

ABERDEEN
PERFORMING
ARTS

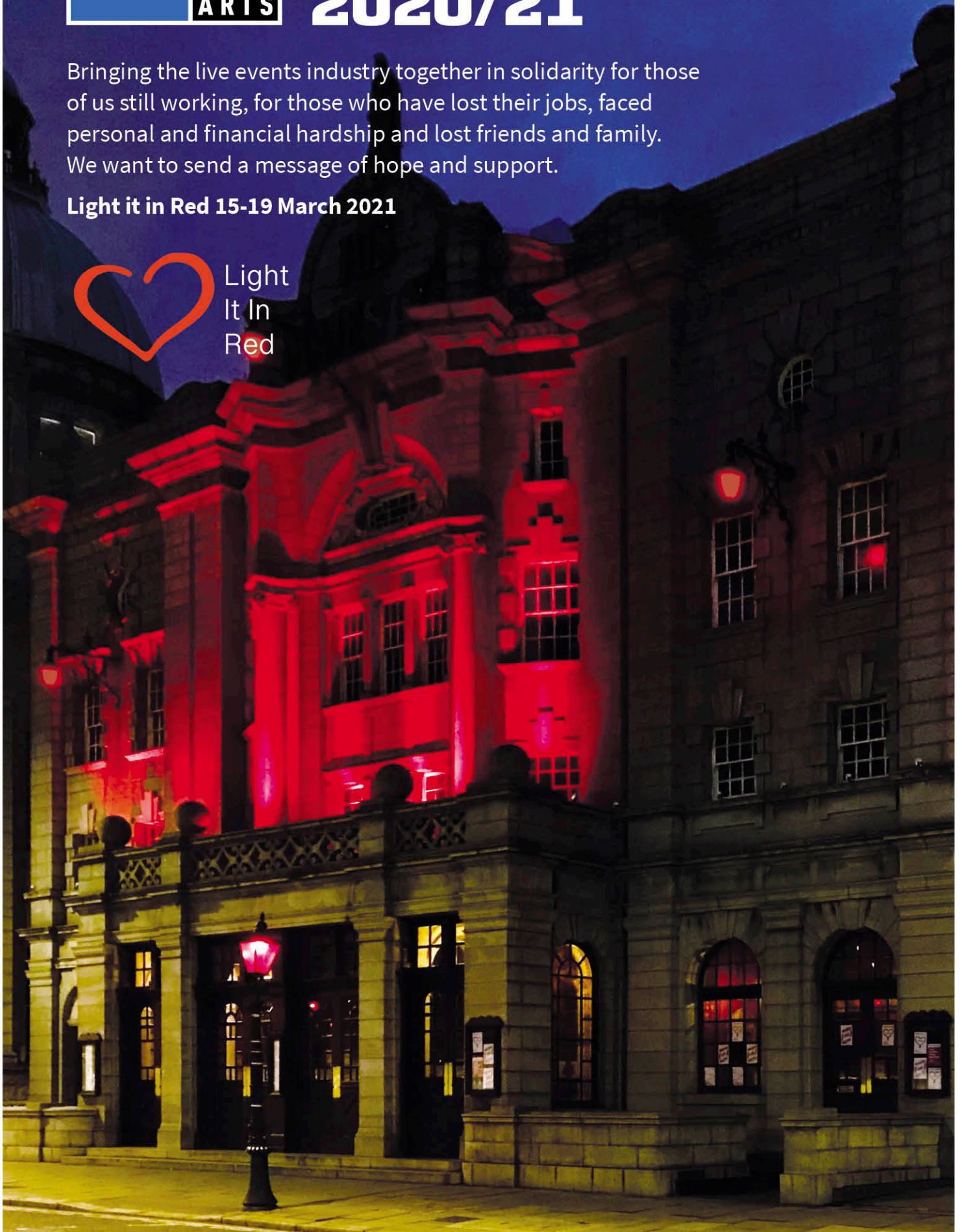
ALEO Report 2020/21

Bringing the live events industry together in solidarity for those of us still working, for those who have lost their jobs, faced personal and financial hardship and lost friends and family. We want to send a message of hope and support.

Light it in Red 15-19 March 2021



Light
It In
Red



ALEO ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT



Organisation: Aberdeen Performing Arts	
Year Covered:	2020-2021
Report completed by:	Jane Spiers
Position:	Chief Executive

About the organisation

A brief description of the organisation and its vision

Aberdeen Performing Arts is the arts charity that runs three city centre venues – the Music Hall, His Majesty’s Theatre and the Lemon Tree and three festivals - True North, Granite Noir and Light the Blue youth arts festival. We also provide a box office service for 30+ venues in the North-east, run a production company, Freshly Squeezed Productions, for young and emerging talent, and a creative learning programme Engage! in schools and communities across the city.

Our vision is to be a creative hub at the heart of city life, inspiring, exploring and engaging through live performance and creative projects. Our mission is ‘Creating A Spark’, taking our inspiration from the sparkle in the granite.

Organisation Information	
Organisation legal structure	Company limited by guarantee with charitable status
Number of years operating	16
Name of Director/ Chief Executive	Jane Spiers
Number of venues operated	3
Number of festivals operated	3
Number of Board Members	13
Number of Full time staff	46 full-time (average head count for year) / 12 retained to work and 34 furloughed/flexi-furloughed throughout the year
Number of part time/casual staff	215 part-time/casual (average headcount for year) / All furloughed or flexi-furloughed throughout the year

SECTION 1 - Outcomes and outputs

Please provide a qualitative executive summary of outcomes, outputs, activities undertaken and progress made to date:

Key Achievements

All of the achievements in this report have been delivered by a retained team of 12 people from a workforce of 261, the rest of whom were furloughed in March 2020.

AMBITION 1: City Vision: provide cultural leadership to shape city vision and a creative Scotland

Within this ambition we are reporting on COVID-19 survival and recovery and achievements in terms of people, venues, communications and delivering business critical projects. Projects and activities that have kept our charity solvent, our people safe and secure and our business in the best possible shape for re-opening.

