



ABERDEEN
PERFORMING
ARTS

OUR PLAN
2024
2028

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1 ■ Our guiding principles

Purpose

To bring the joy of arts, creativity, and live performance to all.

Values

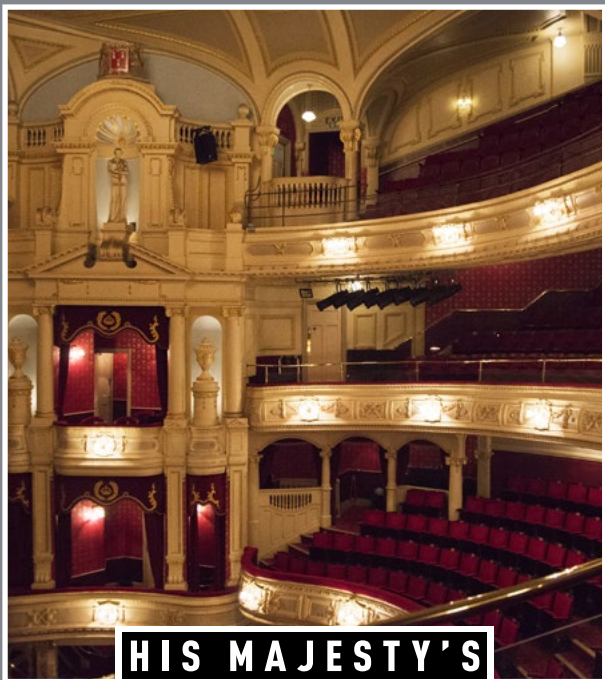
Curiosity, Optimism, Loyalty, Resilience, Teamwork.

Mission

To ensure that our inclusive, creative work inspires, stimulates and entertains diverse audiences and participants from Aberdeen, the North-east and beyond.

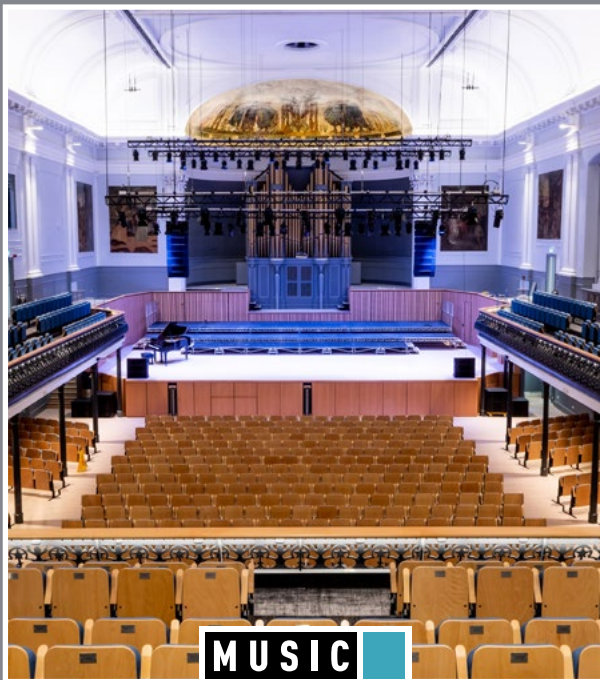
Our vision is centred on placing creativity and culture at the core of inclusive transformational change in the North-east.

2 Where 200 years of **history** meets infinite **future** possibilities!



HIS MAJESTY'S
THEATRE

□ From Scotland the What?
to Wicked



MUSIC
HALL

□ From Dickens
to Deacon Blue



LEMON
TREE

□ From Radiohead
to Emeli Sandé

3 Executive Summary

Aberdeen Performing Arts is the cultural cornerstone of North-east Scotland, fostering inclusive transformational change through creativity and community engagement. Over the next five years, our ambition is to uphold our position as the vibrant hub of arts, community, and civic life in the region. This vision encompasses city centre regeneration, social change initiatives, community cohesion and placemaking, thereby enriching the creative, social and economic fabric of the North-east.

We will gauge our success, focusing on financial and operational targets, city centre revitalisation, community engagement metrics, and the growth of our artistic programmes. Through collaboration, inclusion, and investment in our people, we aim to ascend as a leader in the cultural sector while nurturing talent and fostering sustainable development in the region.

As a cultural hub for the region, we contribute to the arts, community, and civic life of the North-east of Scotland, presenting national and international performances, producing and curating work, hosting festivals, and engaging with diverse communities. We play a pivotal role in uniting and leading the local cultural sector and generate a significant creative, social and economic impact.

Situated in Scotland's third-largest city, Aberdeen Performing Arts serves a region undergoing transformative shifts, particularly towards renewable energy and sustainability. Arts and culture influence and reflect these dynamics, ensuring the region's thriving development. We actively engage

with local communities, transcending socio-economic boundaries to provide access to arts and culture for all, thereby enhancing cultural experiences and positively impacting life opportunities for residents.

Aberdeen Performing Arts champions collaboration and creative engagement within the sector, forging partnerships to support the creation of new work and strengthen the sector's growth and innovation. Active and visible leadership within the cultural sector underscores our commitment to be at the forefront of the industry.

