



ALEO ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

Deadline for submission 15th July 2025

Organisation: Aberdeen Performing Arts	
Year Covered:	2024-25
Report completed by:	Sharon Burgess
Position:	Chief Executive

About the organisation

Aberdeen Performing Arts is the cultural cornerstone of North-east Scotland, driving change through creativity and community engagement. Our vision includes city centre regeneration, social change initiatives, community cohesion, and placemaking, enriching the region's creative, social, and economic fabric.

We measure success by financial and operational targets, city centre revitalisation, community engagement metrics, and the growth of our artistic programmes. Focusing on collaboration, inclusion, and personnel investment, we aim to lead the cultural sector, nurture talent, and foster sustainable development.

As a cultural hub, we contribute to the arts, community, and civic life through national and international performances, producing and curating work, hosting festivals, and engaging diverse communities. Our activities significantly impact the local cultural sector and the region's prosperity, and we are a critical element of the infrastructure for regional community arts supporting the amateur sector as well as emerging professionals.

Serving a region transitioning to renewable energy and sustainability, we ensure arts and culture influence and reflect these dynamics. We engage with local communities, transcending socio-economic boundaries to provide access to arts and culture for all, enhancing experiences and adding regional value.

We champion collaboration and creative engagement, forging partnerships to support new work and sector growth. Investment in people, governance, leadership, and digital technologies drives our transformation. Our leadership promotes a positive company culture, equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Aberdeen Performing Arts offers clear pathways for workforce and talent development, providing opportunities for emerging artists to contribute meaningfully to the artistic landscape.

In conclusion, Aberdeen Performing Arts' strategic direction focuses on becoming the leading cultural institution in North-east Scotland, driving change through creativity, community engagement, and sustainable development.

Organisation Information	
Organisation legal structure	Company limited by guarantee with charitable status
Number of years operating	20
Name of Director/ Chief Executive	Sharon Burgess
Number of venues operated	3
Number of Board Members	14
Number of Full time staff	48 (average headcount across the year)
Number of part time/casual staff	230 (average headcount across the year)

SECTION 1 - Outcomes and outputs

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

PROGRAMME 2024/25 – making, curating and staging work of quality and ambition that is distinctive, diverse and relevant

Our 2024/25 programme featured:

- **783 diverse performances** across theatre, music, dance, comedy, literature, spoken word, and work for young people. The very best of professional touring productions, national companies, Scottish made work, local emerging professionals, and a range of community, schools and amateur projects.
- **Granite Noir** – international crime writing festival featuring a record attendance.
- **Light the Blue** – festival for and by young people in Aberdeen.
- **International Season** – new international season of circus, acrobatics, comedy and family events.
- **Rise Up** – a festival celebrating black and people of colour creatives, in partnership with We Are Here Scotland.
- **Delve** – a weekend of artist-led exploration of themes and ideas curated by musician Rachel Sermanni.
- **Digital art** – 5 new commissions for our Stepping In screen.
- **Art exhibition** – including 2 new commissions in our Music Hall gallery spaces.
- **Comedy Festival** – announced the relaunch and refresh of the Aberdeen Comedy Festival.

TALENT – Investing in the artists, performers and creatives of today and tomorrow

In 2024/25, we:

- Co-commissioned and co-produced the first production in an ongoing partnership with Imagine/Edinburgh International Children's Festival which was award-nominated.
- Acted as associate producer, providing rehearsal, tech and production support for an award-winning production presented at the Edinburgh Fringe and on tour.
- Commissioned a new script by two highly regarded theatre-makers based on a popular topic related to Aberdeen.
- Undertook discussions to establish a number of further co-commission and co-production partnerships.
- Commissioned North-East based artists to produce our Rise Up festival and a theatre production for Granite Noir.
- Delivered a digital arts programme with 5 new commissions and an art exhibition programme with 2 new commissions.
- Offered 2 Intern positions for Granite Noir and Assistant Producer/2 Festival Assistant positions for Light the Blue.
- Held emerging artist events across all festivals and our programme.
- Launched a call-out for multi-year, multi-venue festive productions for early years, co-commissioned with Eden Court and Capital Theatres.

ARTS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES – creative engagement for everyone, whoever or wherever they are

In 2024/25, we:

- Ran 5 youth theatre classes for ages 5-19 for three 10-week terms.
- Delivered 2 early years music classes for ages 1-8 for three 10-week terms.
- Conducted a hip hop programme, Beats & Rhymes, for ages 12-18 for three 10-week terms.
 - Gathering feedback from young participants is restricted by workshop sizes, most of which are around 15-20 participants at a time. Much of what we gather is qualitative and anecdotal however we are addressing this through an improved research structure by working with the social impact agency TIALT.
 - We also recognise there are limitations to audience data capture of young audiences. Our post-show survey can be filtered to show just family events but on the wider scale of our programme, the topline results will skew towards the older demographics.
- Across our youth arts workshops, we offer inspiring cross art form opportunities. Beats & Rhymes composed music for our Light the Blue youth theatre performances. Our young participants benefit from cross fertilisation of ideas across all our participation offer. Regular opportunities to attend performances which they may not otherwise attend in our venues offer new inspirations – our Beats & Rhymes group attending classical music at the Music Hall and theatre at HMT, our youth theatre participants attending performances which inform and inspire their own practice in new ways.
- Established a script-reading group for over 60s in partnership with Ten Feet Tall Theatre.
- Brought the Flames residency programme for older people to Aberdeen with Tricky Hat Productions.
- Commissioned 'Everyone is Welcome Here' lit artwork for our venues and delivered staff inclusivity training.
- Delivered our inclusive community choir.