COVID-19 Survival and Recovery

The Global pandemic had an immediate and devastating impact on our business. 88% of our turnover, (£12/£13M in an average year), is earned income and that was wiped out overnight when COVID-19 struck. The remaining 12% is grant income from Aberdeen City Council (8%) and Creative Scotland (4%). Our cash reserves as we went into lockdown were lower than we would have liked as a consequence of the Music Hall redevelopment, (we contributed £2M from our own charitable reserves) and insufficient to cover our obligations for such a significant and unprecedented period of closure.

When we closed our doors on 17th March 2020 it was with a sense of foreboding but we never imagined we would still be closed 18 months on. Because of the scale of Aberdeen Performing Arts, 3 venues, 3 festivals, 250+ staff, and our high reliance on self generated income, we knew we would be in trouble quickly so we took immediate action.

We put a freeze on all but essential expenditure, we furloughed 249 staff on 1 April 2020 and with just 12 staff retained we have battled insolvency, raised £3.4M to safeguard jobs, drawn down £2.1M in JRS, cancelled and rescheduled 700 shows in the last 18 months with a ticket value in excess of £4M, and through all of that, with 12 staff, we have continued to deliver services, engage with our audiences and build up a creative online programming presence.

1. Advocacy

We have been very active in making the case within the city, region and nation in relation to securing funds to keep our charity going and highlighting the role of culture in recovery. We did this through national industry networks, including our membership and active role in the Scottish Theatre Producing Consortium, the UK Touring Partnership, Federation of Scottish Theatre, Culture Aberdeen, BECTU, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce and Visit Aberdeenshire.

We have commented on the Scottish Government Strategic Framework for suppressing COVID-19, the structured levels and on the Performing Arts and Venues Guidance. We have written directly to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture highlighting the significance to the regional economy in the North of Scotland and the unique challenges of the performing arts sector and specifically large-scale venues like ours with high earned income targets. This has paid off, our voice has been heard, our significance to the cultural sector in Scotland and the North East economy was recognised and we are immensely grateful for all the funds received. The outcome was securing nearly £3.4M in funds.

2. Funding

As a consequence of our campaigning and fundraising efforts, in a highly competitive environment and with extremely limited internal resource, we have raised £3,375,500 to safeguard jobs and undertake essential business critical projects in the last 16 months. We have made successful applications to 11 different funds tailoring each application to fit the essential criteria, be that for business, tourism, third sector, hospitality, cultural. Each application was a significant piece of work and was hard fought. Alongside, we have managed a public giving campaign to raise nearly £150,000.

Broken down as follows:

Grants

Third Sector Resilience Fund:	£80,000	April 2020
Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund:	£150,000	June 2020

Heritage Emergency Fund:	£150,000	July 2020
Performing Arts Venues Relief Fund:	£750,000	Aug 2020
Strategic Framework Business Fund	£103,500	Nov 2020-Apr 2021
Winter Recovery Grant	£27,000	April 2021
Event Scotland (Granite Noir)	£12,000	Dec 2020
Scottish Government Stabilisation Funding	£1,400,000	April 2021
Youth Arts Access Fund	£30,000	April 2021
Performing Arts Venues Relief Fund 2	£500,000	August 2021
Adapt and Thrive	£25,000	August 2021
Total	£3,227,500	
Public Giving Donations	£148,000	
Grand Total	£3,375,500	

Job Retention Scheme

To the end of August 2021 we have secured **£2,182,247** from the Job Retention Scheme.

3. Business Critical Projects

Over the last 18 months behind closed doors our retained team has delivered a number of business critical projects to ensure that we return as safely, efficiently and effectively as possible and with the best possible chance of recovery.

Website

We have funded, scoped, tendered, built and commissioned a new website, launched in July 2021, with enhanced functionality and new design features. It is a testament to the team that we have successfully delivered this complex project during an extended period of closure with only a small retained workforce. Key areas of improvement are:

- Improved online presence: image led and all sections reviewed and rewritten
- Improved customer journey
- Improved accessibility
- Improved design
- Dedicated Festival pages
- Greater event prominence, especially our own venues
- Search Engine Optimisation

e-ticketing

We have researched, scoped, tendered and selected a new e-ticketing system and put in place staff training for our 150+ front facing staff.

Food and Beverage

During closure we have written a three year plan from 21/22 – 23/24 for a complete refresh of our food and beverage services. It includes a staff review and restructure, new performance targets, a revised food offer, and a capital project to upgrade and rebrand 1906 restaurant and cafe at HMT. We have commissioned a feasibility study to consider options and provide indicative costs. There have been significant infrastructure developments around HMT - the Art Gallery, proposals to pedestrianise Belmont Street and Union Terrace Gardens - and our proposals are capitalising on and contributing to this enhanced offer.

EPOS

We have funded, researched, scoped, tendered, commissioned and are now training our staff on a new, state of the art Point of Sale (EPOS) system towards the safe, secure and efficient integration of all of our ecommerce capabilities and efficient stock control.

External Audit

In this financial year we re-tendered for our external audit services. We prepared tender documentation, advertised, interviewed and appointed new auditors.

Customer Service Excellence

Despite being closed to the public we re-applied for the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Government Standard which requires to be annually, independently assessed on the basis of continuous improvement. We completed the rigorous evidence based application process and onsite assessment. We retained the accreditation, with Compliance achieved in all 57 criteria and Compliance Plus in 22.

"You have faced significant challenge following lockdown, but have fulfilled customer expectations at every step. You have explored fresh ways to engage and communicate with customers, including having a greater emphasis on digital and on-line facilities. Throughout the pandemic you have established yourselves as a flagship for the arts industry. Retention of the accreditation is extremely well deserved".

Customer Service Excellence Assessor

Re-opening Hello Campaign

The Hello campaign was designed to lead Aberdeen Performing Arts through re-opening and to maximise recovery, while also having long term audience development benefits. The basis of the plan is driven by data and based around segmentation to split our audience base into five groups in terms of the genres they attend along with new/lapsed customers and staff/stakeholders. A strong, visual message was designed, set up to be simple, flexible and visually striking. It is a digital campaign, based around use of our database, integrated email system and social media, backed up with an outdoor advertising campaign

"Despite the restrictions in place during the pandemic, and your small retained team, you have continued to develop customer insight, which was data driven across all research. The level of segmentation of information is extremely impressive and the introduction of channels through the Hello Campaign has significantly aided recovery. Consultation and communication has also been crucial and you set out your plan so that information was 'impossible to miss'. Your approaches have been inclusive and you have taken time to review processes including marketing, ticketing, refunds and the website.