Investment in people, governance, leadership, and digital technologies drives organisational transformation and content development. Our ethos of Everyone is Welcome here reflects our commitment to fostering a positive company culture and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

We will provide clear pathways for workforce and talent development within the arts sector. Our initiatives offer genuine opportunities for emerging artists to flourish, hone their skills, and contribute meaningfully to the artistic landscape.

In conclusion, the Aberdeen Performing Arts strategic direction focuses on consolidating our privileged position as the leading cultural institution in North-east Scotland, driving inclusive transformational change through creativity, community engagement and sustainable development.



Our aim is to...

...ascend as a leader in our cultural sector while nurturing talent and fostering sustainable development in the region.

Our ambition is to...

...uphold our position as the vibrant hub of arts, community, and civic life in the region over the next five years. This includes initiatives for city centre regeneration, social change, community cohesion, and placemaking, enriching the creative, social, and economic fabric of the North-east of Scotland.

Our aspirations are to...

- ☐ Be the cultural cornerstone of North-east Scotland, fostering inclusive transformational change through creativity and community engagement.
 - ☐ Contribute to the arts, community, and civic life in North-east Scotland through activities such as presenting national and international performances, producing and curating work, hosting festivals, and engaging with diverse communities across the region, thereby significantly impacting the creative, social, and economic fortunes of the region.
 - ☐ Provide clear pathways for workforce and talent development within the sector, offering genuine opportunities for emerging artists and arts workers to flourish, hone their skills, and contribute meaningfully to the artistic landscape.
-

...fostering inclusive
transformational change
through creativity and
community engagement

Our Programme

At Aberdeen Performing Arts, we love to share stories and take our audiences on a journey. Our unique creative business model transcends scale allowing us to create a diverse programme where globally recognised superstars sit alongside local emerging talent, and where we stage traditionally popular art in tandem with contemporary work that challenges the norm. We tell the story of the area and its people through the creation of authentic productions and festivals, promoting justice and equality throughout. We aim to bring the world to the North-east of Scotland whilst celebrating our region's unique culture far and wide.

Over the next five years, we will seek out work that inspires, challenges and entertains while bringing value to our local community. While we strive to balance artistic worth with commercial potential, our primary goal is to enrich the cultural tapestry of the North-east of Scotland. We intend to curate an annual season of signature events – from world-class musicians to international contemporary dance, from authentic festivals to inclusive partnerships.

We will reaffirm our role as a creative producer by establishing a new and innovative approach to producing based on collaboration, commissioning and co-production. Facilitating artist-led initiatives through creative engagement, realising great ideas and steering projects will captivate audiences and transform lives, empowering artists to dream big and take risks. We will collaborate to create work that is thought-provoking,

**We love to share stories
and we love to take our
audiences on a journey!**

change-making and risk-taking. We are excited to work with artists and inspire ideas and will develop our ambitions to reach new creative talent with an extended call-out initiative, which will generate new productions, exhibitions and artworks.

Aberdeen can lay claim to being Scotland's year-round festival city and we will deliver six annual festivals. Our established festivals - Granite Noir, Light the Blue and Rise Up – will continue to grow and develop and we aim to introduce new festivals – a festival with and for the LGBT+ community, an international roots music festival, while reimagining the city's comedy festival.

We recognise our critical role in supporting creative talent locally and developing a programme for artists providing training, scratch performances, and residencies. Aberdeen Performing Arts will champion companies who create work here and provide space, advice and promotion. Our expertise and resource will enhance partner festivals.

Our programme is vital, it provides the creative backbone for the cultural life of the North-east of Scotland. Our distinctive offer provides audiences with countless opportunities for fulfilment, enrichment and surprise, and is an important route for our homegrown creative talent to find and achieve its potential.





...work which inspires,
challenges and entertains
but also benefits our
local community.

Our aim is to...

...present, produce and curate a creative programme which is ambitious, distinctive and far-reaching.

