



# Orkney's Creative Future

*A Ten Year Strategy for the Arts*



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# Foreword

*The great strength of Orkney's culture lies in its people. I know of nowhere else where there is such enthusiasm for the arts amongst the inhabitants of a single community, and who demonstrate such involvement in their history and heritage.*

As children growing up in Orkney, we were brought up on stories of the great pageant of July 1937, the 800th anniversary of the founding of St Magnus Cathedral, when a cast of more than six hundred recreated events from the island's Viking past, watched by an audience of nearly 7,000.

The Orkney Herald may have gone a little over the top when it described it as "the most magnificent dramatic event Orkney or the North had ever seen," but my father, Eric Linklater, who wrote the script with Storer Clouston, said afterwards that those who took part felt themselves at one with Orkney's heritage: "We didn't bother to proclaim our independence, we just realised it ..." he explained. "It was extraordinary, the way Orkney suddenly perceived the reality of its history."

That remains true today in all the remarkable events that Orkney has staged and witnessed over the years, in its festivals and its community drama, its music, its art – and its writing: each year, for more than a decade, I have helped judge stories and essays written by pupils from Kirkwall Grammar School and Stromness Academy, and have been amazed by the way they have been able to reach back into Orkney's past to re-imagine the folk legends of the islands, often written in local dialect, with great imagination and an innate understanding of Orkney life.

Not that Orcadians throw themselves into anything new without questioning its credentials. I remember the early days of the Pier Arts Centre in Stromness, when the art collector Margaret Gardiner donated her pictures from Cornwall, including some of the great treasures of 20th Century British art. Questions were raised about whether this had anything to do with Orkney itself, and it was only accepted when people realised how strong the connections were between the maritime traditions of two sea-bound communities. Once in place it was embraced with enthusiasm, and now constitutes one of the greatest small galleries in Britain.

The genius of Peter Maxwell Davies, founder and driving spirit behind the St Magnus Festival, was to immerse himself in the folk history of the island, write music around its traditions, and involve local children in his productions. They responded instinctively. On Hoy, as resident composer with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, he wrote his Strathclyde concertos specifically to be taken into schools, and scarcely a year went by without him composing something for Orkney children to play or sing.

When, in 1977, the festival was launched, he brought composers and poets to Orkney to perform alongside local people and children, who, in turn, joined in singing and playing what he wrote for them. It was typical that, when his 80th birthday was celebrated in 2014, the official celebrations should have involved local young musicians rather than outsiders.

His legacy can be seen in a musical tradition on Orkney that still embraces the familiar and the modern - its folk festival, drawing on the extraordinary playing of local fiddlers and accordionists, its community drama, recreating stories from the island's past, its concerts which take place in far-flung island churches or halls, its art and its literature, inspired by a rich and colourful history, stretching back to prehistoric times. None of this could have been sustained without the support and involvement of Orkney folk themselves. It is they who have established and sustained a rich cultural legacy – and it is they who will bring to life the new and imaginative strategy for the arts set out in the pages that follow.

*Magnus Linklater*

# Executive Summary

*Orkney's distinctive cultural landscape has evolved over thousands of years and the arts have without doubt played a hugely significant role in shaping the islands, the people who live here, and those who visit.*

Orkney has provided the inspiration and situation for some of the most talented artists and unique works of art of the 20th and 21st centuries and because of this it has a reputation that extends far beyond its own shores.

Our ambition is that Orkney continues to be defined by this rich artistic culture. That the next generation are able to foster their creative talents, that arts organisations, festivals and events continue to develop and showcase work of international reputation and that the arts sector, is together, able to play a greater role in shaping a healthy, vibrant and sustainable future for the islands.

Whilst this ambition depends on many factors, some of which we will have more control over than others, we recognise the value of a shared vision and the role that policy can play.

Orkney's Creative Future has been developed over a period of 12 months and is the result of extensive efforts by the Orkney Arts Forum. The development of the strategy has also been influenced by open public consultation and focused conversations. The strategy outlines 3 strategic themes which reflect the needs of the sector and the community. Although distinct in their presentation the 3 themes are closely interlinked and together provide a framework for developing the arts in Orkney over the next 10 years.

These themes are intended to act as a platform, not only for the arts, but for work in regeneration, economic development, social mobility, education, health and wellbeing, and seek the shared challenges that may only be achievable by working together.

Whilst the strategy looks forward, it is also an opportunity to celebrate achievements in the arts since the conception of and over the duration of the last development plan. In the past few years it is notable that a new generation of talented artists and designers have begun to consolidate their practice and relationship with Orkney. Over this same period Orkney has continued to host acclaimed artists, present critically acclaimed exhibitions, musical premieres and stage internationally significant events.

On the following pages you will find examples of some of these moments as well as short commentaries from people across Orkney that reveal the significance of the arts to them. Orkney's Creative Future seeks growth and continuity and demonstrates a commitment to develop the arts in a way that positivity impacts on the lives of artists, audiences and communities.

