

ALEO ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

Deadline for submission 15th July 2024

Organisation: Aberdeen Performing Arts	
Year Covered:	2023-24
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.

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	19
Name of Director/ Chief Executive	Jane Spiers (from April 2023 to May 2023) Sharon Burgess (from June 2023 to March 2024)
Number of venues operated	3
Number of Board Members	14
Number of Full time staff	42 (average headcount across the year)
Number of part time/casual staff	211 (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 2023/24

Our programme featured:

- **700+ diverse performances** across theatre, music, dance, comedy, literature, spoken word, and work for young people.
- **Granite Noir** – an international crime writing festival.
- **Light the Blue** – a youth festival created by and for young people in Aberdeen.
- **Rise Up** – a festival celebrating black and people of colour creatives, in partnership with We Are Here Scotland.
- **Delve** – a weekend of artist-curated exploration of themes and ideas.
- **Creative responses** to key themes and events, including Climate Week North East.
- **Digital art** – 5 new commissions for our Stepping In screen.
- **Art exhibition** – including 2 new commissions in our Music Hall gallery spaces.

TALENT – Investing in Today's and Tomorrow's Creatives

In 2023/24, we:

- Co-produced a major new work with the National Theatre of Scotland, offering opportunities for local creatives.
- Supported development, production, and touring for North-east theatre companies, including AyeTunes and Ten Feet Tall.
- 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 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 – Inclusive Creative Engagement

In 2023/24, 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 for ages 12-18 for three 10-week terms.
- Supported a community choir and vocal ensemble.
- Held HOURS, a hip hop event series by local producers.
- Expanded Light the Blue as a co-designed youth arts festival.
- Established a young advisors' network for Light the Blue and broader organisational input.
- Developed community engagement projects on climate action and inclusion.
- Expanded engagement efforts to reach and include new audiences.

PLACEMAKING – Shaping and Celebrating the North-east

In 2023/24, we:

- Played a leading role in Culture Aberdeen, including key initiatives and advocacy.
- Actively participated in local, regional, and national networks, including Board-level representation.
- Delivered Granite Noir, Light the Blue, Rise Up, and Delve with increased partnerships and local artist involvement.
- Co-produced Dracula with National Theatre of Scotland and led supporting campaigns.

PEOPLE AND FAIR WORK

In 2023/24, we:

- Developed our Board with new recruitment and training, enhancing diversity and transitioning to a new chair.
- Reviewed our leadership structure to support people development and financial sustainability.
- Continued implementing Open House, our Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion plan.
- Provided leadership development and training opportunities to our team.

AUDIENCE

DEVELOPMENT AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

In 2023/24, we:

- Utilised Audience Spectrum for segmentation to support programme priorities.
- Launched key marketing campaigns for Rise Up and Light the Blue.
- Engaged new and existing audiences with campaigns for Rise Up, Light the Blue, and Granite Noir.
- Conducted stakeholder mapping to support creative engagement.
- Evaluated audiences using various metrics including behaviour, geography, and socio-economic factors.
- Enhanced Spektrix data with Audience Agency partnership.
- Improved digital customer journeys with increased web sales and mobile ticketing.
- Developed digital strategies for programme priorities and social media reach.
- Planned marketing and communications for Board and Leadership changes and recruitment.

CLIMATE ACTION

In 2023/24, we:

- Implemented our Environmental Sustainability Policy and Carbon Management Plan.
- Aligned our Carbon Management Strategy with Science Based Targets Net Zero pathway.
- Worked with The Theatre Green Book to audit venues for carbon reduction opportunities.
- Developed climate-themed events and activities, including for Climate Week North East.
- Partnered with Creative Carbon Scotland, Beyond Green, and other organisations.
- Explored carbon offsetting schemes for audience participation.
- Embedded climate action in our branding and communications.
- Ensured sustainability in future redevelopment projects.
- Partnered with Creative Scotland's Climate Emergency and Sustainability Plan.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

In 2023/24, we:

- Diversified income sources and increased fundraised income.
- Set and reviewed clear revenue and profit targets.
- Improved efficiencies through effective structures and venue operations.
- Developed digital and data strategies for decision-making.
- Enhanced digital marketing resources for greater reach.
- Improved system effectiveness and invested in performance analysis software.
- Created detailed audience profiles to inform offerings and marketing.
- Expanded corporate hospitality, conference, and event offerings.