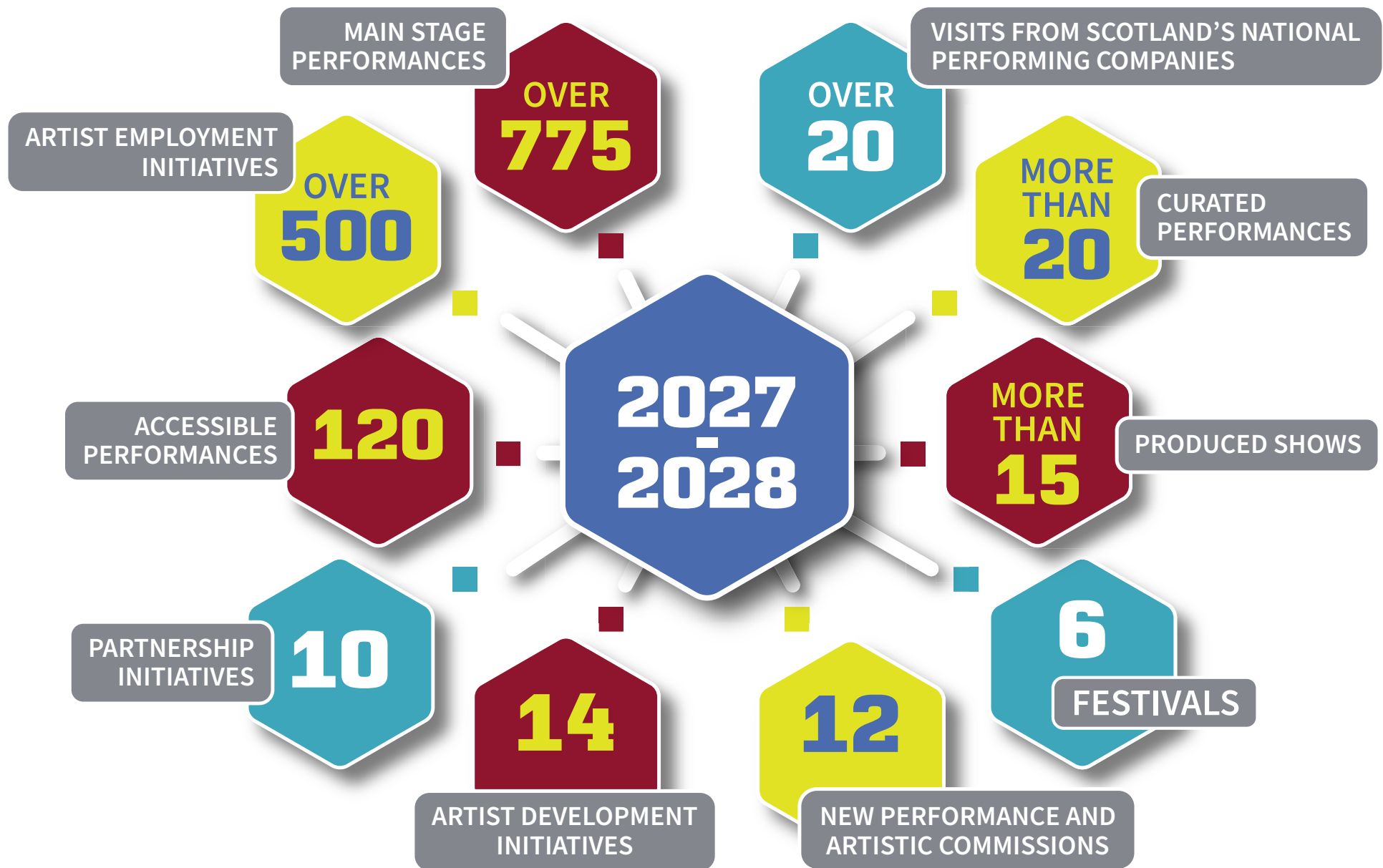
Our ambition is to...

...create the highest quality, most diverse, performing arts programme in Scotland.

Our aspirations are to...

- ☐ Present a programme of the very best touring performing arts productions across our venues.
 - ☐ Curate a series of signature events, unique to Aberdeen, showcasing significant global artists, exploring insightful themes, and promoting social justice.
 - ☐ Establish a new model of creative producing based on collaboration and commissioning.
 - ☐ Reflect the North-east of Scotland's unique culture in innovative creative projects and partnerships.
 - ☐ Cement Aberdeen's position as a year-round festival city, producing our own and enhancing local partner festivals.
 - ☐ Support the development and growth of the local artistic community in the North-east of Scotland.
-

By 2027-2028, our programme will feature:



5 Creative Engagement

Our Creative Engagement activity is embedded within the organisation's cultural programme and is designed to reflect the needs of our community. We deliver a core programme of sessions and workshops for all ages which include music-making, singing and theatre skills and we are uniquely placed in our ability to offer participants inspirational opportunities which connect with our wider programme.

We are committed to producing work which gives participants a meaningful voice in its design and delivery, and this is highlighted by Light the Blue, our annual multi-arts festival for and by young people. We will collaboratively interrogate our work, reflecting on our offer through evaluation and open dialogue, which will inform how we can adapt and improve, embracing change where it is needed.

We recognise that for our more disadvantaged communities, intersectionality impacts negatively on life chances and leads to cultural poverty. Our work aims to deliver positive social impact through events and festivals which are inclusive in their focus - such as our work with the LGBT+ and Black and People of Colour communities - and responds to major issues such as the climate emergency. We will develop and grow the work of our Creative Change-Makers as they explore and respond to the issues most pertinent to the communities we wish to engage with.

Striving to engage with a more diverse audience and establishing safe spaces where everyone feels welcome.

Connecting with families and children from low socio-economic backgrounds is a priority, providing starting points for a lifelong journey with the arts from an early age. We will continue to dismantle barriers to participation, honing a pricing strategy which ensures taking part is accessible to all. We will deliver new work for older people, recognising that participation in the arts has positive health and wellbeing benefits and can reduce isolation and loneliness.

Our partnerships have presented exciting opportunities to grow the breadth of our work and connect with new audiences and communities. Growing our networks further supports our aim to connect with new groups, marginalised communities and under-represented people. We understand the most powerful results can be achieved through working with others and we will grow our networks to develop collaborations and open new opportunities to take part.

Our newly established ethos of Everyone is Welcome Here reflects our dedication to inclusivity, and this spirit of respect for all will be the cornerstone of our engagement work and inform everything we do. We will continue to make every effort to ensure our venues are safe and accessible spaces where people feel comfortable, and therefore our work can provide truly inclusive opportunities to learn, participate and create.