- Partnered with soundplay to offer valuable opportunities for children and young people with additional needs and complex disabilities to engage as participants and audience members through bespoke, carefully curated creative activity.
- Held HOURS, a hip hop event series by local producers.
- In partnership with TISS (Theatre in Schools Scotland) delivered professional, free to attend theatre production to over 100 pupils at Gilcomstoun School. We have developed good partnerships with schools, and they trust the opportunities we offer are of high quality.
- Expanded Light the Blue as a co-designed youth arts festival.
- Established a young advisors' network for Light the Blue and broader organisational input.
- With support from Aberdeen City Council's Cost of Living fund, we were able to offer 300 people (67 families) tickets to the pantomime with a package including ice cream and toys for children, all at no cost to families. We enhanced the offer with free bus travel from FirstBus, giving families a fun, cultural experience at a time of year which can be challenging for many.
- Developed community engagement projects on inclusion.
- Expanded engagement efforts to reach and include new audiences.

PLACEMAKING – shaping place, reinventing the North-East and recognising arts and creativity as a central part of our nation

In 2024/25, we:

- Actively participated in local, regional, and national networks, including Board-level representation.
- We've strengthened our position with the Scottish Government, with our CEO invited to join several working groups and attend an industry roundtable at the First Minister's residence.
- Contributed to Culture Aberdeen's initiatives focused on advocacy and strengthening sector support.
- Delivered Granite Noir, Light the Blue, Rise Up, and Delve with increased partnerships and local artist involvement and introduced our new International Season and relaunched the Aberdeen Comedy Festival.
- Co-produced So Far So Good with Imagine and Superfan, and associate produced Love Beyond with Raw Material Arts and Vanishing Point.
- Significantly invested in the fabric of our buildings including re-pointing works at His Majesty's Theatre and the Lemon Tree.
- Invested in new technical equipment, seating, tables, flooring and decor at the Lemon Tree resulting in a much improved environment for artists, audiences and staff.
- Provided a platform for local talent including showcase programmes, support acts, and a range of local arts and community organisations from local bands to community orchestras, school concerts, accessible drama groups and the annual student show.

PEOPLE AND FAIR WORK

In 2024/25, we:

- Strengthened staff engagement through our enhanced Employee-led Forum, monthly union engagement meetings, and the appointment of an Employee Director to the Board to further enable effective voice.
- Entered into a voluntary recognition agreement with BECTU for our technical and operations teams.
- Delivered inclusive governance training to the Board; inducted four new members and completed transition to a new Chair.
- Introduced crucial new roles in hospitality and events teams, programming, finance, marketing, and restructured the technical team to include more permanent, contracted positions for greater job stability.
- Scoped a 12-week People Manager Programme; delivered training in EDI and formal processes; supported LT members through external leadership qualifications.
- Initiated FLOW Learning Management System reintegration, focusing on appraisals, engagement, and up-to-date training materials.
- Piloted an early careers placement and began mapping blueprint for future placements.
- Initiated workforce planning and began a policy review to ensure inclusive language and transparent guidance.
- Continued implementing Open House, our Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion plan (2025–2028).

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

In 2024/25, we:

- Increased tickets sales by 14% year on year.

- Saw an increase in new customers attending our performances to 18,274 – bringing us closer to our 2028 target of 21,500 a year.
- Increased Friends memberships by 29% year on year.
- Achieved a net promoter score of 72 – an increase from 71 of last year and closer to our 2028 target of 74.
- Achieved a customer experience rating of 4.6 out of 5.
- Started projects and initiatives to measure our social impact, economic impact and assess our brand perception among audiences and stakeholders.
 - Our current approach to developing a social impact framework is through working with an agency called TIALT, who specialise in setting up organisations with a structured approach to measuring results of community and engagement work.
 - Economic impact is being assessed through changes to our post-show survey. This accompanied with our own accounts and use of government multipliers to understand our induced spend, will demonstrate how audiences attending our performances benefit the region economically.
 - Our brand perception is being assessed through our work with the Creating Impakt agency. The study across, our audiences, stakeholders and public is being conducted in 2025 to follow on from the first stage in 2023 to identify the results of improved communications and results of organisational change.