Customer Service Excellence Assessor

4. People

Staff Welfare and Wellbeing

Our focus in 20/21 during the pandemic and two lockdowns with 250 staff furloughed and 12 retained staff under enormous pressure to keep everything going, has been to look after the mental health and wellbeing of our team at home, without the structure of a job and with ongoing uncertainty around job security. The handful of retained staff have abandoned their job descriptions and had to learn new skills to keep the business going, often going above and beyond.

We are proud of the continuity of support and development we have provided to our workforce during this time of extreme business disruption. It is our positive, can-do company culture that has seen us through to date.

For the very small team working from home during our enforced closure due to Covid, we created IT Remote working guidelines and Homeworking and Welfare guidelines.

All staff, whether working or furloughed, have been kept updated through our Soundcheck newsletters, which were put together by our retained team and issued monthly. Wellbeing and mental health was a key focus of the newsletters and signposting to guidance, hints and tips.

Staff were also provided with opportunities to keep in touch, raise issues or worries through regular communication individually, in groups and as a whole staff, with line managers and members of the leadership

team, by email, whatsapp groups, phone, Teams calls, and our private staff facebook group. Examples of wellbeing support and communications include: weekly virtual teabreaks, access to our Employee Assistance Programme, access to wellbeing resources and training sessions via our life insurance provider, the Theatre employee helpline, and access to counselling services. We held a virtual teabreak session for this year's Time to Talk day and then continued these every week, encouraging staff to talk about mental wellbeing and stay connected with each other. We held our "Feel Good February" campaign, which encouraged staff to take part in various wellbeing activities or tasks every day in February.

We held full company meetings during closure which all furloughed staff were invited to, we created a new OneTeam for our retained team. Our CEO recorded regular video messages on her phone to send to our furloughed staff to keep them up to date and to let them know we're here for them.

In lieu of being able to work and complete on site and on the job training and development, we have also encouraged and supported our furloughed team to undertake volunteering, training and alternative employment opportunities where available and appropriate to ensure a feeling of purpose, self-development, and mental wellbeing. We have seen many of our furloughed team support the fight against COVID, including volunteering to help their community, supporting the vaccination rollout at P&J Live, working in essential retail, and using their technical and creative skills in areas such as making scrubs and masks for the NHS and local care homes.

Staff Restructure and Review

We have undertaken a review of key areas within the organisation to ensure our structure and teams are fit for purpose and to make savings to fund the Real Living Wage which we introduced on 1 September 2021. We reviewed the Leadership Team structure and we reviewed box office, front of house and food and beverage, creating a new integrated Customer Experience Team.

Learning and Development

Our focus has been to identify operational training needs and plan training for reopening. Teams who have begun returning to work have been welcomed back into the venues with induction, IT and COVID-19 specific procedures.

5. Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

New Open House Access Scheme

We set up a new scheme to improve the booking procedure for our customers with additional access needs, allowing us to tag customers on request which will open up the selected seats that are held off to general public for booking. We trialed this with volunteer wheelchair bookers and then rolled out to all wheelchair bookers with an e flyer and form available on the website. 100% positive feedback received

Weston Jerwood Associate Artist Bursary

In 2019 we were successful in securing funding from the Weston Jerwood Foundation to host a creative bursary for an artist/creative from a lower socio-economic background. This successful application also came with a programme of organisational development aimed at improving representation within the host organisation which we completed in 20/21. Despite closure we pressed ahead with the post, appointed in May 2021 and are now mentoring the emerging producer, providing her with creative project opportunities and developing her skills and confidence.

We're Here for You

We introduced a phone line in April 2020 to reach out to more vulnerable customers and engage them in conversation about shows they'd seen in our venues over the years to help combat isolation, loneliness and anxiety. All 12 of us took turns staffing the phone line and we kept it running for the duration of the first lockdown.

6. Venues

We have maintained and invested in all three of our venues during 18 months of closure, two of which are category A listed. Key projects delivered:

Music Hall

We completed insurance works following flooding in August 2020 which included roof repairs, replacing flooring in the lower ground floor, in Coda café bar, Big Sky Studio and Tutti Studio, repainting and replastering and replacement of the fire panel in the lower ground. We also completed the snagging works outstanding from the Music Hall redevelopment.

His Majesty's Theatre

We commissioned a conditions survey to provide recommendations for building/roof repairs and are now undertaking a programme of repairs and upgrades. We are working on an application to Historic Environment Scotland for the more substantial work required. As part of the insurance works following flooding last year which also impacted on HMT, the flooring in the Education Studio has been replaced and flooring in 1906 restaurant repaired, sanded and varnished.

Lemon Tree

We have scoped a feasibility study for the redevelopment of The Lemon Tree, to determine the viability of the project, the scope of potential works, options open to us and indicative costs. This is a project we are leading as part of the proposed redevelopment of Queen Street. We have been active participants in the culture workstream led by Aberdeen City Council which has included consultation with cultural partners, a cultural mapping exercise and an assessment of needs.

AMBITION 2: Programme: Delivering a distinctive and diverse artistic programme

1. Securing the Work on our Stages

When we closed our doors in March 2020 we lost two years' worth of programming in the weeks and months that followed. Over 18 months, we have cancelled and rescheduled 700 shows with a ticket value of over £4M and equating to 250,000 interactions with customers. All of this has been managed solely by our small retained team as our entire box office team was furloughed. We have had to renegotiate with producers from scratch to retain and reschedule every show in the last 18 months into 2022 and 2023, also with our programming team furloughed. Some shows like *The Book of Mormon* have now been scheduled three times – May 2020, May 2021 and May 2022. It's been a hugely complex and time consuming diary management exercise. However, it has been worth it and, as a result, we are confident that 2022, which includes shows rescheduled from the closure period alongside new titles and artists, will be a strong year artistically and commercially.