We will continue to dismantle
barriers to participation.

Our aim is to...

...offer arts participation with no boundaries.

Our ambition is to...

...provide opportunities for everyone to have a meaningful creative experience delivered by Aberdeen Performing Arts.

Our aspirations are to...

- ☐ Create innovative, exciting engagement projects which inspire, bring joy and the energy and magic of arts participation to all our communities.
 - ☐ Develop meaningful connections with key groups and individuals to inform the direction and content of our engagement work.
 - ☐ Embrace creativity as a tool for positive social change within our city.
 - ☐ Ensure our venues are seen as accessible, safe spaces for all.
 - ☐ Fully embed our company ethos of “Everyone Is Welcome Here”.
-

6 Our People

We want our team to achieve great success.

At Aberdeen Performing Arts, we believe we can accomplish anything and our people are the asset that will drive us to do this. We are committed to investing in a healthy, inclusive and diverse workforce who will allow the company to thrive at the forefront of the industry. In short, we want our team to achieve great success.

Our values, curiosity, loyalty, optimism, resilience and teamwork, help to create our company culture, and we aspire to have a team who relate to and embody them. Our company culture and values are the principles which guide how we work and are instilled from the start of all employees' journeys with us from the recruitment process onwards. We will continue to build a team who live and breathe our values and who work in unison to create a positive, thriving culture at Aberdeen Performing Arts.

Our success depends on attracting, developing, rewarding and retaining a talented workforce with a positive company culture. We will provide career and development opportunities for our staff and shape a Pathways Programme to provide training, work experience and Internships to encourage our team to stay and grow with us. It is therefore important we have personnel who can benefit from learning and development so they have opportunities and a positive experience in their employment.

We will engage and partner with other organisations to enhance the development opportunities available through knowledge exchange and

work experience within our industry. We have an ambition to be a learning hub in the North-east of Scotland for theatre, music and live events. We will explore further opportunities to create a work-based certificated qualification with local partners to allow us to position ourselves as a learning centre for the arts.

We actively play our part in delivering the Scottish Government's ambition to become a Fair Work nation. Our commitment is to ensure an inclusive workplace, fair work practices for all, tackling inequality, providing a safe, secure and positive workplace and culture, recognising the need for an intersectional and multi-faceted approach. We will continue to enhance our recruitment practices, supporting candidates who face barriers to employment and to our industry. We want a team that feels welcomed, respected and fulfilled in working with us.

Overall, we want to create an environment where our staff feel empowered, valued and look forward to coming to work. Having people who are proud of what they do is vital to us reaching our goals and ambitions. Thriving people who feel welcome, valued and engaged in meaningful work will allow us to realise our ambitions. Together, we can achieve anything.



Our aim is to...

...build and support a talented workforce who are committed to our vision, mission and values.

Our ambition is to...

...be an employer of choice where everyone can say in their own way *"I love my job and I am welcome, respected and fulfilled here"*.

Our aspirations are to...