CLIMATE ACTION

In 2024/25, we:

- Delivered a series of carbon literacy training sessions to our Green Champions to improve understanding and awareness.
- Undertook a series of building related sustainability initiatives, covered in more detail further in this report under **Net Zero/Climate Change**, aligned to our wider Carbon Management Plan and ESOS Phase 3 action plan.
- Took the lead, in collaboration with The Barn, for the North East of Scotland in Culture for Climate Scotland Springboard Assembly Series
- Actively engaged with our national visiting companies on promoting their 'Green Rider' aimed at reducing their carbon footprint whilst they visit our venues.
- Focused on enhancing sustainable travel options for our festivals, such as Granite Noir and International Season, including supporting more rail travel for authors / performers and partnering with First Bus to encourage discounted bus transport to our attending audiences.
- Installed engaging artwork, designed by artist Gabi Reith, on our recycling bins in the Music Hall, encouraging audiences to use the correct bins, resulting in increased appropriate bin use.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

In 2024/25, we:

- Restructured our Trading Company management team to provide greater focus on Food and Beverage and our Conference and Events activity, to drive growth.
- Invested in creation of a number of posts within the team to strengthen our future strategy, including IT and Systems Manager and People Coordinator.
- Undertook a major IT Investment to provide a platform for digital growth and to strengthen our cyber security, This included deploying a new fully digital phone system, transitioning to a cloud-based server infrastructure, replacing key infrastructure such as firewalls and access points, and improving.
- Implemented a task and project management tool, Asana, which has allowed for greater organisational collaboration and planning.
- Rolled out enhanced, system based, financial reporting to our Management Team allowing for more dynamic budgetary monitoring and control.
- Fully reviewed our fundraising strategy, ensuring that partnership and philanthropy opportunities that align with our organisational priorities and requirements were maximised. This included:
 - Securing additional targeted funding including £20,000 towards expanding our Granite Noir Festival, £68,595 towards Building Management System upgrade works at His Majesty's Theatre and £164,433 towards exterior works at His Majesty's Theatre

- Alignment of our membership levels in terms of pricing and benefits (Friends, Friend Prime and Friends Prime Plus) and the development and launch of a new corporate focussed support level, Ovation Club, aimed at increasing sponsorship.
- Launching a new 'Take a Step' Campaign at the Lemon Tree and fully relaunching our 'Take a Seat' seat sponsorship scheme at His Majesty's Theatre and Music Hall aimed at encouraging support of the venues themselves.
- Refreshing our pricing structure for our Safety Curtain sponsorship, adopting a per square meter pricing scheme aligned with other forms of advertising, and securing an uplift in income generated despite elevated competition in the advertising space with the Tall Ships 2025.

Activity Outputs (complete only the ones that apply to your funded activities)

Total number of participants	13,913	Total audience numbers	416,379
Total number of volunteers	11	Total number of volunteer hours	510
Total number of project artists employed	291	Total number of artist hours	1,746
Total number of performances	783	Total number of training courses	-
Total number of exhibitions	9	Total number of festivals	5
Total number of workshops	484	Total number of publications	-
Other (please specify)	-	Total number of Conference and Events	64

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

All targets set have been achieved in the reported year.

Please provide a summary of particular successes or case studies:

This is where you can collate and share your good news stories highlighting best practice where investing in culture has had positive impact in changing lives or changing perceptions (i.e. personal testimonies or examples of projects which are game changers in how you approach your activity).

Case studies are also encouraged, these can be big projects like a building development or festival but they can also be something more small scale and discreet such as a programme of outreach workshops or the mentoring and development of volunteer or artists. Its helpful to consider any case study in the context of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and Culture Aberdeen strategy/actions to demonstrate real progress against the city's wider priorities as well as examples of best practice which your organisation and others within the cultural sector can learn from.

International Season

The first Aberdeen Performing Arts International Season took place between July and September 2024 – it was a ground-breaking series of performances from some of the most innovative and cutting edge performers from around the world. The International Season marks a significant milestone in the cultural calendar in the North-East of Scotland and brought world-class entertainment to the region while promoting sustainable touring to the companies coming to Scotland. With contemporary circus, comedy, theatre and family events on offer, audiences saw some of the highest quality performances and received unparalleled experiences. Performers from Australia, New Zealand and Germany were seen by over 2,700 audience members and the event attracted significant positive press coverage including front page headlines for the announcement.

Collaborative Co-Productions

As part of our ongoing aspirations to cultivate our reputation as a commissioning and producing organisation, we undertook two significant partnership projects in 2024/25:

- **So Far So Good** – a joint commission with Imagine, by Strathspey-based circus theatre organisation Superfan. The show had rehearsal, production and previews in Aberdeen before a run at the Edinburgh International Children's Festival, a short Scottish tour, before concluding with performances at our Light the Blue festival. The production was a finalist for Best Production for Children and Young People at the annual Critics Awards for Theatre in Scotland. This was an engaging performance for children aged 3-6 which shared important messages about making mistakes and facing challenges.
- **Love Beyond** – we were associate producers on this production led by Raw Material Arts and Vanishing Point theatre company for this powerful show by deaf theatre artist Ramesh Meyyappan. We provided technical and production time prior to a run at the Edinburgh Fringe, at which the production won the Leading Light Award for Best Scottish Production. The show then undertook a Scottish tour which opened at The Lemon Tree. This was a hugely powerful story about facing dementia as a deaf person.

Both productions were of an extremely high standard and helped us to hone our offer as a collaborative producing partner, particularly offering technical and production space and support. In both cases, these first partnerships will lead to further collaborations with the organisations involved having been positive experiences for all partners. These projects are vitally important towards improving Aberdeen's reputation as a creative city and a place where quality artistic work can be made.