Activity Outputs (complete only the ones that apply to your funded activities)			
Total number of participants	9,393	Total audience numbers	363,709
Total number of volunteers	11	Total number of volunteer hours	498
Total number of project artists employed	79	Total number of artist hours	360
Total number of performances	777	Total number of training courses	-
Total number of exhibitions	12	Total number of festivals	4
Total number of workshops	393	Total number of publications	-
Other (please specify)	-	Total number of Conference and Events	48

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

The targets set against our key strategic performance indicators (KPI) have in the most part been achieved or exceeded. The expanded KPIs for Creative Engagement and Audience in relation to age demographics have been provided for 2023/24 reflective of the enhanced data capture which was not possible in previous years.

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.

Dracula: Mina's Reckoning

In 2023, Aberdeen Performing Arts collaborated with the National Theatre of Scotland in partnership with Belgrade Theatre Coventry, to co-produce the epic new adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The new version, written by Elgin-born playwright Morna Pearson, was located in Aberdeen and Cruden Bay (as well as Transylvania) and used Stoker's frequent trips to the North-east of Scotland as an authentic interpretation of the story's setting. Award-winning director Sally Pearson led the production which had an all-female or non-binary cast many of whom were from this region. The production featured the Doric language throughout and provided a platform for our local dialect to be seen in a serious context, although with frequent humour. The production included a mesmerising soundscape, innovative use of lighting and projection mapping, and an imposing Gothic set created by Highland designer Kenneth MacLeod. As co-producers, APA not only invested financially in the creation of the piece, but heavily influenced the creative decisions and direction it took. Our involvement gave confidence to the team to embrace the full opportunities providing by the North-east setting, giving the production an authenticity from the very start. Following rehearsals at NTS' base in Glasgow, the show did production and tech week in Aberdeen, opening at His Majesty's Theatre in September 2023. It subsequently toured to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness, Dundee, Stirling and Coventry, before finishing its run at the Liverpool Playhouse. The show was performed 41 times and seen by 19,294 audiences and received excellent public and critical acclaim including a five-star review in the Scotsman. A motion was submitted to the Scottish Parliament commending the success and ambition of the project. The collaboration with NTS was extremely positive and we have received very warm feedback from them about our team and our constructive approach to the partnership. This project demonstrated Aberdeen Performing Arts' vision and ambition for producing and creating work of scale and impact, our ability to contribute as creative as well as financial partners, and contributed hugely to delivering Aberdeen's cultural objectives around creation, working with artists, experimentation and impact.

Encore! Script reading Group and participation research for older people

We introduced a new participatory group which was specifically aimed at engaging creatively with older people. This project, delivered at the Music Hall and in partnership with Ten Feet Tall Theatre company, provides an opportunity for people over the age of 60 to meet in a relaxed environment and to explore a well-known play. The group is very informal and is accessible to people with no experience of acting or performing. The focus of the group is as much on socialising and interacting as with exploring and discussing the text. It is a really effective model for allowing people to participate without any pressure to perform and with the ability to contribute as much or as little as they are comfortable with. The programme proved hugely popular and completely sold out and we plan to integrate this as a core element of our creative engagement programme.

Related to this, we have recognised that there is an opportunity for us to provide participatory activities for older people, particularly those who may suffer from isolation or loneliness, or have financial barriers to taking part in activities. As such, we engaged a placement student from the University of Aberdeen to undertake a research project investigating what types of activities older people may wish to participate in. The research explores types of activity, possible themes, ideal locations and setup, and possible barriers to attendance. We will use the outcome of this research to inform future plans with older participants.

