

# **Common Ground**

## Stirling's Cultural Direction

### *A Strategic Approach*

2023-2028

# The catalysts for passion, change and action are in this room

At the end of a presentation to a gathering of Stirling's creative practitioners in June 2023, this was the final slide. For this document, it could be slightly amended to, "...are reading this strategy.". Documents don't change things, people do.

If you're reading this you probably already have some interest in culture, creativity, heritage, education, economic development, or wellbeing – you may have skin in the game as a practising artist or cultural venue – you might be looking for funding and hope this provides you with a handy phrase or two to unlock it.

Documents don't change things, but they can influence change and the people who can create change. And that is the spirit in which this document is offered – not as a definitive roadmap to be followed, but to suggest a collective direction of travel based on what many people and organisations have already said or written.

It aims to distil common themes into practical initiatives and start a conversation around them. It talks a lot about catalysts and when it does, it's talking about you. If things are to change and develop, then it's going to happen because you help it to, working on your own or most likely with others.

Hopefully, it will remind you of two things - you're not alone in what you're trying to achieve, and you're doing it in an area that is so culturally and creatively diverse that you can find your travelling companions quite quickly if you scratch the surface just a bit.

# 1 Common Ground

*"Cultural leaders want to operate from a place of confidence. I can set goals, resolutions and ambitions for what may lie ahead. But who can be confident when culture, like society seems overflowing with a plethora of unknown unknowns? We are witnessing an unprecedented maelstrom of shifts that demand new responses across a whole range of issues."*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ['Leading Culture In Our Time'](#), Hilary Carty, Clore Leadership, Arts Professional, February 2022

## Continuing a journey that's already underway.

The aim of Stirling's 2016-20 Cultural Strategy was:

*'...to position Stirling as [an] international cultural powerhouse - **a vibrant, dynamic and creative place to be.** We will be bold, embracing innovation and challenging the status quo to more fully harness the potential of arts, culture and creativity to help transform the quality of life for people and in communities; and deliver inclusive economic growth and community regeneration. We will particularly focus on those communities and citizens who are less advantaged. Increasing access to and [recognising] participation in arts and culture can make a significant impact on reducing health and educational inequalities, hence **the principle of inclusion and social justice is integral to our strategic approach.**'<sup>2</sup>*

This aim remains largely true in 2023 in this refreshed strategy, although given the global circumstances that have occurred between the timing of the two documents, there is perhaps a more reflective ambition to be a *local* rather than *international* powerhouse. You can be both, but you can't have the latter without the former.

However, the centrality of inclusion, access and social justice remain central to the personal and common

aspirations of all those who contributed their time, thoughts, and experience to inform this document. This is a good thing – it suggests a continuing philosophy that underpins how the area views the value and role of cultural activity in its various communities. Maintaining such a positive core motivation is a strength, and that philosophy is evident in the recommended actions of this document.

So, what is this document? The cultural ambitions of the city were clearly and colourfully explored in the 2022 submission to become UK City of Culture<sup>3</sup> (the Bid), which was in itself a call-to-arms for those in the cultural, public, private and academic sectors to work collectively towards a common goal (and the momentum of that co-working has largely inspired the creation of this Strategy). Earlier in 2021, Scene Stirling produced a first, and comprehensive, draft of a Cultural Action Plan<sup>4</sup> (the Plan) for the area. So why the need for this document? What's its purpose?

That was answered in part by its brief – *to test that the assumptions made in those two documents were still widely held, and to explore ways in which their aspirations might become realised.* But it was only fully answered during the process of the consultation which, through various group and one-to-one meetings and questionnaires, revealed the passion and commitment of those practitioners and managers and member of the public – professional and non-professional – who demonstrated that culture is easier to

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<sup>2</sup> 'Stirling's Cultural Strategy: 2016-2020', Stirling Council, 2016

<sup>3</sup> 'Stirling: Alive with Culture – UK City of Culture 2025 – Our Bid', Stirling Council, 2022 (the Bid document)

<sup>4</sup> 'Strategic Culture Action Plan for Stirling', Scene Stirling, 2021 (the Action Plan)

express through actions than it is to commit to paper.

Sometimes, it is sufficient for a document like this to remind a large and disparate community of interest that they are just that – a community of many souls – although the solitary nature of their work may make this seem less apparent to them on a day-to-day basis. And importantly, that they are working to a common purpose – that there are kindred spirits who are neighbours, literally and metaphorically.

This, then, is the role of this refreshed strategy – to establish some pragmatic common ground for the next 3-5 years for practitioners and policymakers, inspired by what is already happening and what could happen better, and shaped by the core values of social justice and equality of opportunity that have carried forward from 2016. It is not a collection of well-meant and carefully phrased ambitions – rather, it suggests six specific areas that could be worked towards, collectively, recognising that not all will want or be able to join these initiatives, but that everyone in the Stirling area is likely to be touched by them in some way.

## Context

In an area of such cultural diversity and richness both in its contemporary and historic offer, what common ground can be found? The one aspect that unites everyone is the context in which they will operate, and for many the next five years will be a period of recovery, consolidation, and in some cases survival. While many individuals and organisations will look to diversify and develop in different ways as a means of addressing that survival and consolidation, others will need more support and care.

A strategic direction, therefore, should acknowledge this context as the element that will most drive the actions of the players in the cultural sector over the next five years – a long list of objectives and outcomes are unlikely to affect or be of interest to the sector.

Establishing an environment that is more supportive, understands and acknowledges the role and opportunities of culture and creativity, and looks to make long term change through investment in creativity is more likely to be both of interest to the sector and of benefit to the people of the Stirling area.

## Impact

Each year brings new research evidence of something that many feel instinctively, the positive impact of engaging in creative activity. This can be through improved physical and mental health, general wellbeing, educational achievement, personal confidence and self-esteem. Communities can experience similar benefits – a different or higher profile, often through culture-led regeneration projects (and one of the drivers behind Stirling's City of Culture bid). Social impact at both individual and community levels can be transformative.

Cultural impact – strengthening the depth, quality and availability of indigenous cultural opportunity – is another principal driver of this refreshed strategy and, therefore, requires the support of the indigenous creative community – individual practitioners and organisations, from games companies to arts clubs and societies, the Smith and the MacRobert to makers and writers.

Assessing the economic benefits of cultural and heritage assets is

complex. Where other sectors (such as, transport and housing) have established databanks of evidence to draw from there is no similar approach for culture and heritage. So, the DCMS<sup>5</sup> established the Culture and Heritage Capital Programme<sup>6</sup> to create an approach that considers Cultural & Heritage assets, such as those held across the Stirling area, as “stock” which provides benefit “flows” in terms of the services and that they generate, and the use of ‘contingent value approaches’ (i.e. people’s willingness to pay) as a proxy for the economic value of free goods, such as visits to cultural venues and volunteer input.

All of this is a slightly complex way of recognising there is indirect economic merit and benefit – often at significant levels – in a community’s level of cultural activity, non-professional and professional. There are direct benefits as well, of course, through employment in organisations, events, and venues. And the area’s heritage assets in particular – the castles at Stirling and Doune, the Wallace monument – are not only genuinely iconic in national terms but economically lucrative in terms of visitor visibility and attraction of tourists<sup>7</sup>.

## Themes

The main themes of the strategic approach are *connection*, *catalyst* and *collaboration*.

Underpinning these is a sense of social purpose that recognises the innate power of creativity to help

individuals in different ways: to develop confidence, to broaden horizons, to open gateways to employment or further education, and perhaps the most obvious and widespread reason of all - to enjoy and have fun.

Defining ‘culture’ can sometimes miss that basic point: people define culture differently because of their own experience, taste and exposure to cultural events they enjoy – there is no right definition, and it can as easily encompass country and western music as Wagner’s operas, flower arranging and contemporary dance, gala days and film festivals, reading manga comics and painting watercolours, playing Minecraft and embroidering a scarf, visiting a museum and playing the guitar – everyone has a cultural thumbprint, a personalised portfolio of creative experiences and preferences that grows and changes as they do.