Creative Engagement Inclusion Partnership Production

We partnered with Look Again to produce and present *Glory*, a cabaret series celebrating queer creativity. Local artists from the queer community were commissioned to respond to objects from the RGU Art and Heritage Collections, creating new work that explored identity, history, and place. Two cabarets were delivered, each offering a platform for emerging artists to explore the cultural identity of the Northeast through performance. Each event also featured established performers, creating valuable opportunities for early-career artists to learn and develop by working alongside experienced professionals. *Glory* provided emerging artists with a space to experiment creatively, refining their existing skills, and developing new ones—laying a foundation for future opportunities.

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

Again, this provides context of the environment you have been operating under to better reflect your organisations challenges and achievements. Its also an opportunity to highlight examples of good practice leadership, governance, collaboration and financial management within your organisation.

There were no significant problems or issues that required attention or action beyond normal day-to-day business operations.

We continued to manage routine operational matters through standard processes and maintained stable governance, financial oversight, and collaborative working throughout the period.

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 Strong Communities and Cultural Identity	LOIP 2024 refresh (2016-26)	Your Organisations Delivered Actions
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>	Fostering a strong sense of cultural identity and belonging in the region	<p>2. Working towards a 74% employment rate for Aberdeen City by 2026.</p> <p>4. 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026.</p> <p>10. Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026.</p> <p>13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.</p> <p>15. 26% of Aberdeen's area will be protected for nature and 60% of citizens report they feel that spaces and buildings are well cared for by 2026.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We deliver a diverse programme with wide appeal including touring production, signature events, and exclusive curated shows.• Our festivals attract audiences from a range of backgrounds and boost pride in the city.• Our ticket pricing has accessible entry points and discount schemes.• We curate unique events which are rooted in the city.• Developed Light the Blue as a festival for and by young people with young advisors and an approach of co-design.• An extensive access programme for people with disabilities including BSL, captioning, audio description, and relaxed adaptations.• Partnerships with organisations such as Sanctuary Queer Arts, We Are Here Scotland, North East Sensory Services, Barnardos and more.• Innovative change-maker posts with a focus on inclusion.• Creative Engagement activity with participants from under-represented communities and free/subsidised spaces.• Local community productions at all venues throughout the year.
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>	Increasing the number of jobs in the creative industries	<p>16. 50% of citizens report they feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed new co-producing and co-commissioning partnerships which resulted in work being rehearsed and opening in the city, with improved provision for technical and production support.• A joint festive commission with counterparts in Edinburgh and Inverness.• 2 new visual art commissions• 6 new digital art commissions• Delivered the third Rise Up festival celebrating and showcasing Black and POC creatives.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered the third Delve weekend inviting an artist to curate a series of performance and workshops on a chosen theme or art form. Developed our inclusive cabaret programme for LGBT+ artists and audiences and added a new partnership with RGU. Maintained employment and freelance engagement of more than 290 creative professionals.
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>Increasing the number of assets held by communities across the region</p> <p>Creating a clearer/ stronger identity and cultural narrative</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded all our festivals to have presence across the city particularly Light the Blue, our festival for and by young people, which featured outdoor performances in the city centre, and projects with a range of partners and locations throughout. Staged large scale West-End productions at His Majesty's Theatre, attracting strong audiences from across the region and beyond. Produced signature festivals featuring events, workshops and exhibitions in various locations and venues across the city
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>Creating a clearer/ stronger identity and cultural narrative</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced a new International Season inviting circus, acrobatic, comedy and family productions from across the world to Aberdeen as part of a sustainable touring approach. Granite Noir invites international writers and welcomes international audiences to the city and online. Delivered Rise Up festival weekend and developed new partnerships with organisations promoting artists of colour. Retained all the programming of national and international significance at our venues – home of Scotland's national companies in the North, key touring stop for prestigious national organisations.
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>Increasing the number of jobs in the creative industries</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. Strengthened links with Scottish Government through CEO's involvement in working groups and First Minister roundtable

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership programming with local cultural organisations including Citymoves, Sound, Peacock, GHAT, Look Again, shmu, Arts Centre, Creative Learning, Multicultural Centre, Ten Feet Tall, and more. • Providing opportunities for the next generation of creative talent through our youth participation programmes, Granite Noir interns, Light the Blue Assistants and Young Advisors, placements and volunteering. • Membership of city-wide groups including Culture Aberdeen, Events 365, AGCC Policy Council, Visit Aberdeenshire Tourism group, North-East Music Partnership. • Staff learning and development programmes; cross-departmental working groups: <p>Future proofing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive work on environmental sustainability, cross-dept green team, award-nominated. • Continual development and repairs/maintenance of our building and equipment infrastructure. • 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 • Creation of new audience development plans and customer engagement strategies to better inform decision making. • Significant programming for children and young people throughout year plus a dedicated festival.
--	--	--	--