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.

The launch of a new call-out for multi-year, multi-venue festive productions for early years, co-commissioned with Eden Court and Capital Theatres, was delayed by a year due to funding uncertainty caused by the delayed CS RFO application process

Aberdeen Performing Arts is set to commence a refurbishment of The Lemon Tree to ensure it remains fit for purpose for the foreseeable future, given that a full redevelopment is not financially viable at this time. All capital expenditure will focus on essential work that would also be part of a full redevelopment if it occurs in the longer term.

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	4. 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026.	<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.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-produced a major touring theatre production with National Theatre of Scotland, <i>Dracula: Mina's Reckoning</i>, which was set and opened in Aberdeen before touring across the UK. • Supporting the creation and touring of <i>My Doric Diary</i> by Fraserburgh based Aye Tunes. • 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

		<p>2. Working towards a 74% employment rate for Aberdeen City by 2026.</p> <p>10. Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026.</p>	<p>Black and POC creatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered the second Delve weekend inviting an artist to curate a series of performance and workshops on a chosen theme or art form. Curated a programme for Climate Week North East. Developed our inclusive cabaret programme for LGBT+ artists and audiences. Maintained employment and freelance engagement of more than 350 creative professionals.
<p>Making All the City a Stage - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city which inspires, where exciting cultural experiences are around each and every corner and where there are no creative boundaries.</i></p>	<p>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
<p>Connecting Us to the World- <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city like no other, where we celebrate and promote our culture and heritage, the things we make and create.</i></p>	<p>Creating a clearer/ stronger identity and cultural narrative</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Granite Noir invites international writers and welcomes international audiences to the city and online. Developed a plan for a new international season alongside the Edinburgh Fringe to promote sustainable touring, encouraging artists traveling from overseas to extend their season to Aberdeen, to deliver in summer 2024. Rise Up 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.
<p>Shaping our Future- <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city whose cultural sector is growing in ambition and confidence with a</i></p>	<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

<p><i>strong collective of cultural leaders collaborating to realise the city's potential.</i></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> <p>16. 50% of citizens report they feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026.</p>	<p>for the city.</p> <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.
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Local Priorities:

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

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

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

LOIP Stretch Outcome	Key Driver	Aberdeen Performing Art Actions
Aberdeen Prospers		
<p>Investment in Infrastructure</p> <p>Aberdeen City is a robust and resilient economy providing a vibrant built environment and attractive place for residents, students, business and tourists</p>	<p>We will regenerate our city centre to become a vibrant and attractive place to live, work and invest in</p>	<p>Deliver diverse and distinctive cultural programme to create attractive city to live, work and visit.</p> <p>Custodian of iconic city centre venues and undertaken major investment in upgrading facilities.</p> <p>Regular programme of upgrades and repairs to buildings and infrastructure.</p>
<p>Innovation</p> <p>Aberdeen City has a reputation for enterprise, innovation and world class solutions</p>	<p>We will accelerate the transition to a more balanced economy</p>	<p>Collaboration and partnership to create brand new work of scale such as Dracula: Mina's Reckoning.</p> <p>Ambitious programming, measured risk-taking, and curatorial approach to create unique offer.</p> <p>Produce several innovative festivals with local relevance and national impact.</p>
<p>Inclusive economic growth</p> <p>A skilled workforce for the future that provides opportunities for all our people</p>	<p>We will develop the people and skills necessary to deliver economic development and, as a result, support diversification of businesses and economy</p>	<p>Hundreds of opportunities for artist employment.</p> <p>Developing new talent through internships, placements and new roles. Partner on Developing Young Workforce.</p> <p>Creating sustainable employment through revised contracts and new posts.</p> <p>Accredited Real Living Wage Employer,</p>