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport

<sup>6</sup> A paper, “Valuing culture and heritage capital: a framework towards informing

decision making” was published in January 2021.

<sup>7</sup> More than 50% of international visitors cite ‘history and culture’ as their primary driver for visiting, Scotland Visitor Survey, Visit Scotland

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## 2 Connect

"Our vision is for culture to be at the core of all our everyday lives.

Culture is within all of our communities. It is for everyone, but we understand that not everybody is starting on an equal footing."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Bid document

## Encouraging an appetite

In June 2023, over 60 people convened at the Tolbooth at the top of the town, to share their experience as arts practitioners, and to discuss themes of common interest. The gathering was convened by Scene Stirling and was a great illustration of what a healthy cultural ecosystem requires – people within the cultural and creative community periodically gathering to share and agree directions of travel. Such events don't always need to be at such scale or be so formalised, they can take place between a handful of visual artists in Killearn, or community activists in Pleau, or students at Forth Valley College campus, or in any number of ways and locations. The principle is about *communication* both for its own sake, and also with the potential for collaboration.

'People don't know what's going on', 'There's so much happening that folk aren't aware of' – variations of this were the most familiar refrain heard throughout the consultation. It was often accompanied by a detailed list of the type of cultural event, class, performance, exhibition, or workshop taking place at local level. There's no doubt you don't need to scratch the surface too hard before finding an astonishing diversity of creative activity, throughout the area.

So, is it a question of better marketing, as many felt – a more effective what's on/anti-clash guide or better collective PR for culture? Or is it that there is not always the scale of audience interest for activity that the enthusiast believes there should be? The former can be addressed through improving or introducing new mechanisms – better social media use to develop new networks, savvier use of broadcast and online media channels. The latter, however,

requires deeper attention and is a fundamental requirement – it is about *encouraging an appetite* for cultural activity so individuals will actively search out how they might participate or attend.

For a long-term strategic approach, encouraging an appetite in cultural activity is the key thing to address. Often it is expected that this should happen through the primary and secondary education systems – and that is certainly an important area (and one of the proposed six initiatives) – but it's not the only one.

The appetite is generally stimulated at home or within friendship peer groups. So, any strategic direction needs to acknowledge a broader scope that includes the home and the immediate communities with which people identify geographically – a village, small town, the University campus, or the many areas that comprise the city. 'The Stirling area' doesn't mean much to most residents – Fallin, Bannockburn, or Thornhill do. Again, the importance of communicating in a way that residents engage with is key, and chief amongst these is that they recognise themselves and their community within what is being discussed or planned.

## Underlying Assumptions

Acknowledging this geographic diversity, the 2021 Action Plan has three Priorities – its first is:

***Stirling as a place where cultural activity and creativity is at the heart of its regeneration. Building a strong and visible reputation for culture in place-making and community development in city and rural areas, with a strong focus on participation, inclusion, and access.***

This, then, is one of the basic underlying assumptions of the strategic direction.

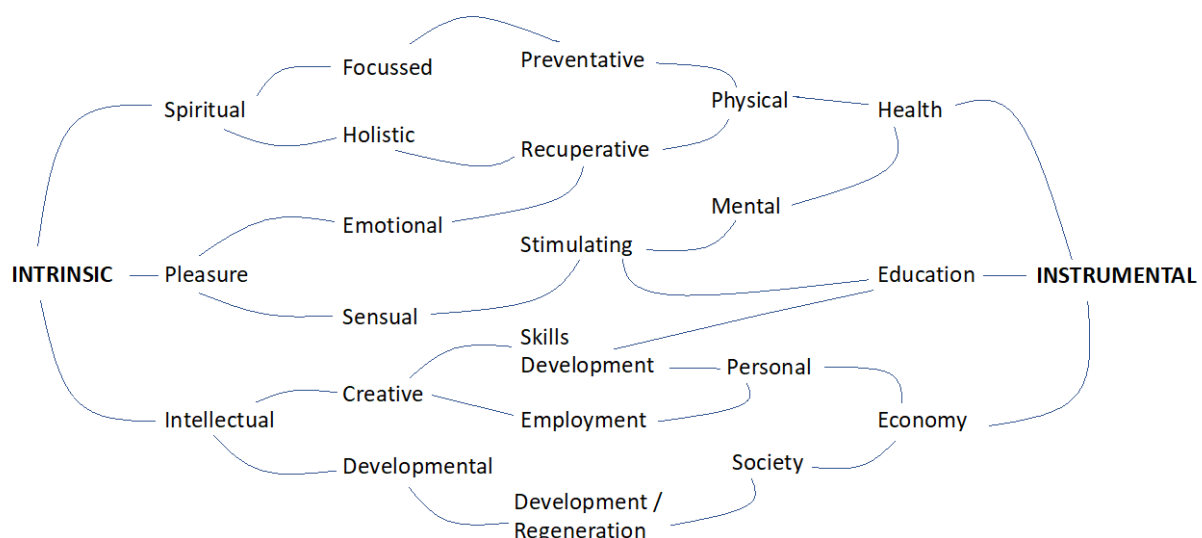
Throughout the consultation, many underlined the importance of the need to understand that any healthy cultural ecology requires an active constituency of creative practitioners – artists, musicians, games designers, makers, et al. So, the second underlying assumption is that **creative artists should be supported**. This simple sentence acknowledges a complex requirement. There are many creative disciplines, some physically demanding and others requiring more intellectual engagement, some digital, some analogue, some requiring specialist spaces and equipment, others requiring none. The range of support required, therefore, is diverse and needs sustained support, particularly from the public and academic sectors, in terms of funding, creation and maintenance of spaces, and education opportunities.

A third assumption is that **the development-led approach to cultural activity changes people** – ‘plant trees’ was a metaphor that one consultee used, essentially, expose people to creative opportunities, particularly when they’re young, without looking for immediate benefit. Sometimes the discussion can become characterised as an Intrinsic v Instrumental approach. However, as the diagram below illustrates, the two are intertwined and, for the purposes of this Strategic Direction, both are considered equally valid.

## What is the change you want to make?

The Plan talks about ‘a catalyst for change’ and the Bid says, ‘our cultural power will enable change’. But catalysts to what? What needs changed?

Change is something people respond to differently and, when pushed, most consultees saw change as being a) incremental, and b) often about mindsets – moving to a position



where the worth of cultural activity is understood better at institutional and domestic levels. In other words, people should be motivated or interested as part of their day-to-day lives to participate or attend cultural activities, and the infrastructure to do so should be provided to help them – i.e. cultural interest stimulated at domestic level and supported at institutional level.

It's a simple enough formula on paper and summarised by the metaphor of transferring 'cultural power' from the institution to the individual. The reality is complicated by historic patterns of cultural provision either through venues or activities – where they are located, how well they are funded, who undertakes them. What consultees suggested was that the nature of agency needs to change i.e. who makes the decisions about what is presented/made available where and by whom. This transfer to a more localised opportunity for decision-making would, it was felt, provide much more appropriate expressions of cultural interest within communities and, therefore, address more effectively *establishing the appetite* at domestic levels - *'Culture is within all of our communities. It is for everyone, but we understand that not everybody is starting on an equal footing.'*<sup>9</sup>

This is elaborated in the Bid's five stated areas for impact:

- **Social**  
Renew connections among communities, placing culture in the core of our lives
- **Cultural**  
Reimagine boundaries and connections linking people and places through culture

- **Economic**  
Generate sustainable growth through creative innovation, entrepreneurship and new collaborative networks
- **Environmental**  
Placing Stirling at the heart of the UK's vision of a creative and sustainable future
- **Place-making/ Recognition**  
Stirling cultural, creative and economic vibrancy better recognised at home and abroad<sup>10</sup>

It can also be found in Creative Stirling's Vision, *'Stirling's creative sector is an active agency for promoting community leadership in enterprise, education, skills and training towards a shared agenda for Community Wealth Building.'*<sup>11</sup>

So, the change that is sought is a seminal one – a change in attitude to how people perceive culture, what it is, their own relation to it, and how they can determine it. This is a bold, significant, and ultimately long-term aim. It should also be considered as an integrated element of a broader approach to civic provision of services, as outlined in Stirling Council's 'Thriving Stirling' policy objectives, outlined in the diagram below.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p8

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p16

<sup>11</sup> 'Creative Sector Strategic Plan, final draft', Creative Stirling, 2020



## Where is the need?

Change is often driven by need, and Appendix A provides a concise demographic summary of the Stirling city-region, which notes that, *'overall, Stirling performs well when it comes to most economic and social indicators, particularly compared to Scotland-wide averages. However, [there are] deep rooted inequalities across Stirling, with persistent pockets of deprivation. There is a direct correlation between areas with poorer social and health outcomes and poorer economic outcomes'*.