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	Deliver diverse and distinctive cultural programme to create attractive city to live, work and visit. Custodian of iconic city centre venues and undertaken major investment in upgrading facilities. Regular programme of upgrades and repairs to buildings and infrastructure.
Innovation Aberdeen City has a reputation for enterprise, innovation and world class solutions	We will accelerate the transition to a more balanced economy	Collaboration and partnership to establish Aberdeen as a viable city for co-creation and production – e.g. So Far So Good and Love Beyond. Ambitious programming, measured risk-taking, and curatorial approach to create unique offer. Produce several innovative festivals with local relevance and national impact.
Inclusive economic growth A skilled workforce for the future that provides opportunities for all our people	We will develop the people and skills necessary to deliver economic development and, as a result, support diversification of businesses and economy	Hundreds of opportunities for artist employment. Developing new talent through internships, placements and new roles. Partner on Developing Young Workforce. Creating sustainable employment through revised contracts and new posts.

		Accredited Real Living Wage Employer, Disability Confident Committed.
Internationalisation Aberdeen City is a location of choice for investment, high value business activity and skills	We will attract the best possible range of incoming exhibitions and events and showcase the city's internationally recognised sports, arts and culture offer	The launch of a spectacular new International Season in Aberdeen. Joined the Dance Consortium, which facilitates the touring of large-scale international contemporary dance. We continue to grow international presence in our festivals such as Granite Noir. Support for locally based ethnically diverse communities via Multicultural Centre, Mela etc.
Prosperous People – Children are our future		
Children are our future and people are resilient, included and supported when in need	Children have the best start in life – children in Aberdeen City are healthy, happy and safe, and enjoy the best possible childhood	Extensive programme of weekly participation opportunities. Expanded free spaces programme across our activity. Dedicated festival Light the Blue for and by young people. Programming for children and young people, ticket offers, and schools' engagement. Projects specifically with care experienced young people, children with disabilities, and from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
	Children are safe and responsible – from all forms of harm	Comprehensive safeguarding training and child protection approach. Partnerships with key support organisations.
	Children are respected, included and achieving – children and young people are listened to, respected, valued and involved in the decision-making process	Young advisors group co-design Light the Blue and wider activity.
Prosperous People – People Are Resilient, Included and supported when in need		
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.	We will develop systems and approaches that raise awareness of harm	Projects specifically targeted to improve opportunities for marginalised groups e.g. Beats and Rhymes, over 60s, LGBT+, BPOC.

		<p>Research project to combat loneliness in older people.</p> <p>Our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion policy and action plan continues to raise the bar in our support of our communities, under-represented and vulnerable groups</p> <p>Continued roll-out of EDI and conflict resolution sessions to build confidence in managing sensitive issues and fostering inclusive team environments.</p> <p>Reframed our approach to employee support, shifting from reactive processes to proactive, person-centred practices. This includes flexible working principles, tailored support plans, early-stage Occupational Health consultations, and coaching managers in group mediation and inclusive problem-solving.</p> <p>HR policy redevelopment progressed, ensuring inclusive language and clear, accessible guidance for staff.</p> <p>Reinforced psychological safety through employee-led engagement structures, including the Employee Forum and monthly union meetings.</p> <p>Delivered First Aid training across departments, with further Emergency First Aid sessions planned.</p>
<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>Fostered a culture of development and progression through internal promotions, tailored leadership development, and a new People Manager Programme.</p> <p>Maintained Real Living Wage and Disability Confident Committed accreditations, ensuring fair, inclusive employment for all staff.</p> <p>Increased access provision and membership scheme.</p> <p>Promoted autonomy and wellbeing by reframing support structures, centering flexibility, tailored</p>

		<p>adjustments, and proactive wellbeing planning.</p> <p>Embedded inclusive recruitment practices such as video applications, and shared interview questions.</p> <p>Providing regular performances which as BSL signed, audio described, captioned and relaxed performances.</p> <p>Continued embedding our <i>Everyone is Welcome Here</i> ethos across workplace culture, policies, and leadership practices.</p>
Prosperous People - EMPOWERED, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES		
People friendly city – a city where people to choose to invest, live and visit	Build a child friendly city to ensure that the best interests of the child is a primary consideration	<p>We provide a child and family friendly programme in all our venues.</p> <p>Dedicated festival for children and young people.</p> <p>Increased free spaces in our participation programme.</p> <p>Signed up to breastfeeding friendly Scotland scheme.</p> <p>Children Eat Free in school holidays in our cafes.</p>
	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	<p>Award-nominated for environmental initiatives.</p> <p>Embedded post of Creative Change-Maker (Climate Action)</p> <p>Cross-dept Green Team.</p> <p>Improved practices and data gather.</p>

Equalities:

Please provide further information in respect to any relevant activities

Guided by Open House, our evolving Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Action Plan (2025–2028), Aberdeen Performing Arts continues to embed fair work and inclusive practice at the heart of how we lead, work and grow. This work reflects our ongoing commitment to equality, access and fair work, not just as policy, but as everyday practice.

- **Inclusive Leadership:** Delivered tailored Board development on inclusive governance; inducted four new Board members and a new Chair; completed the Leadership Team to advance people and culture priorities.
- **People Strategy:** Launched a new organisation-wide strategy centred on employee experience, leadership development and continuous feedback. A refreshed appraisal cycle and accompanying resources developed to launch in Autumn 2025.