***Rik Hammond***  
Chair, Orkney Arts Forum

# Strategic Themes

**People** *Children and young people will be able to harness their curiosity, imagination and problem solving skills to achieve educationally, secure employment and confidently navigate life. Through new friendships and dynamic partnerships artists and organisations will foster collaborative cultural leadership and a more resilient future for the arts.*

**Place** *We consider art as vital to the future sustainability and resilience of our islands. Orkney's landscape, unique culture and sense of place will continue to be a source of inspiration for artists. A readiness to experiment and innovate will help us to realise a creative and vibrant economy and a dynamic place where people choose to live and work.*

**Participation** *Individuals and communities will be able to access and participate in a diverse range of high quality arts activity. Increased opportunities for people to experience the arts and also to become the creators of art will help improve mental and physical wellbeing, tackle social isolation and enable people to develop important skills.*



# Orkney Arts Forum

*Orkney Arts Forum is a group of arts and cultural specialists, art form representatives and key stakeholders from the public and voluntary sectors who together play an important role in influencing arts and culture within Orkney. Since its inception in 2003 the Forum has operated as an un-constituted group which supports the work of the Arts Development Service within Orkney Islands Council. More than a decade on, the Forum continues to act as an important space for knowledge sharing, and as a platform for advocacy and local decision making.*

Orkney Arts Forum has the following priority functions:

- To support the strategic development of the arts in Orkney
- To raise awareness of the benefits of arts and culture
- To advocate for increased activity and resources for the arts in Orkney
- To act as the advisory and consultation body for Orkney's Arts Development Service
- To support community development and sustainability

## **Members of Orkney Arts Forum**

### ***Art form representatives:***

Architecture, design and new media  
Craft  
Dance  
Drama  
Visual arts  
Film  
Literature  
Music  
Storytelling  
Young People

### ***Organisations:***

Creative Scotland  
George Mackay Brown Fellowship  
Highlands & Islands Enterprise  
Orkney Arts Society  
Orkney Crafts Association  
Orkney College - University of the Highlands & Islands  
Orkney Folk Festival  
Orkney Islands Council  
Pier Arts Centre  
Scottish Community Drama Association (SCDA) - Orkney  
St Magnus International Festival  
The Pickaquooy Centre  
Orkney Tourism Group  
Voluntary Action Orkney





## What do we mean by the arts?

Although not easy to define, it is important to make clear the emphasis of this strategy which includes, but is not limited to, architecture, craft, dance, design, digital media, drama, film, intangible cultural heritage, literature and language, music and visual arts. In this way the strategy's focus is on artists, the arts sector in Orkney as a whole and how the development of both can positively impact on people's lives. Museums, galleries, libraries and archives are also an essential part of the arts landscape – presenting, commissioning and conducting much of the work that takes place here in Orkney.

Orkney's unique historic environment and heritage assets are a major part of the cultural landscape and are in many ways inseparable from the arts. These are protected and supported by specific strategies such as those in relation to World Heritage Status and governance through bodies such as Orkney Islands Council, Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland and are therefore out with the remit of this strategy.

# The Orkney Principles

In 2012 Highlands and Islands Enterprise commissioned a study that sought to better understand the evolution of the arts in Orkney and how a relatively small population with limited infrastructure and resources could have achieved such a wealth of cultural production. The goal was to understand whether there was a model or at least opportunities that could be replicated elsewhere.

François Matarasso's study, *Stories and Fables*, describes the very unique circumstances, personalities and opportunities that have led to the rich cultural life that Orkney enjoys and is identified with today. The study sets out a number of principles which have collectively contributed to Orkney's cultural development and resulted in the belief that "what has happened here over the past few decades is not just unusual: it is remarkable".

The 10 principles remain a benchmark for the arts in Orkney and the sector will continue to be guided by these principles so that we become more sustainable and resilient, the value of the arts is fully understood and the benefits of creative participation are experienced by more people.

- Leadership with a clear vision
- Demonstrating value
- A sustainable economic model
- Valuing volunteers
- Open, democratic governance
- Flexible and responsive
- Confidence and humility
- Cooperative and competitive
- Always positive
- 'Dig where you stand'

# Social and Economic Value

*Evidence of Orkney's cultural significance is bountiful thanks to the rich archaeological discoveries which continue to be made throughout the county. Less evident however are the reasons why our ancestors made art and why to this day art remains a significant part of the collective imagination of these islands.*

Art has a unique ability to cultivate new forms of knowledge and consciousness. Art acts as a platform and alternative mechanism by which to understand, respond to, and engage with, the world around us. Art offers alternative spaces for creative thinking, room to experiment, innovate and problem solve. These are just a few of the many reasons why arts currency fails to diminish.

In an effort to demonstrate what is at stake, it is worth spending a moment trying to imagine Orkney without artists, writers, musicians and poets, with fewer festivals and without the problem solving and entrepreneurial spirit that thrives in these islands. Given the right conditions and support art can help us to imagine and shape Orkney's future.





*"Orkney's culture is an important economic asset both in terms of the employment and wealth it generates directly, and as an attraction for the tourists crucial to the local economy. It is also a vital social asset, bringing people together in small and large gatherings, developing skills, experience and knowledge, fostering common purpose, and building social capital."*

Stories and Fables, François Matarasso

#### **Social value**

We recognise the difference that the arts can make to people's lives. Whilst the significant economic value of the arts and cultural sector is becoming more widely recognised, the benefits of participating in the arts both as individuals and as a society is yet to be fully acknowledged.

There is however overwhelming evidence of the positive impact that creative participation can have on people's lives. The arts are understood to positively benefit the development of young people - creativity is helping to close the attainment gap in our schools and is providing young people with the confidence and skills they need in a rapidly evolving employment market. Art is recognised as making a positive contribution towards mental and physical health and the general wellbeing of individuals, it is also recognised in helping to tackle social isolation and fostering community cohesion.

In Orkney the social significance of the arts is difficult to overstate. We revel in a vibrant and diverse calendar of events, festivals, workshops, exhibitions and performances, underpinned by a rich cultural heritage. Measuring, evaluating and communicating the benefits and impact of this activity remains a significant challenge. It is often these intangible benefits of cultural activity that are of the greatest importance; opportunities to see friends and make new acquaintances, to discover, learn, to be excited or inspired. We will never fully understand the impact of these experiences and emotions but we know that they are vital.

# Island Voices



Rebecca  
Ford

Writer

*"It is the word, blossoming as legend, poem, story, secret, that holds a community together and gives a meaning to its life."*

George Mackay, Brown An Orkney Tapestry 1969

This quote from George Mackay Brown sums up for me the place of the arts in the life of the Orkney community. While my own research looks at the role of narrative and storytelling in shaping meaning in everyday discourse, it is grounded in the recognition that any perceived boundary between art and life is fluid and permeable.

The richness of Orkney's engagement with the arts is grounded in this recognition of the inseparability of works of art from the creative process. What is expressed through the range of arts practices within the Orkney community is this creative relationship between people and place. The future of the arts in Orkney depends on recognising and celebrating this relationship



### **Economic value**

Arts and culture represent a growing contribution to the Scottish and UK economy. At the moment of writing the arts and creative industries are the fastest growing sectors in the UK, for the first time they are widely accepted as a vital part of the economy and one of the most significant measures of how we are recognised on an international stage. 2012 research conducted on behalf of Creative Scotland estimated that the arts and creative industries support 84,400 jobs and account for a £3.2 billion contribution to the Scottish economy. Figures that are likely to have grown since the research was conducted.

The economic impact of arts and culture on local economies is diverse. A report by the Local Government Association identified five key ways in which arts and culture can boost local economies:

- Attracting visitors
- Creating jobs and developing skills
- Attracting and retaining businesses
- Revitalising places
- Developing talent

There is evidence of arts and culture having an impact on Orkney's economy in all of these ways. Attracting visitors is possibly the most plain to see; cultural tourism is a major economic driver in Orkney and represents a significant part of the local economy. Orkney's globally significant archaeological sites and wider historic environment are key motivators for cultural visits; similarly the Pier Arts Centre, St Magnus International Festival and the Orkney Folk Festival are significant cultural tourism drivers. A recent study commissioned by the St Magnus International Festival and Highlands and Islands Enterprise concluded that the festival alone supports 26 Full time equivalent jobs in Orkney, 30 in Highlands and Islands (including Orkney) and 55 in all of Scotland. The success of the Pier Art Centre's redevelopment is widely regarded as a stimulus for further regeneration in Stromness, including the Stromness Townscape Heritage Initiative and the development of the new library and customer services facility within the Warehouse Buildings.

Perhaps less well recognised and understood is the significant contribution that the wide variety of smaller cultural events and activities make to the cultural ecology of the islands, our shared creative wealth and the image this conjures of Orkney in the wider world.

A major recommendation of this strategy will be to conduct a fuller and more up to date study of both the social and economic benefit of the arts and cultural sector in Orkney. As a part of this the sector must begin to use suitably robust evaluation techniques to evidence the impact of the offer. Together this information can be used to make a case for continued support for the arts, better informed decision making and future investment in one of the county's most valuable assets.

# Island voices



Kirsteen  
Stewart  
Fashion Designer

I set up business in Orkney as I have always found it a creative and inspiring place to live and work. We have a wealth of creativity that feeds into each other through art, music, design and business. As a creative business and through travelling with work I have realised this is unusual and is not the norm. Orkney's creativity is open and transparent and this I believe is why so many people are drawn to work, live and create here. Starting my own business as a young person was a daunting prospect especially as my main target markets were further afield, but the support I have received from other local businesses, Orkney Islands Council, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and Business Gateway proved valuable for every step I took. Now, more than ever, I see the value of maintaining and growing this support and developing the arts in Orkney as it benefits our local community and adds value economically.





# Funding the Arts

At this current time the amount of public funding available to artists, cultural organisations and partners is reducing and further reductions and cost saving measures look likely to continue. This is without doubt the most significant challenge the arts sector is currently facing and one it must continue to navigate over the coming years.

Whilst local authority spending still represents the largest percentage of funding to the arts sector in the UK, continuing to protect cultural spending will become increasingly difficult in the face of further budget reductions. The picture looks similar across the cultural funding landscape. Creative Scotland, which distributes Grant in Aid from the Scottish Government and National Lottery funding, has also experienced significant reductions in the amount of funding they are able to make available to the sector.

As we have already witnessed, a reduction in cultural spending will require cultural organisations to identify alternative sources of revenue so as to reduce dependency on public funding. There is also an expectation that regularly funded organisations are able to evidence an increasingly diverse revenue

portfolio. Whilst the cultural sector has shown the ability to source funding elsewhere, either through donation, philanthropy or the private sector, it remains a huge challenge to raise the revenue needed to fill the shortfall in public funding. In an Orkney context these potential sources of alternative revenue are very limited and where organisation's resources and capacity are already stretched this challenge is even greater.

Despite a rather gloomy forecast there are positives that should not be over-looked. As outlined in their latest Arts Strategy (2016-17), Creative Scotland remains committed to 'increasing the reach, relevance and contribution that artists and art make to life in Scotland' and will be investing in excess of £100 million in the creative sector between 2015 and 2018. Research also shows that local authorities have done their best to protect cultural spending and the benefits this investment can deliver for individuals and communities. This is true of Orkney, whilst cultural services have experienced budget reductions; these same services are recognised as important to people's lives and have been maintained wherever possible.

*“Culture has a unique capacity to engage and enthuse. In straitened times, local authorities would be wise to harness that power and recognise the wide-ranging, and sometimes unquantifiable, rewards that investment in culture can pay.”*

Ruth Fry, LGiU Scotland Associate - Cinderella goes to the ball: the social benefits of investing in culture

Due to increasing financial pressure, examples from elsewhere suggest that local authorities are looking at a number of further mechanisms to support the sector. Some local authorities are providing organisations with professional support to investigate and develop their revenue generating potential; others are seeking further integration of the arts within local economic and social development planning. More radical approaches from within the sector might be symbolised by successful crowd

funding projects or examples such as the proposal for a new wind turbine in Glasgow, used to generate renewable energy and fund arts projects, an idea initiated by artist Ellie Harrison.

It remains to be seen how the future economic climate and public funding for the arts will unfold. In the meantime the arts sector in Orkney must do its utmost to encourage continued public investment but also be supported to seek revenue generating opportunities and attract increased investment via new opportunities.

What is clear is that it will take imagination and most likely an effective combination of traditional and new funding models to ensure the sustainability and growth of the sector.







# Island voices



Denise  
Stout

Director of the  
St Magnus International  
Festival Choir

The arts are what make living worthwhile! Work is for keeping a roof over your head but the arts develop and grow us creatively, emotionally and spiritually so what could possibly be more important than that. They are a fundamental part of our culture - they say who we are or who we aspire to be. For me, both creative and performing arts are about communication, participation, connection and fellowship - society in microcosm if you like - and if we ignore their importance we impoverish each other emotionally and spiritually and restrict the opportunities for interaction.

The arts are a huge resource for Orkney - both financial and cultural. From locals who participate (whether actively or by listening or looking) to the myriad visitors who come to our islands every year. They reaffirm who we are but it's also important not to look too inwards on our own culture but to embrace all that the world has to offer if we can.

# Strategic Themes

## *People*

Children and young people will be able to harness their curiosity, imagination and problem solving skills to achieve educationally, secure employment and confidently navigate life. Through new friendships and dynamic partnerships artists and organisations will foster collaborative cultural leadership and a more resilient future for the arts.

## *Place*

We consider art as vital to the future sustainability and resilience of our islands. Orkney's landscape, unique culture and sense of place will continue to be a source of inspiration for artists. A readiness to experiment and innovate will help us to realise a creative and vibrant economy and a dynamic place where people choose to live and work.

## *Participation*

Individuals and communities will be able to access and participate in a diverse range of high quality arts activity. Increased opportunities for people to experience the arts and also to become the creators of art will help improve mental and physical wellbeing, tackle social isolation and enable people to develop important skills.

# People

*Children and young people will be able to harness their curiosity, imagination and problem solving skills to achieve educationally, secure employment and confidently navigate life. Through new friendships and dynamic partnerships artists and organisations will foster collaborative cultural leadership and a more resilient future for the arts.*

**The next generation** is a key theme that has emerged through the development of this strategy. There is a wealth of research and evidence available which shows just how important creative skills are to children's development from a very young age. Curiosity, imagination and problem solving skills are essential to higher educational attainment and are shown to significantly improve performance in many subject areas. Furthermore there are significant links between creativity and the emotional well-being of young people and their ability to manage and navigate life as they mature.



We consider creative skills as critical, both for the future prospects of our young people and the future prosperity of Orkney. Our ambition is to embed creative learning from the very start of a child's education and ensure that there is a diversity of opportunities for young people to develop the skills they will need in the future employment market and that Orkney will need to meet future opportunities and challenges.

*“ What we are doing within the arts and art education is more than just a nice thing that makes life that bit more interesting. It is absolutely fundamental to developing a visually literate society, a society where people from all walks of life are able to read, critique and challenge their experience. ”*

*Rachel Maclean, Artist*

Orkney can lead the way in providing an education driven by creativity. We will continue to innovate, promote and advocate creative approaches to learning. We will develop a shared understanding of creativity between learning providers and look to establish stronger links between the key stages of learning, from early years through to further education, thus establishing pathways for creative learning progression.

**Retaining young people** is not a challenge unique to Orkney but one faced by many rural communities in Scotland. We want to ensure that there is an innovative and sustainable arts sector with a greater number of creative opportunities for young people, catering for those who want to remain in the county and also to draw people back and encourage new people to Orkney. Building on a rich creative learning experience it is our aspiration to provide a wider range of training and development opportunities in the form of apprenticeships and further and higher education courses which will enable people to develop the very specialist skills required by the creative industries and cultural sector.

**Continued professional development** for artists and creative professionals is vital to individuals and the strength of Orkney's creative sector as a whole. Due to our geographical context people must often seek specialist training out with the county and at a substantial cost. A better understanding of the sector's requirements in this respect will enable us to identify gaps and shared needs, and seek more cost effective training solutions that will enable people to grow creatively.

**Volunteers** make a massive contribution to the arts in Orkney, in keeping with Scotland's wider arts and cultural sector. Much of what is achieved would not be possible without their support and the diverse range of skills they bring with them. We will continue to support volunteers, ensuring they are able to develop new skills and enjoy their experiences. We will consider new platforms for skill sharing and the cascading of knowledge, and stimulate greater interdisciplinary working to help build capacity right across Orkney's cultural sector.



# Sector aims and ambitions - *People*

- Cultivate a shared understanding of creativity skills and creative learning across the arts and education sector in Orkney
- Develop a greater range and number of creative learning opportunities in schools and communities
- Support access routes into the arts sector and creative industries through apprenticeships, trainee schemes, further and higher education
- Increase access to more regular and cost effective professional development opportunities for artists and creative sector employees
- Build volunteer capacity across Orkney's arts and cultural sector through knowledge sharing and training

# Case Study - Piergroup

Pier Art Centre's young people's collective Piergroup is a shifting and flexible collective of young people who participate in a programme of creative activity focused on the gallery's permanent collection and temporary exhibitions programme. The group acts as a forum for young people - including senior school pupils, undergraduates and those recently qualified - to meet and offers a platform for the development of personal and practical skills.

The group gains experience from working with artists and cultural experts on a wide range of projects, from exhibitions through to the development of community outreach and education programmes. Notably the group are empowered to feed into strategic decision making and have identified and defined a set of key outcomes for longer-term, strategic engagement of young people with the Pier Arts Centre. Many of the young people engaged with Piergroup activity go on to study art and design courses at Scottish and UK universities whilst maintaining a strong link with the Centre and cultural life in Orkney.

*Brandon Logan is a member of the Piergroup and is currently studying Fine Art at Edinburgh College of Art/ University of Edinburgh.*

*"The Pier Arts Centre and Piergroup have made me aware from a young age of the value of visual art. In a location often considered 'remote' I have had, and continue to have, the opportunity to engage with international contemporary art and artists, and to work with professionals in the gallery and museum sector, as well as contribute to the Pier's on-going programme in collaboration with my peers. The range of experiences that I've gained from participating in Piergroup has given me a confidence that has led me to study fine art and the capacity to see the many potential career possibilities ahead, not least as a practicing artist."*

## An Unfolding Gift



# Place

*We consider art as vital to the future sustainability and resilience of our islands. Orkney's landscape, unique culture and sense of place will continue to be a source of inspiration for artists. A readiness to experiment and innovate will help us to realise a creative and vibrant economy and a dynamic place where people choose to live and work.*

**Orkney's landscape** has long been a source of inspiration; a consistent theme and the defining influence amongst Orkney's most well-known musicians, writers and makers. Artists continue to be drawn here by this legacy, by visions of land and sea, distance, departure and safe harbour.

*"The full significance of Rackwick in the rich flowering of Orcadian Culture in the late 20th century has still to be properly evaluated, but its importance is beyond question"*

Archie Bevan, a founder of  
the St Magnus International Festival

The arts sector will play its part in helping to preserve a landscape of rich natural and cultural significance, safeguarding our tangible built heritage and internationally important collections as well as the stories, knowledge and skills which are synonymous with these islands.

**Cultural tourism** is a major economic driver and represents a significant share of Orkney's economy. Orkney's historic environment and archaeology are key motivators, according to Visit Scotland 80% of visitors in 2014 visited an archaeological site with Skara Brae, the Ring of Brodgar and St Magnus Cathedral being amongst the most visited places. Equally important however is the year round calendar of cultural events - these too play an important role in attracting people to the county. The St Magnus International Festival, Orkney Folk Festival and Orkney International Science Festival all cater to both domestic and international tourism markets, bringing with them significant reputational and economic value.

**Community development and empowerment** has, in many of the most successful examples, been driven by arts and cultural activity. We recognise the arts as an important community asset and understand that the profusion of small scale projects and events play a pivotal role in local communities and how people feel about the place they live and work. 76% of people in Scotland say their local area would lose something of value if the area lost its arts and cultural activities - Scottish Opinion Survey TNS, September 2014.

*"In a contemporary sense it (community development) is based on harnessing the collective imagination and intelligence of citizens in making, shaping and co-creating"*

*Charles Landry, Creative Urban Planner*

Residents take great pride in Orkney's strong cultural identity and our cultural traditions play a unifying role in the community. The Pier Arts Centre is just one local example of the arts as a catalyst, surveys show the significance of the Pier Arts Centre in terms of increasing the area's attractiveness as a tourism destination, raising the quality of the cultural offering and as a focal point for Orkney's artistic and wider community.





**Orkney's cultural infrastructure** is an important factor in our ability to cultivate and showcase the very best of our home grown creative talent as well as host performances and exhibitions by international artists and companies. Since the last strategy the realisation of the new Orkney Theatre as well as the recently opened Stromness Studios and the Kelp Store Heritage and Craft Centre in Papa Westray are all welcome and important additions to the landscape. Future opportunities are now presented by the development of the Old Library in Kirkwall, the Old Post Office in Stromness, as well as the significant investment in a new research and innovation campus in Stromness. As a sector we will provide support for these and other new developments to help ensure they cater and provide the provision needed by the community.

**The Creative Industries** represent the fastest growing sector in the UK and are estimated to contribute £3.7 billion to Scotland's economy - Scottish Government Growth Sector Statistics, October 2015. Orkney's geographical context means that it is not the first place that springs to mind

when thinking about the creative industries, yet there are many historical and contemporary examples of creative businesses succeeding in Orkney. Perhaps most notably Orkney jewellery has a long established reputation for its design and craftsmanship - now the next generation of designers and makers are achieving success and exporting their work internationally.

The Creative Industries and Social Enterprise have an important role to play in helping to achieve sustainable economic growth and helping rural economies such as Orkney to diversify and transition from traditional rural models. Further work is needed to explore these opportunities and to stimulate local growth in this sector. By providing the right conditions and incentives Orkney could become a viable place for more creative businesses to set up and enjoy success, whilst at the same time making a valuable contribution to communities and the local economy.





# Sector aims and ambitions - *Place*

- Maintain and celebrate Orkney's unique built heritage, natural environment, arts and heritage collections and cultural traditions
- Raise awareness of and promote Orkney's 'Living Culture' as a cultural tourism driver
- Encourage investment in capital cultural projects and infrastructure
- Explore cross sectoral collaborations locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
- Make use of the combined knowledge and expertise in Orkney's arts and business sectors to support new creative start-ups and social enterprises

# Case Study - *Papa Westray*

Papay is one of Orkney's most northerly islands with a population of around 80. During the last 18 months, residents, the Community Council and Community Association have gathered around a number of arts and creative projects.

The Kelp Store Heritage and Craft Centre opened to the public in June 2016. The centre has a dedicated exhibition, performance and workshop space and will host a broad programme of activity in partnership with local artists/craft makers alongside both national and international practitioners.

The community on Papay has shown great commitment to the centre and there is a boundless enthusiasm to make the most of this special building which is part of the heritage of the island and will now continue to make its own history here on Papay.

Alongside the development of the Kelp Store the island hosted acclaimed artists Richard Skelton and Autumn Richardson for a month long residency in 2016. This was the first extended artists residency that the Papay Development Trust had undertaken,

with support from the Orkney Island Council's Culture Fund and Papa Westray Community Council the residency proved to be a resounding success. Richard and Autumn were welcomed into the community and were very quickly researching and making work. A sound piece produced by Richard and Autumn during their time on Papay is part of the archive display in the Kelp Store, along with a selection of their books. The community are looking to further this collaboration to produce a Papay dialect dictionary.

Jonathan Ford is the Papay Ranger.

*"The Papay Development Trust has encouraged and supported me in the setting up of artist's residencies and workshop programme. They see the value that the residencies, events and the future identity of the Kelp Store as a space for artists and crafts people can bring to the island. Attracting more people to the island, as visitors or as artists will not only bring needed money in to the island but raise its profile nationally and hopefully internationally in the future, which can only be a good thing in what still is quite a fragile community."*

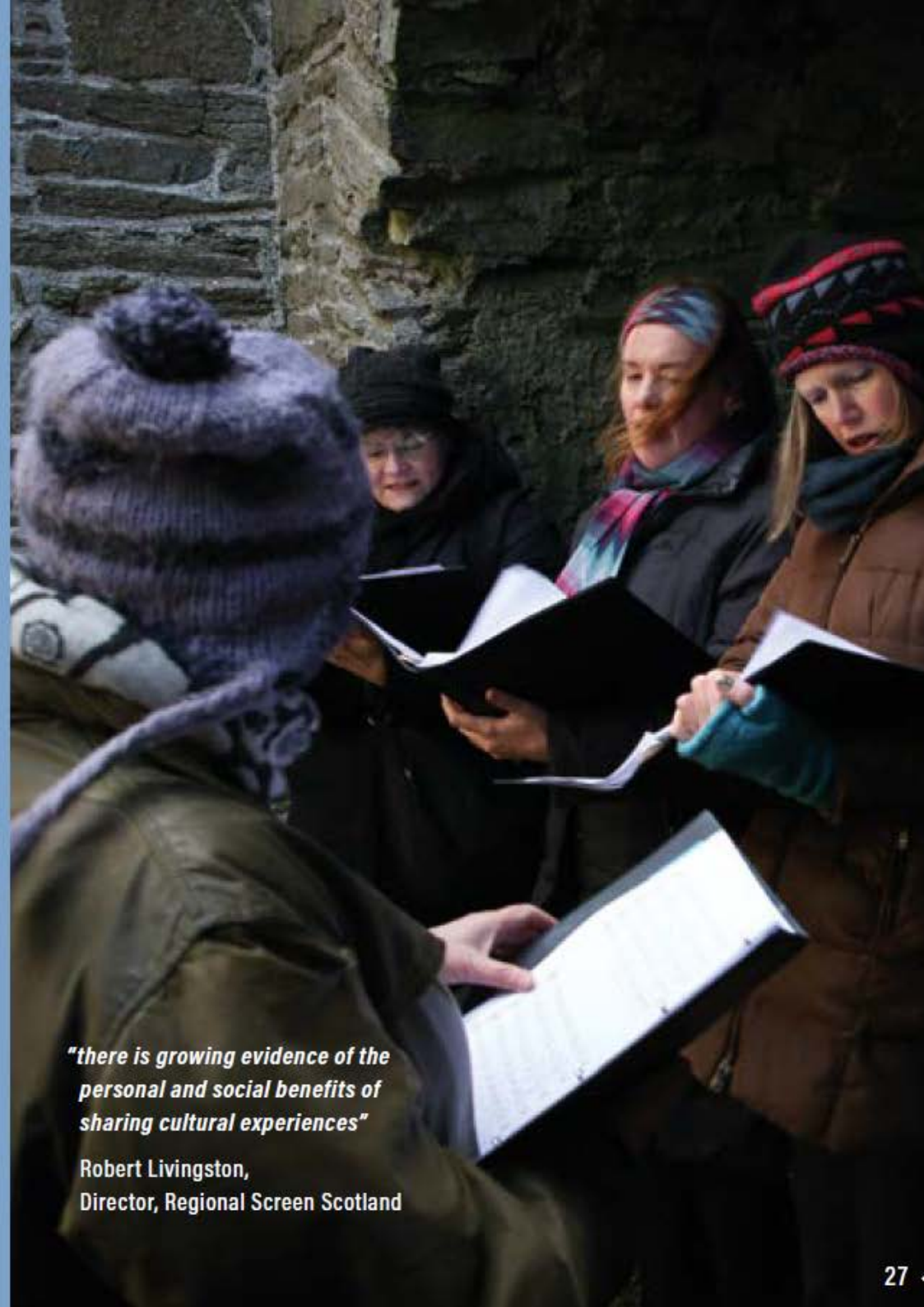


# Participation

*Individuals and communities will be able to access and participate in a diverse range of high quality arts activity. Increased opportunities for people to experience the arts and also to become the creators of art will help improve mental and physical wellbeing, tackle social isolation and enable people to develop important skills.*

Increasing cultural engagement is one of the Scottish Government's National Indicators and is strong recognition of the positive impact that participation in the arts can have on people's lives and on the social fabric of a community.

We know that a large number of people in Orkney already experience or participate in the arts - according to the Scottish Household Survey 91% of adults in Orkney engaged in cultural activity in 2014. It is surprising however, that despite Orkney's often cited cultural distinction, cultural participation is only comparable with the Scottish national average. This demonstrates a clear need to continue to increase opportunities to participate in the arts so that as many and a diverse a range of people as possible experience the many benefits. By considering how we increase participation in the arts we must also consider the traditional parameters of participation. We wish to establish more opportunities for people, not only to spectate but to create art.



*"there is growing evidence of the personal and social benefits of sharing cultural experiences"*

Robert Livingston,  
Director, Regional Screen Scotland

Instead of thinking of art as an object or output, might it instead be considered as an input? Our vision is one in which the arts are regarded as a resource, a mechanism by which people are able to think, feel and create, an opportunity to energise and mobilise people, a collective contribution to our understanding, a tool to problem solve and a way to reimagine how we do things.

**Health and wellbeing** is one of the key challenges facing communities and politically the agenda continues to gather pace. Locally, the Orkney Partnership, who are responsible for community planning, has identified Healthy and Sustainable Communities and Positive Ageing as two of its three strategic priorities. As we move slowly towards an era of prevention rather than treatment, the currency of the arts in relation to the health and wellbeing agenda looks increasingly positive and one that we as a community cannot afford to overlook.

A growing body of research makes clear the strong links between creative participation and health, in particular mental health and emotional wellbeing but also physical health. Findings suggest that arts participation can make a positive contribution to reducing stress and anxiety, enhancing greater self-awareness and reflection, altering behaviours and thinking. A more explicit example would be the strong evidence of the positive impact of music for patients with dementia whilst a report based on the Scottish Household Survey found a definite correlation between attending cultural activities and physical wellbeing: "Overall, those who attended a cultural place or event were almost 60 per cent more likely to report good health compared to those who did not attend."

We strongly believe that in the future the arts can play an increasingly instrumental role in achieving a healthier and sustainable community in Orkney and the integration of health and social care offers further opportunities to capitalise on this. We must do more to ensure that these benefits are understood beyond the limits of the arts sector, and that other sectors feel confident to open a dialogue and collaborate in creative partnerships.





**Digital technologies** are now a hugely significant part of everyday life - the arts and cultural sector have played a significant role in the innovation of many of these technologies. Traditionally harnessed by organisations to promote exhibitions and events, communicate about their work and generate revenue through ticket sales and merchandise - today organisations are using these technologies to an even greater extent, showcasing their work to large online audiences and even to generate work in the public realm. Since the widespread adoption of social media, digital has become the fastest growing platform for cultural production and participation.

Orkney has suffered a significant lack of investment in its digital infrastructure; the creative sectors, along with many others, continue to be hampered by this. Given the geographical context of Orkney and the disparate geography of our communities digital technologies have the ability to radically change the nature of creative participation, to help us connect locally and globally.

