



ABERDEEN EVENTS 365 PLAN

JANUARY 2023 - 2026

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1. DEVELOPING THE PLAN

The Aberdeen 365 Events Strategy was first implemented in 2017 and set out a number of ways to enhance and grow the city's events and festivals calendar to support local events, grow others to national status and introduce 'bought-in' events of national and international significance. Its key outcome was a framework that would see a significant event or festival take place in the city every month with a Team Aberdeen approach linking the city's cultural venues and creators.

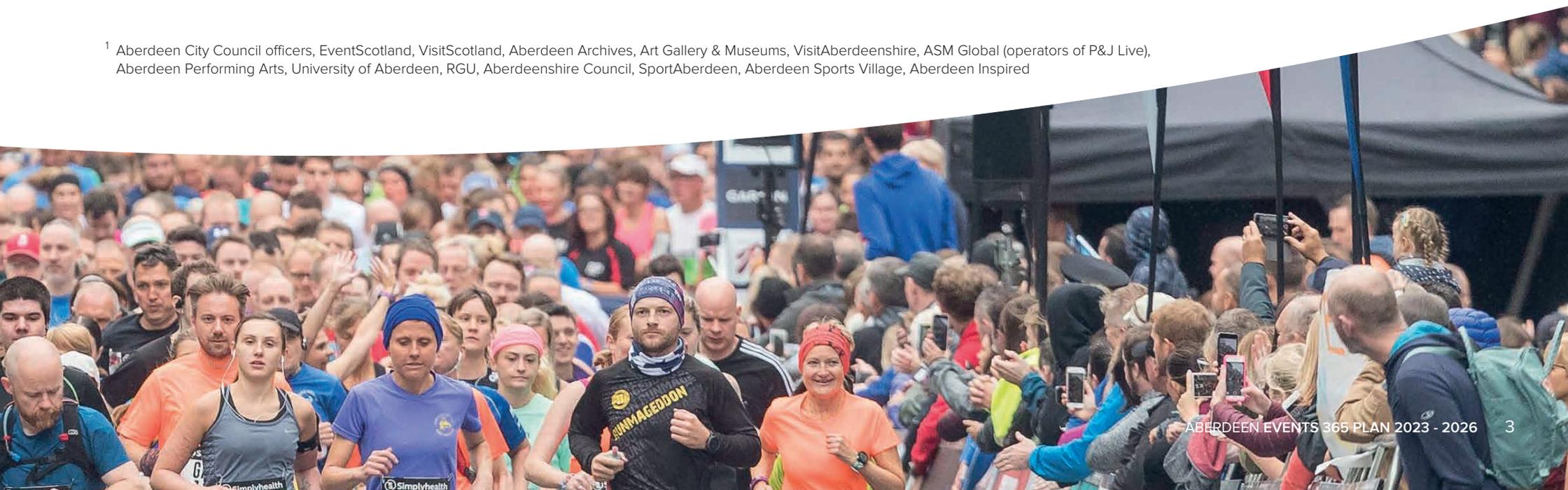
That Strategy technically concluded in 2022, but since it was first implemented the sector has had to respond to the challenges of the global pandemic and resulting changes to the events industry, as well as rising operational costs, climate emergency targets and audience expectations.

This new Plan, for 2023/24 to 2025/26 will build on the events delivered under the 2017 Strategy and methodology and aims to provide a clear vision and direction for events and festivals in Aberdeen, responding to changing conditions in the wider cultural, sporting and conferencing sector and its funding and sales models.

Events and festivals provide a wide range of benefits at the city, regional and national levels. This Plan will embed key cultural, sporting and conferencing occasions and introduce new events to grow the programme and associated cultural, social and economic benefits. It has been developed in consultation with EventScotland, VisitScotland and the participating organisations in the Aberdeen Event 365 Group¹. Officers also consulted with the Council's CCMP and Beach Masterplan teams, Culture Aberdeen, and a number of major events rights holders and successful bidding cities at the Host Cities Conference 2022.

The overall national context is provided by The Culture Strategy for Scotland (February 2020) and Scotland: The Perfect Stage (the national Events Strategy 2015-2025). The latter is currently subject to post-pandemic revision, but consultation with EventScotland has given broad indications of future direction. This Plan aligns with the overall aims of the emerging Regional Economic Strategy, the regional Tourism Destination Strategy, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, City Centre and Beach Masterplan and Culture Aberdeen's Cultural Strategy.

¹ Aberdeen City Council officers, EventScotland, VisitScotland, Aberdeen Archives, Art Gallery & Museums, VisitAberdeenshire, ASM Global (operators of P&J Live), Aberdeen Performing Arts, University of Aberdeen, RGU, Aberdeenshire Council, SportAberdeen, Aberdeen Sports Village, Aberdeen Inspired