		Disability Confident Committed.
<p>Internationalisation</p> <p>Aberdeen City is a location of choice for investment, high value business activity and skills</p>	<p>We will attract the best possible range of incoming exhibitions and events and showcase the city's internationally recognised sports, arts and culture offer</p>	<p>We continue to grow international presence in our festivals such as Granite Noir.</p> <p>We have a new international season for launch in 2024.</p> <p>Support for locally based ethnically diverse communities via Multicultural Centre, Mela etc.</p>
<p>Prosperous People – Children are our future</p>		
<p>Children are our future and people are resilient, included and supported when in need</p>	<p>Children have the best start in life – children in Aberdeen City are healthy, happy and safe, and enjoy the best possible childhood</p>	<p>Extensive programme of weekly participation opportunities.</p> <p>Expanded free spaces programme across our activity.</p> <p>Dedicated festival Light the Blue for and by young people.</p> <p>Programming for children and young people, ticket offers, and schools engagement.</p> <p>Projects specifically with care experienced young people, children with disabilities, and from lower socio-economic backgrounds.</p>
	<p>Children are safe and responsible – from all forms of harm</p>	<p>Comprehensive safeguarding training and child protection approach.</p> <p>Partnerships with key support organisations.</p>
	<p>Children are respected, included and achieving – children and young people are listened to, respected, valued and involved in the decision-making process</p>	<p>Young advisors group co-design Light the Blue and wider activity.</p>
<p>Prosperous People – People Are Resilient, Included and supported when in need</p>		
<p>People and communities are protected from harm – Individuals and communities are made aware of the risk of harm and supported appropriately to reduce this risk.</p>	<p>We will develop systems and approaches that raise awareness of harm</p>	<p>Projects specifically targeted to improve opportunities for marginalised groups e.g. Beats and Rhymes, over 60s, LGBT+, BPOC.</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>Research project to combat loneliness in older people.</p> <p>We provided training in conflict management, as well as first aid.</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>Culture of development and progression for our team.</p> <p>We are an accredited Real Living Wage employer.</p> <p>Increased access provision and membership scheme.</p> <p>Disability Confident Committed accredited employer.</p> <p>Inclusive recruitment practices including video application, interview questions shared etc.</p> <p>Providing regular performances which as BSL signed, audio described, captioned and relaxed performances.</p> <p>Embed Everyone is Welcome Here ethos.</p>
<p>Prosperous People - EMPOWERED, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES</p>		
<p>People friendly city – a city where people to choose to invest, live and visit</p>	<p>Build a child friendly city to ensure that the best interests of the child is a primary consideration</p>	<p>We provide a 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>
	<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>	<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

Open House, our EDI policy and action plan was updated in June 2023, and within the year 2023/24, a number of initiatives were expanded, consolidated and implemented in order to work towards and meet our ambitions around Equality at Aberdeen Performing Arts, across all areas. These include:

- We augmented our board through a wide search and inclusive recruitment process, resulting in five new board members including our new Chair. This has resulted in our board now being more representative of under-represented backgrounds, and closer to being balanced in terms of gender.
- We saw our workforce continue to develop in its diversity and representation of our community, through inclusive recruitment campaigns, and continued achievement of the Disability Confident Committed accreditation
- The introduction and development of our Access Champion working group comprising of 10 employees. Our training focused on using our own service providers to provide meaningful relevant content. Our BSL Interpreter ran a deaf awareness workshop, in addition to the session our Audio Describer did earlier in the year on the services we offer for Visually Impaired customers. Both sessions focused on best practice for the team and offered insight into how we can continue to better the customer experience.
- In partnership with We Are Here Scotland, we delivered our third Rise Up festival, celebrating the work of Black and People of Colour creatives. Eat the Rich, our LGBT+ cabaret event took place for the third year running and saw increased ticket demand, leading to a sold-out performance and demonstrating the need for events within a safe space which are relevant to the LGBT+ community. Our hip hop workshops, Beats and Rhymes, are focused 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. We have undertaken research into provision of creative activity for the over 60s age group to better inform how we can meet their needs with future creative engagement provision with an intention to look at ways to tackle isolation and improve health and wellbeing outcomes.
- The development of our unique Creative Change Maker: Inclusion and Relevance role, ensuring that our commissions, productions and curated work involve collaboration around creative diversity and representation and our organisation embraces the ethos of Everyone Is Welcome Here.
- There have been notable increases in our accessible performance offerings. BSL performances increased from 26 to 39, captioned performances from 17 to 20, and audio described performances from 28 to 30. Touch tours saw a significant rise from 10 to 29. Relaxed performances increased from 2 to 5. Sales of wheelchair spaces grew from 619 to 704, and our complimentary essential companion tickets more than doubled from 570 to 1160.
- Our commitment to dismantling barriers to participation continues with increased offers of free spaces within our Creative Engagement strand. We continue to work with partners to help us reach those with whom we are not currently engaged. We have introduced more pay what you can ticket initiatives for our produced shows to support marginalised and under-represented groups in attending events which they may otherwise face barriers to accessing.
- 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 95% with almost 700 people attending. Eat the Rich, our subversive and provocative cabaret aimed at the LGBT+ community sold 83 tickets in 2022, 109 in 2023 and sold out in 2024 with 149 attendees.

Net Zero/Climate Change:

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

Within the year, our team of Green Champions, concluded the first phase of our Carbon Management project which allowed us to define our Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, establish a baseline metric, plan out a series of initiatives for the medium term that allow us to focus on reducing our carbon footprint and strengthening our Environmental Sustainability Policy and framework. Inputs from the legislative ESOS Phase 3 environmental audits, as well as support from Business Energy Scotland and our environmental partner Beyond Green, have provided a solid foundation for us to shape the direction of our practical sustainability activity particularly in Scope 3 categories, which include our Audience Travel impact.

We have undertaken a number of initiatives across the year aimed at reducing the carbon impact of the infrastructure we

operate within, as well as our operation itself. These include:

- Finalising the upgrading to LED lighting within His Majesty's Theatre and Music Hall in public areas, complete with motion sensor detection.
- Signing up to electricity contracts for all three venues which are provided from 100% renewable sources.
- Reducing the amount of single use and disposable cleaning products used within our housekeeping function
- The introduction of a pedestrian scrubbing machine at The Lemon Tree, which significantly reduces the water consumed and wasted throughout the cleaning process.
- Initial improvements to our Building Management System at His Majesty's Theatre, and scoping of a wider suite of works intended at significantly improving efficiency.

We realise the unique position that the arts leverage within the wider climate and sustainability conversation, and through our creative engagement team

- Successful delivery of an environmental focused art exhibition, Oor Future Oor Monsters, which is now on permanent display within our Lemon Tree venue.
- Successful delivery of a series of programmed activity to coincide with Climate Week North East 2024
- Taking the lead, alongside partners The Barn, in hosting a series of workshop events as part of Creative Carbon Scotland's Springboard Assemblies series.

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 Festival – Snappy Operas Project

Our festival for and by young people, Light The Blue, delivered the Snappy Operas project to four primary schools, Hanover Street, Gilcomstoun, Riverbank and West Park. Working in school with professional musicians, producers, repititeurs and directors, pupils created their own mini opera which they then performed on the stage at the Music Hall for an audience of friends, families and guests.

The project invited pupils to engage with opera through an accessible, fun approach, introducing them to an art form which is often perceived as elitist. For most of the children and their families, it was the first time they had ever set foot in the Music Hall, affording us an opportunity to make everyone feel welcome, breaking down perceived barriers to accessing our buildings. The young people thoroughly enjoyed the experience, with each school creating their own unique, 10-minute snappy opera, performed brilliantly on stage. Taking part helped develop self-confidence, teamwork, creative thinking, music making, performance, reading and writing skills and inspired pupils and teachers to continue a journey exploring further opportunities for creative and music making.

