

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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**CULTURE INVESTMENT 2025/26 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUDGET REPORT**

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present recommended awards for 2025/26 Culture Investment and in-principle recommendations for 2026/27 and 2027/28 with respect to budget profiling.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Council;

- 2.1 Notes the Culture Investment Programme application and review process undertaken;
- 2.2 Approve the recommendations for allocation of Culture Investment for 2025/26 put forward by the Culture Investment Panel.

**3. CURRENT SITUATION**

- 3.1 At the meeting of the Finance and Resources on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024, the Committee approved the establishment of a new Culture Investment Framework, replacing previous grant schemes and arrangements for supporting externally delivered cultural services. The Committee also approved that from 2025 onwards, any Common Good proposals for non-capital creative projects and cultural funding support are directed through the Culture Investment Programme (The Programme).
- 3.2 The new Programme was structured to reflect both the level of demand for investment as well as the Council's financial projections. The new programmes provide more flexibility to provide different entry points based on organisations level of experience, capacity, and capability. This was designed to give agency to culture organisations to access the right investment to enable them to deliver high quality activities for the people of Aberdeen. In total there are four programmes, all launching on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, with the exception of Acorn which will go live in 2025. The programmes are as follows:

**Acorn:** Awards of £500 - £2500 – seed funding for pilots and small projects.

**Catalyst:** Awards of £5,000 - £15,000 – project and festival funding.

**Cultivate:** Awards of £15,000 - £100,000 – year-round programmes of cultural activity.

**Cornerstone:** Awards £100,000 plus – Large scale Aberdeen based organisations and consortiums delivering culture programmes.

### Investment Priorities, Criteria and Process

- 3.3 Following an extensive review and consultation process a series of priorities for investment were identified for culture investment, these were aligned to the Aberdeen Local Outcome Improvement Plan five themes with a further two themes, 'Experience' and 'Celebrate' developed to recognise that the utility of culture for social, economic and environmental good must at first be rooted in a core artistic and cultural experience, otherwise the desired outcomes are less feasible.

Theme	Description	Outcome
<b>Experience</b>	Recognising the intrinsic value of creativity and removing barriers to experiencing culture.	Everyone who calls Aberdeen home has the opportunity to engage in high quality creative and cultural activity.
<b>Celebrate</b>	Creating a clearer/ stronger identity and cultural narrative.	The creative diversity of our people and communities is celebrated, we use culture and creativity to share and celebrate our stories to the world.
<b>Our Economy</b>	Economic resilience and diversity through Increased creative industries employment, people in sustained fair employment and reduction in reported skills gaps.	Aberdeen's economy and workforce is resilient and diverse, through our skills support and cultural employment opportunities.
<b>Our Children &amp; Young People</b>	Increased sense of confidence, safety and wellbeing in children and young people, reducing need for Tier 3 services.	Our children and young people's physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing is improved and have access to cultural education experiences and post-school opportunities.
<b>Our citizens</b>	Increased healthy life expectancy through cultural engagement.	Our citizens benefit from healthy life expectancy, mental wellbeing, and positive life choices through cultural intervention.
<b>Our Place</b>	Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions, protecting our natural and built environment.	Our cultural assets are well cared for and cultural sector is contributing to climate change resilience.
<b>Our community</b>	Building strong personal and community resilience, enabling people to participate in decisions that help change things for the better.	Culture provides a voice for community capacity building and decision making.

- 3.4 The Programme is open to Aberdeen based, not-for-profit organisations and groups who meet the following criteria;

- Cultural activities and programmes delivered in Aberdeen for the benefit of its residents.
- Revenue and project expenditure in relation to direct delivery of cultural activities delivering against the priorities.
- An ability to deliver high quality creative activity within Aberdeen.
- Must have relevant safeguarding policies in place.
- An equal opportunities statement or policy, applications from under-represented groups encouraged.
- Applicants must not already be in receipt of other non-cultural 'core funding' from Aberdeen City Council.
- Must be financially sustainable and have relevant accounting procedures in respect to the level of activity and investment.

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- For funding over £15,000 Council Investment must represent no more than 25% annual income, 10% for applications over £100,000
- Must be able to demonstrate activity would not have happened without Council support.
- Environmental sustainability policy and action plan (as applicable to the organisation and nature of activities).

3.5 Applications to the Programme were through a two-step process, organisations were required to submit an initial Expression of Interest (EOI) using a template published on the Council website. This allowed Officers to quickly review if applicants met the core eligibility and which programme they were best suited to based on their capacity, financial position, intended beneficiaries and impacts of the proposed activities. Once checked and approved to proceed, applicants submitted a full application for support to the relevant programme, including all specified supporting documents and a financial proforma.

3.6 Following initial checks, completed applications are assessed through panel meetings consisting of relevant Council Officers, Community representatives and independent cultural professionals. All applications are assessed based on the published criteria and using a scoring matrix template. Applications are also reviewed against the Common Good criteria and the Following the Public Pound checklist.

3.7 The tables below provide the scores and recommendations for Culture Investment within the three open strands as well as summaries of each application. Total recommended award for 2025/26 would be £1,384,228, £1,348,000 of that request could meet the Common Good criteria requirements but £32,000 can only be funded through general revenue fund. Officers would recommend a further £45,000 is budgeted for 2025/26 to make grants through the Acorn programme to support pilot projects by community groups and individual creatives. Based on the application outputs this investment will deliver:

- 467,796 audience engagements
- 39,435 participant opportunities
- 1,222 performances and exhibitions
- 3,173 workshops
- 48 festivals
- 894 artist employment opportunities
- £15,915,834 of match funding and generated income

3.8 'In principle' awards are indicated for financial year 2026/27, and 2027/28 where appropriate. These will be subject to application, evaluation and budget decisions in the future, but provide an indication of intent in respect of funding decisions going forward.

## Catalyst

	Organisation	Amount Requested 2025/26	Panel Score (max 32)	Following Public Pound Check	Common Good Criteria	Recommend Award for 2025/26	Recommend Award In principle for 2026/27
1	Crowhouse Projects	£15,000	21.5	yes	yes	£15,000	-
2	Friends of Elphinstone	£15,000	21.5	yes	no	£12,000	-
3	Aberdeen Mela	£15,000	21	yes	yes	£15,000	£15,000
4	Four Pillars (Grampian Pride)	£15,000	19.5	yes	yes	£15,000	-
5	Nescan Hub	£15,000	19	no	yes	£0	-
6	Pushing Out the Boat	£5,000	18.5	yes	yes	£5,000	-
7	Touch of Love Outreach	£15,000	18	Yes	yes	£11,228	-
8	Jazz at the Blue Lamp	£9,000	17.5	Yes	no	£0	-
9	Afristyle	£12,000	14.5	No	yes	£0	-

## Cultivate and Cornerstone

	Organisation	Amount Requested 2025/26	Panel score (max 32)	Following Public Pound Check	Common Good Criteria	Rec. Award for 2025/26	Rec. Award in principle 2026/27	Rec. Award in principle 2027/28
10	Citymoves Dance Agency SCIO	£100,000	28	yes	Yes	£100,000	£98,000	£95,000
11	Grampian Hospital Art Trust	£40,000	26	yes	No	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000
12	Sound Festival	£20,000	25.5	yes	Yes	£20,000	£18,000	£18,000
13	Open Road	£21,865	24	yes	Yes	£16,000	£16,000	16,000
14	Belmont Community Cinema	£40,000	23.5	yes	Yes	£40,000	£40,000	£40,000
15	Jazz Scotland	£16,000	22.5	yes	Yes	£16,000	£16,000	£16,000
16	Aberdeen Inspired (Nuart)	£100,000	19.5	yes	Yes	£88,000	-	-
17	Sistema (Big Noise Torry)	£92,613	19.5	no	No	£0	-	-
18	Peacock Visual Arts	£100,000	19	yes	Yes	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
19	Castlegate Arts	£100,000	16.5	no	Yes	£0	-	-
20	Aberdeen Performing Arts	£1,010,000	26.5	yes	Yes	£961,000	£913,000	£865,000

**Note 1 Crowhouse Projects, £15,000 (request £15,000)**

This represents funding to deliver a 2025 Film Accelerator Programme, providing professional training and production experience in short-film making.