# Sector aims and ambitions - *Participation*

- Promote the many benefits of creative participation
- Cultivate a shared understanding of how creative participation can be used as a form of prevention in relation to health and wellbeing
- Pilot projects which demonstrate the positive impact of arts participation across a range of non-arts services
- Promote, ensure and celebrate equalities and diversity within the arts
- Pilot projects with a focus on digital participation and skills development





# Case Study - *For Arts Sake*

For Arts Sake is a Community Interest Company and Social Enterprise that has been running in Orkney since 2009. The company facilitates many opportunities to make art; its aims are to;

- Promote social inclusion, equality and diversity
- Advance education in the creative arts
- Promote personal development and wellbeing
- Support artistic community activities

For Arts Sake runs a well-equipped art shop, stocking a range of art materials and supplies. Profits from the shop facilitate the company to run a wide range of workshops, taster sessions and regular creative groups that enable participants to take part in creative activity. Groups include Knit n Natter, Portrait and Patchwork groups, offering valuable opportunities for people of all ages and with a wide range of experience to get together share and learn creative skills. The social aspect of the workshops can be as important as the resulting artwork.

The groups are open to all to encourage everyone not only to share their skills but to experience the positive effect of creative wellbeing. By being open and welcoming to all we have discovered that there are a number of regular participants who have mental health and/or social issues that have restricted their participation in groups in the past, but who have found a sense of wellbeing within the groups. The Zentangle and Spinning groups by their nature focus on the meditative side of creativity bringing a calm absorption to the participants which is important for everyone's mental health.

As a social enterprise For Arts Sake also offers opportunities for people to work as volunteers in a supported environment. Volunteers help run the art shop and learn a number of valuable retail and communication skills. A number of volunteers have used this time to work towards and gain their Saltire Awards, clocking up hundreds of hours of volunteering and growing in confidence along the way. For Arts Sake makes a further important contribution to the arts in Orkney; running a gallery space that showcases and sells the work of local professional and amateur artists.

Jan Judge is founder and Director of For Arts Sake. "Our philosophy is to encourage everyone to experience and benefit from developing their own creativity, supporting their personal development and contributing to good mental wellbeing throughout the community, whatever their skill level"

# Sector aims and ambitions

The 3 strategic themes provide the foundation for a series of shared aims and ambitions which will be reviewed on a 3 year cycle. The aims and ambitions will be monitored by the Orkney Arts Forum and the Council's Arts Development Service. In addition and where necessary, working groups will be set up to provide expertise and drive activity.

The full Sector Aims and Ambitions document can be downloaded from the the Orkney Arts Forum website [www.orkneyartsforum.co.uk](http://www.orkneyartsforum.co.uk)



*Strategic Theme: Participation*  
 Individuals and communities will be able to access and participate in a diverse range of high quality arts activity. Increased opportunities for people who to become the creators of art will help improve mental and physical wellbeing, tackle social isolation and enable people to develop their talents.

Sector aims and objectives	Target No.	Target	How will this be achieved	Lead Partnership Organisation
Promote the benefits of creative participation.	33	Develop a shared sector level of understanding regarding the value of creative participation in the arts, including what we can learn to develop greater participation, from the arts in other countries.	A UK/OSI co-funded project to develop participation in the arts and the arts in education. Consider developing a shared understanding of the value and impact of participation in the arts and education in other countries.	Orkney Arts Forum Orkney Council
	34	Develop the Arts Development Strategy which will be a key document in the sector in recognition of a wide range of contributions to community development in the arts.	Develop the shared Orkney Arts Development Strategy which will be a key document in the sector in recognition of a wide range of contributions to community development in the arts.	Orkney Arts Forum
	35	Develop the shared sector public consultation on previous creative sector needs such as the development of Orkney Arts Forum.	Develop the shared sector public consultation on previous creative sector needs such as the development of Orkney Arts Forum.	Orkney Arts Forum Orkney Council
Collaborate a shared understanding of how creative participation can be used as a form of prevention in relation to mental and wellbeing.	36	Develop a shared understanding of how creative participation can be used as a form of prevention in relation to mental and wellbeing.	Develop a shared understanding of how creative participation can be used as a form of prevention in relation to mental and wellbeing.	Arts/Cultural Organisations Orkney Arts Forum

## Appendix 1 - Sources

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Ruth Fry, LGiU Scotland Associate

[Creative accounting? The economic benefits of investing in culture](#)  
Ruth Fry, LGiU Scotland Associate

## Appendix 2 - Images

Front cover

Magnus 900 - *Orkney Media Group*

Inside Cover

Poppies Weeping Window - *Ellie Kurttz Photography*

P2 1937 St Magnus pagaent  
*Orkney Library & Archive*

P5 Orkney Folk Festival - *Sean Purser*

P6 Ring of Brodgar

P7 St Magnus International Festival - *Leslie Burger*

P10 Sea Hames - *Oceanallover*

P12 Odyssean Artist Residency - *Simon Lee Dicker*

P14 Orkney Folk Festival - *Sean Purser*

P17 Orkney Folk Festival - *Sean Purser*

P19 Knit n Natter - *For Arts Sake*

P20 Piergroup - *Pier Arts Centre*

P21 Rackwick, Hoy

P23 Pier Arts Centre - *Pier Arts Centre*

P24 St Magnus Way - *Orkney Media Group*

P26 Oy Festival- *Jonathan Ford*

P27 Mayfield Singers - *Orkney Media Group*

P28 Pier Arts Centre - *Pier Arts Centre*

P30 Spinning Group - *For Arts Sake*

P32 St Magnus International Festival - *Leslie Burgher*

Back cover

Pier Arts Centre - *Pier Arts Centre*



Orkney's Creative Future  
*A Ten Year Strategy for the Arts*

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