- **Fair Work in Action:** Maintained Real Living Wage and Disability Confident accreditation; continued to reduce casual contracts; and entered a voluntary union recognition agreement with BECTU for our Technical and Operations teams.
- **Employee Voice:** Strengthened our employee-led Forum, initiated monthly union engagement meetings, and appointed an Employee Director to the Board to formalise staff representation at governance level.
- **Learning & Development:** Delivered tailored team and leadership development sessions, scoped 12-week People Manager Programme, and offered EDI and formal process training to managers. LT members also undertook external leadership qualifications, initiated project for the reintegration of our FLOW Learning Management System.
- **Access & Progression:** Established new permanent roles across departments, supported internal promotions, and piloted cross-team early careers placement.
- **Infrastructure for Growth:** Completed full HR data migration to PeopleHR (HR Information System) and initiated foundational workforce planning to support long-term sustainability.
- **Inclusive Policy Development:** Began a full review and redevelopment of people policies, embedding inclusive language and clear, transparent guidance for staff and managers.
- **Access Champions in Action:** Our Front of House Access Champions continued to play a key role in enhancing the customer experience at accessibility-focused events such as audio-described performances and touch tours. While no formal training sessions were delivered this year, we refined our approach based on valuable insights from both our service users and Access Champions, who remained instrumental in identifying barriers and supporting inclusive practices across our venues.
- **Partnerships Driving Feedback:** Our Customer Experience team work closely with NESS (North-east Sensory Services) to maintain a feedback loop with our service users. As NESS often books on behalf of its members, we've been developing ways to gather feedback that reflects the experience more meaningfully. Feedback from our quarterly meetings has directly informed changes to our operations, from headset collection points to the development of accessibility guides reinforcing our commitment to creating a more inclusive and responsive service.
- **Representation Through Programming:** In partnership with We Are Here Scotland, we delivered the Rise Up festival, celebrating the work of Black and People of Colour creatives. Our *Eat the Rich* and *Glory* cabarets continue to grow in popularity, highlighting a clear demand for events that celebrate queer creativity in safer, welcoming spaces. Beats and Rhymes, our Hip Hop workshops, focus on delivering music making opportunities to those young people who may not otherwise have chances to take part in creative activity and continues to engage successfully with this group, building skills and self-confidence.
- **Creative Changemaker in Practice:** Our unique role of Creative Changemaker for Inclusion and Relevance continues to play a vital role within the organisation, helping to further embed our ethos of *Everyone is Welcome Here*. This includes leading focus groups with staff teams to explore what this ethos means in practice and how it can be applied across our work every day. The Changemaker ensures that our commissions, productions, and curated projects actively celebrate and amplify collaborative practices that champion creative diversity and representation.
- **Removing Barriers to Participation:** Our commitment to dismantling barriers to participation remains central to our work. Through our Creative Engagement strand, we have expanded the offer of free spaces to ensure wider access. We continue to collaborate with partners to reach individuals and communities we are not yet engaging. Our Pay What You Can ticketing initiatives for produced shows support marginalised and under-represented groups in attending events they may otherwise be excluded from due to cost. *Light the Blue*, our festival for and by young people, delivers the majority of its programme free of charge—ensuring that financial barriers never stand in the way of participation.
- **Accessible Performances and Growing Demand:** There have been notable increases in our accessible performance offerings. BSL performances increased from 40 to 46, captioned performances from 20 to 28, and audio described performances from 30 to 34. Touch tours saw a rise from 29 to 34. We offered a relaxed performance, of our annual Christmas Pantomime Sales of wheelchair spaces grew from 704 to 930, and our complimentary essential companion tickets nearly doubled from 1,172 to 2,290.

- **Audience Growth for Inclusive Events:** Audiences for events and festivals with values around equality and diversity have been increasing year-on-year. Rise Up, a festival showcasing Black and People of Colour artists, increased in attendance by 78% to over 560. Our series of events at the LGBT+ community, Eat the Rich, Queer Folks' Tales and Glory resulted in sales in excess of 500 tickets.

Net Zero/Climate Change:

Please provide further information in respect to any relevant activities to support realising Aberdeen City's Net Zero Ambitions

We continue to refine our work in developing a wider Carbon Management Strategy for our venues and operation, that is reflective of the scale of challenge surrounding our leased heritage buildings and cognisant of the challenging external funding landscape and which allows us to deliver on our commitment to reduce the impact of our operations. This has resulted on the following key achievements in 2024/25:

- Commencement of a programme of works to upgrade the Building Management System at His Majesty's Theatre. This programme seeks to allow fully centralised control and monitoring of lighting, heating and ventilation within the venue and ensuring we can seek to reduce waste consumption. This significant undertaking has marked the completion of the first two phases in 2024/25 with a wider suite of works continuing into 2025/26.
- Installation of two new energy efficient boilers at the Music Hall replacing aged inefficient equipment, as part of a routine maintenance improvement plan which is aligned to sustainability priorities.
- Commencement of roof void insulation replacement at the Music Hall.
- Significant investment in the refurbishment of our Lemon Tree venue which in addition to a series of enhancements aimed at improving customer experience, we have been able to include a number of Sustainability improvements such as the replacement of stage and house lighting with an energy efficient LED solution.