**Note 2 Friends of Elphinstone, £12,000 (request £15,000)**

This represents funding to deliver the Button Boxes & Moothies festival, including five concerts (including a youth concert), eight workshops, two 'meet the artist' events and three jam sessions.

**Note 3 Aberdeen Multicultural Centre /Aberdeen Mela, £15,000 (request £15,000)**

This represents funding to deliver the 2025 annual edition of the Aberdeen Mela festival, showcasing the diversity of cultures living in Aberdeen through music, dance, food, dress, crafts, and more in setting of Union Terrace Gardens. Applicant has also applied directly to Common Good fund but Officer recommendation is the activity is supported through Culture Investment Programme.

**Note 4 Four Pillars/ Grampian Pride, £15,000 (request £15,000)**

This represents funding to deliver a programme of family friendly arts and cultural activities in Duthie Park as part of the 2025 Grampian Pride festival.

**Note 5 Nescan Hub,£0 (request £15,000)**

This represents funding to deliver the Envirolution Aberdeen festival, a free one-day community event dedicated to increasing understanding of climate change. The applicant has submitted a separate application directly to the Common Good Fund for the same event requesting £50,000 to cover the whole event. Application does not meet the Culture Investment requirements on the basis the event is not deliverable within the budget presented in the application and should be considered under the Common Good request only.

**Note 6 Pushing Out the Boat, £5,000 (request £5,000)**

This represents funding to produce, publish and launch a commemorative anthology of Pushing Out the Boat to mark the publications 25th anniversary, celebrating new writing including Doric, Scots and Gaelic.

**Note 7 Touch of Love Outreach, £11,228 ( £15,000)**

This represents funding to initiate a pilot festival celebrating Scottish and African culture and a programme of educational workshops and artist collaborations.

**Note 8 Jazz at the Blue Lamp, £0 (request £9,000)**

This represents funding to continue to present a monthly programme of Sunday afternoon concerts for local jazz musicians at the Blue Lamp. Panel assessed the application did not meet the investment priorities.

**Note 9 Afristyle, £0 (request £12,000)**

This request represents support to deliver an African Cultural Festival, a community celebration of Aberdeen's ethnic minority groups through African culture of dance and drumming. Proposal does not meet Following the Public Pound requirements or investment priorities.

**Note 10 Citymoves Dance Agency SCIO, £100,000 (request £100,000)**

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This request represents core funding for the delivery of annual programme of dance activity, including over 10,000 participant opportunities, including activities in schools, care homes and community settings. Investment will also support the delivery of Dancelive Festival and the Spring Show.

### **Note 11 Grampian Hospital Art Trust, £20,000 (request £40,000)**

This request represents core funding support towards the Artroom Programme, underpinning social prescribing of cultural activity for health, recovery and wellbeing,

### **Note 12 Sound Festival, £20,000 (request £20,000)**

This request represents support towards a year round programme of new music development including engagement activities with communities, a composer development programme, children's music workshops and the annual Sound Festival.

### **Note 13 Open Road, £16,000 (request £21,865)**

This request represents support to develop new productions inspired by the history and stories of Aberdeen and the North East, as well as delivering programmes of community cultural activities, including participation in the Festival of the Sea.

### **Note 14 Belmont Community Cinema, £40,000 (request £40,000)**

This request represents support to develop new programmes of education and community engagement as part of the venue relaunch, from introductory workshops for young children to accredited qualifications and industry-linked training for older youth and adults toward careers within the screen industry. Funding conditional on reopening date.

### **Note 15 Jazz Scotland, £16,000 (request £16,000)**

This request represents core support to the delivery of the Aberdeen Jazz Festival, Jazz education programme and range of artists and community events.

### **Note 16 Aberdeen Inspired /Nuart, £88,000 (request £100,000)**

This request represents support towards a 2025 edition of Nuart Aberdeen, Aberdeen's festival of street art. Support has been recommended for one financial year in light of ballot timescales for 2026 event.

### **Note 17 Sistema/ Big Noise Torry, £0 (request £92,613)**

This request represents support towards the continuous delivery of the Big Noise Torry programme of music education. Proposal does not fully meet Common Good and Following the Public Pound requirements.

### **Note 18 Peacock Visual Arts, £50,000 (request £100,000)**

This Request represents support to deliver open access print making studio, year round programme exhibitions and events and communities printmaking education.

### **Note 19 Castlegate Arts, £0 (request £100,000)**

This request represents core support for the continued operation of Aberdeen Arts Centre, delivering a programme of theatre, dance, music, spoken word, comedy, film and creative learning and artist development. Proposal does not meet Following Public Pound and Investment priorities.

**Note 20 Aberdeen Performing Arts, £961,000 (request £1,010,000)**

This request represents support for the core programming operations across His Majesty's Theatre, Aberdeen Music Hall and Lemon Tree, delivery of signature events and festivals, production development and creative engagement programme.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The current budget provision in support of Culture Investment within Common Good is £1,191,000 and within General Fund is £394,000, total £1,585,000.
- 4.2 Panel recommendation for Culture Investment to external cultural organisations is budgeted in 2025/26 would be £1,429,228 (£1,633,075 in 2024/25).
- 4.3 Beyond 2027 there is scope for some of the activities such as festivals, events and presentation of national touring productions to be supported through a newly established Aberdeen Visitor Levy.
- 4.4 With respect to the Budget Saving Options that have been tabled within the Corporate Playbook, if options CG-01 'Phased reduction in funding to the cultural development and grants programmes" (£420,000) the funding recommendations of the Culture Investment Framework will not be achievable and recommendations will need to be revised to meet budget. If option New 123, "Further reduce funding to Aberdeen Performing Arts" (£700,000) the Culture Investment Framework recommendation will not be achievable and presents legal and reputational risks. The savings set out in C&PS06c (£46,000) are achievable within the current Investment recommendations, however taking the saving as the specific budget option invalidates the agreed framework process.
- 4.5 The costs to the Council related to its buildings operated by cultural partners are retained by those partners if liabilities remain with them through current lease. However, should possession fall back to the Council, annual Non-Domestic Rates liabilities equating to £724,950 would revert to the Council. This figure does not include associated costs for repairs for wind & watertight as well as plant equipment, energy costs, water, security and insurance premiums.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Under section 14 of the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982, the Council has a duty to "ensure that there is adequate provision of facilities for the inhabitants of their area for recreational, sporting, cultural and social activities". The Council also has a duty under section 1(3) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to secure for pupils in attendance at schools in their area, "The provision of adequate facilities for social, cultural and recreative activities and for physical education and training". These duties require adequate provision and do not stipulate precisely what facilities must be provided.
- 5.2 Section 15(4)(b) of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 requires the Council to "have regard to the interests of all the inhabitants of their areas" when administering common good property. Therefore, the following two

basic principles are followed in determining the appropriate use of the Common Good fund:

- (1) That the Common Good must be applied for the benefit of the community; and
- (2) That the Council must in each case use reasonable judgement in allocating Common Good funding.

