

# Plaques Policy

**Approved by Committee on**

**25 August 2021 with an implementation date of 25 August 2021**

## Document Control

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<b>Approval Authority</b>	Finance and Resources Committee
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May 2021	Policy replaces 2002 Guidance documentation for the Erection of Commemorative Plaques and reflects requirements of Corporate Policy Template.
May 2024	Policy reflects change in committee and cluster name, introduction of an annual application deadline and duplication clause, IIA modification, plaque wording responsibility change, vandalism clause alteration and repositioning of location information.

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## 1. Why does the Council need this Policy?

- 1.1 From the 19th century, plaques have been erected in Aberdeen commemorating people and places which have shaped the city, Scotland or beyond – people who have made outstanding achievements in their field, or buildings or events of historic significance. The City Council have overseen the erection of these plaques since 1978 when it first developed a scheme.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the criteria Aberdeen City Council will apply to applications from citizens, officers and elected members nominating an individual, building or event for commemoration on a plaque within Aberdeen under the Council's Plaques scheme. It will guide the decisions of Council officers and Committees on whether a person, event or building should be recognised with a plaque.
- 1.3 This policy will mitigate the reputational risk of unfair and inconsistent decision making about who or what should be recognised with a plaque. In addition it will mitigate the reputational risk of unsuitable plaques (such as those connected with discriminatory activity) being erected and associated with the interests of Aberdeen City Council.
- 1.4 This policy is in line with national guidance from [Historic Environment Scotland](#) and the Council's [Listed Building consent procedures](#).

## 2. Application and Scope Statement

- 2.1 This policy will guide the decisions of Council officers and Committees on whether a person, event or building should be recognised with a plaque.
- 2.2 The scheme encompasses yellow (old scheme) and blue (current) circular plaques commemorating individuals (which we will refer to as People Plaques) and their connection to a particular building; and black rectangular arched plaques (which we will refer to as Place Plaques) that mark historical sites and events.
- 2.3 Other commemorative plaque schemes exist at a local and national level. These include the University of Aberdeen's maroon plaques, Historic Environment Scotland and UK wide organisations such as the Institute of Physics. These plaques are not covered by this policy but we encourage information sharing and collaboration for the public benefit.

## 3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Chief Officer - City Development and Regeneration is the owner of this policy and accountable for overseeing its application by Aberdeen Archives, Gallery and Museums (AAGM) staff.
- 3.2 The scheme is administered by officers in AAGM. They review nominations and make recommendations to the Chief Officer and relevant Committee (currently Finance and Resources).

- 3.3 Decisions on whether to accept a nomination are subject to the approval of the relevant Committee.
- 3.4 Under delegated powers, the Chief Officer - City Development and Regeneration can, following consultation with the Convener of the Finance and Resources Committee, decline applications that do not meet the criteria set out in sections 5.1 - 5.3 of this policy or if they determine that the contents of a unique Integrated Impact Assessment are sufficient for application rejection, even with mitigations in place (see 3.6).

### 3.5 **Responsibilities of the Nominator**

The nominating person or body is responsible for:

- Submitting a clear rationale for recognising an individual, place or event in time for the annual plaque application deadline of 1st December.
- Proposing a location and wording for the plaque, and awaiting confirmation from the Council that the site is appropriate prior to the Nominator approaching the building's owner.
- Seeking written consent from the building owner to allow the Council to erect the plaque (this can be via email). The application will not go ahead if written consent is not received. The building owner is responsible for informing the residents of any planned installation of plaques in line with their tenancy agreements.
- If appropriate, gaining listed building consent for the plaque.
- Making payment to the Council for full cost of production and installation of the plaque (invoices can be provided).
- On approval of the proposal, the Nominator will re-confirm in writing, agreement with the building owner (and tenants if applicable) and pass confirmation to AAGM.

NOTE: the Council will determine the final location of the plaque, following communication with building owners.

Joint nominations by several organisations working in collaboration are welcomed.

### 3.6 **Responsibilities of Aberdeen City Council**

- Submitted nominations will be reviewed by relevant AAGM officers. Equality considerations will be taken into consideration during this review, using an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA). The generic IIA for plaque applications will be considered, and unique IIAs will be completed for individual nominations where necessary. As part of the review, the Council will obtain confirmation that site is appropriate (including completion of associated risk assessment).

- Recommendations to Committee will be based on assessment of relevance to Aberdeen, uniqueness and importance of the achievement and suitability of the proposed location for the proposed plaque. AAGM officers will work with the Nominator to agree proposed plaque wording.
- Decisions will be taken based on these recommendations and supported by the IIA, and are subject to final approval by the appropriate Council Committee (at present Finance and Resources). If erection of the plaque is approved, Committee will confirm final plaque wording.
- The Chief Officer – City Development and Regeneration will refuse, following consultation with the Convener of the Finance and Resources Committee, applications for plaques if they do not meet the Council’s criteria or if it is determined after assessment of a unique IIA that the contents are sufficient for application rejection, even with mitigations in place. These will not ordinarily be presented to the Finance and Resources Committee for determination.

On approval of the plaque application the AAGM officers will:

- arrange for the production of the plaque.
- inform the Nominator when the plaque is ready to be installed, and indicate clearly where the plaque is to be sited on the proposed building.
- write to the owner of the building to confirm a date for installing the plaque, and instruct the owner to inform tenants accordingly in a timely manner.
- install the plaque.
- ensure that any opportunities for promotion and publicity are managed appropriately with the Nominator.
- update the online catalogue of Commemorative Plaques and send specific link to Nominator.
- Any accidental damage to a plaque by the Council or by any other third party will be repaired by the Council as funds allow unless it is caused by the building’s owner or contractors employed by the owner, in which case the building owner will be liable for any costs of replacement or repair. Damage caused by vandalism will be repaired/ replaced by the Council as funds allow, and the Council will seek to recover the costs from those responsible.

3.7 Feedback on this policy should be directed to [plaques@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:plaques@aberdeencity.gov.uk).

3.8 A summary of this process is provided in Appendix 1.

## 4. Supporting Procedures and Documentation

- 4.1 Documentation to support adherence to the policy and guide Nominators is available on the City Council website at [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/aagm](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/aagm). This comprises:
- [Application Form and Guidance Notes for Applicants](#).
  - [Examples of existing plaques](#) in eMuseum.

## 5. About this Policy

### 5.1 People Plaques

Plaques commemorating an individual should meet the following criteria.

The person should have:

- died at least 20 years ago AND have been born more than 100 years ago. This is to ensure that the decision whether to erect a plaque is made with a sufficient degree of hindsight.
- contributed to the rich social, political and cultural heritage of Aberdeen or have been an Aberdonian who impacted the world through their achievements, words or deeds.
- made a major contribution to their field within a Scottish context as a minimum. (This could be as judged by their peers, such as an established award or prize; as judged by the public, where their achievements generate commercial success or popular acclaim; or based on informed assessment of the impact and legacy of their work to their field, by suitably qualified peers).

They should normally also have:

- lived or worked in Aberdeen for at least 5 years;  
or
- been born in Aberdeen;  
or
- made their discovery or achieved their accomplishment in Aberdeen.

Collective applications for groups of individuals will be considered against the same criteria.

### 5.2 Place Plaques

Plaques commemorating an event, site or building should meet the following criteria.

The event should:

- have occurred at least 50 years ago. This is to ensure that the decision whether to erect a plaque is made with a sufficient degree of hindsight.
- have impacted on a significant number of Aberdeen residents.
- reflect the rich social, political or cultural heritage of Aberdeen.
- be specifically associated with the location at which the plaque is to be erected.

The building or site should either:

- be of particular architectural importance.
- be historically important as a survival of a particular period.
- have a connection with a series of historic events; or
- have a connection with a significant business or industry.

### 5.3 Location criteria

Plaques should meet the following location criteria.

The plaque must be affixed to a building within the public realm (visible without entering private property). Only one plaque in this Council scheme can be erected per person/event within Aberdeen; a person/event is represented at one location only.

For People Plaques the location of the proposed plaque should be such that:

- the person was born or lived within the same building upon which the plaque will be fixed, or they worked there for a significant or important period of their life (at least 5 years).
- or
- an existing and appropriate building on site of the former building (in point above).

Where buildings have been radically altered or demolished, we consider the relationship between person and building to have been broken. However the policy would allow “on this site” to be used in such a situation, if appropriate wording could be agreed then approved at Committee-level, otherwise no plaque will be erected.

For Place Plaques the location should be such that the event or site is focused near or at the vicinity of the proposed plaque (for existing examples please see <http://emuseum.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites>).

Technical specifications as to the siting and style of plaques are detailed in Appendix 2, and must be adhered to.

### 5.4 Cost

The cost of any applications for permissions, production and installation will be met by the Nominator. Aberdeen City Council does not hold a budget for the creation of new plaques within the city. Council officers can suggest possible sources of funding to support applications for nominators who will struggle to meet these costs (for example the Council’s Culture Grants Programme).

### 5.5 Reappraisal

There may be rare cases where a significant reappraisal of an individual’s contribution occurs after a plaque has been erected (for example, where a connection to criminal or inappropriate activity comes to light). Where this is the case, applications to review and revise the wording of plaques by AAGM officers will be submitted to the relevant Committee following consultation with the original Nominator/sponsor if known and the building’s owner(s). The Committee may decide that a plaque should be removed. In some instances, plaques will be retained but all reasonable efforts will be made to highlight new assessments of an individual or event through the Council’s plaques database and website. Other opportunities may be explored if planning permission and/or funding allows. Periodic review of existing plaques will be carried out by the Council to ensure our plaques database and website contains up to date research or new information.



## 5.6 Diversity and representation

We recognise the relative lack of diversity and representation in the current range of commemorative plaques in the Aberdeen City Council scheme. Applications that celebrate the contributions of Aberdeen's diverse communities to the City will be particularly welcomed. As a public authority, the Council is obligated to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The erection of plaques may foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

## 6. Risk

6.1 This policy and its supporting documentation will mitigate the following reputational risks to the Council:

- risk the Council's decisions on plaques are inconsistent;
- risk that the plaques are erected for unsuitable candidates, which could create negative publicity and complaints for the Council by association;
- risk of customers being disappointed at an unsuccessful application.

The policy mitigates these risks by establishing clear criteria and ensuring a sufficient degree of hindsight is applied to the assessment of whether an individual or event's achievements or significance makes them worthy of marking with a plaque.

6.2 This risk will be monitored through application success rates and the progression of enquiries through to full application. If the policy is successful it should mean that the Committee supports officer recommendations. These recommendations are supported by the IIA.

## 7. Environmental Implications

7.1 The manufacturing of plaques has a negative impact in terms of carbon emissions. However, cast aluminium is durable and the manufacturer of commemorative plaques is based in the UK and uses recycled aluminium sourced from within the UK, supporting sustainable procurement.

7.2 Plaque schemes can encourage people to walk more, and this may aid appreciation of our surrounding environment. A Council 'People and Places' walking trail supports the Council's Commemorative Plaques scheme.

## 8. Policy Performance

8.1 By providing clear criteria for applicants to meet, this policy should reduce the number of unsuccessful applications for plaques, saving the time of both Council staff and nominators. It should also reduce the number of complaints from citizens or organisations about plaques and unsuccessful applications.

- 8.2 Nomination, approval and rejection rates will be monitored, along with feedback from service users, to measure the effectiveness of the policy.
- 8.3 Existing plaques will be reviewed periodically to ensure the website and plaques database includes up to date research or new information. The Council is committed to making its website accessible.

## 9. Design and Delivery

- 9.1 Plaques contribute to the city centre being a City of Learning, specifically supporting the following area of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26, refreshed 7 July 2021 (page 49):

“We are committed to becoming a City of Learning means capitalising on the vast opportunities, resources and potential for enabling people to learn and develop themselves in ways that meet their needs, interests and ambitions.”

Plaques also contribute to the city centre as a visitor destination linked to heritage tourism. This aligns with the Regional Economic Strategy 2015-2025 (page 4):

“Similarly we want to capitalise on our existing strengths and support a broadening of our economy across other industries – within the energy sector itself, tourism, food, drink, fisheries and agriculture, creative industries and life sciences.”

- 9.2 This policy should increase the diversity of people recognised as contributing to the heritage of the City, supporting the Public Sector Equality Duty and the corporate Equality Outcomes.
- 9.3 This policy fits with the aspirations of the Council’s Operating Model to improve processes to reduce inefficiency, guided by people at the front line.

## 10. Housekeeping and Maintenance

- 10.1 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by officers in City Development and Regeneration.
- 10.2 This policy replaces the Plaques Policy approved by the City Growth and Resources Committee in August 2021.

## 11. Communication and Distribution

- 11.1 The policy and supporting guidance will be made available on the Council’s website and supplied to those interested in nominating an individual, building or event for a plaque. Information and guidance will also be made available in alternative formats where requested.

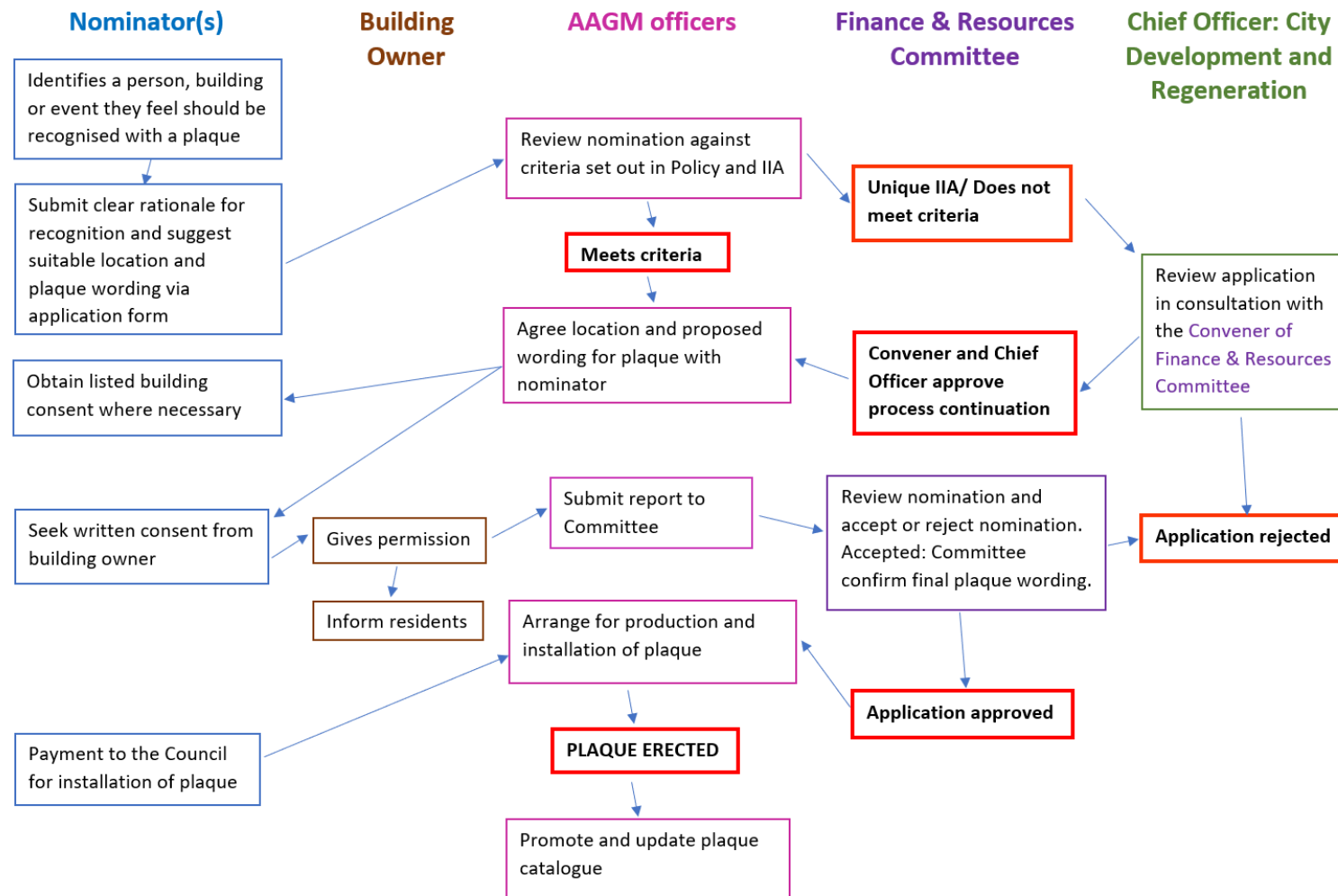
## 12. Information Management

- 12.1 Information generated by the application of the policy will be managed in accordance with the Council's Corporate Information Policy and supporting Procedures.

## 13. Definitions and Understanding this Policy

- 13.1 Nominator: The individual or group nominating an individual, event or building for recognition with a plaque.
- 13.2 People Plaques: commemorating the lives of outstanding individuals who have contributed to the development of the city, the history of the region or who are of international standing. Previously referred to as Commemorative Plaques. For a full description of the style and location restrictions, please see Appendix 2.
- 13.3 Place Plaques: commemorate a significant historic event that took place in that building or site; or to highlight the part played by such a building or site in the history of the city. Previously known as Court Plaques. For a full description of the style and location restrictions, please see Appendix 2.

## Appendix 1: Process and Responsibilities



## Appendix 2: Technical specifications for plaques

### General specifications

The following specifications concerning location and style must be met for both People and Place Plaques.