The need is, therefore, geographic and demographic and has underpinned the 2021 Plan's Strategic Outcomes, all of which remain valid:

***Our Strategic Outcomes - as a focus and a catalyst for change, are:***

- ***A measurable increase in the well-being and self-esteem of our citizens and their pride in Stirling.***
- ***An increased engagement with the cultural offerings, especially by those less likely to participate in cultural activity.***
- ***The development of new collaborative cultural offerings, new skills, new opportunities and new connections - nationally and internationally for artists and cultural organisations.***
- ***A greater national and international understanding and profile through increased tourism and reputation.***<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> From the Action Plan

# 3 Catalysts

"Our cultural power will enable change. This change will be realised through creating social and cultural connections.

Through volunteering and training. Through entrepreneurship and business support. Through care and consideration. Through shared ambition and strong partnerships."<sup>13</sup>

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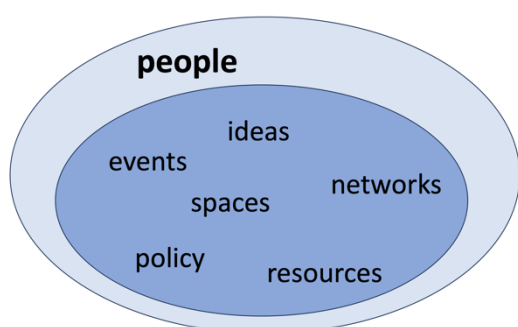
<sup>13</sup> The Bid document

## Change

Stirling has form in terms of *catalysts for change* in culture. It was the first local authority in Scotland to appoint a dedicated Arts Development Officer, the first to create an independent Arts Council to advise the public sector on matters of cultural provision, and the first to produce an independent arts magazine dedicated to promoting and celebrating the city-region's arts sector.

More recently, over the last 15 years it has played host to arguably Scotland's most significant long-term experiment in culture-led social change – the Big Noise project in Raploch.

Consultees were prompted to suggest contemporary catalysts for change, whether people, events, ideas, funding, networks, venues or policies, and examples were offered of each. The consensus was that catalysing change requires all of these, but that the overriding requirement was for people, as illustrated in the diagram below:



People make change, as teachers, policy-makers, practising artists, politicians, parents and peers. And it's people that will implement the strategic direction for culture, so their circumstance will determine the level of its success. There were four recurring aspects consultees felt needed to be acknowledged with any

new initiatives emerging from this strategic process.

## Recovery

In the immediate future, most people and organisations will be aiming to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living challenges at the same time as recovering from the impact of the pandemic and Brexit. This applies equally to those that participate in and experience cultural activity as well as those that provide it. That becomes the defining context for at least the next year or two and, realistically, is likely to shape the next five.

Therefore, in that time period, the emphasis of any strategic approach should be on how it contributes to the recovery of individuals, communities, and organisations; how it promotes cooperation and collaboration; and how it can sow the seeds for longer term growth. In that respect, this presents an ideal time to create a strategic direction for culture.

## Community

Much of the thinking around this – cultural power transferring more locally – is already in place through the Bid and the Plan. The vision and objectives in both documents emphasise the importance of cultural activity being at the core of everyday life in all communities, helping address and change the inequalities of access that exist.

But how can that change be part of the plans for recovery and resilience that will be required over the next five years? Understanding that individuals and organisations have limited capacity and will be largely focussed on their own activities, consultees felt a cultural strategy should focus on

doing fewer things with the widest likely benefit.

## *Resilience*

In Darren McGarvey's book *Poverty Safari*<sup>14</sup> he talks of 'well-intentioned drama and arts projects' being delivered 'to rather than with' communities, usually because the objectives are those of the funder and not the recipients – and he notes this creates increased dependency on external resources and expertise. The task, therefore, is to build resilience. The well-known theory of development work/aid – *give someone a fish and you feed them for a day, teach them to fish and you feed them for life* – holds just as true in cultural development, he suggests.

This resonated with the experience of many consultees as they spoke of the need to work in and with communities, to listen and respond, to understand what that community's culture is (and that it might not be the same as yours, or even familiar to you). But how do you build resilience? Many felt it starts with an acknowledgment of that community's right to determine how they identify their cultural life – the 'cultural power' that is referenced in the Plan. Although that sounds the simplest element, it is often the hardest.

## *Economy*

Economic wellbeing is a key concern of many individuals, as well as communities more broadly. The beneficial social and economic impacts of cultural activity are sometimes considered separately although in practice they are often mutual. At the heart of them is the investment in young people – their skills, but also their confidence – something cultural activity can be

particularly adept at developing. The long-term economic health of a community rests on the ability of its succeeding generations, their imagination and ingenuity, as well as their desire to live and work in an area.

## *Six Catalysts*

The consultation conversations revealed remarkable synergy and alignment of objectives across all disciplines, so this document aims to reflect these in six specific areas that can be developed further in the coming years – these include creativity and health, creative volunteering, development of the screen industries, celebrating the diversity of the cultural offer in the Stirling area, and exploring the cultural rights that individuals might have. These themes recurred time and again in conversations.

Here are six options for specific initiatives that help address these four key themes – all emerged from the consultation discussions as potential ways to turn aspirations into practical outcomes:

- Social Prescription  
*Connecting health providers with cultural activities*
- Cultural Rucksack  
*Pooling cultural opportunities for young people*
- Skills Market  
*Connecting people with cultural employment opportunities*
- Film Sector  
*A joined up approach to establish Stirling as a key Scottish film hub*
- Volunteer Exchange  
*A mechanism to connect communities to cultural projects and practitioners*

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<sup>14</sup> 'Poverty Safari', Darren McGarvey, Picador, 2018

- Major Event  
*An annual communal event that celebrates the diversity of the area's culture*

Each of these is based on *connecting* – people and communities with opportunities and practitioners – and some have young people as an explicit focus. Each could have a particularly strong impact in the areas outlined below:

	<i>Recovery</i>	<i>Resilience</i>	<i>Economy</i>	<i>Community</i>
Social Prescription				
Cultural Rucksack				
Skills Market				
Film Sector				
Volunteer Exchange				
Culture Night				

It's understood that each of the six initiatives will develop in different ways and at a different pace over the course of the next five years: some will exceed all expectations, others perhaps less so, however, they establish areas of common purpose that allow people to convene, discuss, and plan collectively and collaboratively.

The following pages explores each of them in more detail and provides an example of:

- Catalyst  
*What makes this more possible at this moment in time*
- Existing Objective  
*What existing aim will be met by this*
- New Vision  
*What new opportunity might this provide*
- Who needs to be at the table  
*Who are the principal partners to take this forward*
- Context  
*What else has happened or is planned in the area that would contribute to this*

# Social Prescription

## *Connecting health providers with cultural activities*

In Autumn 2022, a coalition of 19 health charities called on the Scottish Government to urgently adopt the use of social prescribing to address growing health inequalities<sup>15</sup>.

The concept of social prescription, or cultural prescription, is not new and indeed has been practised for several years in the Stirling area, albeit to a limited and uncoordinated extent. However, it's an issue that recurred frequently in the consultation conversations about the future.