2. Our Digital Programme

Festivals

True North

We staged a virtual festival to mark the *True North* weekend from 25-27 September 2020. We presented five online concerts by musicians from or connected to the North-east, with two pre-recorded videos and three live streamed performance from the artists' homes. The headline performance was a set performed by Scottish Album of the Year winner Kathryn Joseph which was filmed in the empty auditorium of the Music Hall. Three young Aberdeen performers played three Facebook Live slots, and we created a special online gig for children and families with Randolph Leap frontman Adam Ross from Laurencekirk. We commissioned a digital exhibition from local creative agency Design and Code, which was entitled 'Live Music: Long May You Run', and featured words and images from past festivals. The festival received an excellent response and many supportive comments on social media. The videos were viewed 11,109 times and social media posts having seen by more than 40,000 people.

Granite Noir

In 2021, as a consequence of COVID-19, *Granite Noir* went online. We remained true to the spirit of the festival - deeply rooted in place and inspired by the history and heritage of the North-east, international in outlook, as a Northern city, celebrating our close connections with Nordic Noir, and celebrating Scotland's crime writers and their global reach. The programme this year was a diverse mix of Scottish and international authors, headliners and debut authors, unique commissions and interactive family activities – children's authors, writing workshops and escape games.

We staged 15 events, 5 headline solo events with Jo Nesbo, Camilla Lackberg, Peter May, David Baldacci and Attica Locke and 4 panels including our Bold New Voices panel with debut authors Femi Kayode, Saima Mir and Susie Yang. We entered the world of podcasts for the first time with a collaboration between the Backlisted podcast and Val McDermid to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Josephine Tey and we brought true crime podcasters Isla Traquiar and Candice Gaines together. We staged a Criminal Portraits webinar hosted by city archivist Phil Astley, a creative writing workshop hosted by Aberdeen Library Service, children's events with Katherine Rundell and M.G Leonard and we commissioned *North by North-east*, a photographic exhibition of iconic *Granite Noir* authors in iconic city places.

We were delighted with the programme with so many standout events. Its reach was exceptional with more than 24,000 views and audiences tuning in from 52 countries over the weekend rising to 70 with on demand viewing available afterwards.

Supporting Local and National Festivals

Local dance agency Citymoves staged the annual **DanceLive Festival** of contemporary dance in October 2020, and we were able to support this by enabling them to stage, rehearse and film a production for streaming in the Lemon Tree. The performance was broadcast as part of the festival on Sunday 18 October.

We partnered with the **Manipulate Visual Theatre Festival**, which is run by Puppet Animation Scotland (PAS), to bring their innovative *Restless Worlds* project to Aberdeen. PAS commissioned 8 artists to create kinetic sculptures sited in locations around the city centre which could be viewed by audiences from outside the building while listening to an accompanying soundtrack on headphones.

Scenes for Survival

We partnered on the National Theatre of Scotland's innovative digital short plays project *Scenes for Survival*. A play was developed by North East writer Morna Pearson called *Clearing*, which was directed by Aberdeen theatre maker Cameron Mowat and featured Elgin born performer Ashleigh More.

Christmas

We commissioned and produced an online festive production in December 2020. *Reid Robin's Christmas Bosies* featured a daily online video hosted by our very own Doric robin, who was brought to life by local creative agency Design and Code and Aberdonian writer and performer Joyce Falconer. In the twelve days leading up to Christmas, there was a daily performance by a diverse range of talent including actors Elaine C Smith, Alan McHugh and Danielle Jam; unique festive tales by Mara the Storyteller, the Polar Bears and Frozen Charlotte and Ten Feet Tall Theatre's elves; a participatory dance performance by Shaper Caper's The Snow Queen; poetry by local spoken word artist Jo Gilbert; and music from percussionist Owen Gunnell of Children's Classic Concerts, the Uriposte Jukebox featuring violinist Elena Urioste and multi-instrumentalist Tom Poster, clarsach player Siannie Moodie, and a perfectly festive finale from Jamie MacDougall and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. The 13 videos received more than 17,000 views.

Niqabi Ninja

We brought the powerful and prescient production of *Niqabi Ninja* by Sara Shaarawi to Aberdeen, while it was simultaneously presented in four other Scottish cities and in London. Originally conceived as a stage play, the production was adapted into an audio performance which was experienced whilst walking around the city centre and encountering accompanying artworks.

AMBITION 3: Creative Learning: Providing inspirational community engagement and participation

We were unable to run any in person creative learning activities during 2020/21 but we quickly adjusted and our retained team put in place a digital programme engagement programme we called Here For You. Projects included:

Beethoven 250: Cyber Sonatas

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of the birth of one of the most significant people in music history, we created a digital collection of Beethoven's piano sonatas, which are described as the new testament of classical music. We invited pianists – amateur or professional – from anywhere in the world to submit videos of themselves performing movements from the sonatas, to create a unique collection of performances of these great works. We received submissions from Scotland's leading concert pianist Steven Osborne, from a sitting MSP, and from as far as Chile.

Keep the Lights On HMT

Our audiences couldn't visit HMT in person, so we invited them to create their own at home. We received many beautiful and imaginative versions from cardboard models to an incredibly detailed digital HMT formed in the Sims computer game.

When Life Gives You Lemons

This fun and engaging task invited people to recreate their favourite album covers recalling great gigs and memories from the Lemon Tree over the years.

Armchair Audiences

We selected one of the many free online performances which were made available during the lockdown and invited our audiences to watch it and join an online discussion with members of our team.

The Coronavirus Time Capsule

Members of our youth programme participated in this international project devised by London based Company Three. Over a period of ten weeks, participants were invited to document their experiences in lockdown with a different theme each week. The result was a poignant, humorous and creative diary of the first lockdown from the perspective of teenagers. Videos were submitted from around the world.

Positive Stories for Negative Times

Three of our youth theatre groups participated in the *Positive Stories for Negative Times* project run by Wonderfools Theatre Company and the Traverse Theatre, creating three digital performances of the scripts commissioned for the project. In April 2021, we presented digital performances of *Is This a Fairytale?* by Bea Webster, *The Pack* by Stef Smith, and *Bad Bored Women of the Rooms* by Sabrina Mahfouz.