Feedback from teachers:

- 'Can you pass on my massive thanks to Jess, Eleanor, Lavie and Rosie for all their hard work with my class. It was such a massive undertaking, and they were just amazing. My class definitely have their challenges and they took it all in their stride. My 5s loved every session and they were gutted when it was a week where they didn't come in!'
- 'Fantastic! A chance to make real music in a real setting (that none of my class had ever been to) supported by professionals. What a way to encourage children into the arts.'
- 'Huge confidence boost, being on stage, performing for a large audience. Improved resilience, workshopping and developing a performance. Self and peer feedback improved throughout the term. Renewed interest in music-making (and increased uptake of instrumental lessons).'
- 'Many children in our setting never aspire to get on stage and perform for others and this will be one of these things that many will remember for the rest of their lives.'
- 'Throughout the experience, the children were engaged. In allowed the pupils to grow in confidence and perform to a live audience. The opportunity to perform, for free, was great as it allowed all to participate'.

Feedback from young people:

- 'Amazing! I loved being on stage in front of so many people and singing for them.'
- 'I felt really confident getting on stage and doing our opera for my family. We worked really hard but it was totally worth it.'
- 'The concert hall was really big and scary and I was worried about standing on it in front of everyone, but we did lots of practise and when we had to perform for the audience we just did it and it was amazing!'

Please also see link to Light the Blue Snappy Operas video in Support Material.

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 main volunteers undertake the roles of Tour Guide and Archivist. Our Board members are also volunteers. This year we added two new volunteers to our tour guide pool, and further updated our tour guide script, training and supporting our volunteer tour guides on updates within the organisation, so that our public tours can incorporate current information about our venues and organisation as well as the history of the venues.

Volunteer success stories:

We had visitors from far and wide, including America, as part of a health and wellness trip to Scotland. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and there are dates in the diary for a return trip. We also welcomed a group of students from France who are studying English Literature. Our volunteer tour guides tailored the tour to include insights into the performances that have been on our stage.

We hosted a dementia-friendly guided tour at The Music Hall, designed to be inclusive and accessible, allowing participants to experience the venue in a comfortable and supportive environment. Following the tour, our archivist Alan hosted a tea and chat session, providing an opportunity for attendees to share their memories and stories. Participants expressed their gratitude for the compassionate and respectful way the tour was conducted. This success has encouraged us to expand our work with Alzheimer's Scotland,

Most of our tour guides have traditionally led tours exclusively at His Majesty's Theatre. However, the success of our recent Music Hall tour has demonstrated the potential for our volunteers to diversify their expertise. We are currently in the process of reviewing and fine-tuning the tour script to train more of our volunteers to lead tours at The Music Hall.

Training and policy in action: In 2023/24 we have placed a particular focus on creating development opportunities internally for our team. This has involved creating secondment and development roles across various departments for internal staff only, allowing and encouraging more cross-departmental working, which has resulted in the upskilling of key members of our team, providing more part time and full time opportunities, developing career paths, and improving understanding cross-departmentally.

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.

Our co-production of *Dracula: Mina's Reckoning*, our support of Aye Tunes' *My Doric Diary* and a presentation of a work in progress by local playwright Laura Miller, all provided employment opportunities for artists and creatives hailing from the North-east, and importantly provided a platform for North-east stories to be shared on stage and on tour.

We delivered two cabarets, *Eat the Rich*, and *Everyone is Welcome Here*, for the LGBT+ community. Both cabarets commissioned new work and provided a platform for early career artists to perform, developing production, performance and stage skills with the support of a professional team. Early career producers and stage managers from the LGBT+ community were employed to help sustain and bolster their career opportunities in the region.

