

Appendix 2

What the Arts Mean to Aberdeenshire

The arts are the means by which we communicate our sense of freedom and creativity as human beings. They challenge us with new thoughts and ideas, they evoke new and often contradictory feelings and provide us with the will to question our values. The arts are also cultural products, the outcome of social and historical structures in which choices are made.

The arts also entertain, amuse, challenge and inform us. They can bring enlightenment, broaden our horizons and enrich our lives. The arts can make us laugh and cry; they can be breathtaking and spectacular or find beauty in simplicity. We can relate to the arts as individuals or as part of a group, we can be spectators or participants. The arts offer us an astonishing diversity of experiences.

The arts are something we all do, from going to see a show or movie to singing and dancing. Some of us take part in arts groups, be they drama clubs, choirs or folk sessions at the local pubs. Others enjoy individual activities, going to see an arts exhibition or knittichildren take part in. Many of us love absorbing ourselves in a good book, tune or movie and entering into the world of someone else's imagination. Others enjoy expressing their own imagination through making up stories for the kids or writing poetry.

The arts can, in the right circumstances:

- contribute towards stimulating economic wellbeing though attracting people to live in or visit an area and encourage businesses to locate there
- create employment
- contribute towards collective perceptions of wellbeing
- provide opportunities for people to realise their potential, feel a sense of achievement and increase social contacts
- provide opportunities for people to learn new skills which can contribute to employability
- increase people's self confidence
- improve people's physical and mental health
- develop community cohesion and reduce social isolation
- promote increased creativity and confidence for young people
- help people explore difficult personal and social issues
- develop a sense of local identity and increased pride
- improve the environment

The arts can make a major contribution to improving our quality of life as individuals and communities. For example:

The arts can create jobs

Kim Ritchie gained her first experiences of the arts in Aberdeenshire and has returned to share her skills and creativity with Fraserburgh's young people. Kim started out at Fraserburgh Junior Arts and, having caught the bug, was further inspired by attending a local summer school and meeting Aberdeenshire's Dance Artist-in-Residence. Kim went on to study Creative Arts at Sunderland University and having gained professional experience has chosen to establish a dance school in Fraserburgh. Kim's priority is to enthuse the young people of Fraserburgh with the joy of dance and give them the opportunity of participation.

The arts can reach across national boundaries

Through the use of new technologies, old links based on the 19th Century whaling trade have been re-kindled. The North East Folklore Archive internet site inspired a group of Inuit students from Baffin Island to make contact, leading to a visit to Peterhead and the development of a relationship with Peterhead Academy.

International cultural exchange has been the focus of an exhibition and activities taking place at the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses at Fraserburgh. As part of the national Japan 2001 celebration, the Reflections on a Floating World exhibition, which includes the work of Northeast-based artist Lisa Kirton, looks at the idea of how exposure to other cultures can prompt us to re-evaluate our own identities and culture. Sponsored by Japan 2001, Robert Gordon University, Great Britain Sasawaka Foundation, University of Salford and Aberdeenshire Council.

The arts can contribute towards a high quality educational experience

Learning by Lug is a current project which is teaching children how to learn music by ear. Inspired by the aural techniques of traditional music, local musicians are teaching children new techniques on very accessible instruments (paper and comb, spoons). The children have great fun and learn how to make music without expensive instruments. Supported by the Scottish Arts Council.

Forest View and Scolty Day Centres are resources for adults with learning disabilities. A committee of Social Work and Arts Development officers organised a week's residency in 1998 with Steve King, a musician and composer, to help Centre users learn how to make music and to train adult and childcare leaders and primary teachers in the techniques of music making. The week was highly successful, and spurred the organisers to work with Live Music Now to arrange concerts for similar audiences in the following years. A Day Centre user said "I really enjoyed myself" and another said it was "really great".

The arts can help us understand our heritage and where we live

Children from Southpark School worked with local artists at the Museum of Scottish Lighthouses to devise an interpretative performance which focused on famous individuals from Fraserburgh. One child said "I've learned things about Fraserburgh I've never heard of before" and others said they had fun performing and gained great confidence.

This event was presented to the international audience of the "On the Edge" conference at Duff House, which attracted delegates from Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Austria and Colombia. The conference was sponsored by the North Sea Commission, Aberdeenshire Council and local businesses.