Grampian Hospitals Art Trust: Amplify

We participated in a digital project in partnership with the Grampian Hospitals Arts Trust, who commissioned three artists (film-maker, writer, musician) to create a filmed performance inspired by stories from the archives created to celebrate the centenary of the Foresterhill Hospital campus. The final films and exhibition will be presented in the Suttie Arts Space at the hospital later in 2021.

Christmas Choirs

We held a number of online choir rehearsals in the weeks leading up to Christmas enabling us to maintain engagement with our Community Choir and vocal ensemble Tutti Voices.

AMBITION 4: Talent: Be an incubator for artists and talent development in the North-east

We were unable to offer any live performance opportunities for artists but we continued to act as a resource and support for artists in the region many of whom are freelance and had no source of income. We offered advice and assistance, signposted artists to funding opportunities and applied ourselves on behalf of artists to secure funds to be able to offer work and commissions in the digital space.

We offered whatever opportunities we could to Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire artists in our digital programme – all our online programming featured North East based performers, with True North in particular featuring an all-North East programme, and Reid Robin’s Christmas Bosies working with local creatives. The Weston Jerwood Creative Bursary process has allowed us to employ and support a local early-career creative practitioner, providing career mentoring, experiential and development opportunities and further enabled us to undertake activities which support the wider sector such as increased commissioning and producing, signposting opportunities etc.

INDICATOR	TARGET 20/21	ACHIEVED 20/21
Programme: Delivering a distinctive and diverse artistic programme		
Number of Performances (Aberdeen Performing Arts programme):		
Number of performances across venues (total) / digital	700	46
Number of performances at His Majesty’s Theatre	300	0
Number of performances at Music Hall	220	0
Number of performances at The Lemon Tree	180	0
Number of performances at other venues / online	10	26
Number of performances at True North Festival(digital)	20	5
Number of performances at Granite Noir Festival. (digital)	40	15
Attendances at Aberdeen Performing Arts programme:		
Audience numbers across venues (total) / digital	345,000	57,013
Audience numbers at His Majesty’s Theatre	220,000	0
Audience numbers at Music Hall	100,000	0
Audience numbers at The Lemon Tree	25,000	0
Audience at other venues / online – Reid Robin’s Christmas Bosies, Beethoven 250, Coronavirus Time Capsule, Positive Stories for Negative Times, Scenes for Survival, Niqabi Ninja, Restless Worlds	1,000	21,576
True North Festival Attendance (digital event)	4,500	11,109
Granite Noir Festival Attendance. (digital event)	4,725	24,498
Total attendances/digital views	345,000	57,183
Tickets Sales for Aberdeen Performing Arts programme:		
Ticket Sales: His Majesty’s Theatre	£4,700,000	0
Ticket Sales: Music Hall	£1,700,000	0
Ticket sales: The Lemon Tree	£180,000	0
Talent: an incubator for artists and talent development in the North-east		
Number of artists participating in talent initiatives (produced, curated, commissioned and festivals development)	250	54
Number of Associate Artists (in residence in the city)	2	0
Number of local, emerging artists participating in talent initiatives	40	1
Number of new works commissioned	4	13
Number of exhibitions commissioned	3	3
Number of sharings	2	0
Creative Learning:		

Providing inspirational community engagement & participation		
Number of participants in youth theatre digital engagement projects	0	61
Number of participants in general digital engagement projects	0	73
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:		
Number of BSL signed performances	20	9
Number of captioned performances	20	0
Number of audio described performances	20	0
Number of Touch Tours	20	0
Number of relaxed performances for people on autism spectrum	2	0
City Vision: provide cultural leadership to shape city vision and a creative Scotland		
Accreditations		
Customer Service Excellence Standard accreditations	57 compliance 20 compliance plus	57 compliance 22 compliance plus
Volume of customer service interactions		
Volume of customer service email interactions		18,825
Customer service calls answered between 01 Apr 20 and 13 Jun 20 when we closed the line.		3,968
Environmental: reduce electricity consumption by 5% year-on-year	-5%	-65%
Environmental: reduce gas consumption by 5% year-on-year	-5%	-37%
Environmental: reduce overall energy consumption by 5% year-on-year	-5%	-44%
Environmental: reduce waste to landfill by 5% year-on-year	-5%	-91%

If you have not met the targets set, please give any reasons or explanation for this:

This section is an opportunity to provide context and reflect on particular challenges, what learning has come from the experience which will feed into future planning. This section should really demonstrate your organisation's commitment to continuous improvement.

We were unable to deliver our targets as a consequence of closure for the full year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding and with 12 retained staff we kept the business solvent and we revised targets to deliver digital programming and business critical projects.

Please provide a summary of particular successes or case studies:

Case Study One: Granite Noir Online Festival

The digital staging of Granite Noir in 2021 was a huge success. It enabled us to programme writers who may not have been in a position to travel to Aberdeen and extended the festival's reach, with 24,000 audiences viewing events in 70 countries.

We made full use of our digital format to promote the city of Aberdeen over the weekend using stunning images of locations and landmarks to communicate a strong sense of place and inviting our audiences to join us next year in Aberdeen. We commissioned a photography exhibition, North by North East, featuring iconic *Granite Noir* authors in iconic Aberdeen places.

We worked with online presentation specialists who ensured that the same production values we would expect for a live event, were present in our digital offerings too. *Granite Noir* is a destination festival and we are looking forward to staging it live in 2022. However, we would not rule out a hybrid approach as we were amazed at the

international reach of the festival online which put Aberdeen on a world stage as a vibrant cultural destination in 70 countries.

Case Study Two: Reid Robin's Christmas Bosies

Christmas is a hugely important time for the arts industry. It not only normally represents our most profitable season, but is also the time when many people attend a live performance for the first time. It was important to us that we created an online experience which enabled our audiences to engage with us at this important time of year. Working with local creatives and using our strong national networks, we were able to pull together an exciting and diverse lineup of talent to present 13 daily videos in the lead up to Christmas. The videos resulted in 17,000 views and really helped to reinstate some Christmas spirit.

Case Study Three: The Aberdeen Performing Arts Way

"Throughout the pandemic you have established yourselves as a flagship for the arts industry".