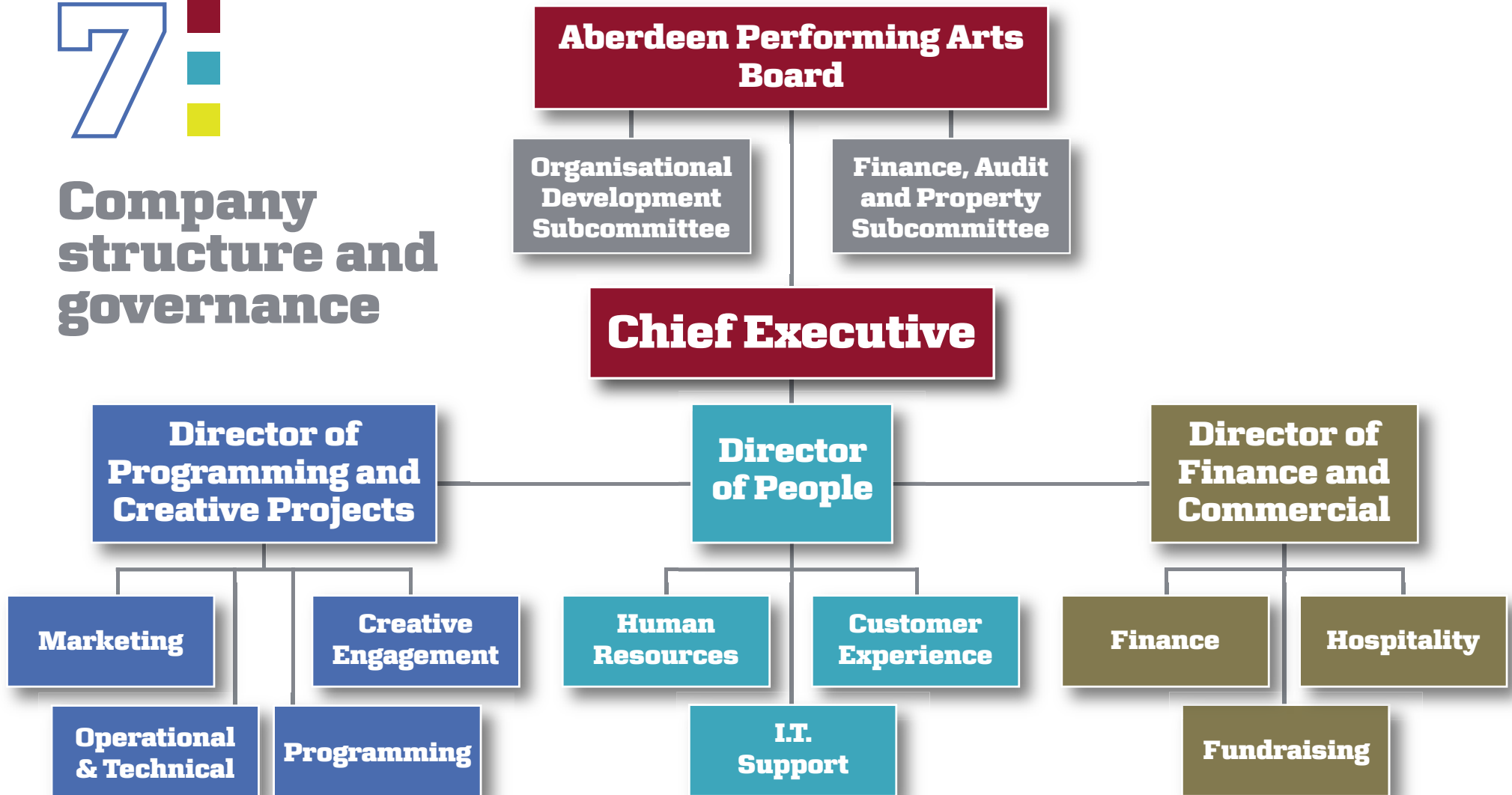
- ☐ Have a cohesive team who achieve great success.
 - ☐ Build a workforce embodying our values.
 - ☐ Invest further in career and development opportunities for all our team.
 - ☐ Be a learning hub for the arts in the North-east of Scotland.
 - ☐ Create an inclusive, diverse workplace where our people feel safe, secure, included and positive.
 - ☐ Provide fair work and an environment where our teams feel empowered, respected and valued.
-



We are committed to investing in a healthy, inclusive and diverse workforce.



Company structure and governance



Internal working groups and networks:
Green Team, Health, Safety and Security working group, EDI and Access Champions,
Wellbeing and Social Team.

8 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our ongoing initiatives seek to foster increased diversity at all levels.

Aberdeen Performing Arts is committed to creating an inclusive environment that reflects a deep understanding of equality in both our services and company culture. Our EDI policies guide us, ensuring we move beyond superficial measures. This helps us address societal inequalities, especially in the arts, where various groups including young people, women, the Global Majority, those on low incomes, transgender and people with disabilities face challenges. Economic disparities burden these communities even more, and we're determined to bridge these gaps by connecting artists and communities for positive societal change.

Our ongoing initiatives seek to foster increased diversity at all levels: our Board, workplace, audiences, and on our stages. We emphasise creating a safe workspace, mirrored in our dedication to leadership roles like Director of People and Change Maker: Inclusion and Relevance. Our commitment to policies like the Fair Work Framework and Equal Opportunities Employment signifies our stand against unfair pay and unstable employment.

Artistically, our dedication to showcasing diverse works will increase in scale, range and relevance, ensuring we are attuned to the voices of both our engaged audiences and those we aim to reach. In particular, we will continue our work with the Global Majority and LGBT+ communities to provide a platform and safe space for artists and audiences.

Our community engagement and talent development work will continue to have a focus on the development of opportunities for care-experienced young people, refugees and asylum seekers, and those who come from a disadvantaged socio-economic background.

Our focus on accessibility is comprehensive across our physical venues, online platforms, marketing materials and organisational protocols. We're expanding our range of accessible performances with more BSL, captioned, audio-described and relaxed showings. Our internal Access Champions will work ardently to enhance these offerings, work in collaboration with local access organisations to spread awareness about our inclusivity efforts. We have also revisited ticket pricing, promoting models like "pay what you can," to remove financial barriers.

We will continue to develop and strengthen our inclusive culture, making our organisation a safe workplace where our people can grow and are supported. We will continue to refine our recruitment practice to help remove barriers to entering our workforce and ensure we invest in our people, valuing, trusting and supporting them. We will provide a safe space for those from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds to feel included and welcome, which will result in greater retention and a happier workforce.



Our aim is to...

...address societal inequalities and improve lives through creative activity and engagement.

Our ambition is to...

...become a truly inclusive cultural hub where everyone feels welcome to take part.

Our aspirations are to...

- ☐ Create an inclusive environment across all our work and venues.
 - ☐ Ensure there is diversity at all levels through Aberdeen Performing Arts.
 - ☐ Showcase diverse work through our programme and ensure opportunities and safe spaces for artists and audiences.
 - ☐ Focus our community engagement work towards young people, refugees, asylum seekers and those from disadvantaged groups.
 - ☐ Expand our range of accessible performances, services and spread awareness of our inclusivity efforts.
 - ☐ Continue to develop an inclusive culture within our workforce so our teams can grow and flourish.
-



Everyone is
Welcome Here.