This was in part recognition of the healing powers of participation in creative activity for both physical and mental well-being, made particularly acute at a time when social and financial pressures are leading to greater levels of personal stress and challenge.

Many felt there was an opportunity for Stirling to develop a more structured approach to social prescription, linking the health sector with the cultural sector in ways that could benefit both.

A potential catalyst for this may be through community liaison posts being established in a number of GP practices in the area in 2023 - these posts could help connect the cultural activity that already exists (or that could be developed specifically) with those whose healthcare would benefit from their involvement in such activities.

This is not a replacement for existing professional disciplines such as drama therapy and music therapy - and is perhaps better characterised as a means of improving physical and mental well-being through social interaction and creative activity.

### **Catalyst**

Appointment of new Community Liaison posts in GP practices across the Stirling area.

### **Existing Objective**

Outcome One of the Plan is:

***A measurable increase in the well-being and self-esteem of our citizens and their pride in Stirling***

### **New vision**

To be a leading area in Scotland for integrated health and creative practice.

### **Who needs to be at the table?**

*University of Stirling* – to link with current and future research in this area; to develop robust measuring tools for impact

*NHS* – to encourage, support and enable GP practices and other healthcare providers to participate

*Cultural providers* – a coalition of those who are happy to engage with this area of activity including individuals and organisations

*Artlink Central* – to provide direction and intel, as one of the few organisations that have consistently championed, and participated, in this field

*GP practices* – to ensure approaches are consistent with good practice

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<sup>15</sup> Holyrood, Scottish Parliament magazine, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2022

appropriate to the day-to-day operation of the practices

### **Context<sup>16</sup>**

Stirling already hosts several high profile culture and health initiatives.

In 2008, investment from Stirling founded Raploch as home to Sistema Scotland's first Big Noise orchestra. Big Noise uses music and nurturing relationships to help children and young people realise their potential, improve lives and strengthen communities. It is a long-term project and now has over 500 members from babies through to sixth years secondary school pupils. The programme has expanded to include volunteering as well as an adult community orchestra and a new brass programme at Fallin Primary.

Stirling Health and Care Village launched in 2020. The site features Dementia friendly contemporary arts and design commissions, an ongoing

artist residency and arts-led third sector programme in Scotland's first health, social care and third sector hub. New artwork includes Leigh Bagley; Heinrich and Palmer and 150 recent graduates across the UK. It has a programme of intergenerational and dementia inclusive arts activity.

The Macrobert builds wider engagement programmes around performances and commissions. Gary Clarke's Coal featured four local community cast members and a local brass band alongside professional dancers. Daylong outreach events were held in former mining areas offering free art, dance & drama workshops, film screenings and community consultation. A walking app was created, and schools took part in a youth dance project which created a curtain raiser performance and an exhibition of commissioned work by artists and community artists.

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<sup>16</sup> From the Bid document

# Cultural Rucksack

## *Pooling cultural opportunities for young people*

*Stirling's children, these  
sons and daughters of the rock  
sculpted with love, anchored  
safe  
from our stronghold  
we take flight into the future<sup>17</sup>*

This excerpt from a poem in the Bid, co-created from community contributions, summarises one of the underlying themes from the consultation – what are the cultural rights of individuals in the Stirling area? Often, but not always, this would focus on children and what level of introduction and support to creative activity should be included as part of the formal primary and secondary curriculum.

At its heart, this approach is around the devolution of cultural power to a local scale model, as can be found expressed in one of the Bid's ambitions, *'This power will be embedded in our people. It will grow from within our different communities. It will be nurtured by the care of our artists and cultural bodies. It will be celebrated by everybody.'*

Its philosophy is rooted in the notion of cultural rights – what is it we believe our community should enable our citizens to have open access to as a consequence of living in our community. This opens a very interesting conversation that quickly extends beyond children to address the cultural rights of all citizens and their equality of access to cultural

opportunities, whether that is geographic access to facilities and services, or financial access, or beyond to a psychological access – *encouraging the appetite.*

It also extends to how we conceive of culture in education and training, as outlined below:

*'The democratic provision of arts education can and should bring about transformational change in people's lives... ask how institutions might train performing artists differently; not simply to entertain, but as critical thinkers, wholly engaged in the challenges of their societies. It's a concept called 'artistic citizenship'.<sup>18</sup>*

One practical means of developing this notion of cultural rights is through the creation of a Cultural Rucksack for primary school children. There are examples of this elsewhere in the UK and Nordic countries and it's not dissimilar from the Scottish Government's Baby Box – essentially, it's a pledge to each school age child that during their time at school they will experience a specified list of activities, each of which is place in their own Cultural Rucksack.

The exact nature of the content of the Rucksack can be slightly different from school to school, but there should be a 'core' offer of essentials that all pupils have access to, and

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<sup>17</sup> Excerpt from Kin Kennings, the 'collective poem by the people of Stirling for 2025', CoC Bid document

<sup>18</sup> ['Can artistic citizenship be taught'](#), Johnathan Vaughan, Arts Professional, February 2023

some additional ones that are provided by artists and venues that are based within the School's locale (some areas may have a particular local tradition that they want to ensure is maintained, for example). Cultural venues or organisations in the area may want to contribute free or reduced-cost access, or provide more specific Rucksack-ready offers. Individuals might contribute access to workshops sessions, studio visits, lecture-demos, and such like.

### **Catalyst**

The creation of cultural rights, as part of a response to Scottish government's consultation on 'a rights-based modern constitution'<sup>19</sup>.

### **Existing Objective**

Outcome Two of the Plan is:

***An increased engagement with the cultural offerings, especially by those less likely to participate in cultural activity.***

### **New Vision**

Stirling adopts an approach to cultural rights that permeates across all areas of cultural provision.

### **Who needs to be at the table?**

*Stirling Council* – as the education authority, to encourage schools' participation

*Education Scotland* – to advise, monitor and, where possible, provide content

*Scottish Government* – to consider as a national pilot

*Creative Scotland* – to support cultural practitioners to prepare material for the Rucksack

*Cultural Practitioners* – to participate as providers

### **Context**

The Cultural Rucksack is a concept that originated in Norway and is designed to enhance cultural experiences for children and young people. It is a metaphorical backpack that contains various cultural activities and experiences. Here's an example of what might go into a Cultural Rucksack:

- a. Museum Pass: that provides free or discounted access to local museums and art galleries
- b. Musical Instrument: A small musical instrument, such as a tin whistle or ukulele, with online resources, to encourage children to learn and play music.
- c. Storytelling Kit: A collection of books, storytelling props, and puppets that enable children to engage in imaginative storytelling.
- d. Art Supplies art supplies, including paints, brushes, sketchbooks, and coloured pencils.
- e. Theatre Tickets: to age-appropriate performances.
- f. Film Club Membership: Membership to a local film club or access to an online streaming platform.
- g. Coding Resources: Books or online courses that introduce basic coding.
- h. Cultural Workshops: or interactive sessions led by artists, musicians, writers, or performers from different cultural backgrounds.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/news/embedding-rights-into-the-constitution/>

# Skills Market

## *Connecting people with cultural employment opportunities*

*Heritage, culture, tourism and creative sector leaders working together to ensure quality jobs and career opportunities through innovation and experimentation that is not risk averse, ensuring future workforce skills development activity is a priority for the area's plans for economic growth.<sup>20</sup>*

This objective from another key document, the Creative Sector Strategic Plan (CSSP), captures a universally held ambition with a current slight disconnect. Education and skills providers and policymakers are keen to see a creative skills-driven economy, students and others are keen to get jobs in an exciting industry - but not everyone is aware of the pipeline to enter the sector.

The CSSP outlined the current scenario very clearly:

"The city's institutions must find new ways to encourage diverse routes into the local creative sector, supporting people either to create their own pathways towards establishing a creative business, or finding employment.