Customer Service Excellence Assessment August 2021

Our organisation has always placed huge importance on creating a thriving, positive, people centred company culture, one that values employees, encourages loyalty, promotes a strong work ethic and an environment where we have each other's backs. During the COVID-19 pandemic this was tested like never before, but ultimately it was this that secured the survival of the organisation and the retention of our staff team.

We opted not to use redundancy and lay offs to manage the challenges of the pandemic and to fight for our whole team. Our retained team did whatever was necessary to secure the rescue packages to make it through, to retain programming and audiences for when we could reopen and to minimise any financial burden on Aberdeen City Council, using our council grant to continue to deliver services. We were determined to fight for the team who brought home Business of the Year in 2019, to ensure they kept their jobs and had a workplace to return to - and we succeeded.

Please provide a summary of any problems or issues that have required attention or action:

The single biggest challenge struck at the end of the financial year in March 2020 when, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to close our venues at short notice with the loss of all revenue for 18 months. Measures we took immediately to minimise impact included to furlough 95% of our workforce taking advantage of the job retention scheme, delete the 3% pay award, enter into negotiations with contractors to negotiate reductions and breaks in contract with our supply chain and mount a fundraising campaign. We produced a COVID-19 risk register and set up a COVID-19 Board Sub Committee.

Over the last 18 months we have battled insolvency, rescheduled 700 shows, continued to deliver services with a workforce of 12, look after the wellbeing of our wider workforce. We have achieved this as an ALEO to date without putting any additional financial burden on Aberdeen City Council.

The challenges we face are ongoing uncertainty around COVID-19, concern about audience appetite to return - many people are still anxious about attending large gatherings, and there are challenges around implementing legislation – face coverings, double vaccination passports.

We are addressing this by engaging with and listening to our audiences, phasing our return to give staff, audiences and artists an opportunity to transition and through our Hello Campaign, putting out strong messaging to reassure customers and welcome them into our venues again.

Delivering on Key Strategic Priorities

Please provide a summary of how your activities have delivered against key local (and national) strategic priorities relevant to your organisation

Culture Aberdeen 2018-2028 Action Plan Ambitions	Regional Economic Strategy 2018-2023 Action Plan	Creative Scotland Priorities 'Unlocking potential, embracing ambition'	Aberdeen Performing Arts Delivered Actions (a summary of achievements – more detail is located elsewhere in this report)
<p>Releasing our Creativity - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city opening doors, where everyone can be transformed and inspired through engagement in the arts and culture.</i></p>		<p>Everyone can access and enjoy artistic and creative experiences</p>	<p>Despite 100% venue closure, we were able to deliver a number of creative and accessible projects digitally and outdoors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • True North music festival • Reid Robin's Christmas Bosies – festive production • Granite Noir crime fiction festival • Restless Worlds – city centre kinetic sculpture tour • Niqabi Ninja – city centre audio performance tour • Several community engagement projects – Beethoven 250 Cyber Sonatas, Keep the Lights On HMT, When Life Gives You Lemons album covers, Armchair Audiences, Here For You phoneline • Several participatory projects – Coronavirus Time Capsule (youth participants), Positive Stories for Negative Times (Youth Theatre), Amplify with GHAT (Youth Theatre), Community Choir, Tutti Vocal Ensemble
<p>Becoming Scotland's Creative Lab - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city to experiment in, a home, a place, a destination and testing ground for artists, creative enterprises and new ideas</i></p>		<p>Excellence and experimentation across the arts, screen and creative industries is recognised and valued</p>	<p>Commissioned a digital festive production using a city-based creative agency and several Aberdonian artists.</p> <p>Developing new commissions for Stepping In screen and exhibitions for the Music Hall gallery spaces.</p> <p>Led the development and delivery of a multi-venue, multi-year commission for early years festive productions with Capital Theatres in Edinburgh and Eden Court Highlands.</p> <p>Developing partnership approach to Rise Up Aberdeen commissions to mark reopening and recovery from the pandemic.</p>

<p>Making All the City a Stage - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city which inspires, where exciting cultural experiences are around each and every corner and where there are no creative boundaries.</i></p>	<p>Delivery & marketing of cultural, heritage and tourism attractions of national significance, and of international standard (existing and new assets) and maximising tourism potential of accredited archives.</p> <p>Support and attract events that will be of international and national significance as part of the delivery of the Aberdeen 365 events and festivals plan.</p>	<p>Places and quality of life are transformed through imagination, ambition and an understanding of the potential of creativity</p>	<p>Delivered two outdoor city centre productions working with various city centre businesses to help drive footfall as well as using the city in new ways as a creative canvas.</p> <p>Showcasing the city itself in our digital productions – Granite Noir featured an online exhibition using photography featuring writers in locations around the city, Reid Robin animation contained city buildings and references to the city.</p>
<p>Connecting Us to the World- <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city like no other, where we celebrate and promote our culture and heritage, the things we make and create.</i></p>	<p>Support and promote the arts and cultural venues of the North East to attract and promote national and international exhibitions and programmes.</p>	<p>Scotland is a distinctive creative nation connected to the world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granite Noir featured 12 international writers from USA, Nigeria, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and France, and was a platform to showcase Aberdeen and Scotland on an international stage reaching 70 countries. • True North celebrated homegrown talent with all artists born in or based in the North East. • Retained all the programming of national and international significance at our venues by carefully rescheduling and avoid cancellation.
<p>Shaping our Future- <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city whose cultural sector is growing in ambition and confidence with a strong collective of cultural leaders collaborating to realise the city's potential.</i></p>	<p>Support development of projects and delivery of Culture Aberdeen Plan and the Aberdeen Culture Strategy.</p>	<p>Ideas are brought to life by a diverse, skilled and connected leadership and workforce</p>	<p>Active participation in city-wide initiatives; development of the cultural strategy for the city:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant contribution to the delivery of the cultural strategy for the city • Membership of city-wide groups including Culture Aberdeen, Events 365, AGCC Policy Council, Visit Aberdeenshire Tourism group, Aberdeen Youth Music Partnership. • Staff learning and development programmes; cross-departmental working groups: • Staff training and development programme <p>Future proofing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, immediate and effective governance and leadership in response to the global pandemic

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continually review and update business readiness including business continuity, infrastructure, information and data security, GDPR adherence, cyber security audit, environmental impacts, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion
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Local Priorities:

Please highlight where your outcomes, outputs or activities align against the priorities of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and or Council Delivery plan. <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/aberdeen-city-local-outcome-improvement-plan-2016-26/>

Aberdeen Performing Arts is not currently a statutory community planning partner but contributes and aligns to the LOIP stretch outcomes as follows (pre-revised LOIP Priorities 2018-9)

Aberdeen Performing Arts is also a member of Culture Aberdeen, who currently sit on the Outcome Improvement Group 'Aberdeen Prospers'.

