⁹ These programmes support creative practitioners to work in community settings over a sustained period of time to co-design and co-produce projects with local communities and support wellbeing, enterprise and place-based impacts.

⁶ [Scottish Local Government Financial Statistics](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AMBITION 3: THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE

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

The creativity, culture and heritage sector makes an important contribution to regenerating communities, villages, towns and cities, and helps grow local¹⁰

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

economies, and national¹¹ economies, and contributes to inclusive growth¹². It enables people of any age to achieve their ambitions in the arts or help people to reach their potential in other careers through participating in cultural activities. Our creativity, culture and heritage sector brings learning, fun and joy into people's daily lives. It helps to reduce the impact of social isolation and loneliness and can be an effective preventative measure to combat associated effects on physical and mental health.

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

Recognising the contribution that the creativity, culture and heritage sector has on the life of our region doesn't mean that we can be complacent. It does not mean that our job is done. This strategy is evidence that it has always had to be inventive, resilient and bold, never more so, than in response to the extraordinary challenges presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic. This strategy takes the pandemic into consideration and sets out a number of entwined pathways which collectively, will enable our sector to play an important part in our region's social and economic recovery.

The many benefits of exposure and engagement in creativity, culture and heritage are well documented, but we accept that on a local level there are some gaps in our knowledge, awareness and understanding. In some areas there's a lack of empirical data, or it's out of date. Our creativity, culture and heritage sector has a thirst to do more, to be better, and improve what it does. This strategy advocates the need to plug those knowledge gaps and collate relevant data where it's

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

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

needed. This will help our creativity, culture and heritage sector lever further investment, and more clearly evidence the value it adds.

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

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

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

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

The publication by the Scottish Government in February 2020 of *A Culture Strategy for Scotland*¹⁴ has helped change the discourse around the idea that creativity,

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

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

culture and heritage are simply a *'nice thing to do if you can'*. This strategy intends to put to bed any remaining deep-seated perceptions held about the value or validity of culture by championing working with other sectors and wider Third Sector organisations, to extend the reach and positive impact of creativity, culture and heritage on our people and our places.

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

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

ENABLERS

This strategy is both a statement of confidence and intent.

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

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

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

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

CAPACITY

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

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

Our sector is acknowledged as an increasingly important contributor to society on many levels. In order to sustain and develop its contribution we need a resilient and expanding creative economy. People who took part in the engagement phase told us what is required to help achieve this including working closely in partnership with [South of Scotland Enterprise](#); advocating support for the creative workforce to receive a fair wage and wider employment benefits and facilitating cultural professionals to develop their practice and business skills.

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

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

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

CONNECTIVITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

We need to enhance and develop new connections with colleagues from other sectors such as [Visit Scotland](#) in relation to tourism and other representative bodies

within education, hospitality, health and social care to achieve shared outcomes and deepen the reach and impact of the creativity, culture and heritage sector. There was wide agreement of the need for our sector to be outward looking and plugged into what's happening outside the region.

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

COMMUNICATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GET ON WITH IT THEN!

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

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

Delivering the strategy

The first step in the process of delivering this strategy will be to establish a Dumfries and Galloway Partnership for Culture. Our Council will facilitate the creation of this Partnership, whose role will be to oversee the delivery of this strategy. Various partnership models are possible, and it will be for the new group to explore the most effective framework for delivery of the plan.

We envisage that the Dumfries and Galloway Partnership for Culture will provide a forum for collaboration and strategic planning, bringing together our Council, sector representatives and key partners to deliver the vision for this strategy. The Partnership for Culture will develop and endorse an initial action plan for delivery against the strategy ambitions, building on the feedback, recommendations and ideas gathered during the extensive engagement undertaken in the preparation of this strategy.

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

Ownership and implementation

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

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

Guiding principles

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

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

The sweet smell of success

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

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

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

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