Kincardine O'Neil's "The Heart of a Village Project" focused on revisiting history and exploring residents' feelings about needs for a new hall, revamped recreational and environmental areas, new housing, traffic management, and social projects. Local artists, a playwright, architecture students, and a project worker helped residents along their journey of discovery, which involved festivals, workshops, banner-making and community design projects. Children used word boards during their celebration of St. Erchard's Day to express their wishes for the future. Discussions about the hall's integral role in the community lead to its adornment as the "Heart of the Village", with interior banners created to reflect the area's ancient historical significance. The project was supported by a Lottery Charities award and the Robert Gordon University, with funding from Scottish Homes, Kincardine Estate, Grampian Enterprise Limited and Aberdeenshire Council.

The arts can overcome the problems we face as rural communities

The "On the Edge" research project at Gray's School of Art has recently been awarded significant research funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) to develop a new articulation of the value of the arts in remote rural locations from the perspective of the visual arts.

Key stakeholders including artists, administrators and audience who are interested in shaping culture inclusively from artistic, social and economic perspectives are structuring the research around the development and evaluation of five experimental and innovative projects in the Northeast. The research is a formalisation and development of a number of short-term projects framed by partnerships: "Room with a View" exhibition series, "Conversations Rural", "Living the Land", etc. The outcomes will be transferable to all areas of cultural development.

This research was launched by the "On the Edge" international conference, which looked at the benefits of the arts in remote and

rural locations (Duff House May 2001). This conference, facilitated by the international cultural policy researcher François Matarasso, attracted 15 case studies from across Europe and resulted in the identification of 9 principles for successful development of the arts in remote rural areas:

- Understanding culture and its potential
- Trusting local judgement and experience
- Recognising leadership
- Working flexibly
- Nurturing participation
- Building real partnerships
- Demonstrating local benefit
- Planning for sustainability
- Pursuing Quality

The arts can help build communities

Over 70 people with an age range spanning 50 years (starting at 5) joined together at Haddo Hall to stage a musical play which celebrated local history and culture. The play took its creative inspiration from Slains Castle and the stories and myths surrounding it. Local historical societies helped in the telling of the story and visual artists created evocative images of the Castle. The play brought the local community together as actors and audiences.

The arts can encourage young people to try new things and learn together

Based on the successful Feisan, the first Gordon Gaitherin took place in Easter 1993 involving some 20 young people. It aims to enable empowered learning and personal development through shared artistic and musical expression of culture. Currently approximately 200 young people attend either the Easter Gaitherin (for primary school age) or the October Gaitherin (for secondary school age) held within Kemnay Academy and Sir Arthur Grant Residential Centre at Monymusk.

Young people said about the Gaitherin:

"It's not about how good you are."

"It lets you be yourself."

"The atmosphere is relaxed!"

"I get asked how I feel."

"You can progress and come back as a tutor."

"You get involved in stuff - even if you have no idea - meet other people and make new friends."

"My mum made me come the first time but I keep coming back."

The arts can have a social and economic impact on our

communities

The Grassic Gibbon Centre in Arbuthnott has recreated an economic and social focus for the hamlet by building a visitor centre dedicated to the works of local novelist, Lewis Grassic Gibbon. The building houses an exhibition and tearoom, as well as the local post office, a community development office, and is

High quality arts can be developed by our communities

Woodend Arts Association is a registered charity, a largely

confidence and encourages the community to work together to promote Inverurie to visitors. The numbers of people attending and participating in the festival continues to grow. This is having a positive benefit on the local economy according to hotels and shops and has kindled a sense of pride in local people.

World-class arts can be local and accessible

Evelyn Glennie has become a patron of Woodend Barn Arts Centre. The world famous percussionist visits the centre every two years and her concerts and master classes attract people from all over the Northeast. Children are inspired through learning from a star performer and the local community can be proud of the world class associations.

The arts can provide an uplifting spiritual experience

To celebrate the Millennium the community at Christ Church, Midmar decided to write and produce a Passion Play, recognising that religion links the present to the past and that the church stands at the heart of the community. The play was performed as a promenade piece, moving from the sanctuary to outside the church. There was a great intimacy between the audience and the performers with a narrator linking each scene and other actors standing among the audience, involving those watching in the action. The play culminated in the resurrection, which took place within the stone circle which dominates the graveyard. The success of the play was due to the efforts of individuals from the community who wrote the script, built the set, designed the costumes, directed the action, made up the cast and undertook a publicity campaign. A thousand people watched the unique Millennium event and many said that it was an uplifting spiritual experience which had brought something distinctive to the ongoing spiritual life of the community.

The arts can attract visitors to Aberdeenshire

Hotels are full when Aly Bain and Phil Cunningham perform at the Stonehaven Folk Festival. The festival attracts the best folk and roots performers from Scotland, the UK, Europe and the United States and audiences (including Billy Connolly) flock to hear them play and to take part in events such as the "Splashing White Sergeant" at the Aqua Ceilidh.

Through contemporary art we can explore our traditions

"Living the Land" was a project developed by Duff House in partnership with Gray's School of Art, which looked at the role of the arts in rural development. It asked artists how their work connected to the places where they lived. The exhibition was presented as a series of conversations between the artist and the

viewer. This is one between Helen Denerley, a sculptor, and Eddie Stuart, a farmer, both in Strathdon.

Helen: I have been working on pieces that are mostly made from agricultural scrap. Celebration would be a good word to describe what I am doing because some of those parts, especially the cast-iron ones, have been lovingly hand-made by blacksmiths. But over time, they become useless. When I bring them into the work. I am bringing the past into the present.

Eddie: I breed my own cows.... I'm following in my father's footsteps. It's a tradition in my family.... Helen is using all the equipment that was used way before my father's time—bits used on the farm before the tractor. I've given her bits of threshing machines and hay trimmers and she makes them into something you'd never have thought about. I've never seen anything like it. I think that Helen is letting people see that old stuff that has been lying around for years is still good for something yet.... I would like to put the work in the open so that people can see the skill she has. She is doing this in the right place, up in the heart of the glen where farming goes way back. It is the place where the equipment she is reusing was wanted.

The arts can promote Aberdeenshire far and wide

For National Poetry Day Aberdeenshire created a poetry postcard which featured a mountain landscape painted by nationally acclaimed Strathdon artist Peter Goodfellow and poetry from Aberdeenshire's own anthology of mountain poetry, **Things Not Seen**. The postcard promotes Aberdeenshire's rich landscape and show others how we celebrate our cultural heritage.

Words Carried on the Wind * by Stuart Campbell

Mid-Deeside Limited is embarking on its second international photography competition for images of Deeside's landscape, people and wildlife. The original activity in 1998 was sparked by the need for high-quality images of the area to use in promotional literature, but now it's viewed as an attention-winner for Deeside in itself. Winning images from the first competition were compiled in a handsome catalogue and exhibited at Balmoral Castle and other local venues. Major project funding came from a film manufacturer and local sponsors.

The arts can improve the quality of life for vulnerable groups

Through the group Busy Bodies, people with and without disabilities are able to interact and understand each other's experiences. Participating in a professionally led dance/drama group gives opportunity for self-expression, confidence building, improved motor and balance skills, fitness and a whole load of fun. Through their performances in the community, the group presents direct evidence of integration and the skills and value of those with disabilities, helping to improve individual confidence and capacity, and communication skills they have developed at Busy Bodies.

The arts can improve health

A special needs teacher in Banchory said: I can think of so many examples it is impossible to choose – dancing to the Old Blind Dogs or Callater at the Hogmanay Ceilidh. Drawing classes with inspirational tutors at the Woodend Barn or Crathes Village Hall. Participating in a massed choirs singing workshop in Aboyne. Creating a community play from scratch each summer at the Barn, with participants aged 2 to 92. Working with Downs Syndrome adults and hyperactive children in art and dance workshops; all of these events have left me, and others, with an unquenchable joy.

The arts can overcome social isolation

People young and old were brought together for a musical event as part of BBC Music Live. The performance of "Carnival of the Animals" was chosen to appeal to young people and many children were involved in the development of the event, their

community and village halls. The Travelling Gallery brings contemporary art to schools and communities. Through workshops with artists, writers and performers, children and adults can actively engage and learn more about the arts.

The artist can express innovative ideas

Artist Professor George Beasley was invited to create a piece of work to feature at the 2001 International Sculpture Conference in Pittsburgh, USA. He wanted to work in a significant landscape and chose to collaborate with artist Helen Denerley and the Scottish Sculpture Workshop.

The concept was to develop a performance/installation at Glen Deskry to be transmitted live via satellite link to the conference in Pittsburgh. Artists, technicians and people living in the Glen (old and young) worked together to create the piece.