9 Audience Development

...our place on the global stage.

Each day presents an opportunity to engage with our audiences. Whether it's through attending a performance, singing in our choirs, bringing children to our workshops or sharing a moment in our café bars, our goals go beyond entertainment. We want to touch the hearts and minds of those in the North-east and beyond through arts and culture. We see opportunities for the arts to make a positive contribution to some of society's most pressing issues, including environmental sustainability, diversity and our place on the global stage as a vibrant tourist destination.

With strong and broad programming, accessible workshops for all ages, a series of curated festivals, and a range of community and outreach projects, we are in a strong position to reach a wide spectrum of audiences. Many have already shared experiences with us and our goal is to deepen their engagement, increasing loyalty and frequency of attendance. By strategically reaching out to new audiences, we not only introduce them to the arts and culture but expand our customer base within key demographic groups.

Our work will continue to prioritise increasing the engagement of under-represented groups, demonstrating our belief that the arts is for everyone. This commitment ensures that Aberdeen Performing Arts remains relevant, inclusive and provides welcoming spaces for all.

Aberdeen Performing Arts is deeply rooted in the North-east of Scotland. We tell the story of the city through our work and support local artists and companies. We have strong local connections and aim to reach beyond our immediate catchment to tell our story further afield and bring audiences to the city and experience everything the North-east has to offer.

We were pleased to be the first Scottish arts organisation to collaborate with the Audience Agency. This partnership has allowed us to delve deeper into profiling and segmentation, fundamental techniques to better understand our customers behaviour and inform how we engage with new audiences. We will continue to leverage this partnership, along with others, to remain at the forefront of the industry in audience development.





...touch the hearts and
minds of those in the
North-east and beyond.

Our aim is to...

...widen and deepen access for live performance and participation in arts and culture among all audiences and communities in the North-east of Scotland and beyond.

Our ambition is to...

...reach and engage with audiences locally, nationally and internationally to place Aberdeen on the world stage.

Our aspirations are to...

- ☐ Provide regular meaningful connection and experiences for our audiences.
 - ☐ Foster greater loyalty and deepen the engagement with our audiences.
 - ☐ Grow attendances from currently under-represented groups ensuring our offer is relevant and accessible.
 - ☐ Tell the story of our city and create a strong sense of place to put Aberdeen on the global stage and attract audiences on an international level.
 - ☐ Maximise partnerships with agencies and partners to be an industry leader in audience development.
-

Every year, we have around **350,000 paid attendances, with ambitions to grow key audience groups.**



*Net promoter score - the .current level is 71 and average NPS is 32.

**Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation areas.

10 ■ Climate and Sustainability

We recognise the unique position that the arts can play in Climate Action.

As a responsible charitable organisation, we take our commitment to environmental sustainability seriously.

Our buildings are not simply key to what we do, providing the spaces to allow us to thrive, they are iconic within the city and region. They also represent a significant portion of our carbon footprint. To address this, we will expand upon the work already initiated, investing in our infrastructure and exploring opportunities in terms of how we light, ventilate, heat and cool our spaces. This work includes the control systems for our infrastructure, investigating the potential of tapping in to the district heating network and alternative energy sources to reduce and minimise their environmental impact.

We remain committed to the development of our Green Team Champions, equipping them with essential tools and resources like the Theatre Green Book: Sustainable Operations. This approach empowers individuals across every department to share new ideas and tackle aspects of our operational impact. Audience travel will remain a focal point as we continue to enhance our data collection. This will enable us to identify areas where we can drive change, such as partnerships with local travel providers.