We continue to leverage the unique position that the arts play within the wider climate and sustainability conversation, and advocacy for awareness, and in doing so our Creative Engagement and Programming team have supported the following:

- Taking the lead, in collaboration with partners The Barn, in coordinating climate focused workshops as part of the Culture for Climate Scotland Springboard Assembly Series. This has resulted in two facilitated workshop sessions attended by arts organisations, freelancers and creatives across the North East of Scotland, to explore opportunities for collaboration when it comes to tackling the topic of climate action. The Music Hall also hosted the regional watch party for Culture for Climate Scotland national assembly.
- We secured additional funding, through Event Scotland, to allow us to support wider use of more sustainable travel options, such as rail, for authors attending our Granite Noir 2025 festival.

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.

Light the Blue – Everyone is Welcome Here with Skene Square Primary School

Everyone is Welcome Here was a large-scale creative initiative that brought together all 500 pupils of Skene Square School in a celebration of community and creativity. Over the course of a week, every pupil collaborated closely with a professional artist, culminating in a one-day mini festival held in the school playground. This vibrant event featured music, drama, and dance performances and was attended by pupils' families and carers.

Skene Square serves a richly multicultural community, and the true magic of *Everyone is Welcome Here* lay in its ability to unite people across diverse backgrounds. The project fostered a deep sense of joy, togetherness, and commonality—proving that creativity can be a powerful force for connection, breaking down barriers of language and socio-economic disparity.

Skene Square is one of our valued neighbourhood schools, and *Everyone is Welcome Here* marked a significant step in building a meaningful, lasting partnership. By engaging the entire school community in a week-long creative process—culminating in a festival of music, drama, and dance—we’ve laid the foundation for ongoing collaboration. We are committed to strengthening this relationship over time, creating more opportunities for pupils to engage in high-quality, inclusive creative activities. Through continued partnership, we aim to support young people’s artistic expression, confidence, and sense of belonging within their school and wider community.

Granite Noir – Education partnerships

We established exciting new partnership with secondary and further education institutions for the Granite Noir crime writing festival in February 2025. These were focused on the following projects:

- **Robert Gordon University Criminology Courses** – in partnership with the School of Law and Social Sciences and in recognition of the new courses in Criminology being delivered, we collaborated to deliver two unique and distinctive events as part of Granite Noir 2025. World-renowned policing expert, Professor Nick Fyfe, delivered a talk based on decades of providing support to the police and criminal justice system. Wendy Deegan created an interactive forensics experience taking audiences through how to work and analyse a crime scene with support from students.
- **Aberdeen Grammar School Reading Schools Accreditation** – we developed a number of projects with Aberdeen Grammar School which supported their mission to achieve silver status in Reading Schools Accreditation. Pupils from S3 worked with the production team to create puzzles as part of an audio mystery experience at the Music Hall. Granite Noir staff led an assembly about career paths in literature and festivals. The school put on daily reading events (Book at Breakfast) inspired by the festival, created an in-school library escape room, English teachers shared a ‘thrilling read’ as part of S1-S3 lessons, and a display of ‘thrilling reads’ curated by the library ambassadors.
- **Primary School Author events** – three of the festival writers presented schools readings and workshops in addition to their public festival appearances. A total of 12 school presentations to more than 400 pupils took place.

Employment

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

- What roles do your volunteers undertake within the organisation?
- Training and Policy in action?
- Example of volunteer success stories such as transition to employment?

Our volunteers play a valued role across our organisation, their contributions include leading backstage tours at His Majesty’s Theatre, managing archive materials, and serving on our Board. Our backstage tour guides are a diverse group ranging from retirees to individuals who work remotely in their day job and are passionate about our historic buildings. They appreciate the opportunity to connect with others through in-person volunteering without the need for a formal or contracted role.

We’re committed to providing a meaningful and well-supported volunteer experience. This year, we welcomed two new volunteer tour guides to the team, enriching the group with fresh perspectives, while another long-standing tour guide stepped down. In response to feedback gathered through guide discussions, we updated our tour scripts and shared best practice. This ensured our volunteers are well-prepared to share accurate, up-to-date information about our venues - balancing historical storytelling with current organisational developments. These practices reflect our approach to volunteer policy in action: flexible, inclusive, and responsive to both organisational needs and individual interests.

We’ve also seen our tours resonate with a wide range of audiences. A highlight this year was welcoming back a group of international guests from the United States on a return visit to Scotland, having previously enjoyed one of our tours as part of a health and wellness trip last year. We look forward to developing ways of gathering more visitor feedback particularly capturing our international guests, through future adaptations of our post-show surveys.

We scheduled another dementia-friendly tour at The Music Hall, designed to be inclusive and comfortable for all participants. Unfortunately, the group was unable to attend due to health concerns. In response, we are exploring virtual alternatives to ensure access remains possible, even when in-person attendance is not.