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 two early career Assistant Producers 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 *Snappy Operas* project across 4 primary schools in the city. 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.

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 "*Scared to Death*" in the *Anatomy Rooms*, telling the true story of a brutal crime from the history of the city.

Rise Up! Festival is 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 offers networking opportunities and a springboard for further opportunities, strengthening the cultural ecology for the BPOC community in the north-east of Scotland.

We work in partnership with *HOURS*, two early career local producers, djs and hip-hop artists. With our support, *HOURS* produce events at the *Lemon Tree* which give a platform to and showcase the work of local up and coming musicians in the genre of hip-hop, rap and drill.

Our series of zine making workshops were delivered by two local artists.

As part of *Book Week Scotland*, we engaged three local writers to perform and showcase their work.

We delivered a *Loud Poets Masterclass* and showcase which was facilitated and hosted by two local poets.

We commissioned local musicians to create new work as part of our *Jam for Climate Justice* event during *Climate Week North East*.

Our monthly *True North Sessions* offered an opportunity for local musicians to perform and showcase their work in *Big Sky Studio* at the *Music Hall*, supported by our professional technical team and with marketing across all our platforms to raise their profile with our audiences.

We commission artists to create new work for exhibition in our gallery space at the *Music Hall*. In 2023/24 we commissioned work from 3 local artists. 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 (22/23)	Total (23/24)
Total visitor Number	1,200,000	1,360,000
Total Audience Number	356,408	363,709
Audience number from Aberdeen City	153,037	160,932
Audience number from the wider region or further	200,952	198,441
% of audience survey rating experience as 'excellent' or 'good'	96%	94%
<i>The above may not be relevant to your organisation or known – however if you use ticket/box office analysis, visitor books, audience surveys, event impacts studies etc. it should be fairly straight forward to complete.</i>	-	-

Audience broken down to Age groups	Target (22/23)	Total (23/24)
Aged 0-5	-	-
Aged 6-15	-	-
Aged 16-24	-	1%
Aged 25-44	-	14%
Aged 45-64	-	51%
Aged 65-74	-	26%
Aged 75+	-	8%
Unknown/ Not Age Specific	-	-

Participants	Target (22/23)	Total (23/24)
Total number of participatory opportunities created throughout programme	-	9,393
Number of participatory opportunities by Age group		
Aged 0-5	-	1,800
Aged 6-15	-	3,308
Aged 16-24	-	1,000
Aged 25-44	-	-
Aged 45-64	-	150
Aged 65-74	-	150
Aged 75+	-	150
Unknown/ Not Age Specific	-	2,835
Number of participatory opportunities for target groups		
Age	-	6,250
Disability	-	308
Gender Reassignment	-	27
Pregnancy and Maternity	-	-
Race	-	260
Religion or Belief	-	-
Sex	-	-
Sexual Orientation	-	27
Low income / income poverty – those who cannot afford regular bills, food, clothing payments.	-	1,500
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
Area deprivation – consider where people live and where they work (accessibility and cost of transport)	-	1500
Socio-economic background – social class, parents' education, employment, income.	-	1500
<i>Please note these are specifically 'targeted' opportunities aimed at reaching the above groups</i>		

Income 2023/24	Total £
Value of Grant(s) from Aberdeen City Council	£ 1,011,000
External Grant funding	
External Grant funding	£ 337,453
Sponsorship	£ -
Trading income	£ 1,930,365
Other (please specify)	
Earned Income (Ticket Sales)	£ 8,574,907
Theatre Tax Relief & Gift Aid	£ 31,645
Donations	£ 59,541
Total add income	£ 10,933,911

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:	Summer 2023 Season Brochure
Support Material 2:	Dracula: Mina's Reckoning
Support Material 3:	Light The Blue 2023 Snappy Operas Project
Support Material 4:	Beats&Rhymes Sharing 2023.pptx
Support Material 5:	Rise Up 2023

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:

Date: