



**Culture and Heritage:
A Manifesto for Local Government**

CULTURE AND HERITAGE ARE...

CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

A Culture Strategy for Scotland states that culture should be “a central consideration across all policy areas” and celebrated “as part of every community.”

A strong cultural offer makes communities of all sizes more attractive places to live, work and invest. Culture and heritage help us value the places where we live, work and visit and help us to understand more about our past, and our present. They create a sense of belonging, encourage community engagement and support active participation in decision-making. It is our shared culture and heritage that makes our communities what they are.

With changing patterns to how we live and work, harnessing the attractive investment potential of our places, through their cultural and heritage sites, will become more important than ever. Culture and heritage are key to the success of the visitor economy. Scotland’s history and culture is the second biggest driver of tourism, after scenery and landscape, with 33% of visitors – and over 50% of European/long-haul visitors – citing history and culture as key motivations to visit.* Culture can also be crucial in attracting domestic visitors.

Investment in culture and heritage is an investment in the vibrancy of local communities and the wider economy. While national government has an important role as a funder and policymaker, local government can play a transformational role.

* <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers/motivations-to-visit-2015-16.pdf>

SUPPORTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Culture and heritage have central roles in supporting our individual and collective wellbeing. Being able to visit a museum, attend a concert, enjoy public art or go to a festival can dramatically improve our quality of life. Culture and heritage are where we can relax, reflect, connect with others and find purpose.

It can also have a remarkable impact on our health. The World Health Organisation suggests that results from over 3000 studies “**identified a major role for the arts in the prevention of ill health, promotion of health, and management and treatment of illness across the lifespan.**” * These benefits range from supporting mental health, tackling chronic pain, halting cognitive decline to the benefits of group singing for people who have suffered a stroke.** For example, creative activities can help reduce anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress in refugees.***

* <https://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/what-is-the-evidence-on-the-role-of-the-arts-in-improving-health-and-well-being-a-scoping-review-2019>

** <https://www.ourcreativevoice.scot/s/OCV-Research-Download-Health.pdf>; <https://culturecounts.scot/>; <https://culturecounts.scot/useful-facts>

*** <https://culturecounts.scot/useful-facts>

This impact is increasingly recognised internationally and supported through social or cultural prescribing. 4 in 5 people in Scotland agree that there are physical and/or mental health benefits to engaging with arts, creative and cultural activities, and a majority say they would take up a 'social prescription' if offered.*

* <https://culturecounts.scot/news/2021/2/25/public-opinion-on-the-health-benefits-of-creative-activities>

SUPPORTING EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Culture and heritage play a vital role in supporting formal, informal and lifelong learning. **93% of the Scottish population believes that creative activity is essential for children and young people's learning and wellbeing.*** Creative skills and critical thinking are valued skills and transferable across the modern economy. Our cultural ecosystem – our libraries, museums, theatres, cinemas, heritage sites, orchestras and much more – can transform lives.

Creative activities can be found within the school curriculum or more informally through participation in community arts or attending cultural venues. The impact can be significant. Engagement with museums has been shown to have a positive impact on attainment and a better understanding of curriculum subjects, with children from disadvantaged areas benefiting most from visiting museums.** Music and arts activities can help children with autism to develop social skills. Cultural and heritage organisations can be uniquely placed to educate on issues such as the legacy of slavery or climate change.

* <https://www.ourcreativevoice.scot/s/OCV-Research-Download-Education.pdf>

** <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/media/2387/mgs-impact-report-educ.pdf>



Young people visit **Glasgow City Archives**

FOR EVERYONE

Access to and participation in culture is a basic human right. **The cultural and heritage sectors are determined to be inclusive of all communities living within Scotland** – providing physical spaces and digital access for people of all backgrounds to express themselves, reflect on their heritage and enjoy arts and creative activity.

Anti-racism, inclusion and work to overcome poverty and inequality are important parts of the work of many within the cultural and heritage sectors. Museums, libraries, archives, and other cultural organisations have been at the forefront of challenging inaccurate and incomplete representations of the past on issues such as slavery. This is not only the right thing to do, but will help these cultural organisations develop new audiences and reduce barriers so that people of all backgrounds feel able to take part in cultural life.



A visit to the **Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA)**

PEOPLE VALUE CULTURE AND HERITAGE

- **84%** believe it is right that there should be public funding of arts and cultural activities in Scotland
- **98%** of the Scottish population have engaged in cultural activity from home during lockdown
- **93%** of the Scottish population believes that creative activity is essential for children and young people's learning and well-being *
- **85%** agree it is important that Scotland's heritage is well looked after **

* <https://www.ourcreativevoice.scot/facts>

** Scottish Household Survey, 2019

EVERYONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE PART IN CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN THEIR LOCAL AREA

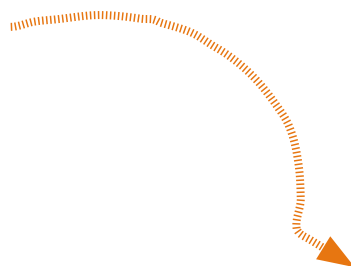
Local authorities should protect and champion cultural infrastructure. Councils should commit to protecting existing access to culture and heritage, and should where appropriate pursue innovative, partnership-based approaches to providing access to collections and buildings. To maximise the reach of our cultural offer, councils should identify and support opportunities for live performances, film screenings, exhibitions and events in diverse venues, including civic spaces, and outside of city- and town-centres.

To ensure a strategic approach to recovery, all local authorities should develop **fully resourced culture and heritage strategies** and embed cultural heritage across portfolios.

Local authorities should understand the value of their cultural offer to communities. This requires understanding current audiences as well as those disengaged from cultural provision. All communities should be engaged in the local cultural offer and local authorities should **commit to supporting anti-racism and inclusion** in their cultural provision. This should include a commitment to implement the recommendations of the Scottish Government funded **Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums** project in their museums and galleries. Cultural services should take a **co-production approach** and welcome projects and ideas generated by underrepresented communities, including through proactive outreach.

Local authorities should ensure that diversity, inclusion and equality of opportunity in the delivery of their cultural services is made a priority by reviewing current EDI Policies, Action Plans and recruitment procedures and providing appropriate EDI training to staff. Employees should be aware of the legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010 to avoid discrimination and positively promote equality in all aspects of their work.

Every local authority should bid for the Scottish Government's fund for **public artwork to broaden the range of representation** in public spaces, in particular women and underrepresented communities.



Young people visit **David Livingstone Birthplace**

CULTURE AND HERITAGE SHOULD BE PLACED AT THE HEART OF OUR ECONOMIC RENEWAL

The impact of the pandemic and changing patterns of living and working will require a reimagining of our high streets and town centres. Culture and heritage can play a key role in regeneration, driving footfall and providing vibrancy.

Every eligible local authority should commit to entering the Scottish Government's open competition for new **National Towns of Culture**.

Local authorities should **support the repurposing of empty commercial properties. These could become cultural spaces** such as studios, venues, co-working spaces for freelance practitioners, workshops, and pop-up exhibition spaces.

Culture and heritage should be considered essential amenities under the **"20 minute neighbourhood"** approach to planning. Following the publication of the National Planning Framework 4, local authorities should set out how they will embed culture and heritage in local neighbourhoods.

An important part of creating 20-minute neighbourhoods will be ensuring that places are easily accessible on foot or by wheel. Local authorities should **use cultural infrastructure to support active travel** through, for example, providing bike racks, as well as ensuring that active travel schemes link the places people live with the places they wish to visit, including cultural venues.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES SHOULD SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE AND VIBRANT CULTURAL AND HERITAGE SECTORS

Local authorities should, as far as possible, move to **multi-year funding agreements** to fund cultural organisations. Short-term funding leads to short-term thinking, and greater security and predictability in funding will support the sector and the wider economic recovery.

Councils should consider the **strategic use of rates relief** as one tool to support culture and heritage. One possible approach is the Creative Improvement District model proposed by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies.*

With the potential long-term hit to international travel, the visitor economy will be increasingly reliant on the domestic market, necessitating meaningful engagement with all local communities, engaging those that are under-represented in visitor demographics currently. Local authorities should support their local culture and heritage sectors with **increased investment in marketing and engagement activities**.

Local authority or arms-length provided services are crucial parts of a wider cultural ecosystem. Councils should explore how civic services can better support, and benefit from, **increased collaboration and shared services** with the independent sector, national organisations and neighbouring local authorities.

* [Post-Covid recovery through culture | CLES](#)

CULTURE AND HERITAGE SHOULD BE VALUED FOR THEIR ROLE SUPPORTING LEARNING AND WELLBEING

Culture and heritage can support both formal and informal learning for all ages. **Museums, libraries, cinemas, cultural agencies, heritage sites, and archives should be embraced as educational resources with the capacity to support the Curriculum for Excellence** and councils should take a strategic approach to maximising their impact. This should include developing **greater links between teachers and practitioners** and identifying where civic collections and other resources can support subjects across the curriculum.

Cultural spaces are also considered safe spaces by the communities which use them, and have a significant wellbeing impact for visitors including pre-5 activities, activities for families and combatting isolation in older residents. There is significant evidence that meaningful engagement with culture increases longevity, decreases dementia and raises mood. Investment in engagement staff and activities is crucial to enable these meaningful interactions to take place, reducing the impact of illnesses on statutory services. In addition, linking to the Scottish Government's ambition to extend social prescribing, local authorities should work to **increase the contribution culture and heritage make to health and social care.**

There is a significant evidence base demonstrating that engagement with culture can increase attainment, particularly for those living in deprived communities.* Councils should develop projects to **tackle the attainment gap through engagement with culture and heritage.**

All **pupils should have a right to visit cultural and heritage sites regularly** throughout their education, and councils should actively tackle barriers to engagement such as transport costs.

* <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/media/2387/mgs-impact-report-educ.pdf>

CULTURE AND HERITAGE SHOULD BE EMBRACED TO SUPPORT THE TRANSITION TO NET ZERO

To help tackle the climate emergency, all councils should set out within the first six months of their new administration how their **culture and heritage assets will be used to support public engagement around climate adaptation.**

Cultural and heritage spaces are trusted and skilled at presenting complex issues in an engaging way, and have increasingly been involved in climate engagement work particularly around COP26. This approach should be embedded in local authority efforts to tackle the climate emergency.

The historic environment – including historic buildings and infrastructure – has an important wider role to play in the transition to Net Zero. As well as being valued for their cultural importance, our existing buildings and homes hold embodied carbon. Retaining and reusing our existing buildings is an important environmental measure that will also bring a range of social and economic benefits, supporting regeneration, bringing empty homes back into use and enabling a sense of place. Traditional building skills are essential for the preservation and repurposing of historic buildings.

Our cultural estate is also a source of emissions and will require capital investment to support the transition. This investment can bring a range of benefits. Potential measures include investment in energy efficiency; using physical assets to generate renewable energy; improving on-site biodiversity; using digital screening technologies to increase local access to cultural provision, and investing in active travel infrastructure at cultural venues.

THIS MANIFESTO WAS COLLABORATIVELY PRODUCED BY:



Front cover image: A family visit **Perth Museum and Art Gallery**