The culmination was the casting of an iron arc over the Deskry. The course of the Deskry has historically delineated physical boundaries in the landscape and the iron casting event was a means of reinterpreting this history. 250 local people watched the event in Glen Deskry with an equal number watching from the conference in Pittsburgh.

Artists can produce work that can create wealth

The act of selling work gives artists both economic and personal benefit. Events such as the Gordon Art Exhibition provide artists with an opportunity to share their work with the local community and to sell. Craft fairs are regularly held at Haddo and Macduff Art Centre as well as many other venues. People are attracted from far and wide to see and buy the work of Aberdeenshire's many craftsmakers. 2500 people attended a craft fair at Haddo House and there was overwhelming demand from exhibitors.

The arts can help us explore difficult personal and social issues

When young people from Westhill Community Centre were offered the chance to make a radio programme they chose to produce a "soap" and focused on issues such as teenage pregnancy, abortion, relationships and alcohol abuse.

This project used the skills of drama workers from the Birds of Paradise Theatre Company to train the young people in all aspects of preparing for radio production, including script writing, editing, voice production and sound recording techniques as well as skills in drama. Not only did the budding broadcasters gain new skills and take part in new experiences, they learned to work as a group to explore some of the difficult issues that affect young people.

The arts can inspire young people

"Belonging" was the theme that brought together young people from Huntly, Castlemilk and Benbecula. 7:84 Theatre Company invited the teenagers to develop a performance that compared their cultures and defined their sense of belonging. Four Aberdeenshire teenagers worked with their peers, a theatre director and playwright in each setting. At the end of the project the young people performed the play in Huntly as well as Castlemilk and Benbecula. The play was reviewed in The Herald and The Scotsman, where Joyce Macmillan gave it a 3-star review:

What emerges is a show that moves straight from the intensely local to the entirely global.... Although this fine show represents a vivid snapshot of our own time. what makes it memorable is that

The arts can be celebratory and fun

The many festivals of Aberdeenshire enable communities to come together in celebration. These festivals often take their inspiration from our cultural heritage (Doric Festival) our cultural traditions (Stonehaven Folk Festival) or our traditions (Portsoy Traditional Boat Festival).

Giant puppetry workshops with Mearns artist Colleen Magennis were staged in the run-up to the 1999 Johnshaven Fish Festival, a day of music, dance, food and heritage celebrations enjoyed by residents and several thousand visitors.

The arts can improve our environment

130 local people helped improve their local environment through the creation of 15 community designed public artworks. The participants included primary school children, art and photography groups and pupils of a local dance school. Many other people were involved through consultation and reports in the local press. Professional artists worked with the participants

Lighthouse in Glasgow, Scotland's Centre for Architecture and Design, where one visitor wrote "Why do things like this happen in Peterhead and not in Glasgow?" Young people were invited to Glasgow to see their work in the Young Designers Gallery. Through the project the environment will be more attractive, residents will understand more about their local cultural heritage, young people and other participants have enjoyed a creative experience and Peterhead has been celebrated as an example of a place where the community has come together to use the arts to improve the environment. Kincardine and Deeside Arts Forum supported a project where Banchory primary school pupils worked with artist Janet McEwan to design monolithic stone pieces to be used as sculptures and for play. The project helped regenerate the play park in King George V Park.

The arts can stimulate life-long learning

Summer Holidays Art Programme—A chance to try new skills in exciting settings: Sculptor Alex Mann, now retired to Braemar, challenged children at St. Cyrus Beach to build sand sculptures.

A senior resident of Ballater tried her hand at a new skill—woodcarving—during workshops launching the Ballater Geddes Project 2004. Based on Geddes' axiom, "By Leaves We Live," the Project created an exhibition, leaflet and website to raise awareness of Sir Patrick Geddes, who was born in the village in 1854, and of his groundbreaking theories in ecology, art & architecture, biology, town planning, and education. Further plans exist to create school study packs, a sculptural memorial in Ballater, and to nurture international school and community exchange.

Aberdeenshire Council's Arts Team and Community Education services worked together on a project with young people in Turriff, Banff and Macduff. The arts were used as the focus for community learning with the young people engaging in new skills through the production of a film called "The Broken Fiddle". The film was premiered at the Belmont Cinema in Aberdeen.



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