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 co-producing partnerships, we facilitated two award-nominated productions to rehearse and open in the city, with technical and production support provided by our team. This developed our producing infrastructure and upskilled our team, as well as increasing the recognition of Aberdeen as a viable place from which to create as well as present work. In addition, we commissioned local theatre company Ten Feet Tall to produce a new play for Granite Noir, featuring an entirely local cast and creative team—supporting the local creative economy and demonstrating our commitment to local talent.

Our cabaret programme, which is developed for and with the LGBT+ community, expanded with the continuation of the popular Eat the Rich performances in partnership with Sanctuary Queer Arts, as well as a new cabaret called Glory in partnership with Look Again and Robert Gordon University, with three new commissions inspired by items from the university's archive. Both events are led by local producers and production/stage management staff and provide a platform and new commissions for local artists.

Across our Youth Theatre, Beats & Rhymes and Early Years music provision, we employ young or early career Creative Assistants who will gain knowledge and skills supporting our experienced directors and tutors in delivery of workshops to children and young people. All our Creative Engagement workshop provision is delivered by local creative practitioners.

Light The Blue engaged an Assistant Producer, employed to support our Festival Producer in the programming, production, logistics and delivery of the festival from March until festival end. The festival also engaged local creatives to support the delivery of the Everyone is Welcome Here project with Skene Square Primary School. The wider festival programme included collaborative projects with a range of local arts partners with many artists and creative practitioners employed to deliver performances, workshops or projects. These initiatives allow local creatives to develop their skills and gain experience, enhancing their future career prospects.

Granite Noir employs two festival interns who providing critical support to the festival programming and marketing teams, delivering key author liaison tasks, and gaining invaluable skills and experiences working alongside our experienced team. The festival supported local writers through the Locals in the Limelight strand and the new Short Story Competition. We commissioned local theatre company Ten Feet Tall Theatre who produced "Guilty" by Aberdeen writer Rona Munro in the Anatomy Rooms.

Rise Up! Festival was delivered in partnership with We Are Here Scotland and this support ensures opportunities for Black and People of Colour creatives, artists and practitioners in producing, programming and delivering the festival alongside opportunities for local BPOC artists to perform on our stages and deliver panels and workshops. The festival offered networking opportunities and a springboard for further opportunities, strengthening the cultural ecology for the BPOC community in the north-east of Scotland.

We commission artists to create new work for exhibition in our gallery space at the Music Hall. In 2024/25 we commissioned work from 2 local artists and displayed work from the local collection held by Grampian Hospital Arts Trust. Additionally, our digital exhibition space, the stepping in screen in the Music Hall foyer offers opportunities for North-East based artists to exhibit their work.

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.

Audiences	Target (23/24)	Total (24/25)
Total Visitor Number	1,360,000	1,415,000
Total Audience Number	363,709	416,379
Audience number from Aberdeen City	160,932	179,138
Audience number from the wider region or further	198,441	237,241
% of audience survey rating experience as 'excellent' or 'good'	94%	95%

Audience broken down to Age groups	Target (23/24)	Total (24/25)
Aged 0-5	-	-
Aged 6-15	-	-
Aged 16-24	1%	1%

Aged 25-44	14%	11%
Aged 45-64	51%	52%
Aged 65-74	26%	29%
Aged 75+	8%	8%
Unknown/ Not Age Specific	-	-

Participants	Target (23/24)	Total (24/25)
Total number of participatory opportunities created throughout programme	9,393	13,913
Number of participatory opportunities by Age group		
Aged 0-5	1,800	1,860
Aged 6-15	3,308	4,950
Aged 16-24	1,000	4,571
Aged 25-44	-	-
Aged 45-64	150	-
Aged 65-74	150	-
Aged 75+	150	-
Unknown/ Not Age Specific	2,835	2,532
Number of participatory opportunities for target groups		
Age	6,250	12,072
Disability	308	820
Gender Reassignment	27	24
Pregnancy and Maternity	-	-
Race	260	387
Religion or Belief	-	-
Sex	-	-
Sexual Orientation	27	24
Low income / income poverty – those who cannot afford regular bills, food, clothing payments.	1,500	3,040
Material deprivation – those who cannot access basic goods and services, unable to repair/replace broken electrical goods, heat their homes or access to leisure or hobbies	1,500	3,040
Area deprivation – consider where people live and where they work (accessibility and cost of transport)	1,500	3,040
Socio-economic background – social class, parents' education, employment, income.	1,500	3,040

Income 2024/25	Total £
Value of Grant(s) from Aberdeen City Council (*1)	£1,141,433
External Grant funding	£375,643
Sponsorship	-
Trading income	£2,344,634
Other (please specify)	
Earned Income (Ticket Sales, Rental Income & Recharges)	£10,393,558
Theatre Tax Relief & Gift Aid	£40,649
Donations	£64,500
Total add income	£14,360,417
(*1) Includes £124,433 awarded through UK Shared Prosperity Fund for Capital Works to His Majesty's Theatre	

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:	Ovation Club Video
Support Material 2:	Season brochure
Support Material 3:	Granite Noir brochure
Support Material 4:	Everyone is Welcome Here
Support Material 5:	APA People Strategy Overview.pptx

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: Sharon Burgess

Date: 15th July 2025