LOIP Stretch Outcome	Key Driver	Aberdeen Performing Art Actions
Aberdeen Prospers		
Investment in Infrastructure Aberdeen City is a robust and resilient economy providing a vibrant built environment and attractive place for residents, students, business and tourists	We will regenerate our city centre to become a vibrant and attractive place to live, work and invest in	<p>We continued to invest in our buildings during the pandemic. We continued to programme a diverse cultural programme online with local and international reach and impact.</p> <p>Throughout the pandemic we ensured proactive engagement with our audiences through digital programming and other activities, and worked hard to retain as much programming as possible for when we reopen. Our venues are award winning and contribute to footfall in the city centre boosting the evening economy, bringing people into the city centre at weekends, impacting positively on local business and having a positive impact on tourism development and place making.</p>
Innovation Aberdeen City has a reputation for enterprise, innovation and world class solutions	We will accelerate the transition to a more balanced economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accelerating, balancing, growing and diversifying the economy through the cultural and creative industries. We currently make a major contribution to the cultural and creative industries in the city generating pre-pandemic turnover of £12m and employing 287 permanent and casual staff. •Leadership (Northern Star business of the year winners)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bringing in funding to the city from a wider range of sources inc £1m over three years we receive from Creative Scotland and during the pandemic we have raised £3.5M externally to keep Aberdeen Performing Arts solvent and avoid wholesale redundancies
<p>Inclusive economic growth - A skilled workforce for the future that provides opportunities for all our people</p>	<p>We will develop the people and skills necessary to deliver economic development and, as a result, support diversification of businesses and economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Talent development programme. We provided work opportunities to 54 artists through our digital programme. We recruited a full time young creative as part of the Weston Jerwood Creative Bursary programme. •We ensured that both our retained team and furloughed staff were able to undertake training and professional development opportunities. •Supporting the creative and cultural sector in Aberdeen – we currently plays a significant role as a creative hub and strategic partner including providing a box office service for 35 venues in the region. Over the lat yaer during the pandemic we have supported partner venue in a number of ways – helping to programme, helping to manage the rescheduling of external venues events, and partnering with local and national festivals.
<p>Internationalisation - Aberdeen City is a location of choice for investment, high value business activity and skills</p>	<p>We will attract the best possible range of incoming exhibitions and events and showcase the city's internationally recognised sports, arts and culture offer</p>	<p>We programme and curate signature events, festivals and unique programmes of work that play a major part in the promotion and marketing of place bringing visitors to the region, contributing to quality of life, attracting a skilled workforce and attracting inward investment.</p> <p>We have managed to save almost all events in the diary over two years affected by the pandemic, and certainly all the significant and most impactful events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Our internationally recognised festivals Granite Noir and True North – the digital staging of

		<p>Granite Noir had a significant international reach and was an excellent showcase of the city.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Our production company and talent pipeline, Freshly Squeezed Productions was put on hold but we continued to provide creative learning activities online and supported the development of 54 artists • we continue to contribute to city-wide partnerships, place making projects and destination marketing for the North East of Scotland
<p>Prosperous People – Children are our future</p>		
<p>Children are our future and people are resilient, included and supported when in need</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life – children in Aberdeen City are healthy, happy and safe, and enjoy the best possible childhood 	<p>Providing free and subsidised early years’ programmes including for children, young people and families from lower socio economic backgrounds. We put together a programme of online engagement aimed at children and families, with interactive activities and an online Christmas production</p> <p>Our creative engagement programme has a strong focus on deep engagement with communities and under-represented and marginalised groups.</p>
	<p>Children are safe and responsible – from all forms of harm</p> <p>Children are respected, included and achieving – children and young people are listened to, respected, valued and involved in the decision-making process</p>	<p>Contributing to multi agency support for vulnerable children and young people. We provide positive destinations and diversionary activity through our creative learning programmes.</p> <p>Subsidised creative learning programme which contributes to innovative and inclusive practice that enhances the experience of Aberdeen’s young people, involves them in decision making, co-design of services, contributes to wellbeing, helps them reach their potential, achieve positive destinations and makes them responsible and contributing citizens</p>

Prosperous People – People Are Resilient, Included and supported when in need		
<p>People and communities are protected from harm – Individuals and communities are made aware of the risk of harm and supported appropriately to reduce this risk.</p>	<p>We will develop systems and approaches that raise awareness of harm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural programmes aimed at young people from lower socio economic backgrounds that improve resilience, health and wellbeing and empowerment, - Weston Jerwood creative bursary, Granite Noir internship. • Our Equalities, diversity and Inclusion Working Group • In 20/21 we reviewed our child protection and safeguarding policy, and updated it to include guidance for online work with young people and vulnerable groups.
<p>People are supported to live as independently as possible – able to sustain an independent quality of life for as long as possible, take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing</p>	<p>We will empower citizens to feel they have real and meaningful choice and control over their own lives.</p>	<p>Supporting, growing and developing as a Healthy Working lives workplace for our employees.</p> <p>Supporting our furloughed team whilst not at work with a communications strategy, regular check-ins, newsletters, calls and meet-ups as permitted. We encouraged staff to keep in touch, arranged training and development and supported colleagues to find alternative employment during furlough.</p> <p>We rolled out our Open House access scheme to enable better access and booking processes for customers with a range of access needs.</p>
Prosperous People - EMPOWERED, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES		
<p>People friendly city – a city where people to choose to invest, live and visit</p>	<p>Build a child friendly city to ensure that the best interests of the child is a primary consideration</p>	<p>We provide a year round child friendly programme in all three venues and have expanded this programme at the Music Hall since we re-opened with a new programme in the new Big Sky</p>

		Studio aimed at children and families. We survey young people and families to ensure that our programme is relevant. We offer subsidies and we reviewed our child protection and safeguarding policy. We continued this engagement through closure with a range of activities and digital productions.
	We will be a city whose built environment is fit for keeping an ageing population safe and healthy and puts the child at the centre of design	Contribution to Agenda 21 and sustainable development. We have played a sector leading role in raising awareness around sustainable development which has resulted in us winning the SEPA Vibes Award in the category of Engaging Scotland in 2019 and we were Eco Hero finalists 2019 Northern Star Business Awards

Education:

Please provide further information in respect to any education programmes delivered.