#### *Location*

The location should be such that:

- members of the public will be able to view it from a public land without needing to enter upon private property.
- it is freely visible, in a distinct uncluttered location and is not in close proximity to obligatory Health and Safety notices and other signage.
- It is not always possible to place plaques at a height that is accessible to wheelchair users, but images and supplementary information will also be made available online to increase accessibility.

Where plaques are proposed to be attached to a listed building:

- It is the responsibility of the applicant to apply for Listed Building Consent.
- Listed building consent will be required unless all the following five criteria are met:
  1. It is only on a category B or category C listed building. Category A listed buildings will normally require consent;
  2. It does not exceed 500mm in diameter;
  3. It is located not below 1m from entrance level and not more than 3m above;
  4. It is the only plaque on the building;
  5. It is secured in place using non-ferrous fixings positioned into the mortar joints.
- To find out whether the building is listed or what category of listing it is, please see Historic Environment Scotland's website:  
<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/search-for-a-listed-building/>
- Please note that features such as boundary walls may be included in a listing, even if not explicitly mentioned in the list description – for clarification, please contact Planning and Building Standards on [pi@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:pi@aberdeencity.gov.uk).

### *Style and wording*

- The wording on the plaque should be in plain English (exceptions may include where book title is being indicated) and consider those with additional communication needs. Refer to existing examples for guidance. Content will be dependent on size and location of plaque.
- Plaques were formerly in block capitals but this is a barrier to those with visual impairments, so sentence case will now be used.
- The role or contribution should be kept brief to ensure the plaque is legible – AAGM officers will advise and help to reduce to a suitable length, taking into account accessibility and location of plaque. Further detail can be added on the Plaques webpages.
- The plaque will conform to the normal dimensions of other plaques within Aberdeen City.
- No notice of sponsorship will occur on the plaque, nor will logos be included in the design. Each plaque is unique. As such, plaque wording should be standalone e.g. not referencing trails or other plaques. Notice of sponsorship and associated plaques can be included on the plaques webpages.

### **People Plaques Specifications**

*Size and shape:* Circular; 20 inches or 500mm in diameter.

*Material:* Metal plaque; cast with raised lettering, border and detail.

*Colour:* Blue with white lettering and border. Older plaques have yellow/fawn tone, a colour previously approved by the planning department to reflect the city's granite backdrop. The blue and white colour scheme provides better visual contrast.

### *Style*

The Text should follow the convention of: Name, years of birth - death, significant role/contribution, was born here/lived here/worked here (with dates).

For consistency of style, the following guidance should be followed:

- Married status titles such as Mr/Ms/Miss/Mrs will not be used.
- Single given/earned titles such as Dr/Sir/Lady will be included.
- Honorifics and awards can be added at the end of names such as QC, OBE, VC – space allowing.
- Use first name and last name only; use familiar or abbreviated names or initials if that is how they were commonly known.

### **Place Plaques Specifications**

*Size and shape:* Rectangular or arched; varying sizes.

*Material:* Metal plaque; cast with raised lettering, border and detail.

*Colour:* Black, colour previously approved by the planning department to better reflect the city's granite backdrop. Border and lettering in gold.



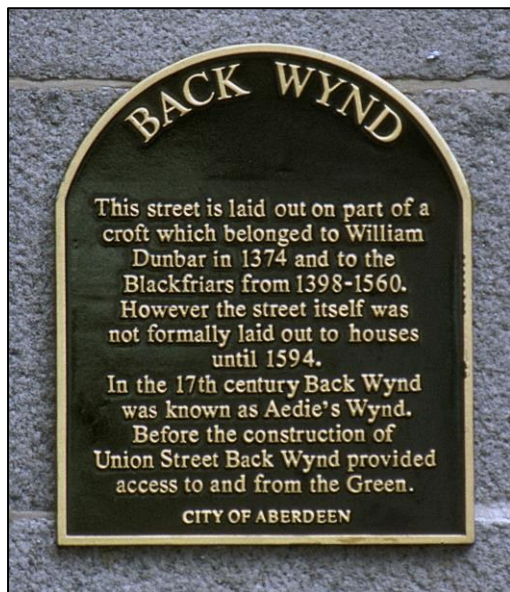
## Examples of plaques



1 Close up of the Dr Sandeman plaque on wall of 22 Waverley Place, Aberdeen



2 Wider view of Dr Sandeman plaque on wall of 22 Waverley Place, Aberdeen



3 Close up of Back Wynd Place Plaque, explaining the history of the street



4 Wide view showing position of Back Wynd plaque on granite wall of St Nicholas Kirkyard at the corner of Back Wynd and Union Street