- 5.3 Grant Agreements will be required between Aberdeen City Council and the successful applicants allocated grant funding.
- 5.4 To ensure compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, officers will establish a subsidy control scheme for the Culture Investment Programme on launch. All awards will be uploaded to the UK Government’s Subsidy Control database for transparency.
- 5.5 The Council has approved Culture Investment Framework process as policy at the meeting of Finance and Resources earlier this year, however budget saving options have tabled (see 4.3) which contradict and invalidate the approved process of allocation of Council funds for culture. If the savings are taken there is a risk the Council may face legal challenge by applicants affected.

**6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Review Report includes an assessment of the current cultural estate, with much of the sector operating listed historic venues and makes recommendations to support efforts towards net zero target going forward. The revised priorities and criteria for culture investment will include targets and metrics to support reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.

**7. RISK**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve. Target Risk Level</b>	<b>*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)</b>  <small>*taking into account controls/control actions</small>	<b>*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?</b>
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Council investment in culture is misaligned to Council Delivery plan and priorities.	Investment priorities aligned to LOIP and prevention agenda	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk of not complying with legislative duties	All applications reviewed against Common Good	L	Yes



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	Council goes with budget saving options and invalidates approved framework process	criteria, FTPP checklist, subsidy control measures. Full IIA undertaken  Recommendations have been made considering the Council budget position, saving options are not recommended due to risk of legal action.	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	Reduction in funding would impact staffing, buildings and programmes, having implications for Council services.	Investment priorities and recommendations consider wider impacts and implications for wider sector and Council services.	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	Council may not achieve saving's targets if it does not reduce cultural spend.	Recommendations have been made to reflect Council's financial position.	L	Yes
<b>Reputational</b>	Risk of citizens perceiving a reduction in services, especially those not recommended for support.	Investment recommendations would represent an increase in current supported activity, providing a broader range of services with clearer outcomes.	M	Yes
	Reputational risk if Council goes with saving options over the framework recommendations	Investment recommendations represent an overall saving on spend without reputational risk posed by savings options	M	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	Risk that decisions taken do not contribute to Net Zero targets.	Investment priorities include Place and contribution to Net Zero objectives.	L	Yes

## 8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024-25</u>	
<b>Impact of Report</b>	
<p><b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b></p> <p><u><a href="#">Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</a></u></p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement: -</p> <p>Vibrant City- We will work tirelessly to make Aberdeen a more attractive place to live, work, report and visit with a vibrant cultural offering.</p> <p>Arts Matter - Our city should become distinguished by the range and depth of active creative expression and artistic enjoyment experienced by those who live here and by visitors. By supporting and working with cultural partners, we will ensure there is richness and diversity of arts activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim to make Aberdeen a premier destination for festivals, productions, conferences, bands and events.</li> <li>• Support Aberdeen Performing Arts and other cultural providers to offer the widest possible arts programme for all across our communities.</li> <li>• Seek to make Aberdeen a UNICEF Child Friendly City.</li> </ul>
<u><a href="#">Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</a></u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The recommendations within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 2 – 74% employment rate for Aberdeen City by 2026 and key drivers, supporting labour market to recover from impact of Covid-19 on employment, Increasing the number of people in Aberdeen in sustained, fair work and Fewer employers reporting skills gaps.
Prosperous People (Children and Young People) Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within the report support the delivery of Stretch Outcome 6. 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 & 2), will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026/
Prosperous People	The report references evidence of arts and culture being able to support the delivery of Stretch Outcome

	10. Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within the report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 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
Community Empowerment Stretch Outcome	50% of people report they feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026 and key driver social connections and networks working together is supported and encouraged.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	<p>This report support Culture Aberdeen, the City's Ten-Year Cultural Strategy and its five key objectives.</p> <p>Regional Economic Strategy - Programme 4 Support development of projects and delivery of Culture Aberdeen Plan and Support and promote the arts and cultural venues of the North-East to attract and promote national and international exhibitions and programmes.</p>

**9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Other</b>	Not required

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 Culture Investment Framework, CR&E/24/214 ,Finance and Resources Committee, 7 August 2024

**11. APPENDICES**

**12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS**

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