

Inspiring Connections: Scotland's International Culture Strategy 2024-30



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Front cover image: Breabach performing at the Festival Interceltique de Lorient in 2023.
Festival Interceltique de Lorient / Joel Le Quellec

Ministerial foreword

International engagement is vital for our culture and creative sector. Engagement and collaboration across borders create new opportunities for creative professionals, make our culture and creative sector more vibrant and diverse, and help to reach new audiences and markets. It also connects us to global dialogues on some of the key challenges of our time.

Scotland's deep and rich culture and creativity is recognised across the world. The work of writers such as Robert Burns, our music scene, and our festivals, with their open international spirit, are all internationally renowned. Our creativity has been recognised by UNESCO in our four Creative Cities. Our unique historic environment is shown in our six World Heritage Sites. Scotland's global cultural contribution puts our culture and creative sector in a strong position to enhance their international engagement.

This is the first time that a comprehensive strategy focused on developing and enhancing international cultural engagement has been published by the Scottish Government. It sets out a vision to enhance the sector's international presence and considers the role that the Scottish Government and our partners can play in that.

It is more important than ever that we take action. The UK's withdrawal from the EU and the end of freedom of movement has weakened the sector's ability to work across borders. This has been compounded by the impacts of COVID-19 and current cost pressures. Supporting the sector to reinvigorate international engagement can be a key part of driving its recovery.

The actions set out here will also help us to engage in wider international debates and play an active role in addressing global challenges. Culture can help bring new perspectives and ideas to the biggest questions we face as a society: for example, our country's role in empire and slavery, and addressing climate change. Work outlined here can help us to consider these vital issues.

We will deliver the aims of this strategy by working closely with the sector, drawing on its expertise and understanding its needs. We will also ensure that international engagement is open to as many organisations and practitioners as possible, so more people can share the positive impacts.

Engaging and cooperating across borders will create a vibrant, innovative and strong culture and creative sector. Developing international cultural connections will benefit our communities, and help us to build a fairer and more just world. This strategy sets out our vision for this. I look forward to widespread conversation about the possibilities and opportunities that this brings.



Angus Robertson MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Constitution,
External Affairs and Culture

Introduction

Scotland's culture and creative sector, organisations and individual practitioners are inherently international. Exchange, collaboration and dialogue are at the heart of how the sector operates, grows and innovates. Creative responses to ideas, identities and societal challenges draw on universal experiences – they are not confined to national borders. Engagement with other cultures, ideas, and approaches is fundamental to the sector, helping it to continue to develop both in its practice and its business models.

International activity can also be an important source of income, supporting the sector's financial health and sustainability. It allows organisations to take their work to wider audiences and access new markets, increasing the range of income streams upon which they can draw. For some, the additional income that international activity generates is what makes a career in the sector financially viable. This is particularly important in the current environment as a number of significant challenges have impacted the sector financially while at the same time reducing its means to generate income, including through international activity.

Practitioners and creative organisations from around the world bringing their work to Scotland enrich our domestic cultural scene by exposing us to new ideas and other cultures. Scotland's world-renowned cultural assets, such as our festivals, heritage, and historic environment bring the world to Scotland and provide opportunities to showcase Scottish practitioners and their work to international peers, audiences and industry figures.

This International Culture Strategy defines the culture and creative sector as those individuals or organisations that derive income from work associated with culture, creative activities, heritage or the arts. It considers the strong existing international footprint of Scotland's culture and creative sector and the value that international work has for the

sector, then sets out how the Scottish Government and wider public sector can support its development. While support has been available for aspects of such activity, this is the first time the Scottish Government has set out a strategic focus on international cultural activity. The strategy takes a view of the whole sector and sets out a policy rationale for supporting the sector's international ambitions. Ultimately, it aims to ensure that international engagement contributes fully to the sector's long-term development in both cultural and economic terms.

Scotland's strengths

Scotland's culture and creative sector is internationally connected and respected for its creativity and excellence but is also recognised for its approaches and business models. A two-part report commissioned by Creative Scotland and British Council Scotland in 2022, *To See Ourselves and As Others See Us*,¹ provides a rich overview of Scotland's cultural assets, the opportunities and challenges for the sector as seen from its own perspective, and a global perspective on its distinctive characteristics and strengths. This work demonstrates that Scotland's cultural assets are not just the activities, performances, festivals, infrastructure, and practitioners that exist in Scotland, but also the approaches and business models that make Scotland distinctive. The sector has a reputation for particular approaches that make organisations keen to work with Scottish peers.

1 British Council (2022) [Arts and Cultural Assets Research Report](#)



Edinburgh Castle illuminated as part of Castle of Light: Hidden Treasures.
VisitScotland / Kenny Lam

A perceived authenticity, democratic bottom-up approach, and innovative delivery models are all recognised as being strengths that support mutually beneficial international relationships.

Scotland's cultural and linguistic diversity is important to international perceptions of Scotland² and features heavily in the collaborative marketing outputs of the Brand Scotland Partnership. It adds to the sense that the Scottish culture and creative sector has an authenticity in its output and impetus and an egalitarian and bottom-up approach. Gaelic and Scots language and culture are central to this as part of people's lived experience. They also support connections with heritage diaspora communities in parts of the world, as well as with other Celtic nations, and provide opportunities for outward and inward international engagement.

Scotland's five National Performing Companies³ have international reputations for cultural excellence. They are supported by the Scottish Government to tour internationally, showcasing Scottish culture on the world stage.

² [ibid.](#)

³ [National Theatre of Scotland](#), [Royal Scottish National Orchestra](#), [Scottish Ballet](#), [Scottish Chamber Orchestra](#) and [Scottish Opera](#).

⁴ [National Library of Scotland](#); [National Museums Scotland](#); [National Galleries of Scotland](#); [National Records of Scotland](#), [V&A Dundee](#).

Our museums and galleries, including our National Collections⁴, are globally connected and have an important role in helping us to understand Scotland's place in the world. Scottish collections are playing a leading role in addressing historic injustices and demonstrating how steps can be taken to redress their ongoing impacts.

Scotland's diverse festivals take place year-round all across the country and are a key cultural asset. Edinburgh is internationally renowned for the annual Festivals programme which the city hosts throughout the year. All these festivals help showcase Scotland's creative talents and innovation, bring the world to Scotland and enrich our domestic culture scene. Festivals connect Scotland's creative sector with international peers and prospective producers which can also open up opportunities for the development of international careers.

The historic environment is the imprint of the past on our landscape. It helps create the distinct character of our country and its towns, cities, villages and rural areas. It connects us with the people who lived here before us, and tells us about their ideas, identities and ambitions. Scotland's historic environment is world renowned, attracting visitors from all over the globe. It generated £4.4 billion for Scotland's economy in 2019 and supported 68,000 full time equivalent jobs mainly in the heritage, tourism and construction sectors. Tourist footfall at heritage attractions was over 18 million in 2019, with half of all international visitors reporting heritage as the key motivation for visiting Scotland.

Scotland's screen sector has grown significantly in recent years, driven by the efforts of our dedicated screen agency Screen Scotland, which published its [own strategy](#) in March 2024. The screen industry generates millions of pounds for Scotland's economy, creates thousands of jobs and supports careers

throughout the sector and ancillary industries. Its gross value-added in 2021 was £627.1 million and it supported 10,940 full-time equivalent jobs.⁵ Screen Scotland will continue to support the sector's growth and development, both in terms of attracting inward investment from international productions and the Scottish productions finding a platform on the world stage. This will increase the cultural and economic impacts and drive wider benefits such as screen tourism.⁶ VisitScotland has worked for a number of years developing screen tourism activity and works closely with industry partners and agencies to deliver screen-related marketing campaigns.

Challenges

In recent years a number of concurrent challenges have negatively impacted on, and curtailed the ability of, cultural organisations to engage internationally. This has affected both their ability to make new cultural connections and income. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the sector more than most, curtailing activity at home and abroad.⁷ The rising cost of living has added additional costs to most work at a time when public sector support has been under pressure. Despite these challenges, we know that the sector is committed to implementing fairer ways of working, which is a commitment that the Scottish Government shares. Ensuring that fair work principles, including that practitioners are fairly paid for the work that they do, can introduce additional expense for creative businesses, but in the long term it will support the resilience of the sector through making careers within it sustainable.

These issues have compounded long-term challenges caused by Brexit⁸. The EU is one of the culture and creative sector's most important international export markets⁹ and Brexit has raised barriers to access. Visa and customs regulations have added additional costs and increased the

administrative burden of taking work to the EU. It has also made it more difficult for the sector to access particular specialist skills. Scottish organisations can no longer access EU programmes such as [Creative Europe](#) or [Erasmus+](#). Creative Europe, the EU's principal programme in support of the culture and creative sector, has a strong focus on international cultural collaboration and the loss of its developmental impetus is keenly felt.

The sector must also adjust to support collective action against climate change. Scotland has a target to become a net zero source of all greenhouse gases by 2045. There is a clear tension here as international travel, both from and to Scotland, is inescapable if we want to uphold meaningful cultural connections and welcome creative professionals to work in Scotland. While many cultural organisations, in part through the experience of the pandemic, have enhanced their ability to present their work digitally and through doing so have expanded audiences, this is not a solution for much activity, particularly the experience of live performance or the importance of in-person engagement.

“Rè a’ ghalair làir-sgaoilte, mheudaich mòran bhuidhnean Gàidhlig an làthaireachd air-loidhne gu mòr, a’ gabhail a-steach cuirmean is co-labhairtean. Thug seo barrachd ruigsinneachd do mhòran dhaoine – gu sònraichte luchd-amais eadar-nàiseanta.” Bòrd na Gàidhlig, International Culture Strategy consultation response

Translation: “During the pandemic, many Gaelic organisations increased their online presence significantly, including performances and conferences. This provided greater access for many people – particularly international audiences.”

5 Saffery Champness (for Screen Scotland) (2023) [The Economic Value of the Screen Sector in Scotland in 2021](#)

6 *ibid.*

7 Creative Scotland (2021) [COVID-19 Scottish Creative Sectors Survey](#)

8 UK in a Changing Europe (2021) [Brexit: Impacts on the arts and culture](#)

9 Arts Council England (2016) [The arts and culture sector and exit from the European Union](#)

We must find ways to strike a balance between environmental impact and the value gained from international engagement, while supporting the sector's longer-term transition to net zero.

Vision and outcomes

Our vision is for the Scottish culture and creative sector to be globally connected with the means and opportunities to achieve its international ambitions and potential, and contribute to Scotland's cultural, social, economic and environmental wellbeing through its international work.

Our vision and strategic aims will be underpinned by working towards the following outcomes:

- ▶ An innovative, more sustainable and economically stronger culture and creative sector.
- ▶ An internationally connected and diverse culture and creative sector that contributes positively to people and communities.
- ▶ An enhanced international reputation for culture and creativity including Scotland's response to global challenges.

Our approach aims to ensure that international engagement is a key element of sectoral recovery from recent challenges and supports its long-term development and resilience. It focusses resolutely on sectoral development and the importance of international engagement to the ways in which the sector works, both in its business interests and in the cultural engagement and exchange of ideas that are fundamental to cultural innovation.

This is an approach that has been informed by extensive stakeholder input including through roundtable conversations, which shaped the early principles of the approach, and a consultation survey to which almost 80 organisations and individuals from a wide range of backgrounds responded.¹⁰

Finally, this strategy is intended to be scalable. Implementation will be informed by the funding that the Scottish Government makes available to the culture sector through its budget processes. The principles of the approach will stand regardless of future constitutional change, but clearly the powers of an independent Scotland would open new avenues through which to support international cultural activity. That would include the formal international presence we would have and membership of the EU and other international institutions like UNESCO. This was set out in detail in [Building a New Scotland: Culture in an Independent Scotland](#), published in February 2024.

¹⁰ Scottish Government (2023) [International Culture Strategy: Consultation Analysis](#)

Case study – another country’s approach: Québec

Québec was the first North American nation to establish a dedicated Ministry of Culture in 1961, underscoring the profound significance of culture to Québec and its identity. The interventions made over the decades have developed an original and thriving culture and creative sector. The promotion, visibility, and dissemination of Québec works and productions are crucial for artistic vitality.

Québec’s cultural footprint is global in scope and access to foreign markets has increased opportunities for artists and writers to create, produce, and disseminate their work, and in doing so increase the number of jobs available within the sector in Québec.

Québec’s international culture policy focus is focused on cultural promotion, language and practices. It encompasses cooperative approaches with other governments, and includes cultural exchanges with other territories, countries and regions of the world. The showcasing of Québec’s distinct culture, particularly its French identity, is a central component in the promotion of Québec culture abroad.

Québec’s cultural reputation, and above all, its influence, go hand in hand with its ability to promote and defend its interests in various Canadian and international settings, including commercial forums. In this regard, the Québec government, supported by the culture sector, has played a pioneering role in the development, adoption and ratification of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Québec is also positioned as a world leader in the integration of culture and sustainable development.

Québec’s international cultural policy objectives have at their heart the development of its culture and creative sector. They are delivered through a number of its institutions including the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec (Québec Arts Council), Société de Développement des Entreprises Culturelles (Society for the Development of Cultural Enterprises), Le Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (Department of Culture and Communications) and Québec’s network of international offices, in which there are 24 cultural officers who support market development for their sector within the territories in which they are based.

Values and principles

This strategy sits under a [Culture Strategy for Scotland](#), published in 2020, and builds on the international ambitions it outlines. The importance of the guiding principles at the heart of that work were reinforced by the views expressed by organisations and individuals during the development of this strategy and are equally relevant here:

- ▶ Culture in Scotland is valued in and of itself.
- ▶ Culture is free to be inspiring and to challenge.
- ▶ Culture is central to the future wellbeing and prosperity of Scotland – cultural, social, economic and environmental.

- ▶ We celebrate the diversity and excellence of cultures in Scotland and the value of open exchange with the wider world.
- ▶ Everyone has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits (Article 27, [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)).
- ▶ Place - community, landscape, language and geography – is important and reflects the creativity of the past and provides inspiration for cultural expression today.

The strategy also connects with and mutually reinforces a wide range of other Scottish Government policies and those that sit with our public bodies, many of which are noted throughout this document.

Outcomes framework

National Performance Framework

- ▶ **Culture:** We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely
- ▶ **International:** We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally
- ▶ **Economy:** We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy
- ▶ **Fair Work:** We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- ▶ **Environment:** We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment
- ▶ **Human Rights:** We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination

Vision

Our vision is for the Scottish culture and creative sector to be globally connected with the means and opportunities to achieve its international ambitions and potential, and contribute to Scotland's cultural, social, economic and environmental wellbeing through its international work.

Outcome

- ▶ An innovative, more sustainable and economically stronger culture and creative sector

Outcome

- ▶ An internationally connected and diverse culture and creative sector that contributes positively to people and communities

Outcome

- ▶ An enhanced international reputation for culture and creativity including Scotland's response to global challenges

The impact of international cultural engagement

The culture and creative sector's international connections have many important impacts on the way practitioners and organisations work. They support cultural innovation and learning, the development of new ideas, approaches and business models, and allow organisations to take their work to wider audiences.¹¹ Accessing new markets can open up opportunities to develop and diversify income streams, which supports financial sustainability and resilience. Inward international cultural activity upholds the world-leading position of Scotland's festivals and enriches Scotland's domestic cultural scene by exposing us to new ideas and cultures.

Fundamentally, international collaboration and exchange reflects the culture sector's inherent values. It exemplifies its openness, internationalism and commitment to engagement with other cultures and ideas and desire to share knowledge and best practice to support international peers. Relationships of reciprocal exchange have mutual benefit.

This section considers the importance of international engagement for the sector and what this strategy seeks to impact. It draws strongly on responses received through the survey the Scottish Government undertook in 2023 to inform the development of this strategy.

Cultural innovation, learning and development

Engagement is at the heart of what many cultural organisations do, be that with audiences, amongst peers or through cross-sector collaboration.

A key motivating factor behind much creative practice is inspiration and the exploration of new ideas, considering shared challenges and values, and seeking to develop our understanding of other cultures while reflecting on our own. International cultural exchange helps us as a society to reflect on our own place in the world, the position of others, and can raise awareness and understanding of global and local challenges.

International engagement provides positive exposure to innovative approaches and learning opportunities for creative practitioners. Establishing connections, building networks and the collaboration that can be facilitated through them supports innovation, development and strengthens the sector. More formal skills and knowledge exchange through international forums such as conferences and delegations also has an important role.

Sharing experience and drawing on others' knowledge and expertise supports innovation and cultural excellence. Few, if any, art forms are confined to national borders, so to continue to innovate, organisations and artists must develop and maintain creative connections with peers around the world.

“The value and importance of learning from best practice models globally cannot be understated and this works both ways, in that not only does Scotland benefit from knowledge and expertise elsewhere but Scotland is also recognised as a leader in areas of museums and galleries work.” Museums Galleries Scotland, International Culture Strategy consultation response

We want to ensure that cultural practitioners and organisations are able to develop their international connections so they can foster and build collaborative relationships. This intent is at the heart of the actions outlined throughout this strategy.

¹¹ ICM Unlimited and SQW (for Arts Council England) (2017) - [Impact of Brexit on the arts and culture sector](#)

Case study - PUSH+

The PUSH+ project came out of a desire in the children's theatre and dance sector to create work that is high quality and relevant, while representing and reflecting a more diverse range of stories.

PUSH+ (2019-2022) was led by Imagineate (Scotland) alongside Aaben Dans (Denmark), Krokusfestival (Belgium), Scenekunstbruket (Norway) and The Ark (Ireland), and was funded by Creative Europe. The project brought together these five partners to stimulate European dialogue and initiate new artistic ideas and performances around important topics in performance for young audiences – encouraging artists to take more risks, to address the underrepresentation of different lives and bodies on stage and to tell stories that really connect with children and who they are.

The work explored three topics: Home, Failure and Different Bodies. Each topic was explored through an 8 day residential Lab, artist residencies and festival visits. The project culminated with a final showcase in September 2022.

The international partnership brought together artists from different cultural and social backgrounds and stimulated dialogue and future collaborations. Artists challenged their practice, developed new approaches, learned from their peers and created new networks.

The project has had a lasting impact on partners and artists with many remaining in contact and planning new projects together. Several of the Scotland-based artists have subsequently been commissioned to develop new work or found international co-production opportunities. All who took part also shared a desire to make work which would push boundaries and challenge the status quo going forward. International collaboration and exchange of ideas were vital to its impact, providing opportunities for engagement and learning that otherwise would not have existed.

Business development

International engagement can open opportunities to develop new audiences and access new markets. For some organisations and practitioners it is their international activity that makes it possible to have a financially sustainable career in their field.

“Identifying fruitful new opportunities and markets internationally should help to aid growth and sustainability of those enterprises involved, providing additional and increased income streams, whilst also acknowledging additional risk and costs.” South of Scotland Enterprise, International Culture Strategy consultation response

International exports are a major source of revenue for Scotland's culture and creative sector and they have seen considerable growth over the last decade. In 2021, exports from the sector stood at £3.8 billion or 4.7% of Scotland's total exports¹²

International activity across the sector is varied and wide-ranging. Certain sub-sectors have a particular focus on international trade in services. For example, international touring is a key element of business models in the music and performing arts sectors. That affects individual artists, organisations such as orchestras, and other professionals such as sound engineers and lighting technicians. It has been estimated that musicians receive around 70% of their income from touring.¹³ Similarly, exhibiting internationally is important to the visual arts sector

¹² Scottish Government (2024) [Growth Sector Briefing – Creative Industries](#)

¹³ House of Commons: Digital, Culture and Sport Committee (2021) [Economics of music streaming](#)



Alan Cumming performing in *Burn* in 2022, a co-production between the National Theatre of Scotland, The Joyce Theater in New York and Edinburgh International Festival

and museums and galleries. The screen sector and those working in it benefit considerably from cross-border projects, co-productions and inward investment. These activities have unique impacts beyond income, such as the development of cross-border networks and relationships, and expansion of audiences. Pre-Brexit, access to the EU was particularly important for artists in the early stages of their careers. This was in part due to the accessibility of the EU market, with relatively inexpensive transport links compared with other international markets. However, costs were also significantly minimised due to freedom of movement within the EU. There are now additional challenges associated with these activities, such as visa and work-permit requirements when working in different countries, many of which have been exacerbated by Brexit.

The export of goods and intellectual property also plays a role in supporting the sector. The export of textiles, crafts, visual art and physical copies of literature and music provide vital revenue for much of the sector. Physical goods are often sold as a means of generating additional revenue as part of international work such as tours. In this area, merchandise sales are of particular value to the music sector. Again, while the international sale of physical goods brings many benefits to the sector, there are also challenges, such as customs and tax requirements.

Reputation and values

“The strength of Scotland’s cultural reputation brings us a voice in international dialogue far beyond our size.” Culture Counts, International Culture Strategy consultation response

There is no doubt that culture in a wide sense is central to positive perceptions of Scotland internationally and to our attractiveness as a destination and partner. In 2022, Scotland was ranked 15th out of 60 countries in the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index¹⁴ in terms of survey respondents’ perceptions of Scotland’s culture. This overall ranking would be higher if the culture dimension did not include perceptions of sporting excellence as a sub-category.

The culture sector is vital to this. Its international footprint highlights Scotland to the rest of the world and has significant secondary impacts. Work by Screen Scotland for example shows that overnight tourists motivated to visit Scotland by screen productions increased from 525,000 in 2016 to 656,000 in 2019 (328,000 domestic, and 328,000 international), spending £56.8 million in Scotland.¹⁵ It can also be a driver of higher value tourism. For example, Festival Edinburgh’s analysis of the 2022 festival season shows that while audience numbers were 30% lower than in 2019 pre-pandemic, increased spending by visitors meant that the economic impact of the festivals was 97% of pre-pandemic levels.¹⁶

It is also clear that many cultural organisations see themselves and their work as having a role to play in presenting Scotland internationally. This is directly related to their creative practice and the exploration of identities, histories and ideas. Through their work they can explore Scotland’s place in the world and enter creative conversations about the values that we might wish to uphold in relationships with other countries. This seeks to understand and present views of Scotland, our relationship with the wider world and common challenges in the 21st century. It also helps us to form a more complete picture of our past and the legacies of its more difficult aspects.

The Scottish Government’s new [International Strategy](#) has set out a range of priorities and actions for its international activity. International cultural cooperation is a key lever through which we can build on Scotland’s impressive reputation as a cultural and creative hub. This means supporting the culture sector to engage in cultural dialogue and present its work in international forums. However, it also means going beyond showcasing what we do and supporting the sector to realise tangible partnerships and outcomes that promote experimentation and innovation, bring economic benefits and new trade and investment relationships, and promote Scotland as a place to visit.

14 Scottish Government (2023) [The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands IndexSM: 2022 Report For Scotland](#)

15 Saffery Champness (for Screen Scotland) [The Economic Value of the Screen Sector in Scotland in 2021](#)

16 BOP Consulting (for Festivals Edinburgh) (2023) [Economic Impact of the Edinburgh Festivals](#)

Supporting requirements

International work requires cultural organisations to have access to skills, knowledge, expertise and networks, whatever the motivations for this activity might be. It also requires capacity and resource to plan and deliver activity. A lack of capacity and capability can prohibit some organisations and practitioners from realising their ambitions to develop and deliver their international work even when doing so could benefit their practice and financial sustainability. The current context of increased costs and ongoing recovery from the curtailment of work during the Covid19 pandemic has not made this any easier. The additional challenges that have been caused by Brexit have raised cost and administrative barriers to accessing the EU, which remains one of the sector's most important international markets.¹⁷

This section of the strategy focuses on the structural factors that support the sector's international engagement and the importance of this engagement to business models in the sector.

Mobility

International mobility is central to activities across the culture and creative sector. Without it, creative professionals in Scotland cannot take their work to other countries, and their counterparts from around the world cannot come to Scotland. The ability to carry out international activities such as touring is vital to many individuals and organisations in terms of reaching new audiences, generating income, collaborating and building vital networks across borders, and showcasing Scotland's culture and creative sector internationally.

However, the sector has been clear that there are many barriers to international mobility such as visa and work permit requirements, customs rules and the general cost of moving between countries. Brexit has put in place significant new barriers which have had a negative impact on this international activity.¹⁸

A key area of action on the back of this strategy will be efforts to mitigate these impacts. It is likely that this will take several forms. Diplomatic efforts will be explored; for example to put in place bilateral and multilateral measures to exempt creative professionals from certain visa and work permit requirements, particularly for short-term cross-border activities. Adapting the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU, as explored in greater detail below, to better reflect the needs of the sector will also be vital.

“[Brexit has] increased costs and complexities of trade in cultural products and services, including from rules governing carnets, cabotage and digitally delivered services.” Festivals Edinburgh, International Culture Strategy consultation response

- ▶ The Scottish Government will continue to push the UK Government to work with other governments and the EU to support visa-free arrangements for touring artists.

¹⁷ Arts Council England (2016) [The arts and culture sector and exit from the European Union](#)

¹⁸ House of Lords Library (2021) [Impact of Brexit on UK Musicians Performing in the EU](#)

Navigating this landscape can be challenging and expensive. The Scottish Government has supported activity to ensure that artists from outside the UK have access to advice on the UK's post-Brexit visa rules, to minimise impact on the domestic cultural scene as far as possible. While services exist in other countries that can provide advice to Scottish organisations seeking to take their work to those places, the additional costs imposed by Brexit on taking work to the EU are inescapable.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will consider what measures might support Scottish artists to address these challenges.

Cultural export and exchange

The export activity of the culture and creative sector takes various forms. This is often in the form of services such as touring or exhibiting and the ability for individuals and organisations to work across borders is central in delivering these services. Mobility is vital to this, but support for cultural export is also a wider issue about developing connections, providing platforms and supporting organisations to develop the skills and capacity to work internationally. The export of physical goods is also important to elements of the sector. Inbound cultural tourism generates export revenue through visitors



Vietnamese and Scottish musicians, Ly Mí Cường, Nguyễn Trung Bảo and Inge Thomson playing together during Thanh Cảnh, a project bringing together artists from Scotland and Vietnam to explore sound's relationship to land, language and tradition. Credit: Lê Nguyễn / Counterflows

coming to Scotland and, as outlined above, the international reputation of Scotland's culture sector is key to wider perceptions of Scotland. Cultural export has a clear economic rationale but it is also driven by creative practice and the desire to develop new cultural connections and take new ideas and work to wider audiences.

At present, support for cultural exports in Scotland is driven by a combination of public and private sector organisations. For example, commercial organisations play an important role in showcasing Scottish music internationally, Creative Scotland provides a range of funds that can support international activity across the sector, while Screen Scotland provides support to film and TV productions to access international markets.

The value of international rights of film and TV projects is what drives the success of content creating companies. Screen Scotland supports the development and production of projects with ambitions to reach international audiences, supports producers to engage with the international distribution, financing and co-production market. Screen Scotland itself also cultivates relationships with the international sales, distribution sector and financing and public funding partners for the benefit of our producing communities.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will continue to work closely with Screen Scotland and enterprise agencies to seek new opportunities abroad to support and grow the screen sector, making Scotland an increasingly attractive production base for international companies and promoting Scotland's screen talent worldwide.

The Scottish Government funds the Festivals EXPO Fund, which supports Scottish artists to showcase their work and develop international connections through Scottish festivals. EXPO supports between 1,000 and 1,250 artists and freelancers annually, as well as seasonal and permanent employment within the festivals themselves. In turn, these additional commissions and projects raise the international profile, reach and scale of the EXPO funded festivals,

and therefore their financial sustainability. In 2023/24 EXPO supported 14 festivals in Edinburgh and Glasgow, provided vital opportunities for international touring EXPO, and created and maintained cultural links with our partners in Europe and priority markets across the world.

Existing support in Scotland has demonstrated significant success but a more strategic and longer term approach, which builds on the best of what we do already and draws on successful models from around the world, will open new opportunities. A range of models exist internationally to support cultural export and exchange either aimed at particular sub-sectors, such as music, or with a broader approach. Stakeholders have identified such

support as a gap in current provision and our survey in support of this strategy similarly identified it as an issue. We will explore models for cultural export and exchange support and consider what feasible models for Scotland could look like. While the establishment of a support service for cultural export and exchange could have a very practical impact on the culture and creative sector, it could more generally provide a focal point for our wider approach to international cultural activity. It could advocate for the benefits of international cultural engagement across the Scottish public sector and work to embed new approaches.

- ▶ We will undertake a feasibility study into the development of a support service for cultural export and exchange.

Case study – Momentum

Each year Edinburgh welcomes over 20,000 of the world's leading arts professionals to enrich its famous August festivals season. The Momentum international delegate programme brings together curators, creative entrepreneurs, funders, media professionals, officials, producers and programmers from all over the world to immerse themselves in this unrivalled showcase of global cultural excellence.

Momentum is delivered by Festivals Edinburgh (on behalf of Edinburgh's Festivals), British Council Scotland, and Creative Scotland, with additional support from City of Edinburgh Council and EventScotland.

Each year, country-delegations are invited to give a presentation on their professional practice, along with an overview of the cultural sector in their country, to stakeholders from the Scottish arts and cultural sector. Each Momentum delegate is provided with an individually tailored schedule of activities, briefings and meetings to help foster collaboration and exchange. The aim is to encourage new international partnerships, as well as investment in and collaboration with Edinburgh's festivals and the wider arts sector in Scotland.

Since 2011, Momentum has brought over 850 international delegates to Edinburgh. These visits have resulted in seasons of work being presented by arts organisations from countries including India and New Zealand during the festivals, and opened up opportunities for delegates to forge new connections and develop collaborations with their counterparts in the UK and internationally.

Over 2022 and 2023 Momentum hosted over 80 delegates and engaged with further 120 guests from independent delegations, hailing from over 31 countries. In 2022 over 170 members of the Scottish sector met with delegates, rising to 233 in 2023, this included Festival directors, arts professional across Scotland, and senior policy leaders. These connections regularly result in long term relationships and mutually beneficial collaborations that support the international networks and long term development of the practitioners involved.

Platforms and networks

The Scottish culture and creative sector has a strong track record of working in partnership with key public bodies to maximise the opportunities that international platforms can offer. A Scottish presence and participation in these forums highlights the sector, its strengths and can open doors for further international partnerships. A collaborative approach can add significant value and a number of the examples and case studies highlighted throughout this strategy demonstrate that.

Scotland has a number of domestic and international platforms which can support the development of the sector's international connections. As we deliver this strategy we will continue to seek ways to increase their capability and impact.

- ▶ We will map out key international cultural networks and platforms and seek to understand where there is potential to support further development of Scottish engagement within them.

Scotland's festivals are world-leading and a key cultural asset. They attract the world to Scotland, both practitioners and audiences, and enrich the domestic cultural scene. They also provide platforms for the development of Scottish artists' careers and international connections. The Scottish Government has supported the impact that festivals have as a platform for the development of Scottish artists' international ambitions through the Festivals EXPO fund.

Internationalism has been at the heart of the Edinburgh Festivals ever since the Edinburgh International Festival was founded in 1947. Run by a partnership of Creative Scotland, Festivals Edinburgh and British Council Scotland, Momentum, outlined in detail above, is a delegate programme aiming to build international relationships and cultivate collaborative opportunities through the festivals.

UNESCO¹⁹ is the principal international organisation with a focus on international cooperation in culture. Scotland has a number of existing connections with UNESCO including our six World Heritage Sites²⁰ and four Scottish members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.²¹ The recognition of the cultural significance of these areas through these programmes plugs Scotland into important international networks that support knowledge exchange and collaboration, and create opportunities for practitioners through residencies and professional development opportunities. They also promote some of Scotland's cultural assets internationally, attracting visitors and highlighting some of the strengths of our sector.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will continue to work closely with the UK Permanent Representation to UNESCO and we will explore ways in which our relationship with UNESCO can be enhanced.

¹⁹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

²⁰ The Antonine Wall; Edinburgh Old and New Towns; the Forth Bridge; Neolithic Orkney; New Lanark; St Kilda

²¹ Dundee, City of Design; Edinburgh, City of Literature; Glasgow, City of Music; Perth, City of Crafts and Folk Art

Case study - Scotland's UNESCO Trail

Scotland's [UNESCO Trail](#) is a proud testament to Scotland's diverse and vibrant culture, heritage and historic environment and connects the country's 13 place-based UNESCO designations, including World Heritage Sites, Biospheres, Global Geoparks and Creative Cities to form a dedicated digital trail. It aims to take visitors on a cultural journey across the country experiencing everything from history to science, music, design and literature to nature and cityscapes. The creation of the Trail was developed through £360,000 of Scottish Government funding.

The Trail was developed in a global-first partnership between the Scottish Government, UK National Commission for UNESCO, Scotland's site designation representatives, VisitScotland, Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot and the National Trust for Scotland. The project is managed by VisitScotland. It has won various awards including Tourmag's 'Cesar for Sustainable Tourism' Award; the Santagata Foundation Award for UNESCO Territories 2022; and the Wanderlust Travel Sustainability Award. Since launching, VisitScotland's social media posts for the Trail have received over 2.5 million interactions.

Scotland's UNESCO Trail promotes local tourism businesses that are developing responsible tourism activity. The Trail aims to support sustainable tourism, encouraging visitors to learn about the designations and to visit and experience them in a way that is meaningful for the visitor, and is responsible and sustainable for the designation and the surrounding community. The Trail provides information that allows visitors to choose greener travel options and encourages people to think about the most suitable time of year to visit. All local businesses referenced in the Trail are part of green accreditation schemes.

The UNESCO Trail highlights the importance of our relationship with UNESCO and why the Scottish Government wants to build and strengthen our connections. In October 2022, the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture co-hosted an event with support from the UK Delegation to UNESCO that engaged with over 50 UNESCO delegates from various missions to celebrate the Trail. We will continue to look for new ways of enhancing this relationship.



V&A Dundee, Scotland's design museum. Dundee is the UK's only UNESCO City of Design.
VisitScotland / Kenny Lam

Scotland has long identified the intrinsic importance of intangible cultural heritage for local communities, and as part of our national identity. Although the UK Government announced its intention to ratify UNESCO's [Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) in late 2023, Scotland has been a vocal proponent of ratification for many years. Scotland is ahead of the other UK nations in our online inventory which has been developed through the [Scottish Intangible Cultural Heritage Partnership](#), a collaboration between Museums Galleries Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS) and Creative Scotland. The Scottish Government recognises the incredible potential in the inclusivity and awareness that intangible cultural heritage provides, and believes that by valuing each other's traditions, cultures, stories and songs we all have much to gain both in Scotland and beyond.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will continue to encourage the UK Government as the UNESCO Member State to act on advice from the Scottish Intangible Cultural Heritage Partnership and learn from the experiences of other UNESCO Member States, including in providing appropriate resource to deliver impactful work post-ratification.

Beyond the opportunities outlined above, we will continue to explore further ideas to support cultural exchange, collaboration and dialogue through domestic and international platforms. This will include the Edinburgh International Culture Summit which was established in 2012 and has since been delivered on a biennial basis through a partnership of the Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament, British Council Scotland, Edinburgh International Festival, and the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It has been an important platform for intergovernmental dialogue on culture policy and the common challenges we face. At the time of writing, this initiative is currently undergoing a review process in which the Scottish Government will work with other partners to reshape its role as an important forum for international cultural engagement. It will also include Scotland + Venice, which is similarly undergoing a process of review, but has been an important platform through which to showcase Scottish creative practitioners.

Connections with the EU

International mobility was a key element of our relationship with the EU. It supported Scottish organisations to take their work to an audience of 500 million people with limited restrictions to doing so. And it allowed their counterparts from around the EU to come to Scotland, enriching festivals and the wider cultural scene, supporting exchange and collaboration, and bringing skills, talent and ideas here.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will continue to lobby the UK Government for improvements in the terms of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the aim of ensuring free movement of creative professionals between the UK and EU.

Brexit has cut access to the Creative Europe programme, the EU's key support mechanism for Europe's culture sector. The programme's focus on international cultural collaboration across all the diverse elements of the sector and the transnational framework through which it delivers support are key elements in its success. It is one of the only programmes delivered outwith national institutions, allowing it to focus on the importance of transnational cultural connections. Scottish organisations were well-represented within projects funded through the programme and attached significant importance to being able to participate in projects that supported links with counterparts across Europe.

Case study - Creative Europe

The Creative Europe Programme is the European Union's principal funding programme in support of the European culture and creative sector, including the screen sector. It supports a wide range of activity but at its heart is a commitment to the importance of international cultural collaboration and the many positive impacts that it can achieve. Its budget in its current seven-year cycle is €2.44 billion.

Scottish organisations were prominent and valued participants in many Creative Europe projects and proportionately were very well-represented in work supported by the programme. This success brought important funding to these organisations, but most important were the connections that it supported them to make and the learning, development and innovation achieved through them.

A [report into the value of Creative Europe in the UK](#) published in 2018 highlighted both the financial and non-financial impacts of the programme. It found that funding had boosted job creation, output and exports, and led to additional investment being secured. It supported organisations to develop international connections and networks in support of their work. And it also enabled innovation, research and development, supporting organisations to take risks and explore opportunities that otherwise would not have been open to them.

The UK Government's decision not to seek to negotiate ongoing participation in Creative Europe has left a significant gap that cannot be filled by domestic programmes. The transnational framework through which the programme is delivered is vital to its success, ensuring that decisions are taken outside of the considerations of national organisations and keeping the focus only on the importance and value of cultural collaboration.



The Usher Hall during the Edinburgh International Festival.
VisitScotland / Kenny Lam

The UK Government, in spite of the views of the Scottish Government, other devolved administrations, and the vast majority of opinion in the culture sector across the UK, decided not to seek ongoing participation in the Creative Europe programme through post-Brexit trade negotiations. It did though negotiate for ongoing participation in Horizon Europe, the EU's key programme in support of research and innovation. Renewed access to the Creative Europe, and other EU programmes, would be of significant value to the sector.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will consider how links with the Creative Europe programme can be enhanced so that Scottish cultural organisations can re-engage with the vital channels for exchange, collaboration and learning that the programme facilitates.
- ▶ Alongside this, the Scottish Government will continue to lobby the UK Government to seek to re-join the Creative Europe programme.

Overarching considerations and context

This section explores the overarching context in which this strategy will be delivered and how to address specific issues that are a part of that context. This includes the geographic focus of the strategy, how it will consider climate change and the need to work towards net zero emissions of greenhouse gases, and how it might engage with debates around Scotland's historic role in issues such as empire and slavery. It also considers issues of equality, diversity and inclusion and how they will be represented in the delivery of the strategy.

Geography

Scotland's size and limited resource means that we need to focus our international efforts on the areas and opportunities that offer the most potential for our cultural and creative organisations. This means taking advantage of the range of connections we already have in place such as our International Network of offices in Beijing (China), Berlin (Germany), Brussels (Belgium), Copenhagen (Denmark), Dublin (Ireland), London (United Kingdom), Ottawa (Canada), Paris (France) and Washington DC (USA), as well as networks and groups such as our diaspora. It also means looking to our partners in Europe and our near neighbourhood to build on the excellent relations we already have. This was a view expressed by a range of cultural organisations in our consultation.

However, focusing solely on where the Scottish Government already has long-established relationships would ignore the wide-ranging global reach and internationalism that defines Scotland's cultural and creative sector. Practitioners and organisations in Scotland should be able to take advantage of opportunities to collaborate with partners based on their own cultural and business considerations. Similarly, business models in an increasingly competitive creative sector require innovation and expansion to develop new audiences and markets.

Other countries of a similar size to Scotland have sought to address this tension between focusing on close international partners and looking further afield. We can draw on their experiences to shape our own approach. Striking a balance between the global opportunities on offer, geographic areas of focus across the breadth of our international work, the available resource, and with the sector's need to pursue opportunities as they see fit, will be an important factor in the development of the actions outlined in this strategy. We will not take a blanket approach that would limit geographic scope or exclude opportunities based on geography, but we recognise that certain interventions and support will be by necessity best limited to where our pre-existing infrastructure and resource allows.

Climate impact and the need to achieve net zero

There is no escaping the fact that international cultural engagement and associated travel is at odds with the need to work towards Scotland being a net zero contributor of greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. There is a trade-off between ensuring that the benefits of international cultural collaboration can be realised with reducing climate impact, but it is unclear how to balance that tension to inform decisions regarding support for particular activities.

There are a range of views within the sector on the extent to which it can support the journey towards net zero. There is a strong commitment from many cultural organisations and practitioners to support change as far as possible, but there is also recognition that progress will require major technological innovation and behavioural change in terms of how we travel, generate power and heat buildings. In a sector with a strong sense of social justice it is not a surprise that responding to one of the most significant challenges of our time is a priority for many.

This response can be creative. It can help us to reflect on and understand the challenge of enabling societal transitions to meet net zero, which after all needs to be a global conversation.

“In our work, we are aligning our international work to our environmental commitments by: opting for slow/lower-carbon travel options, making use of communication technology to minimise travel, developing international projects through long-term collaborations and partnerships.”

The Work Room, International Culture Strategy consultation response

The sector's response to its climate impact can also be very practical. There is a range of activity being undertaken by the culture and creative sector, within and outwith Scotland, to consider how change can be made to current practices. Models for exchange which allow longer periods of engagement or encouraging international practitioners to visit Scotland with increased interaction with a wider range of Scottish artists may allow for some of the benefits of international exchange to be captured while environmental impact is reduced. Work such as this can influence similar adaptation by international peers, and it will be important that where such best practice exists in Scottish organisations that it can be shared internationally to support adaptation.

- ▶ The Scottish Government and public bodies will engage with work domestically and internationally that seeks to develop environmentally sustainable models for international cultural engagement and will consider what steps can be taken to support organisations to assess and balance environmental impact against the value of proposed activity.

Case study - Historic Environment Scotland: A Global Leader Addressing Climate Change and World Heritage

Climate change is the fastest growing global threat to World Heritage. Historic Environment Scotland is therefore taking significant climate action now to protect our past for the future. As the climate crisis intensifies, there is an urgent need to understand the vulnerability of all types of heritage, including climate impacts upon Scotland's six UNESCO designated World Heritage properties.

The Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) is a rapid and systematic tool developed at James Cook University in Australia, specifically to assess climate change vulnerability for all types of World Heritage (cultural, natural and mixed). The first global CVI assessment for a cultural World Heritage property took place at the Heart of Neolithic Orkney in April 2019.

A Research Network grant from the Royal Society of Edinburgh has enabled subsequent CVI assessments for the Old & New Towns of Edinburgh, the Antonine Wall (part of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire), and St Kilda. A snapshot CVI has also been undertaken for the forthcoming World Heritage nomination of the Flow Country.

The CVI has now been applied to four of Scotland's World Heritage properties, assessing a diverse array of heritage from the Neolithic to the 20th century. The CVI has been adopted as a standard tool for considering climate impacts on Scotland's World Heritage. In doing so, Scotland has set a benchmark for World Heritage properties in other countries. Our historic environment is on the front line of climate change, and Scotland is a global leader in heritage-related responses.



Sim'oogit Ni'isjoohl (Mr Earl Stephens) and Sigidimnak' Nox Ts'aawit (Dr Amy Parent) of Nisga'a Nation at the repatriation ceremony to mark the return of the The House of Ni'isjoohl Memorial Pole from the National Museum of Scotland.
Neil Hanna

Historic injustices

While in 2024 Scotland has a strong international image and a desire to be a good global citizen, we must recognise that historically our country has not always played a positive role. Cultural connections can though seek to address, understand and recognise our role in slavery, empire and climate change.

Cultural exchange and dialogue can help us to reflect on our own culture and history. At a time when we are becoming more attuned to Scotland's role in empire, slavery and climate change this is particularly important. Dialogues have opened between many Scottish cultural institutions and peers from parts of the world in which Scotland has at times had a less than positive influence. This can help us to understand our historic role and our place in the world, but it can also have material impacts that in a small way go towards addressing historic injustices. A number of cultural institutions have taken steps to address these histories and how they relate to objects in their collections. This work has seen a number of cultural objects returned to communities from which they were acquired.

Case study - University of Aberdeen restitution of Benin Bronzes

In 1897 the ancient capital of the kingdom of Benin in West Africa was looted by a British military force. This resulted in the national treasures, including portrait busts of the Obas (kings) and other items made in the city over hundreds of years, being dispersed among museums and private collectors across the world. There have been many calls for the return of the 'Benin Bronzes' since the 1930s which have become the highest profile campaign for the return of African cultural property.

A portrait bust was bought by the University of Aberdeen in 1957, with provenance research confirming that it had been one of those looted. As it was clearly stolen property, the University therefore decided that a loan would not be appropriate and instead started to investigate returning it without conditions. The first step saw contact being established with a well-connected intermediary, Nigerian professor of law Bankole Sodipo. This enabled discussions with the Nigerian federal government, the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Edo State Government, and the Court of the Oba, leading to a proposal from the Ministry of Information and Culture which had the support of the other parties.

The University has an established procedure for considering returning items from the collections, including criteria that structure the discussions of an advisory group which in this case included Bankole Sodipo as well as university and museum representatives. The Advisory Group's recommendation was unanimously supported by the University's governing body, so in October 2021 a ceremony in Aberdeen saw the portrait bust being handed over to a group including a representative of the Nigerian High Commission, the Director General of the National Commission, and the brother of the Oba of Benin. A few months later, on the 125th anniversary of the looting, it was presented to the Oba in Benin City, the first Benin Bronze to be unconditionally returned from a museum collection.

The work of the University of Aberdeen and its Nigerian partners has been pioneering amongst Scottish institutions in addressing such historic injustice and has strongly influenced the approach recommended by the Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums project and now being taken forward.

The [Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums project](#), which was coordinated by Museums Galleries Scotland and sponsored by the Scottish Government, published recommendations for the Scottish Government for addressing legacies of historic injustice. The Scottish Government accepted these recommendations in full in January 2024.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will support the implementation of the recommendations of the Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums report, including championing the development of bespoke national guidance for repatriating objects acquired unethically.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Scottish Government continues to promote and advance equality, inclusion and human rights in all that it does.²² We want to support Scotland's culture and creative sector to be an open and equitable place to work, participate in and consume culture.

The two-part cultural assets report *To See Ourselves and As Others See Us*²³ demonstrates that the cultural policy environment in Scotland and the approaches within it are cultural assets with inherent values relating to social, democratic and egalitarian principles that underpin a social contract to support inclusion, diversity, equality and rights. These are the values by which the sector lives and operates.

The Scottish Government is taking a number of steps to uphold equality, diversity and inclusion in our work and in the wider sector. Actions outlined in the Culture Strategy Action Plan, published in December 2023, commit us to work in partnership to increase diversity in the sector, sharing new approaches and codes of practice that ensure skills development and board membership have diversity at their core, including helping recruitment diversity by introducing appropriate remuneration for board members of national culture and heritage public bodies.

The Scottish Government also announced in the [Culture Strategy Action Plan](#) that it is establishing a Fair Work task force with the remit to set the direction of implementing Fair Work in the sector. The task force will consider the 5 pillars of Fair Work: Effective Voice, Opportunity, Security, Fulfilment, Respect as outlined in the Review of Fair Work in the Creative and Cultural Sectors in Scotland²⁴, which was conducted by Culture Radar and commissioned by Creative Scotland and published in 2022.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will embed equality, diversity and inclusion into all work developed under this strategy and link with wider work under the Culture Strategy Action Plan.

22 Scottish Government (2023) [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming report 2023](#)

23 British Council (2022) [Arts and Cultural Assets Research Report](#)

24 Culture Radar (for Creative Scotland) (2022) [Review of Fair Work in the Creative and Cultural Sectors in Scotland](#)

Delivering the International Culture Strategy

This section outlines how this strategy will be delivered. This will be an iterative process that engages individual practitioners and organisations within the culture and creative sector as well as the wider Scottish public sector. Some of the work set out can be taken forward immediately, other areas will need further consideration and groundwork to be undertaken.

Timescales

The actions outlined throughout this document will have various timescales, but as a whole this strategy will apply 2024 to 2030 with periodic review. This timescale will allow for the development, delivery and evaluation of the range of proposed outcomes and evaluation of the impact of the strategy on intended outcomes.

Outcomes

An innovative, more sustainable and economically stronger culture and creative sector

An internationally connected and diverse culture and creative sector that contributes positively to people and communities

An enhanced international reputation for culture and creativity including Scotland's response to global challenges

These high-level outcomes set out what we seek to achieve in the next six years. The success of the strategy will be considered in relation to these outcomes. As such, a theory of change model is being developed to outline why and how change might happen and to document the evidentiary indicators that will be used to measure and demonstrate change.

As outlined in the [Outcomes Framework](#) the strategy's outcomes have been developed in consideration of Scotland's [National Performance Framework](#) outcomes, and responses to the International Culture Strategy consultation survey undertaken in 2023.

The Scottish Government will work with delivery partners to develop a detailed outcomes framework to inform the theory of change. This will explain how existing and upcoming work, including actions in this strategy and any further actions developed with delivery partners, are contributing towards achieving the strategy's outcomes.

An accompanying monitoring and evaluation plan will be produced to support progress towards the strategy's vision and provide accountability.

The theory of change will connect with wider work put forward in the [Culture Strategy Action Plan](#) in December 2023 to improve the data landscape relating to the culture and creative sector.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will work with partners to develop a detailed theory of change for capturing impact from policy actions associated with the strategy, tracking progress, and supporting adaptation, building on the outcomes framework outlined here.

Delivery partners

Scottish Government international networks

Culture is important to the role of the Scottish Government's network of international offices. It is a tool through which they can highlight their presence in their host country and develop further links. These offices also have an important role in creating opportunities for cultural organisations to develop relationships and access the markets in those countries.

There are a number of strong examples of activity of this kind where relationships between the offices, stakeholders in their host countries and Scottish cultural organisations have developed new opportunities for cultural export and exchange, and in doing so has highlighted the presence and role of the Scottish Government office to a wider range of interests. The Scottish Government will continue to assess how such mutually beneficial relationships can be established and put on a sustainable footing through its presence in particular territories.

Case study - Festival Interceltique de Lorient

The Festival Interceltique de Lorient is an annual celebration of Celtic culture held in Lorient, France. It brings together Celtic nations and regions from around the world to showcase their music, dance, literature, cuisine, and heritage. The festival is a vibrant platform for cultural exchange and collaboration.

In 2023, the Scottish Government collaborated with Showcase Scotland Expo and the Traditional Music Scotland Association to highlight Scottish artists. Approximately 7,000 visitors engaged with the Scottish presence. The platform it provided allowed artists involved to showcase their work internationally not just through the festival itself, but also more widely through French media, increasing their reach and their audiences.

Building on the success of the event in 2023, the Scottish Government France Office is planning for the 2024 edition with a focus on youth. It will collaborate once again with Fèis Rois and Showcase Scotland Expo to support young Gaelic singers and artists to showcase the richness and diversity of Scotland's cultural landscape. By placing an emphasis on youth involvement, the Scottish Government will support intergenerational connections and the continued vitality of Celtic traditions.

The Scottish Government's involvement in the Festival Interceltique de Lorient serves as a testament to our commitment to promoting Scottish culture on an international stage. Through strategic partnerships and initiatives, we have successfully showcased Scottish talent while fostering meaningful exchanges with Celtic communities worldwide.

The Scottish Government has a number of memorandums of understanding with countries and regions around the world, often with a strong focus on cultural collaboration. It will work with our international networks to explore how formal agreements such as these can be built upon to deliver increased impact for the culture and creative sector.

- ▶ The Scottish Government's international offices will enhance their ability to open opportunities for Scotland's culture and creative sector in their host countries.

Brand Scotland

Brand Scotland is a strategic cross-organisational partnership which brings together the marketing and communications efforts of the Scottish Government, key public sector organisations, including Creative Scotland, and wider partners behind a shared brand narrative and positioning to deliver a collaborative, audience-first nation brand strategy. Scotland's nation brand embodies our values and tells the stories of our unique culture and heritage, while also celebrating our country's dynamism, progressiveness and innovation. It reinforces the positive perceptions we must consistently build for Scotland with international audiences, to drive consideration of Scotland as a place to live and work, study, visit or do business.

Our creativity and culture are fundamental to who we are and how others see us, and is a key theme used by Brand Scotland to tell our story internationally.

Given the centrality of culture to Scotland's international image, it is not surprising that it is a key element of how we present ourselves internationally as a dynamic, fair and inclusive nation. It can open doors and can be the basis of wider engagement. While traditional images of Scotland can build connections, if we wish to convey the strength and vibrancy of contemporary culture in Scotland, attracting visitors and supporting opportunities for the sector, we must ensure that it continues to be represented in the materials we use to promote Scotland.



Performers outside St Giles Cathedral on The Royal Mile during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.
VisitScotland / Kenny Lam

- ▶ The Scottish Government and partners will promote Scotland and its contemporary culture abroad as an important global centre for culture and creativity which is diverse, identifying and capitalising on key international opportunities and events, including through Brand Scotland activities.

Scottish Connections

Scotland shares connections with different parts of the world for historical, linguistic, or cultural reasons. Heritage diaspora communities are concentrated in areas to which there has been significant migration such as North America or Australia. It also shapes the diversity of communities within Scotland who maintain cultural and family connections with their ancestral homes.

The Scottish Government's definition of diaspora goes beyond ancestry. It includes alumni of Scotland's world-leading universities, who welcome tens of thousands of international students every year, providing a vast, diverse and young network of international citizens who entrusted Scotland with one of the biggest decisions anyone can make. It also includes anyone who has lived in Scotland at any time for any reason, whether they were born in Scotland and later emigrated, or those from elsewhere who returned home after a period working in Scotland. And it includes anyone with

an affinity to Scotland – Scots by inclination – who may have visited our country as tourists or simply be attracted to our culture, history or values.

These connections present opportunities to build relationships and open doors for Scotland's culture and creative sector, whether that be in access to new markets and networks, or in terms of philanthropic relationships. The Scottish Government's [Scottish Connections Framework](#) sets out how we will build relationships with Scotland's diverse diaspora communities across the world. It contains a number of commitments to develop our cultural connections, including involving our network of GlobalScots in promoting the sector and supporting cultural connections with organisations and individuals around the world. It also commits to adding business professionals from the culture and creative sector to the network, and involving GlobalScots in the development of Scotland's culture policy and cultural connections.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will work with partners to deliver the commitments in the Scottish Connections Framework related to GlobalScots who operate in the cultural and creative spheres. This will include leveraging their business networks and connections to support the Framework's aims relating to the promotion of Scotland's culture and creative sector internationally.

National Bodies

[Creative Scotland](#), inclusive of [Screen Scotland](#), is the organisation which supports the culture and creative sector across all parts of Scotland. It is a non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Scottish Government and receives funding from both the Scottish Government and the UK National Lottery. International is one of Creative Scotland's four strategic priorities.

[Historic Environment Scotland](#) is the lead body for the historic environment sector in Scotland. It is Scotland's largest visitor attraction operator, managing over 300 culturally significant properties of national importance on behalf of Scottish Ministers, including Edinburgh Castle, Skara Brae, and Fort George, and employing 1,400 people across Scotland. HES is also responsible for an internationally significant collection of drawings, photographs, manuscripts, and aerial photographs. It works nationally and internationally to advance education, skills, and research in heritage. Through its grants programme, £14 million a year is invested annually to support building repairs, ancient monuments, archaeological work, and conservation.

[Museums Galleries Scotland](#) is the national body for Scotland's collections. It has a role in supporting the sector to: engage with international partners; identify and take up opportunities for international working; access support for such work; and to share good practice and learning across the sector to inspire others. Its role can support Scotland's museums and galleries to engage with international work and the ambitions of this strategy.

[British Council Scotland's](#) work in this area focuses on supporting the development of cultural connections to enable the Scottish art sector to work successfully internationally and engage with international opportunities. Brokering relationships, facilitating connections and providing advice to the sector and international contacts is core to the British Council's role, and working in partnerships with key Scottish stakeholders informed by knowledge from their global network results in a range of activities and initiatives that support international cultural engagement.

National cultural institutions

Scotland's National Performing Companies and National Collections are directly funded by the Scottish Government. The performing companies have access to the International Touring Fund to support them to tour internationally. The Scottish Government encourages our national cultural institutions to develop connections with Scottish Government offices abroad and will work to support those connections to ensure that these organisations' international activity reinforces Scotland's international connections for mutual benefit.

- ▶ We will work together to strengthen communication channels between Scotland's national cultural organisations and Scottish Government external relations policy functions to allow for closer collaboration and early engagement when international activity is being planned.

Scotland's culture and creative sector

Ultimately this strategy is intended to support the development of Scotland's culture and creative sector as a whole. In order to ensure the effectiveness of the strategy and the actions it puts forward we will put in place channels for the sector to support its delivery and engage directly within the development of work that flows from it.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will establish a sector reference group to support delivery of this strategy and ensure that the cultural and creative sector has ownership and opportunities to shape work under it.

Resource

We are increasing funding to the culture and creative sector by £15.8m next financial year to £196.6m. This is the first step on the route to investing at least £100m more annually in culture and the arts by the financial year 2028/29. In 2025/2026 we aim to provide an additional £25m to the culture sector. Through this increased investment we want to drive up opportunities for participation in creative pursuits, support the production of new works, and ensure that Scotland's cultural output has platforms at home and abroad. To support the delivery of this strategy and secure resource where necessary we will fully engage with processes around the allocation of this additional funding.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will make the case for international cultural activity and the actions outlined in this strategy in budgetary processes, working to secure resource to support delivery.

The Scottish Government will also consider the existing funding instruments and routes to support that facilitate international cultural activity in light of this strategy. Doing so will ensure strategic coherence and that existing models continue to have the largest impact that they can. Ensuring equitable access to support will be at the heart of any proposed changes that come out of this exercise.

- ▶ The Scottish Government will review existing funding for international cultural activity in the light of the principles and activity outlined in this strategy to ensure it remains coherent and appropriate to the current context.



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