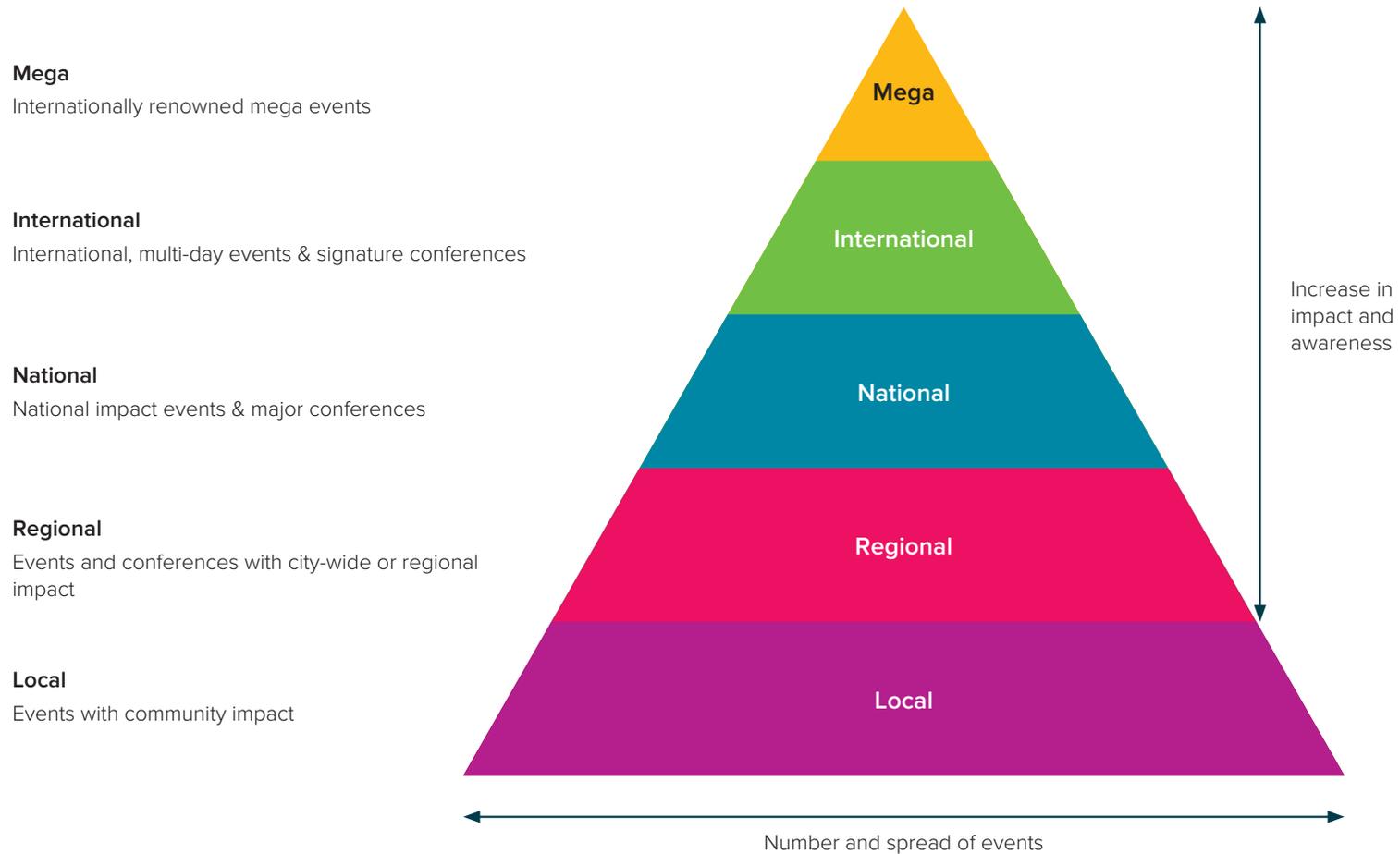


2. PREVIOUS STRATEGY 2017

The previous Strategy implementation included some key elements, ensuring the spread of events across the calendar year, ensuring a mix of local, regional and national events, and providing the impetus to drive key events such as the Tour of Britain. The founding of the Event 365 Group ensured that stakeholders were able to come together quarterly, although the possibilities for the group were never fully realised as the pandemic interrupted its long-term planning.

The 2017 Strategy introduced a model with four event levels. For this Plan the model has been adapted with two changes. Firstly, the Plan will use the naming conventions local, regional, national, international to describe levels of the city's event portfolio. Secondly, a new category of 'mega' events has been added, this would apply to globally renowned events such as the Eurovision Song Contest.

The new names provide an easy shorthand, can apply equally to culture, sport, exhibition and conferencing events and will allow Team Aberdeen to research, bid and win new events, as well as originating, growing and developing the existing event portfolio. There will be some flexibility around criteria but broadly measures of audience numbers, media reach and economic and social impact will be used to determine the category for each event. This model continues to be used by EventScotland.



The 2017 Strategy was severely impacted by the global pandemic and effectively lost over two years of delivery from March 2020. This curtailed the momentum of events in 2019 at P&J Live – Offshore Europe and BBC Sports Personality of the Year, and the sector went into lockdown as events were cancelled, postponed and became virtual events where appropriate.

The end of pandemic related restrictions in 2022 saw a successful return of the events programme for the city, summarised in Table 1 (see Appendix 1 to the Plan). The list is by no means exhaustive and for logistics reasons does not

include a large number of small events run by local community groups on an annual and one-off basis. However the larger and more recognisable festivals, events, conferences and key exhibitions are outlined.

2022 PORTFOLIO – WHERE WE’VE BEEN

See Appendix 1 to the Event 365 Plan.

CASE STUDIES OF RECENT SUCCESS

Spectra

Aberdeen's festival of light has enjoyed a growing reputation as a star in the city's event calendar with rebranding to 'Scotland's Festival of Light' showing clear aspiration for the future. The independent 2022 Research Evaluation Report conducted by the Research Chamber, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce notes:

- Spectra grew to cover 6 sites over 4-days.
- There were 17,000 unique visitors, with 116,000 site attendances in total.
- £250,000 of additional spend was generated by visitors.
- 70% of visitors rated their experience of Spectra as good or excellent.
- 93% said that they would like it to return in 2023.
- 79% said that it had a positive impact on their perception of Aberdeen.
- 74% said that it increased pride in their city.
- 100% of businesses responding to the survey said that Spectra helped to boost the city.





Tour of Britain

Aberdeen hosted the Tour of Britain twice, with the finishing stage in 2021 and the Grand Départ in 2022 when the GetAbout cycling festival added to the main event by bringing a range of cycling and family activities to the city centre the day before the main race. The independent 2022 survey by Frontline Consultants noted:

- 15,000 unique visitors attended the race in Aberdeen.
- £456,000 of additional spend was generated by visitors.
- 28% of visitors stayed overnight in the city.
- 51% came with their families.
- 85% would visit Aberdeen again.
- 89% described their experience as 'very enjoyable'.
- 86% of visitors asked specifically about the GetAbout Cycling Festival said that they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'.

True North Music Festival

True North is a homegrown success story from Aberdeen Performing Arts with music from soulful grassroots artists to internationally renowned musicians taking place over four days. 2022 venues included the Music Hall and its Coda Café Bar, Lemon Tree, Wonder Hoose, Siberia and Waterstones.

- 2022 was the festival's biggest year ever.
- 80 acts and artists took part in over 29 performances.
- 4000 tickets were sold.
- Satisfaction rating was 4.6 out of 5.
- 99% of attendees said that they would return.

Aberdeen Performing Arts, overall impact, including festivals in the last full trading year (2019/20) was £21m in visitor spend and £12m Gross Value Added in the wider city economy. 52 jobs are supported across performance spaces, festivals and events.

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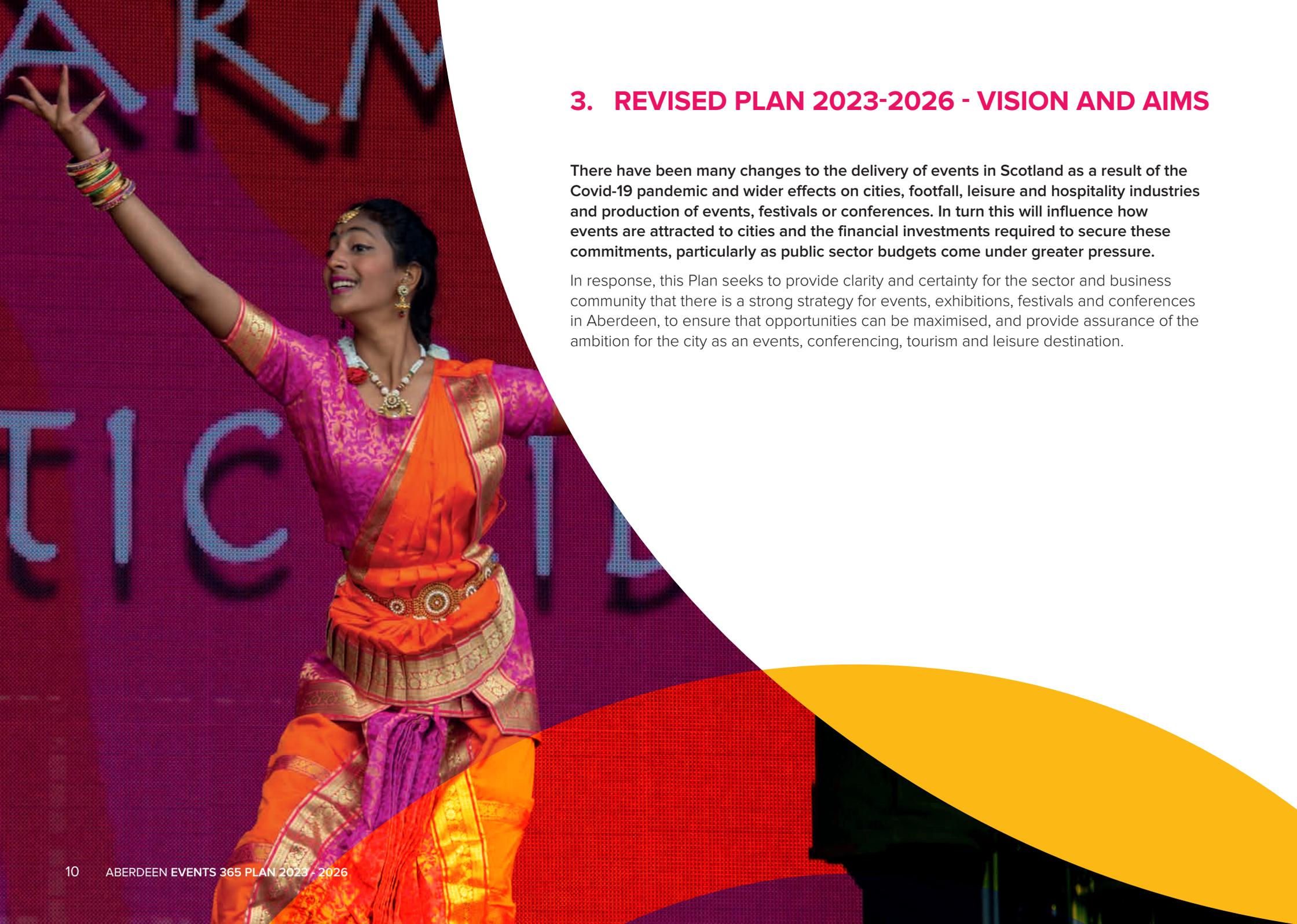




Aberdeen Winter Village

Aberdeen's Winter Village takes place from mid-November until Christmas Eve with bars, food pop-ups, an ice rink, rides and attractions on Broad Street and Upper Kirkgate. The Market takes place in Marischal College quadrangle and features a range of local and regional producers of food, drink and gifts – this stands in contrast to other Scottish cities who tend to have non-regional approach to producers attending. This is organised in partnership with Aberdeen Inspired and Charlie House, with planning and operations by John Codona's Pleasure Fairs Ltd and Aberdeen City Council. An outline from the 2021 evaluation is below, the 2022 evaluation will be presented in early Spring of this year.

- 99% of visitors wanted the event to continue in future.
- 77% of visitors were completely or highly like to recommend the event to others.
- 53% of visitors came to the city centre specifically for the event, with a further 32% adding that it was a part of the reason alongside shopping and eating out.
- 90% of vendors at the market agreed that it was good for their business.
- The average city centre spend per visitor surveyed was £42, with £20 spent at the event itself.



3. REVISED PLAN 2023-2026 - VISION AND AIMS

There have been many changes to the delivery of events in Scotland as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and wider effects on cities, footfall, leisure and hospitality industries and production of events, festivals or conferences. In turn this will influence how events are attracted to cities and the financial investments required to secure these commitments, particularly as public sector budgets come under greater pressure.