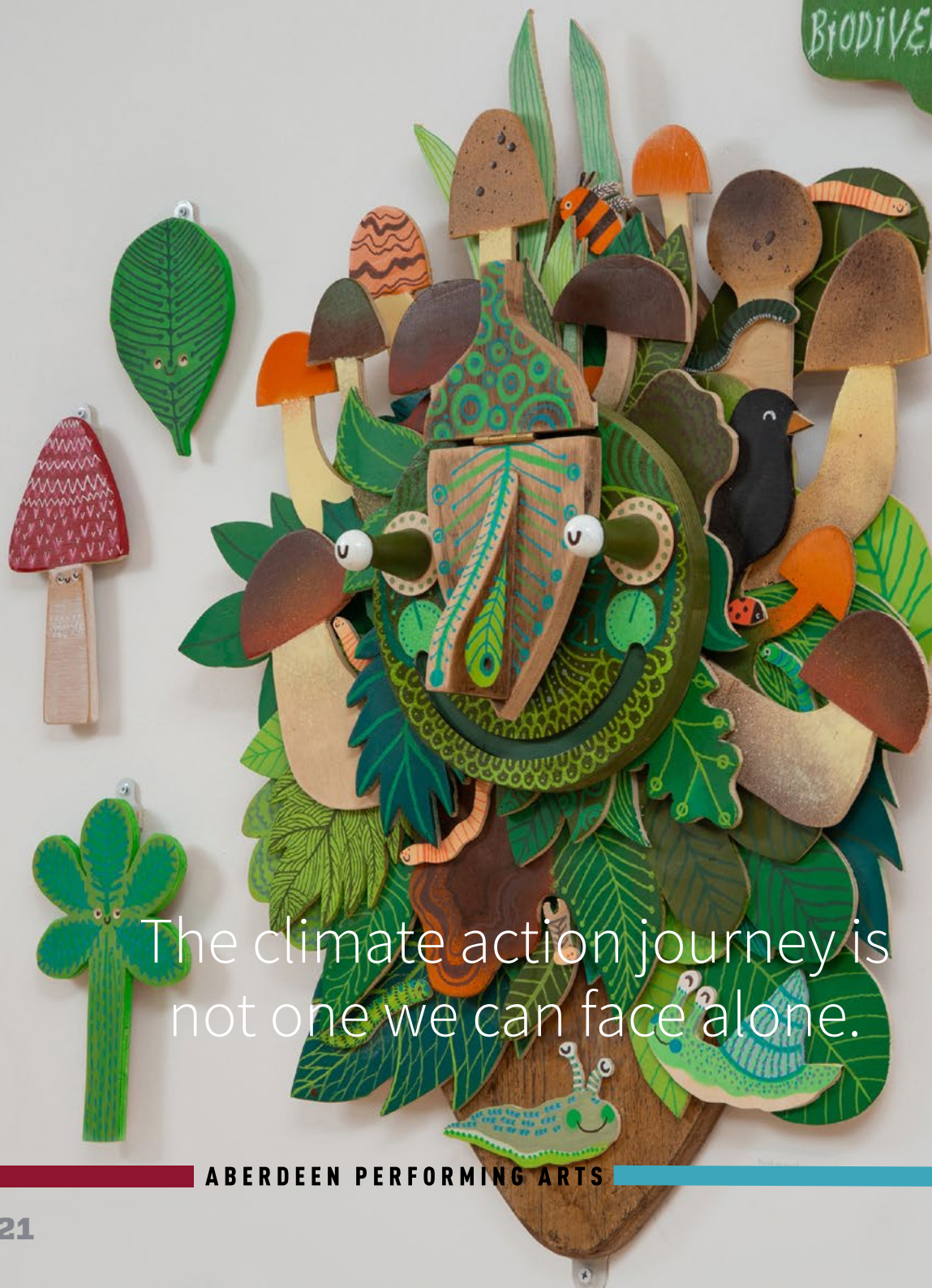
The climate action journey is not one we can face alone, and we will ensure our leading role in advocating for support in terms of funding and opportunity at both a regional and national level.

There is still fragility within the creative sector as we build back from the effects of the pandemic. With the prospect of continuing rising costs, the scale of the challenge and change required can only be achieved through collaborative working with our partners and sector peers.

We recognise the unique position the arts play in Climate Action, encouraging dialogues which can break through an often-complex topic. The creation of the UK's first dedicated role of Creative Change Maker for Climate Action has highlighted our sector leading approach. We will continue the development of this important role, strengthening connections with local groups and organisations. As the region transitions from being the centre for the oil and gas industry into one focused on renewables, we will explore ways in which we can support equity and justice, in particular for our marginalised communities, on this journey.

The changing climate is already impacting across the country, with prolonged periods of extreme weather events becoming more common. We have taken action to protect the integrity of our buildings through an increased schedule of servicing and maintenance. We will ensure that priority is given to key infrastructure likely to be impacted by weather such as drainage and external fabric.





The climate action journey is not one we can face alone.

Our aim is to...

... minimise the carbon impact of our venues and their operations and to actively advocate for climate action.

Our ambition is to...

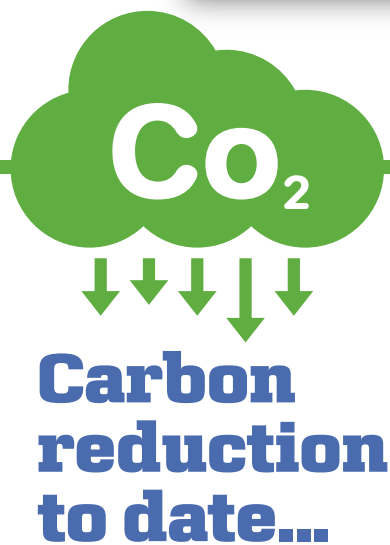
... achieve net zero within government set targets.

Our aspirations are to...