Self-explanatory but helpful to highlight any links with specific schools, further education institutions, geographic areas.

To avoid repeating what has been said previously you can highlight in depth some example of particularly successful projects/programmes, feedback from participants or schools or provide context for longer term vision and partnerships.

Weston Jerwood (in depth example)

We successfully applied in a highly competitive process to become a host organisation of the prestigious Weston Jerwood Creative Bursary programme. Despite the impacts of the pandemic and the reduced resources available, we took part in an intensive organisational development process which focused on improving the inclusivity of our organisation, with a particular focus on providing opportunities for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. We reviewed and refreshed our recruitment and induction processes, and received a very high calibre of applicants for the year-long associate producer post funded by the bursary scheme. The successful candidate is undertaking a programme of professional development with Jerwood Arts, working with a mentor, and undertaking a year-long post developing and delivering creative projects at Aberdeen Performing Arts. Furthermore, we have been able to work with some of the unsuccessful candidates to provide career advice and support, point them towards other opportunities and recommend them for other work. The project has influenced our ongoing recruitment and approach to creative work, as well as provide excellent opportunities for young creatives in the region.

Employment

Please give us a bit more information about your volunteers, if you have any:

What roles do your volunteers undertake within the organisation

Fundraising, advocacy, administration, legal advice, social media content creation, marketing, events co-ordination

Training and Policy in action

Example of volunteer success stories such as transition to employment?

The only volunteer we had in 2020/21 was our volunteer archivist who continued to work a day a week

Artists/ Creative practitioners Opportunities:

Please provide further detail on examples of projects or programmes which have created employment opportunities for local residents, artists and or creative practitioners.

Through our digital programme we have created employment opportunities for 56 artists/creative practitioners.

SECTION 2 – Audiences, Participants and Investment

Please complete this section to report on the number of participants from each of the identified areas who have participated during the year.

Participants	Target	Total 2020/21
Total number of participatory opportunities created throughout programme		188
Number of participatory opportunities targeted for priority groups		
Children and Young People 0-25		61
Adults 26yrs+		127
Disability (mental health physical, sensory (e.g. BSL users) and carers of disabled people)		9 BSL performances 478 views
Ethnic minority communities		unknown

Please complete this section to report on audience/visitor numbers in relation to your programming.

Audiences	Target	Total 2020/21
Total Audience Numbers	345,000	57,183
Total Visitor Numbers (note this is footfall ie non paying visitors)	1,000,000	0
Audience number from Aberdeen City	138,000	N/A*
Audiences who are residents of regeneration areas within Aberdeen City	34,500	N/A*
Audience number from the wider region or further	207,000	N/A*
% of audience survey rating experience as 'excellent' or 'good'	93%	
<i>The above may not be relevant to your organisation or known – however if you use ticket/box office analysis, visitor books, audience surveys, event impacts studies etc. it should be fairly straight forward to complete.</i>		

*As all visitors are digital we do not have the necessary data to ascertain location information

We are keen to evidence the added economic value and social return of investment in culture, as such we request that you please complete the Cultural Impact tool kit as well as the table below.

Income 2020/21.	Total £
Value of Grant(s) from Aberdeen City Council	1,060,000
External Grant funding	379,000
Sponsorship	0
Trading income	46,000
Other (Job Retention Scheme and other COVID grants)	3,061,000
Total add income	4,546,000

Section 3 – Support Material

We recommend you provide up to five items of support material to help demonstrate the quality and impact of your activity. This may include; case studies, photographs, videos, web links, publications, marketing material, reports, participant testimonials and feedback. If emailing please keep all support material to under 5mb. Please supply details on your support material below

Please note that any material submitted may be included within an annual Cultural Investment report and/or material promoting the Creative Funding programme. By submitting this you are providing

permission for each item to be used for publication. You should ensure you have the creators consent and accreditation is provided where necessary.

Support Material 1:	<u>Upcoming venue brochure</u> Brochures (aberdeenperformingarts.com)
Support Material 2:	<u>Granite Noir 2021</u> Granite Noir (aberdeenperformingarts.com)
Support Material 3:	<u>Reid Robin's Christmas Bosies</u> Reid Robin (youtube.com)
Support Material 4:	<u>Coronavirus Time Capsule</u> Time Capsule (youtube.com)
Support Material 5:	

Section 4- Declaration on use of information

Aberdeen City Council collects and maintains the data on this form about your organisation for the purpose of contacting you in relation to the funding, monitoring purposes and to collate information for statistical and audit purposes. We will retain Personal Data for six years in accordance with the organisation's Corporate Records Retention and Disposal Schedule and for the purpose of administering, processing and assessing your report.

For the purposes of processing this information Aberdeen City Council is the Data Controller. The Information Commissioner Office is the UK's regulator of data protection law (www.ico.org.uk). More information about all of the rights you have is available on our website at: <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/your-data>.

Whenever the Council processes personal data we need to make sure we have a basis for doing so. We understand our basis in GDPR to be Article 6(1)(e) as we consider that it is in our public task to collect this information under our powers set down in the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act, 1982 section 14, as amended by section 128 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act, 1994. The act provides for us doing or contributing towards the expenses of providing or doing, anything necessary or expedient for the purpose of ensuring that there are facilities available for recreational, sporting, cultural or social activities as we consider appropriate.

To confirm that all information included in this report is accurate and that you have read and followed the terms and conditions, please sign and date below. If submitting by email an electronic signature or the typed name of the appropriate contact should be inserted.

Name: Jane Spiers
Date: 24th September 2021