In response, this Plan seeks to provide clarity and certainty for the sector and business community that there is a strong strategy for events, exhibitions, festivals and conferences in Aberdeen, to ensure that opportunities can be maximised, and provide assurance of the ambition for the city as an events, conferencing, tourism and leisure destination.

VISION FOR ABERDEEN

Vision

By 2026, Aberdeen will have an even greater reputation as a location for an innovative programme of national and international events, festivals and conferences.

Mission

To achieve the vision, the mission is to enhance the Team Aberdeen approach to delivering a competitive programme of events and festivals that attracts new audiences to the city and North East, by creating a strong and impactful programme that is engaging, sustainable and accessible to all.

Objectives

The objectives of the Plan are therefore to:

- Positively impact the city's economy, businesses and venues by making the city a stage – helping develop the city's cultural, creative and knowledge sectors
- Inspire everyone's creativity and nurture a child friendly city
- Bring people together, connecting Aberdeen to the world
- Help shape the city's creative and sporting future
- Promote skills and volunteering opportunities
- Increase wellbeing and active lifestyles
- Encourage sustainable travel and minimise event carbon emissions and waste
- Measure and report impacts and outcomes

In the medium term these objectives will strongly support the post-pandemic financial recovery of the events, culture, hospitality and tourism sectors in the city and wider region. As important drivers for the city economy and its cultural landscape it is important that these objectives aid other initiatives in the sectors. The Plan will outline a set of local and regional events that are the foundations of Aberdeen's events and festivals calendar.

The Plan reflects the potential for high impact and one-off events, including those of national and international significance. These opportunities may not be known at the time of writing, but if they do arise, they will complement the creative core and highlight Aberdeen's unique appeal as an event destination.

In this sense, the Events Plan also contributes to the 'place-based' objectives for the city and aims to provide a framework for Aberdeen to be a place where successful, high quality events, delivering strong environmental, social and economic outcomes, take place across the city with a clear ongoing commitment from all stakeholders. This will ensure that all communities experience events that excite and entertain, inspire, educate and provide long-lasting opportunity and benefits for all. If successful, the Plan will build on the credentials and expertise from the 2017 Strategy and Aberdeen will be recognised as a centre of events excellence by event owners and producers, event participants and fans, stakeholders, government, businesses, the media and the general public.

Culture Aberdeen's *Cultural Strategy for the City of Aberdeen 2018-2025* has strongly informed the vision and objectives of the Events Plan. The Cultural Strategy's five key ambitions for Aberdeen: to release our creativity, become Scotland's creative lab, make the city a stage, connect us to the world, and shape the city's future, are all embedded in both the approach, the programme itself, and the future aspirations outlined.

Collaboration across sectors and organisations will be key to success, and championing the city's cultural, sporting and conferencing ecology, including its people, organisations, programmers, and venues. A Team Aberdeen approach through the Event 365 Group has supported the implementation of the 2017 Strategy, particularly in the context of the financial challenges facing the sector and local government. The collaboration between stakeholders and partners to develop cross-programming remains of utmost importance, and it is only by combining knowledge and expertise that the city will successfully win, host and stage exhibitions, events, festivals and conferences.

4. ABERDEEN'S DISTINCTIVENESS AS A LOCATION FOR EVENTS

Aberdeen is a centre of opportunity, ambition and innovation. It is recognised globally for its contribution to trade, industry and international relations. As an outward looking and welcoming city, Aberdeen rightly aspires to be a destination for exhibitions, events, festivals and conferences which enhance its reputation around the world, inspire local people and instil civic pride. The people of Aberdeen are enthusiastic volunteers and events provide great opportunities for them to become ambassadors for the city.

Aberdonians are rightly the main beneficiaries of a year-round programme of events, enjoying inspirational experiences, gaining skills and jobs, increasing their wellbeing, rediscovering parts of their city, and bringing their diverse perspectives to events. Local businesses are also a huge asset and their teams are crucial to extending Aberdeen's reputation as an events destination.

CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Aberdeen's culture and heritage is a valuable resource that will inform the development of new and existing events. The rich history of the region, its maritime past, world renowned food and drink, and place in Scotland's wider cultural history will be key to the success of events. Aberdeen has a rich tradition as a leader in education and innovation, nationally significant archive and museum holdings, the Doric language, inspiring outdoor spaces, and globally unique granite architecture. Aberdeen's story continues to unfold in novel and exciting ways, the city has an impressive cultural ecology of creative practitioners, knowledgeable professionals and diverse organisations dedicated to the arts, sport and entertainment.

To echo the city's Culture Strategy, Aberdeen's creative community is a huge asset and presents opportunities to harness the city's unique culture, untap its potential as an events and tourism destination, and with the right resources, develop existing events to create a distinctive home-grown programme with international appeal.

Venues and Event Spaces

Without doubt Aberdeen has the most significant set of venues in the UK for a city of its size – from the arena and conferencing facilities of P&J Live to a vibrant community of small venues, pubs and cafes offering local music and comedy. Much loved venues include the state-of-the-art Sports Village, the Edwardian splendour of His Majesty's Theatre and the Aberdeen Arts Centre – a key focus for creative community groups. Recent projects to regenerate Aberdeen Art Gallery, Provost Skene's House the Music Hall and Union Terrace Gardens as well as future plans for the Beach Ballroom, City Market and the Lemon Tree all show the city's commitment to creating an exciting destination. Future uses for those areas could:

- Hosting new events
- Hosting existing events, or being used as additional spaces, this may allow
 - o Additional audience capacity
 - o More suitable venues for those with particular needs e.g. the elderly, people with disabilities, or young families
- Providing crossover promotion opportunities e.g. outdoor use of Union Terrace Gardens, with indoor use of the event spaces inside Aberdeen Art Gallery
- Breakout space from busy areas
- Additional support services areas

Moreover, the revitalised natural amphitheatre of Union Terrace Gardens, the proposed pocket parks in the city centre and the Beach Masterplan provide green spaces to be activated for festivals and events. Conferencing venues, restaurants, cafes, bars and hotels complete the event destination picture of the city and these stakeholders and their staff provide a core experience for all event attendees, as well as being active promoters and supporters of events.



SPORT AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

As the capital of the North East, Aberdeen is the ideal base to explore the wider region with its glens and mountains, cliffs, gorges and forests. While within the city we have sweeping bays, sandy beaches, two famous rivers, a busy port, and a magnificent range of green spaces. These are ideal for many sports including cycling, running, surfing, highland games and a variety of adventure activities. They also provide excellent scope for activation through cultural events and festivals as well as hire to external producers. The weather is also a central factor for Aberdeen, our long dark nights, big skies and changing conditions are important for the perception, timing and delivery of activities in the city. Events must seek to maintain these natural environments in and of themselves, but also as valuable assets for repeat events and visitor destination appeal.

Aberdeen has a wealth of people and companies that have their origin in individual creativity, imagination, and curiosity.

The Scottish Government's statement for the creative industries notes that it includes visual and performing arts, cultural education, crafts, textiles, fashion, photography, music, writing and publishing, advertising, libraries, museums, archives, antiques, architecture, design, film and video, TV and radio, software and electronic publishing, and computer games. To which sport and conferencing can add, individual and team sports, training and education support, medical and wellbeing services, event planning, catering, technical production, and IT.

Festivals and events support and invigorate these sectors, but also impact a massive number of businesses and professionals who provide services to the creative, sporting and conferencing industries. The hotel and restaurant sectors, transport, security and catering providers, trades people, and marketing and PR businesses benefit as much as those creative and sporting individuals working directly in the sector. This offers huge potential to grow the economic benefits of festivals, events and conferencing for Aberdeen.

THE COUNCIL

As Team Aberdeen grow existing festivals and stage new events the planning considerations to make the city events-ready will become easier. As each space is activated the site maps, public accessibility issues, traffic management plans, security and crowd control aspects, as well as logistical considerations such as vendor and emergency access, power and waste removal will become clearer and can be revisited for future events in the same space. Officers in the Council will continue to support the delivery of Council events and input to other events where required.

Likewise regular and repeat contact with partners across the city and region, such as VisitAberdeenshire, Police Scotland, ScotRail, First Bus, local businesses and hotels makes subsequent event planning processes more straightforward, with key contacts and established workflows in place.

COMMUNICATING THE PLAN

Engaging audiences, stakeholders and those who control host city decisions for large-scale events and conferences is an important element of delivering the events programme and building the reputation of the city as a competitive location for events. It is also important to communicate how each event meets the objectives of the Plan and the outcomes being sought. The Plan will communicate the wider benefits of staging and hosting events, alongside the new and emerging goals of events to be sustainable and bring environmental benefits.





5. THE PLAN

OUTLINE

The Plan below sets out the principles that will be applied when growing, creating or bidding for events for Aberdeen. It also shows an outline calendar of events for the next few years and includes an aspirational list of events for the city. The principles and the aspirational event list have been created following consultation with organisations in the Event 365 Group, and from meetings with festival producers, national stakeholders, events rights holders and local category experts.

AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

Festivals and events in Aberdeen must reflect the distinct features of the city and region and deliver high levels of satisfaction to attendees. This will help with future engagement, audience development and participation in events whether they be cultural, sporting or conferencing – or indeed, as is increasingly the case, a combination of the three. Authentic events will be those that speak to the areas outlined above, our people, culture, heritage and environment, and that take place in built and activated venues that reflect those considerations. They will encompass the warmth of our welcome, our food and drink, venue hospitality and visitor experience.

These experiences can be made unique by putting artists, makers, sports people and producers based in Aberdeen and the North East at the heart of the programming and delivery of events. They can be localised by forming creative, historic or intellectual links between global creators, practitioners, producers and thinkers elsewhere. Aberdeen often stands out when in contrast to, or in harmony with, cultures beyond our borders and shores. The voice of the city's people should always be heard whether in the arts, sporting or business sectors. By creating authentic experiences events will multiply their benefits to the city, supporting the creative economy and encouraging audiences to engage more deeply with the city and region, stay in Aberdeen longer and spend more money in the local economy.

GUEST APPEAL

Events and festivals should have a clear sense of their cultural and market appeal to residents and visitors, all of whom are event guests, be they audiences, delegates or ticket holders. Events should be able to test guest preferences in order to grow, change or drop elements of the offer. While events must welcome and engage any guest regardless of their background. The city should also ensure that the event offer has something for the many diverse communities which call Aberdeen home. Children and young families will be key guests and events should offer a core component for these groups, particularly where those events can also support access to green spaces and contribute to health and wellbeing. Certain events should also connect with those who have roots in, or connections to, the city. The diaspora communities represent a ready audience to return to the city. In combination these groups can boost tourism and business, even from within the city, as well as engaging with the other crucial elements of events such as volunteering, upskilling and employment.

FUTURE PORTFOLIO – WHERE WE WANT TO BE

The future portfolio should aim to build on the reputation and successes of the events outlined above. These fall into the following categories:

- **Continuing** – events expected to remain relatively unchanged under this Plan
- **Growing** – aim to upscale existing events to reach larger or wider audiences
- **New** – events new to the city that will take place in the life of this Plan
- **Potential** – events that are in the discussion stages, prospective event partnerships, or are open to an approach to bid
- **Aspirational** – longer term event targets as the event portfolio grows

Continuing – events expected to remain relatively unchanged under this Plan

These would include most of the core event offer from Aberdeen City Council.

Other organisations and venues in the city will doubtless continue to grow audiences and develop innovative programmes. However, their recurring events are subject to changes to their team resources, funding and aspirations. These high-quality events partly form the bedrock of the city’s cultural calendar and are key to supporting the ambitions of this Plan. To that end they will be encouraged to continue to increase their sustainability, supported through evaluation processes and inform any emerging volunteer programmes. For the purposes of this report, and without evidence to the contrary, the assumption is that the following events and festivals will continue to be largely the same in terms of calendar month, duration, scale, media coverage and audience reach.

Table 2 – Current core annual events

Month	Event	Portfolio Level
January	Hogmanay	Local
February	Granite Noir	National
March	Jazz Festival	National
	TechFest	Regional
	Comic Con North East	Regional
May	Grampian Pride	Regional
June	Highland Games	Local
	NuArt	Regional
	Armed Forces Day Parade	Local
August	Bon Accord Bounce	Local
September	True North	Regional
October	Dance Live	Regional
November	Tea Green Makers Fair	Local
	Aberdeen City Fireworks	Local
	Sound Festival	Regional
	WayWORD Festival	Regional
	Christmas Events Programme	Local

Some events above have previously been in receipt of National Events Programme funding. Where this is the case the aspiration is for them to return to pre-pandemic levels of the portfolio. Without confirmed financial resource though this remains in question.



Growing – aim to upscale existing events to reach larger or wider audiences

Subject to budget, the following events have clear scope to attract greater audience numbers, national awareness or increase their scale of ambition and economic and social impacts. They also present opportunities to appeal to younger and more diverse communities, both through their creative output as well as the learning programmes, creative commissioning and wider community engagement which are often less visible.

Table 3 – Events with scope to grow

Month	Event	Portfolio Level Change	Overview
February	Spectra	Regional to	Attracting the city’s largest audiences and activating the city centre in an otherwise quiet season Spectra already has considerable impact. Increasing either the number, duration or scale of some or all attractions, as well as marketing beyond the region could propel Spectra to being truly Scotland’s Festival of Light. While other cities have light events there is currently no nationally recognised leader of these attractions. In addition to the current works there is scope to light parks, buildings and include more audience participation and interaction and expand commissioning and education work. As Aberdeen is popularly associated with the Northern Lights this is the perfect opportunity to capitalise on the city’s existing reputation.
		National	
August	Aberdeen Mela – One World Day	Local to	This event has been growing in popularity and now attracts local and international acts. As Aberdeen’s community diversity increases there could be even greater interest in the event. With additional expertise around logistics there may be scope to expand capacity, on-site events and the family element of the offer to make this a more regional event.
		Regional	
Year Round	Aberdeen Art Gallery Major Exhibitions Programme	Regional to	The award-winning Art Gallery building is a jewel in the city’s crown. The redisplayed collection and the exhibition programme have proven very popular, visitor numbers are excellent compared to sector peers, and revenue generation capacity is being improved at pace. Specific future plans and possibilities are outlined below, but further investment in high-quality, largely free-to-enter, 3-month exhibitions of national and international note would provide year-round city centre footfall and a reputational boost for culture in the city that shorter-term events often struggle to provide. As an illustrative comparison, 203,000 people attended Glastonbury in 2019, while 5.7 million visited Tate Modern.
		National and	
		International	

New – events new to the city that will take place in the life of this Plan

There are changes to the full programme of city events each year and the next three years will be no exception. The current known additions are set out below.

Table 4 – Known contracted events in Aberdeen in 2023

Month	Event	Event Owner	Description	Venue	Portfolio Level
January	Arenacross	Bolesworth Events	High-octane professional Motocross Racing Event with international riders. Attracting both fans and family audiences alike.	P&J Live	National
February	Subsea Expo 2023	Global Underwater Hub	World's largest annual subsea exhibition and conference event. Around 150 companies presenting to 6,500 visitors over three days.	P&J Live	International
March	Delve	Inge Thomson with Aberdeen Performing Arts	First in a series of guest-curated weekends of music, spoken word, workshops and discussion.	Lemon Tree MH Big Sky Studio	Regional
April	Scottish National Age Group Swimming Championships	Scottish Swimming	Large competitive five day swimming event with 1200 participants in addition to support teams and audiences.	Aberdeen Sports Village	National
April	University of Aberdeen Long Course Championships	University of Aberdeen	Competitive swimming event with 600 participants including international athletes.	Aberdeen Sports Village	National
April May June	Where Ideas Are Born	Magnum Photos in partnership with Aberdeen Art Gallery	A Magnum Photos touring exhibition exploring high quality journalistic / documentary photographers capturing artists at work in their studios, including Frida Kahlo, Francis Bacon and Henry Moore. Estimated attendance is 50,000.	Aberdeen Art Gallery	Regional

Month	Event	Event Owner	Description	Venue	Portfolio Level
May	Digit North Summit	Digit North	10th Annual summit of the largest tech event in the North East of Scotland with presentations from major regional companies.	P&J Live	Regional
June	European Pipe Band Championships 2023	Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association with Aberdeen City Council Events Team	Major international piping and highland dance competition event. Estimated attendance is around 20,000.	Duthie Park	International
July	Tall Ships Races 2023 – Cruise in Company	Tall Ships Races 2023 Lerwick in partnership with Port of Aberdeen and Aberdeen City Council	Cruise in Company ports provide Tall Ships in the 2023 race with a port of call on their route to and from Lerwick. Port of Aberdeen will host either one or two ships for one or two nights in July. The aim is for the event to be cost neutral by winning support from private business. The aspiration is to place two trainees onto the ships which will provide a marketing and recruitment platform for Tall Ships Races 2025.	Port of Aberdeen, Victoria Quay	National
July	Scottish Swimming Summer Meet	Scottish Swimming	National event attracting 800 participants, support teams and spectators.	Aberdeen Sports Village	National
July August September	Quentin Blake: Illustrating Verse / Book Covers	House of Illustration in partnership with Aberdeen Art Gallery	Two touring exhibitions from the House of Illustration combined to add value, exploring the wonderful world of Quentin Blake. A summer family friendly offer tying in with city-wide partners to celebrate drawing and literacy. Estimated attendance is 70,000.	Aberdeen Art Gallery	National

Month	Event	Event Owner	Description	Venue	Portfolio Level
September	Offshore Europe – 50th Anniversary	Reed Exhibitions Ltd	<p>Not 'new' but returning in-person this year, OE is the energy industry's most important European conference and exhibition event.</p> <p>Taking place over 4 days and with the world's most important energy services companies attending the estimated attendance is around 35,000.</p>	P&J Live with satellite civic and private events including Aberdeen Art Gallery	International
October to January (2024)	Constructed Narratives: Lennox Dunbar, Ian Howard, Arthur Watson	Aberdeen Art Gallery	<p>A major retrospective exhibition focussing on the work of three important living artists in the north east, who have not only created their own work over more that 150 years combined, but taught and inspired generations of artists through Gray's School of Art, Edinburgh School of Art and Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design.</p> <p>Estimated attendance is 40,000.</p>	Aberdeen Art Gallery	National



Table 5 – Known contracted events in Aberdeen in 2024

Please note the inclusion of the new Maritime Festival in July

Month	Event	Event Owner	Description	Venue	Portfolio Level
February	Para-Swimming Winter Nationals and Great Britain Para-Swimming World Series	GB Swimming	Major GB national Para-Swimming events with 800 participants expected.	Aberdeen Sports Village	National
February March	Scottish Amateur Swimming North Division Championships	Scottish Swimming	Large regional swimming event with 1400 total participants plus support and spectators.	Aberdeen Sports Village	Regional
March April May June	Artists Rooms	Tate Modern in partnership with Aberdeen Art Gallery	Curation of an Aberdeen specific exhibition from TATE Modern's extensive collection of artworks by Louise Bourgeois. Estimated attendance 60,000.	Aberdeen Art Gallery	National
April	Scottish National Masters Championships	Scottish Athletics	Major national athletics event with around 6,000 participants plus support teams and spectators.	Aberdeen Sports Village	National
July	Scottish Open Swimming Championships	Scottish Swimming	Large national event with 600 participants plus support and spectators.	Aberdeen Sports Village	National



July	Aberdeen Maritime Festival (name tbc)	Aberdeen City Council	Multi-day celebration of Aberdeen's current and historic connections with the sea. Featuring a host of vibrant cultural, music and street theatre events. The programme will be developed over the coming months and is likely to be in partnership with organisations across the city including creative venues, the science centre, and universities. With performers from across the region and beyond alongside food, drink and other attractions. This will also be a proving ground and build anticipation for the Tall Ships Races 2025 programme.	Maritime Museum with other Merchant Quarter and city centre locations to be confirmed.	Regional
July August September	Wildlife Photographer of the Year	Natural History Museum, London in partnership with Aberdeen Art Gallery	Touring exhibition of the latest edition of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Award. Estimated attendance of 80,000.	Aberdeen Art Gallery	Regional
October November December January (2025)	Artists' Textiles	Textile Museum, London in partnership with Aberdeen Art Gallery	Touring exhibition featuring fabric and clothing designed by artists from Picasso to Warhol.	Aberdeen Art Gallery	Regional

In addition, to these 2023 and 2024 contracted events, discussions are ongoing in relation to 4-5 other events that have expressed an interest in being delivered in Aberdeen in 2023 and 2024. This Schedule is provided in Appendix 2 to this Plan.

2025

Programmes are still being determined for all organisations in the city. Ordinarily programming takes place up to 4 years in advance for many organisations, but post-pandemic and economic uncertainty has delayed this usual run-in time.

Tall Ships Races, July 2025

Returning to Aberdeen for the first time in over 25 years this major international tall ships racing event aims to attract 400,000 visitors over four days. The ships are the main attraction while arriving, berthed and departing from Port of Aberdeen but will be accompanied by a large cultural programme including a parade on Union Street, Maritime Festival celebrations, a mini-Highland Games in Union Terrace Gardens, exhibitions at the Maritime Museum and Aberdeen Art Gallery and activation of other city venues and spaces.

The event will be delivered by Aberdeen City Council, Port of Aberdeen and Aberdeen Inspired, but many organisations, sport clubs, businesses and venues across the city are anticipated to get involved.





6. DELIVERING THE PLAN

To build on the previous Aberdeen 365 Events Strategy local and national stakeholders will need to demonstrate their support, alongside those Aberdeen City Council teams tasked with commissioning, programming, bidding and delivery. The Team Aberdeen approach has operated through the Event 365 Group which has included a range of cultural, sporting and conferencing venues and organisations coming together quarterly to discuss projects, with conversation between interested parties happening alongside as needed. The group aimed to:

- provide advice, support and challenge in the strategic development of events in the city;
- contribute to the development and monitoring of the strategy – including taking a lead role in themed years and bidding for bought-in events;
- make decisions on funding applications to events according to clear and transparent criteria based on the recommendations made by events promoters;
- advise on the overall balance, content and quality of the annual event programme;
- contribute to the evaluation of each festival and review evaluation material from artists, delivery partners, participants and audiences;
- advocate widely on behalf of Aberdeen’s events programme; and
- advise and contribute to the development of fundraising, income generation and business development strategies to increase resilience.

During the consultation for this Plan, there have been two workshops with the Event 365 Group. From these, five guiding principles for the next phase of the Event 365 Group have emerged:

1. EVENTS PORTFOLIO

We need to build on the existing programme, originating, growing and sustaining an attractive, sustainable portfolio of cultural, sporting and business events, festivals and exhibitions. Ideas should be tested against the aims and evaluation criteria of this Plan.

2. EVENTS PEOPLE

We need to bring Aberdeen's events hosts, planners and promoters together to create a thriving and unified Team Aberdeen.

3. EVENTS IMPACT

We need to make certain that the positive outcomes of events are built into the event delivery, and ensure that those outcomes are maximised, reported and recognised.

4. EVENTS FLEXIBILITY

We need to make certain that we can move swiftly to take advantage of new event opportunities, sources of funding, commercial opportunities, new technology and audience demands. Members of the Group will be willing to share their knowledge, experiences, connections and programme ideas with the group knowing that matters discussed will be treated in confidence.

5. EVENTS FUNDING

We need to recognise the pressure on government and wider public sector funding and secure multi-year finance agreements from public and private funders to originate and develop events, create timely bids to host major events, and provide best value when securing outside producers and contractors.

These areas will not only benefit Team Aberdeen, but will also give confidence to stakeholders, funding bodies and corporate supporters that the approach is fit for purpose, effective and successful. This is particularly true where events break the city boundaries and Aberdeenshire Council is a key bid partner and co-beneficiary. This will build trust that Team Aberdeen can deliver high-quality events from small community activities to high-profile, multi-day international events i.e. from bronze to diamond levels within the portfolio. Active attendance of Team Aberdeen members at relevant meetings and seminars with rights holders and governing bodies will help to boost the city's profile and aid discovery of opportunities. Over time these measures will enable Aberdeen to bid for and secure ever-larger events and festivals, as well as originating events of notable scale within the city.



Event 365 Group

A refreshed remit for the group is proposed reflecting the lessons learned from the 2017 Strategy, and in particular the challenging environment for the delivery of events, conferences, exhibitions and festivals as the sector emerges from the effects of the pandemic and the current inflationary pressures. For the development of this Plan, it is proposed that the Event 365 Group is more focused on coordination of delivery across organisations and partners, while maintaining its overall strategic view of any planned or reactive bids for events and resourcing, and links to the regional economic and tourism strategies and city centre recovery. For the Council, it is proposed that a progress report is brought to a relevant Committee on implementation. The remit of the Group moving forward is to:

- Oversee and co-ordinate strategic management, planning and funding of the city's events;
- Make certain that a clear cost/benefit analysis can be made using evaluation methodology outlined in Section 7 (below);
- Agree/ adopt mechanisms for assessing and approving proposed events, including impact on the city, exploration of funding awards, financial implications and report recommendations to appropriate governance of participating organisations;
- Ensure that demand for Council resources is planned so that events are well planned and delivered – operations, safety, transport etc;
- Provide accurate information on relevant websites – Culture Aberdeen, VisitAberdeenshire and other organisations recognising that this is also an Events Plan for the wider region;
- Share information with communications teams across partner organisations for the promotion of events; and
- Forward Plan - scheduling complementary events to create more impact, or rescheduling to spread impact or prevent audience clash.

Meeting Structure

- **Annual Plan Update**
 - Each organisation can outline their forward plan as far as they wish
 - Focus on year ahead within that outline
 - Q&A to follow each presentation to generate ideas, support, aims and outcomes, etc
 - Discussion of ideas pertaining to presentations
 - Review of particular successes from prior year as a result of group activity
- **Quarterly Catch-up**
 - Review ongoing forward plan
 - Look at challenges
 - Q&A and open discussion
 - Working group feedback
 - AOB
- **Event Project Updates** (specific events will have project teams drawn from the participating organisations)
 - Report back on progress or if further advice/assistance required
- **Urgent Business Meetings**
 - Called as required where time-sensitives issues arise
 - These could be full group meetings or of a smaller selection of the most relevant members
 - This might include event bids, logistics failures, issues with individual artists, etc

VisitAberdeenshire representation will be through the Convention Bureau. It is supported by the Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Opportunity North East (ONE) to attract business events and tourism to the city. Working closely with venues it coordinates bids for conferences and works with the venue and organisers on delivery, and wider programming and travel, accommodation.

It is proposed that the Council will be represented on the group by officers from within City Growth including Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums.



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7. EVALUATING EVENTS

It is important for this Plan that festivals, events, exhibitions and conferences are evaluated to a common set of clear criteria and key performance indicators wherever appropriate. This will help to build-up a picture of event impacts on the city, show a track-record of success to stakeholders, indicate strength of public feeling, and identify areas for growth or change.

Key impact areas are:



The precise mix, terms of reference and KPIs within each area should be set by the 365 Event Group, this will vary to some extent by project type and venue, but ultimately there will be commonalities that allow for clear measurement across the portfolio. The evaluation criteria should broadly meet the needs of EventScotland to allow comparison to others in the industry. Initially this should be through the eventIMPACTS toolkit as a well-respected model UK-wide and available for immediate use.

Some considerations for each impact area are outlined below:



SOCIAL

- Number of volunteers
- Number of new volunteers
- Volunteer hours
- Number of local attendees
- Percentage from outwith local area
- Participation of marginalised groups
- Engagement with schools
- Case studies of interventions



CULTURAL/SPORTING

- Number of attendees
- First-time engagement with artform, sport or venue
- Evidence of ongoing engagement or participation
- Number of practitioners involved in delivery
- Commissions of new work
- Awards or prizes for the event

ECONOMIC



- Net additional spend
- Equivalent jobs & skills created/sustained
- Value of contracts awarded to local and Scottish businesses
- Number of businesses engaged
- Calculation of bed nights
- Average and total spend from hospitality and retail

SUSTAINABILITY



- Against British Standard on Sustainable Event Management
- Specific measures used to reduce impact of logistics and event running
- Plastic policies
- Local food sourcing and waste objectives
- Guidance to measure and monitor carbon emissions
- Future improvements and carbon reduction measures

MEDIA, PROFILE & BRAND



- Media exposure and reach
- How this contributed to objectives
- Impact of pre-event and in-event marketing
- Assessment of highest impact media e.g. print vs social, or Instagram vs Facebook
- Familiarity with the event brand
- Effect on perception of the city
- Fit with National Events Strategy

BROAD MEASUREMENTS



- Event attendance
- First time attendance
- Visitor satisfaction
- Satisfaction increase/decrease
- Engagement within event of different elements
- Comments and criticisms
- Satisfaction of vendors, artists and contractors to the event and desire from participants and vendors to participate in future





8. CONCLUSION

Successful delivery of the approach, principles and forward plans outlined above will ensure Aberdeen continues to be an event destination. It will further grow the city's reputation with the public and events professionals, and provide a platform for the Event 365 Group to deliver a programme of events, festivals and conferences that are relevant to the city's history, geography and culture as well as its people, tourists and businesses. The proposed Events Plan will provide major economic and social impact, and meet the city's wider aims and aspiration to be a place where all people can prosper.