Ensuring young people, students and those who support them are aware of the opportunities locally will equip the future workforce to make informed decisions on where to base their practice. Sharing sectoral perspectives from established

creatives working across the wider sector and across key disciplines, such as heritage, digital, fashion, music and design are valuable for providing city-wide role models and mentors."

One of Scottish Government's Industry Leadership Group's sector objectives is to build '*on the Creative Digital Initiative and create further opportunities to support creative and cultural businesses to develop their digital capacity and capabilities, enhance their data and digital skills.*'<sup>21</sup>

A practical approach for Stirling in the short-term is to try and connect cultural employers with those who would like employment. A simple 'market' model is suggested as a starting point – an annual gathering, for example, where local, regional and national employers can congregate, exhibit/present their opportunities, and students and others keen to connect with them can do so. A digital version of this may also be worth developing.

### **Catalyst**

Recommendations from the **Scotland National Strategy for Economic Transformation**<sup>22</sup>

### **Existing Objective**

'Create pathways and opportunities to attract and retain creative practitioners and business in Stirling.'<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> 'Creative Sector Strategic Plan, final draft', Creative Stirling, 2020 (CSSP)

<sup>21</sup> [SNSSET](#), Scottish Government, March 2022

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> CSSP

### **New Vision**

Cultural employers and potential cultural workforce meet to create clear pipeline of opportunity.

### **Who needs to be at the table?**

*Forth Valley College  
University of Stirling  
Stirling Enterprise Park  
Codebase  
Cultural employers  
Creative Stirling  
Skills Development Scotland  
Creative Scotland*

### **Context**<sup>24</sup>

#### **Skill Level Improvements addressing skill gaps**

We will identify a range of partners and will develop programmes of creative entrepreneurship focussing on young people, our disadvantaged areas and supporting girls to access STEM opportunities. Heritage is one of Stirling's key assets; of all recorded properties in Stirlingshire 20% date from pre-1914, requiring specialised maintenance and retrofit for net zero. There is a shortage of contractors skilled in stonemasonry, slating, lead-working and other skills placing at risk our built heritage.

Digital is another growth area for us; many of the high-growth businesses in our digital tech sector have difficulty attracting local employees due to skills shortages in the rural environment. With incubators at Codebase Stirling, we can scale-up our digital training and engagement, linking directly to culture.

#### **Total number of expected trainee beneficiaries**

Targets set against current baseline figure set at 150, reflecting the total number of trainees enrolled on courses at Forth Valley College and Stirling Council in Creative Industries (including Art, Design, Film, Media, Sound, Tourism and Events) and ready to move onto Higher Education study or into employment. In addition, training opportunities are offered through our co-creation and participation projects.

*[All from the Bid document]*

And this recommendation from the CSSP takes the concept further:

Create pathways and opportunities to attract and retain creative practitioners and business in Stirling. Proposed actions -

- Develop city-wide mentoring, internships and shared apprenticeship programmes building on current Foundation Apprenticeships as part of a talent attraction strategy.
- Build awareness of Stirling as city for social change and innovation, driven by an enterprising creative sector.
- Commitment to equality and greater diversity in the creative sector by commissioning a new inclusive youth arts strategy with Stirling's arts and culture providers working together to deliver.
- Raise awareness of creative sector opportunities with schools, parents, carers and further and higher education working with employers and DYW, Stirling Youth Forum.

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<sup>24</sup> The Bid document

# Film Sector

*A versatile, joined up approach to the screen sector that establishes Stirling as a key Scottish film hub*

*'Our story is undeniable; the history of Scotland is beneath our feet, and we are cradled in natural beauty with so much to be proud of. I'd like to see events that help people re-write that story in a creative, vibrant, engaging way... bring on the storytellers.'*

Stirling Resident, the Bid

The storytellers of popular culture are filmmakers, animators, games designers, podcasters, and software engineers. The screen is a ubiquitous part of daily life, as it has been for 120 years. Originally, it brought people into spaces for communal experiences in cinemas (it still does), but it is now so much a part of domestic and professional life that it's easy to forget the screen industries are, for many people, their primary source of creative content. As well as being a brilliantly attractive way of stimulating individual cultural abilities. And a source of employment...

They are also prone to the uplifts and downturns of any market-led industry, however, although the nature of that industry may change, the scale of it does not. The games industry is far bigger than Hollywood and the music industry combined<sup>25</sup>. And film, particularly TV production, continues to be a major creative and economic presence in Scotland.

Codebase in central Stirling is a catalyst for creative industry SMEs, including those in games and film.

Elsewhere, the University's long-established film and media studies course increasingly look to attract research funding, some of which allows them to develop spaces off-campus.

Add to this mix a willing partner of the College, happy to explore developing courses that enhance students' skills-base that links them directly to employment opportunities in the sector, and you have the ingredients of a very potent screen offer for the city-region.

These further education partners will be critical in developing the eco-system of skills and talent required to sustain the growth in this sector.

The area is already host to a creative support network of independent writers, composers, designers and musicians, as well as technicians, engineers and makers – many of whom have to travel outwith the area to support their employment.

Stirling is well positioned within the central belt and with a rich abundance of photogenic, scenic and heritage locations to appeal to film makers. Stirling Council currently offers a limited reactive, free and fully confidential locations service, and will continue relationships with production companies and Screen

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<sup>25</sup> ['Gaming Industry Dominates...'](#), Gamerhub website, January 2023

Scotland to position Stirling as a front of mind film location.

There is potential to retain and attract talent in the city region. As the CSSP recommends, *'Build on the city and region's strengths and expertise to innovate and create new approaches to supporting local economy growth and value and opportunity for all our communities.'*<sup>26</sup>

*Forth Valley College – to develop bespoke courses for the sector*

### **Catalyst**

Renewed focus on the development of Stirling as a centre for excellence for skills and talent development in the Film Sector and as a must consider film location.

### **Existing Objective**

Priority Three of the Plan is:

***Supporting the Creative and Cultural Economy - Creative industries are driving economic growth across the UK. By building and supporting a more creative circular economy, we aim to encourage innovative thinking, diversity of thought, increased digital learning and opportunities through collaboration and clear pathways for progression.***

### **New vision**

A versatile, joined-up approach to the screen sector that establishes Stirling as a key Scottish film hub.

### **Who needs to be at the table?**

*Screen Scotland* – to ensure this complements national strategy

*Scottish Enterprise* – to bring national support and context

*University of Stirling* – to integrate AHRC and other research opportunities

*Stirling Council* – to integrate with broad economic strategy

### **Context**<sup>27</sup>

Stirling has a small but increasingly well-connected creative and cultural ecology, in part though the impact of the Stirling Place Partnership programme. People in the creative and culture sector are keen to further develop opportunities to collaborate with others, combine skills and learn from each other. Identifying how the creative sector interrelates to sustain other growth sectors like culture, heritage, food and drink and tourism which could benefit from collaborations and partnerships with the creative sector will be valuable for exploring new and emerging practice.

Stirling has an emerging Digital tech community in Codebase and a burgeoning presence for the heritage sector, not just with our iconic historical monuments but also the Engine Shed, Historic Environment Scotland's award-winning visitor and learning centre for the science and art around the built environment, opened in 2017. The new Third Sector hub and other City Region deal development plans combined, present massive potential to support

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

new creative sector development activity.

CSSP recommends:

*Scope the formation and identity of a 'Creative Cluster' for Stirling for digital and creative skills*

*development, underpinning a talent attraction strategy for the city.*

## Volunteer Exchange

*A mechanism to connect communities to cultural projects and practitioners*

*'We believe volunteering is a cultural activity in its own right. Much of our dementia inclusive work has been supported by community volunteer researchers and Stirling is home to the national headquarters for volunteering in Scotland. We are in an ideal position to use this as an opportunity to promote and celebrate cultural volunteering across the UK.'*

Who Is Involved, The Bid

Volunteering is recognised as being a huge part of the Stirling ethos across various areas of civic life – health, social care, sport, and heritage. However, there is a less obvious level of volunteer activity in the cultural sector – many felt this represented a disconnect between the actual level of interest from volunteers and their awareness of opportunities with which to become involved.

The Bid was explicit in harnessing this local enthusiasm on a large scale – *"Through the Year of Culture programme we will create 2,500 volunteering opportunities for our communities. We will identify a target for new volunteers and for*

*attracting people from rural communities and our areas of high multiple deprivation and opportunities for adults with additional support needs."*

This objective was largely based on involving Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise who already have an area-wide [volunteering portal](#) that brings together volunteers and organisations with volunteer opportunities. The Bid said its events would be the catalyst that *"will allow us to grow our volunteering community, implementing training and support"*.

The Volunteering Portal exists – so the technical means for engagement is there. The main requirement is to bring it to the attention of a) potential volunteers, and b) those in the cultural sector that could benefit from additional voluntary support.

### **Catalyst**

Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise' online volunteering portal.

### **Existing Objective**

"We will create opportunities for different ages and experiences with training and support to include, for example, learning disabled adults working in partnership with third sector organisations. Our volunteers

will form part of our welcome committee to locals, artists and visitors alike creating an authentic Stirling welcome.”<sup>28</sup>

### **New Vision**

An actively engaged cohort of volunteers with a skillset and capacity that enable them to service major and local events that wouldn't happen without them.

### **Who needs to be at the table?**

*Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise* – their online Volunteering Portal is key to making this happen

*Cultural Bodies* – to integrate input in a way that advances both them and the volunteer

*University of Stirling* – a potentially large, willing, and diversely-skilled source of volunteers

*Volunteers* – to advise on how best to reach/interest the largest number of volunteers

*Stirling Council* – to help raise the profile of the opportunity to both volunteers and cultural bodies

opportunities in cultural events and share and embed the learning from our volunteering experiences.

The impact of our Culture Connection Panels will continue to inform future programming ensuring that our communities' voices are always represented and reflected. Our dementia friendly ambitions will have been accelerated and we will continue to innovate and develop new ways to further reduce isolation across Stirling.

Volunteering can be stimulated by place-based engagement, connecting people to opportunities to build a City of Culture programme in their own neighbourhoods, actively representing their own area and enabling others to be a part of shaping their authentic creative outputs.

This neighbourhood and place-based capacity building will also seek to connect with other employability, wellbeing and skills-based initiative, working with a range of services including, libraries, schools, community organisations and the third and public sector to enhance and build from existing local partnerships and priorities.

We will utilise models we have piloted in areas such as the Eastern Villages through Scene Stirling's Vantage Points project and a substantial ten-year engagement plan with the Doune and Deanston communities.

### **Context**<sup>29</sup>

Civic participation and volunteering are an integral part of Stirling's aspiration to develop a thriving city of renewal.

We will build on Stirling's commitment to develop 20-minute neighbourhoods and integrate this with volunteering and cultural participation, so that communities can retain and celebrate their economic, social and cultural capital. Through our partnership working, we will continue to create volunteering

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

# Major Event

*An annual communal event that celebrates the diversity of the area's culture*

*'A 'blockbuster' cultural event or festival every 2 to 3 years in the coming two decades... is a high-profile moment that tells us all collectively about what is important to our population, projecting our character and culture to the rest of the world.'*

'Legacy', the Bid

One of the most exciting aspects of the Bid were the large-scale city-region-wide spectacles that were planned. Ambitious events involving many local cultural organisations and practitioners that would be memorable for locals and put the area on the map for new and returning visitors. It would be an opportunity lost if that ambition was not reflected in this refreshed strategy. In the 1980s, the then Stirling Festival moved its dates to align with the pre-week of Edinburgh's Fringe and take advantage of the influx of visiting artists, something that North Berwick currently emulates<sup>30</sup>. Perhaps there are similar ways in which Stirling can maximise the audience reach through creation of a new major event.

Over 100 organisations were involved in the preparation of the CoC Bid (see Appendix B)– from culture, education, creative and cultural skills, media, heritage, environment, and communities and wellbeing sectors. It is as vivid an illustration of the opportunity that exists for collaborative working in

the area as any statement of intent. It demonstrates that the city-region has the *capacity* to harness creative energy from many sources, what it requires is the *opportunity* to do so.

City of Culture status would have provided that opportunity, but there are other vehicles to explore. Elsewhere in Europe the model of a Culture Night continues to prove popular – combining the approach of a doors-open day with a more dynamic programme of events. The approach in Ireland is a good illustration of the model which:

*"...celebrates culture, creativity and the arts and seeks to actively promote the belief that this rich and varied culture is alive, treasured and nurtured in people's lives, today and every day. Special and unique events and workshops are specifically programmed at participating locations and... all activities are made available to the public free of charge."*<sup>31</sup>

This last part is key – this event is all about access (to residents) and profile (to visitors).

## **Catalyst**

The CoC Bid, and the ambitions for collaborative work on the major opening and closing events.

## **Existing Objective**

Outcome 3 of the Action Plan is:

***The development of new collaborative cultural offerings, new***

<sup>30</sup> Fringe by the Sea - <https://www.fringebythesea.com>

<sup>31</sup> <https://culturenight.ie/about/>

*skills, new opportunities and new connections - nationally and internationally for artists and cultural organisations.*

Outcome Four of the Plan is:

*A greater national and international understanding and profile through increased tourism and reputation.*

#### **New Vision**

A brilliant celebration of Stirling's diverse culture, showcasing all its assets.

#### **Who needs to be at the table?**

*Everyone* – this is something that thrives on the involvement of local and national players. The cultural sector needs to lead on this, but it requires local transport providers, retailers, bars and restaurants, media, and the third sector to all be actively engaged.

#### **Context**

Appendix B shows the level of in-principle commitment there was from the National Performing Companies and National Collections to working with their peers in Stirling to help create something special for the city-region. The Major Event should be seen as one of the catalysts that make that easier to realise. Often, it takes a specific opportunity to turn goodwill and intention into reality, and the development and delivery of a major new event could be one of those moments that allow many interested parties – local and national – to tangibly demonstrate their expressed commitment.

# 4 Collaborate

"Collectively, we seek to spark transformative experiences."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The Bid document

## Who Delivers?

Throughout the consultation, the Stirling Place Partnership, and the creation of Scene Stirling, were cited as vital catalysts to the way the sector has communicated with itself in recent years, as well as providing valuable projects, funding, and training opportunities. That they also produced the Action Plan and played a main role in the creation of the Bid suggests that such a body is a requirement rather than a luxury in terms of coordinating and supporting the sector.

The Place Partnership – funded by Creative Scotland and with Stirling Council as a close and active partner – is time limited, even with a welcome extension. What, or who, will have responsibility for the oversight and delivery of the cultural direction and six initiatives outlined in this document?

If you were to invent a body to do this it would look very much like Scene Stirling – an administratively small yet flexible organisation with good local networks and peer respect, acting as midwife and facilitator to the various initiatives – bringing potential partners together, monitoring progress, championing the sector, and acting as a point of contact and interface for local, regional, and national bodies.

In the absence of such a body, or Scene Stirling, many of the duties may be expected of Stirling Council. The Council are the most important single organisation in terms of cultural provision in the area – their range of venues, services, funding, and personnel are essential in both the provision and facilitation of cultural activity and will remain so. However, as with all local government services, they are likely to find their

capacity to deliver additional duties stretched or simply not possible.

The Stirling Cultural Board is a useful forum to congregate the various key parties and they should certainly have a role in the oversight and monitoring of the strategic cultural direction – but it will also need an active administrative participant to coordinate and get things done.

A strong recommendation would be to adapt the Scene Stirling model, or to find a means of continuing the organisation itself, to undertake this role.

## Culture Connection Panels

One of the Bid's suggestions "to ensure we undertake genuine co-production and collaboration with our communities" was to establish "seven geographical panels representing each of our electoral wards and five representing communities of interest - disability; dementia friendly and older; young people; multicultural and LGBTQ+... They will be a conduit with our wider communities [and]... will be supported by a Culture Connection Coordinator".

Originally, it was intended the panels would have a budget and a representative on a central coordinating body. Should a version of this model be pursued, then a similar arrangement would be worth instigating to ensure good communication and intelligence-sharing.

The ambition to devolve cultural power to smaller geographic units has been outlined earlier – a version of the Culture Connection Panel (CCP) may be an effective vehicle for this as they could be "supported, challenged

and equipped to engage and champion their wider community”, as originally intended.

Such a model would require coordination and administrative support and while this could possibly be achieved on a voluntary basis, it is more likely to happen if it is part of the remit of a more permanent body, such as Scene Stirling or its proposed successor.

It may also be possible in time, to “bring our panels together for shared training or networking opportunities and annually for a Community Culture Assembly with our cultural partners. It will create an ongoing programme of championing our communities, creating connection and building capacity” – an aspiration is very much within the spirit of this document.

## Investment

Priority Two of the Action Plan is: ***Attracting investment - increased cultural funding and investment to sustain the arts and cultural sectors. This would be targeted at resources, spaces, opportunities to attract more artists, performers and designers in Stirling, as well as creative individuals, businesses and cultural organisations, ensuring that everyone can have the opportunity to take part and have more cultural experiences to enjoy.***<sup>33</sup>

How is this to be achieved? The CSSP suggests: *“A pioneering region wide inclusive framework led by a ‘City Compact’ of Stirling and national agencies to devise and broker multi agency collaborations that energise and support the creative and cultural sector, ensuring talent from all our*

*communities will be given equal opportunity to thrive.*”<sup>34</sup>

Such a City Compact (CC) echoes the joint agency approach of the Place Partnership, which has proved a successful model in Stirling’s case. The CC idea suggests a broader coalition of investors that reflect the breadth of interests being served. In the case of the Six Initiatives recommended here, such a coalition would also include Scottish Enterprise, the NHS, and private sector representatives from the creative industries, alongside those already active such as Creative Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) – in addition to the local players.

The Stirling Cultural Board (SCB) already features several of these organisations and may provide an existing platform to develop into a CC. However, the role of the CC would be primarily to attract investment – public and private – to enable cultural initiatives to happen, whereas the SCB’s brief is broader, as a guide and sounding board for the sector.

A body with a focussed investment brief is, on paper, a potentially valuable addition to the area. In practice, however, such a coalition is more likely to coalesce around tangible projects, in the manner that the growth-deal and city-deal partnerships have demonstrated. The Six Initiatives could provide a starting point for such an approach.

There is, however, an opportunity to work more closely with the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Deal that may provide a more appropriate route to a CC-type model, at least for the 5-year period of this strategy.

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<sup>33</sup> The Action Plan

<sup>34</sup> CSSP

The City Deal has a Culture, Heritage and Tourism programme with a potential spend of up to £15m towards tourism-focussed cultural initiatives. It's possible this programme could be re-scoped and, if so, it's recommended they consider a slightly broader brief to include the creative and cultural sector infrastructure opportunities explored more comprehensively as part of the Six Initiatives presented here.

## Places to work

Whether a converted domestic space or a specialist workshop, creative practitioners need space to make, rehearse, produce, exhibit, publish, and perform. This is part of the underlying assumption that requires them to be supported appropriately.

Affordable software has brought publishing, the recording studio, games design, film editing, and other creative activities into the financial scope of many more individuals and groups. However, collective spaces of work and exhibition are still required, and many of those will require public subvention, but not all. The CSSP identifies spaces in Stirling as catalysts, particularly for emerging talent:

*"The Settle Inn on St Mary's Wynd, the Meditteranea on Murray Place, the Creative Hub at 44 King Street and the Red Door Project at Allan Park South Church are thriving local institutions and access points for young local talent. New creative entrepreneurs have untapped aspiration to establish new events in Stirling and with pop up projects led by arts establishment organisations increasingly appearing in spaces around the city, the boundaries of*

*the formal culture establishment in Stirling are beginning to blur. These shifts are driving change, entrepreneurship and creativity and should be fostered within the strategic plan for creative and culture sector.*"<sup>35</sup>

The Macrobert has been working with local activists in Plean to develop a cinema offer in the village. This type of initiative – publicly-subsidised cultural bodies partnering community groups to catalyse local-based projects – can be time-consuming to establish but are valuable ways of using the area's cultural assets to devolve cultural power.

Successful activities will take place where there is a combination of determined partners, a strong shared idea, and the investment of time, experience, and funding. Where they exist, they are worth building on. The Big Noise is a success. Its primary function is to address social disadvantage (a fundamental ambition of this strategy) in a partnership for learning, with music as the catalyst. It's a model that could be transposed elsewhere in the city-region (as it has been elsewhere in the country), and discussions around a presence in Fallin, and greater integration with both the education authority and the area's cultural sector, are worthwhile opportunities to explore. Funding is only one part of the formula required to make this happen, and shouldn't be a deterrent to future conversations.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid

# 5 Conclusion

“Some of our communities will require more time, support and investment than others in order to address long term inequalities.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The Bid document

## Some are more equal than others

This refreshed strategic direction is not prescriptive. It is intended to start and, in some cases, continue conversations around how the diverse cultural and creative activity throughout the Stirling area can be most effectively developed and delivered, and supported.

*"Stirling has been a place of history-defining, dramatic events known around the world. Now, Stirling is an innovative, evolving place where creativity, landscape, digital, heritage, industry and learning converge. Its richness is woven through the code being written in our tech start-ups, as much as in the historic architecture of the Top of the Town."*<sup>37</sup>

The inspiration that fuelled that statement from the Bid should not be dissipated. Now is not the time for a strategy that specifies measurable targets - cultural venues do not need to be reminded of the benefits of increased audiences or visitor footfall, artists do not need to be reminded of the importance of opportunities to display and distribute their work - these imperatives remain as they always have done, as operational targets that individuals and organisations deal with and address every day.

While there is always a need to support individual requirements, and finding effective ways of doing that should always be sought, of more use at this moment in time is

establishing areas of common purpose, a direction of travel that seeks to change the environment in which culture is perceived and supported.

Sometimes in travelling from A to B strategies can take a circuitous route that is defined more by bureaucratic requirements of institutions than by the way the community or cultural organisations actually work. This strategic direction, therefore, encourages the creation of *desire lines* - the most obvious way of travelling from A to B - and those involved in the sector, and certainly the public, are best placed to identify them. This document offers the development of six practical initiatives as a means to take this forward.

Public bodies, local and national, are essential in progressing and helping deliver all aspects of this strategic direction, however, a strategy that is led by the cultural sector and supported by public institutions is more likely to be effective.

As the Bid began the momentum that led to the creation of this document, it is appropriate it provides the last words that summarise it:

*"Our cultural power will enable change. This change will be realised through creating social and cultural connections. Through volunteering and training. Through entrepreneurship and business support. Through care and consideration. Through shared ambition and strong partnerships."*

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid

“Stirling’s culture, as  
random as a drunken  
bee...”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Excerpt from one of the ‘25 Word poems’ coordinated by the CoC Bid, Community member

# Appendix A

## Stirling City-Region: Context

### Geographic area

This Strategy is focussed on the whole Stirling local authority area - city and rural. Stirling is home to 94,000 people, over 14,000 university students, 3,900 businesses, 48,000 jobs and 2,187 square km's of land. Two thirds of our population are in rural areas and one third in the city and surrounding urban settlements.

### Current economic conditions of the target area

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on Stirling's economy and the lives of residents. At its height in mid-2020, one-third of employees in Stirling were furloughed. However, the potential scenario of mass unemployment and business closures has so far largely been avoided, partly through an effective multi-agency response to the crisis.

Nonetheless, total job numbers in Stirling declined by 3,000 between 2019 and 2020, with tourism particularly hard hit. Other challenges include long standing inequalities, a low wage economy (Stirling GVA per job £49,900 is lower than the Scottish average) and changing behaviours which are impacting on places and economic sectors such as retail.

### Social conditions of the target area

Overall, Stirling performs well when it comes to most economic and social indicators, particularly compared to Scotland-wide averages. However, we have deep rooted inequalities across Stirling, with persistent pockets of deprivation. There is a direct correlation between areas with poorer social and health outcomes and poorer economic outcomes.

The gap between the lowest paid and highest paid residents is among the widest of any local authority area in Scotland. This reflects that there are many high earners who travel outside the area to work, as the earnings gap in Stirling-based jobs is much smaller.

Of Scotland's Scottish Index Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), two of Raploch's four data zones are in the most deprived 5% in Scotland with another 5 datazones within the 10% most deprived, an increase from 2016 to 2019. Stirling's population residing within the overall most deprived 20% has increased from 10,150 in 2016 to 11,110 in 2020. In the income domain, 9% of the population of Stirling were income deprived (8,150 residents).

Life expectancy for females range from 71.9 years in Raploch to 87.5 years in Kippen and Fintry. In Stirling, the leading cause of death for females in 2020 was dementia and Alzheimer's disease (14.9% of all female deaths) with dementia increasing exponentially.

Stirling is expecting an increase in population of 4.8% between 2018 and 2028 with 6.7% net migration but also a 26.7% increase in the 75+ population over the same period resulting in an ageing population, putting more pressure on health and social care. Rural Stirling has a larger proportion of pensionable aged people

24% than council wide 17%, with a greater focus on neighbourhood models of care and support needed.

In 2019/20 21% of Stirling's children were living in poverty after housing costs. That is 3,242 children. Fewer than 3% of children in the Dunblane area live in low-income families compared with around a quarter of children (24%) in Plean and Rural South East Stirling.

From 2019 to 2021 Start Up Stirling delivered 30% more hot meals to those in need and 45% more food packs to the temporary homeless.

7 datazones are ranked in Scotland's most education deprived 4%. In contrast there are 18 datazones in Scotland's least education deprived 4%.

Other parts of Stirling, particularly the rural west, may present superficially as lacking deprivation. In truth, 8 of Stirling's rural datazones are in Scotland's 4% most access deprived. Most of the northern part of Stirling's rural area lies within the most deprived 5% nationally for accessibility, (e.g. travel times to facilities such as GPs, shops, post offices and schools). These disparities can exclude and impact disproportionately on young people and families.

*The text in this Appendix is taken from 'Stirling: Alive with Culture – UK City of Culture 2025 – Our Bid'.*

## Appendix B

### The Partnership Opportunity

This list is of those who were involved in some capacity in the preparation of the Stirling CoC Bid. It demonstrates the diversity, range, and opportunity that exists to co-work and collaborate.

#### Cultural

1. Age Scotland
2. All or Nothing Aerial Dance
3. Arcadia
4. Argyll and Sutherland -
5. Highlanders Museum
6. Artlink Central
7. Bannockburn House
8. BBC Scottish Symphony
9. Orchestra
10. Benedetti Foundation
11. BAFTA Scotland
12. Bloody Scotland -
13. International Crime
14. Writing Festival
15. British Council
16. British Museum
17. Callander Jazz and
18. Blues Festival
19. Celtic Connections
20. Central Scotland Documentary Festival
21. Creative Stirling
22. DF Concerts
23. Doors Open Day
24. Doune the Rabbit Hole
25. Dunblane Museum and Art Gallery
26. Edinburgh Fringe Festival
27. Edinburgh International
28. Culture Summit
29. Edinburgh International - Festival

30. Feis Fhoirt
31. Feral Arts
32. Forth Valley Art Beat
33. Forth Valley Food and Drink
34. GOSSIP visual arts collective
35. Imagine International Children's Festival
36. Justice and Arts Scotland
37. Luminate Festival
38. MacRobert Arts Centre
39. Manipulate Festival

#### Museums & Galleries

40. National Galleries of Scotland
41. National Museums Scotland
42. National Theatre of Scotland
43. National Trust for Scotland
44. Picture the Possible
45. Stirling Photography Festival
46. Royal Scottish National Orchestra
47. Rubber Chicken Theatre
48. Scottish Ballet
49. Scottish Opera
50. Sistema Scotland - Big Noise Raploch
51. Smith Art Gallery and Museum
52. Spirit of 2012
53. Sport Scotland

54. Stirling City Heritage Trust
55. Stirling Council Culture and Events
56. Stirling Photography Festival
57. Stirling Science Festival
58. Theatr Mwldan
59. Tolbooth
60. Unlimited
61. University of Stirling Students' Union
62. V&A Dundee
63. Wild Child Animation
64. 432 Presents

#### Artists and creative practitioners including:

Sue Beach, Becky Pankhurst, Sean Hall, Rachel Davies, Tracy Dougall, June Carey, Rob Mullholland, Michael Corr, Lou Carrberry, Suzanne Williamson, Constant Follower and School of Craft Scotland

#### Wider independent and community arts groups including:

Monument Dance School, Art 4 You, Theatre Broad, Bridge of Allan Operatic Society, Stirling City Choir

## **Education**

- 65. Aberfoyle Primary School
- 66. Allans Primary
- 67. Ceangail
- 68. CLD adult learning working group
- 69. Callander Primary School
- 70. Deanston Primary School
- 71. Dunblane Primary School
- 72. Forth Valley College
- 73. Gartmore Primary School
- 74. McLaren High
- 75. Port of Menteith Primary School
- 76. Stirling Council Education Department
- 77. Stirling Council Youth and Community Services
- 78. Strathyre Primary School
- 79. Thornhill Primary School
- 80. University of Stirling

## **Jobs and skills**

- 81. Codebase Stirling
- 82. Construction Scotland
- 83. Innovation Centre

## **Creative and Cultural Skills**

- 84. Federation of Small Businesses Scotland
- 85. Forth Valley Chamber of Commerce
- 86. Go Forth City BID
- 87. Scotland's Chamber of Commerce Network

- 88. Scottish Cities Alliance
- 89. STEP
- 90. Stirling Council Economic Development Department
- 91. Stirling Council Youth and Community Services

## **Communities and wellbeing**

- 92. Age Scotland
- 93. Alzheimer's Scotland
- 94. Coorie Creative
- 95. Cowane's Hospital Trust
- 96. Deanston & Doune
- 97. Youth Group
- 98. Dementia Services Development Centre
- 99. Forth Valley Welcome
- 100. Leighton Library Dunblane
- 101. St Mark's Church, Raploch
- 102. Stirling Council Libraries
- 103. Stirling Multicultural Partnership
- 104. Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise
- 105. Stirling Young Carers
- 106. Visit Bridge of Allan Group

## **Heritage**

- 107. Architecture & Design Scotland
- 108. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Museum

- 109. Heritage Trust Network - Historic Environment
- 110. Scotland - National Lottery
- 111. Heritage Fund - Stirling Heritage Trust

## **Environment**

- 112. Construction Scotland Innovation Centre
- 113. Creative Carbon Scotland
- 114. Forestry & Land Scotland
- 115. Forth Environment Link
- 116. Friends of Pleun Country Park
- 117. Green Action Trust
- 118. Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park
- 119. Transition Stirling
- 120. Treelink
- 121. Zero Waste Scotland

## **Tourism and sport**

- 122. Doune Castle
- 123. Event Scotland
- 124. National Doors Open
- 125. Scotland Food and Drink
- 126. Scotrail
- 127. Scottish Institute of Sport
- 128. Sport Scotland
- 129. Stirling Doors Open Day
- 130. Stirling Science Festival
- 131. VisitScotland

## **Media**

- 132. BBC Radio 4
- 133. BBC Scotland

134. BBC Radio  
Scotland  
135. Central FM  
136. Castle Sound,  
Stirling  
137. Community  
Radio

138. Daily Record  
139. Love Local  
140. Scotland on  
Sunday  
141. Scottish  
Business Insider

142. Scottish  
Business News  
143. Scottish Field  
144. Stirling  
Observer  
145. STV  
146. The Herald