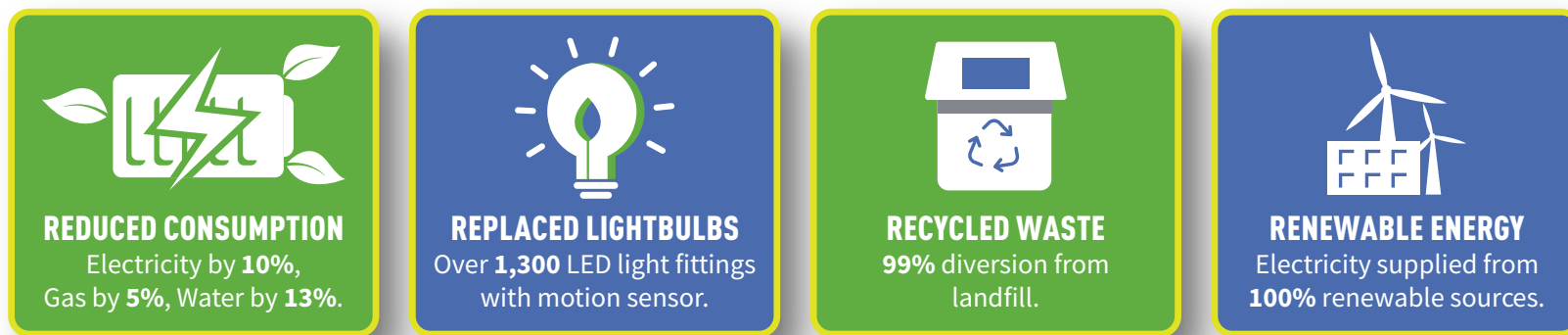
- ☐ Reduce our carbon footprint by identifying alternative methods of managing our venues energy usage and minimise their impact.
- ☐ Develop our team of Green Champions and empower them to create change across the company.
- ☐ Collaborate with partners and take a leading role in the advocacy for support regionally and nationally.
- ☐ Encourage conversations around climate action within the industry to challenge perceptions and create change.
- ☐ Ensure we adapt to the impact of climate action and maintain the integrity of our venues to counteract the effects of extreme weather.

Our Net Zero Roadmap

tCO2e = Tonnes CO2 emissions



As a responsible charitable organisation, we take our commitment to environmental sustainability seriously.



Future plans...



11 Fundraising and Income Diversity

We have a real opportunity to grow and develop our offering.

As a charitable organisation, the importance of funding cannot be underestimated. No increase in subsidy over the last 5 years along with high levels of inflation marks a substantial real-term reduction. Our organisational structure is such that our iconic and listed buildings are operated on a full repair and lease basis from Aberdeen City Council, coming at a cost that will only increase with time. We will continue to work closely with our key funding partners to advocate the importance of our work to the city, region, nationally and internationally and to sustain a level of subsidy that is representative and equitable. Developing our fundraising and commercial revenue is essential to complement our public subsidy and to deal with the external factors faced by the organisation, and not as a replacement of the same.

Initial steps have been taken to develop our fundraising strategy and delivery through the creation of our dedicated Partnership Manager role. We will now move to form an approach to fundraising focussing on philanthropy to foster and nurture a valuable relationship with benefactors over a longer term to maximise potential return.

We know that our Conference and Events business has untapped potential. Whilst not a primary income objective, this area lends itself to diversification. With a return to in-person conference and meetings, we have a real opportunity to grow and develop our offering, ensuring we

maximise utilisation of the diverse spaces within our venue. Revitalising the branding and promotional materials selling the space, a greater focus on sales and business development, alignment with our programming and engagement commitments and reviewing our pricing model all position us to elevate this income stream.

We aim to build on the success of the Terrace Bar and Café as we seek to position it as ‘much more than pre-show dining’ with the development of a series of themed events and a regular daytime trade that is sustainable without reliance on the programme at His Majesty’s Theatre. In addition, we will ensure that we maximise our food and beverage trade across all our venues by exploring and deploying solutions that allow us to sell to our audience in advance of their arrival and sell more dynamically. This not only allows us to streamline and improve our customer journey, but drives an uplift in sales by making the process more efficient and accessible.

Our diversification of commercial and income opportunities, combined with a robust fundraising strategy will provide us the resilience required to respond to external factors in addition to the challenging financial landscape our industry faces, ensuring that we will thrive in the future.



Make a Difference

Tap to Give

Our aim is to...

...achieve our charitable objectives in a financially sustainable manner securing the long-term future of the organisation.

Our ambition is to...

...develop and transition to a dynamic financial model that is resilient to external risk and factors on our delivery.

Our aspirations are to...

- ☐ Work closely with key funding partners to demonstrate the importance of our work regionally, nationally and internationally.
- ☐ Create valuable long-term relationships with benefactors to maximise potential returns
- ☐ Actively pursue funding opportunities that allow us to reduce our carbon impact or allow us to maintain the integrity of our iconic buildings
- ☐ Develop our Conference and Events income stream
- ☐ Build the customer base of The Terrace Bar and Café around events, daytime trade and extended evening service.
- ☐ Deploy technology that maximises revenue and improves customer experience at our sales positions.



**Infinite future
possibilities...
be part of our plan.**



Glossary

IMAGE CREDITS

- Cover Scottish Ballet: *Twice Born*. Credit - Andy Ross
- Page 2 Georgia Cecile at *Scotland Sings Bacharach* by Perth Concert Hall and co-produced by Aberdeen Performing Arts. Credit - Newslane Media.
- Page 3 Ayanna Witter Johnson at the *True North Music Festival*. Credit - Richard Frew Photography
- Page 6 The Complete Stone Roses at the Lemon Tree. Credit - Darren McAllister
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- Page 11 Aberdeen Performing Arts Senior Youth Theatre at *Light the Blue Festival*. Credit - Richard Frew Photography
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- Page 25 *The Ayoub Sisters* join the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and conductor Junping Qian. Credit - Richard Frew Photography

