

## 2025 - 2028 KEY AIMS

### More Drama & Original Music

Producing and co-producing, and collaborating on tour planning, integrated with enhanced audience development.

Programming

### More Creative Engagement

Building from our new Creative Engagement base, and on our socially engaged work in communities with leading artists

Engagement

### Audience Development

Reaching more people all across Ayrshire and beyond to engage more people, more deeply.

Audiences

### Greater Access, Inclusion and Diversity

Engaging a wider range of artists and building on our work to engage people who are typically excluded from culture.

EDI

### More Socially Engaged Artists

Providing opportunities and support for artists to develop skills and commitment to co-producing in and with communities.

Development

### Broader Response to Climate Crisis

Accelerating our work not only on our own productions, operation and building, but also in influencing our community.

Environment



## The Gaiety Business Plan 2025-28

Artists and community in collaboration

April 2024

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## Executive summary

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The Gaiety is the pre-eminent theatre in South West Scotland, with a history of innovation from 1902 to the present day. The subject of local affection, it also has national respect and a main house many performers rate as their best stage. With a reach right across Ayrshire and beyond, it is much more than just a theatre building, with a core purpose:

"To enhance individual and community well-being through the performing arts."

This goal is based on our understanding that cultural participation is an essential element of human existence. So this plan sets out how we will continue bring artists and communities together to explore meaning, to challenge, to grow, to experience joy, and to change both themselves and their world. It is based on our success to date, including:

- Restoring and upgrading the iconic auditorium and reaching a total audience in 2023 of over 70,000 people
- Delivering our own artist-led pantomime rated as the best in Scotland and producing and coproducing an increasing range of drama, touring the country including to a new rural touring network involving programming 20 venues
- Establishing a new Creative Engagement base with hundreds of participants and pioneering socially engaged theatre with Scotland's most deprived communities
- Helping to build the sector through collaborations with other theatres and supporting new and emerging artists.

Over 2025-28 we aim to deliver

- **More drama and original music** – producing and co-producing, and collaborating on tour planning, integrated with enhanced audience development.
- **More creative engagement** – building from our new Creative Engagement base, and on our socially engaged work in communities with leading artists.
- **Reaching more people through audience development** – reaching right across Ayrshire and beyond to engage more people, more deeply.
- **Greater access, inclusion and diversity** – engaging a wider range of artists and building on our work to engage people who are typically excluded from culture.
- **More socially engaged artists** – providing opportunities and support for artists to develop skills and commitment to co-producing in and with communities.
- **Broader response to climate crisis** – accelerating our work not only on our own productions, operation and building, but also in influencing our community.

In order to do this we seek support of £250,000 per year, rising by 5% pa. This will be around 12-13% of our turnover and represent substantial leverage and value for money. Our mixed funding model delivers outstanding value for money for public investment. At the same time core public funding is essential if we are to thrive and continue to secure the rest of our funding from sales, donations and other sources.

## Introduction

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### A decade of achievement

Ayr Gaiety Partnership is the community based charity and social enterprise that is the focus for performing arts in Ayrshire. Our goal is: "To increase individual and community wellbeing through the (performing) arts".

As a receiving venue, a producer/co-producer and a champion for community based creative engagement, we are the pre-eminent cultural venue and organisation in Ayrshire. The long history of the venue, affection of many in the sector, and the local recognition for our current programme mean that we have a special place in the arts landscape. Since taking over the closed Gaiety theatre a decade ago, we have:

- ❑ refurbished the 120-year old 500-seat theatre interior;
- ❑ re-connected with a thriving audience (around 65,000 tickets a year);
- ❑ produced the best artist-led panto in Scotland (5\* The Stage 2022 & 2023);
- ❑ co-produced several dramas to critical acclaim (A Slow Air, The Straw Chair, Uncanny Valley, Miraculous, Meet Jan Black, Junkie Miracles, Tally's Blood);
- ❑ responded to the pandemic with a unique programme (community grants, online creative engagement, 20+ livestreamed events and 20+ films)
- ❑ established an innovative and effective artist-led Creative Engagement programme in our most deprived communities (150+ artists, 4,000+ participants);
- ❑ established a large youth theatre and a new youth and family theatre base (c 300 members);
- ❑ developed links with a wide range of educational institutions (UWS, RCS, Ayrshire College, 50+ local schools)
- ❑ collaborated with and supported a significant body of artists (including supporting around 100 emerging artists)

All this underscores our commitment to enriching the cultural fabric of our region while serving as a nurturing ground for artists, and welcoming space for a diverse community.

### A strong base for the future

Ayr Gaiety Partnership owns The Gaiety Theatre, a 120-year old proscenium stage with a particularly intimate relationship with the 500 seater auditorium. A small studio theatre, seating 50-80 depending on layout and a 60-cover restaurant, along with dressing rooms and limited office and storage space complete the facility. We also lease a small storage unit and a new creative engagement base – both close to the theatre in Ayr. Additionally, we work with around 20 smaller and community venues across Ayrshire.

Our small staff team of 20 (full and part-time) is augmented by around 100 volunteers, who are active at the ticket desk, front of house, heritage, technical and fundraising. We

programme a mix of professional and amateur shows in our main house and studio, for around 200 days each year. Our programme includes our own productions and touring drama, music, dance, opera and musical theatre. Our rural touring circuit currently involves around 50 performances of 6-8 shows a year. And our Creative Engagement programme reaches around 300 young people in regular sessions and around 2,000 people in community initiatives. A particular feature of our Creative Engagement is the dual track of fee-earning youth theatre and artist led co-creation initiatives in our most excluded communities.

## Key achievements to build on

Since emerging from the pandemic, we have been able to build on and steadily improve the quality, breadth and reach of our offer. Our primary focus is on devising and presenting high-quality artistic experiences that respond to the unique cultural fabric of our community. Whether it's a one-night musical theatre performance, the staging of original dramas, or our ongoing commitment to engaging with marginalised and excluded groups, our work revolves around the conviction that culture and the arts are fundamental to well-being, and should be accessible to everyone. In practical terms, in the last year we:

**Presented** a wide variety of music, dance, drama, opera, comedy and more to the 20 (and more) stages we programme with over 250 performances of 102 productions and over 70,000 audiences members.

**Co-produced** quality theatre, including 5 co-productions with A Play, A Pie and A Pint, initiating and coproducing a 4\* sell-out tour of Tally's Blood and.....

**Produced** our own 5-star, artist-led pantomime, combining artistic quality, inclusive storytelling with strong female protagonists with Scots Language to over 27,000 people.

**Engaged** around 500 people in 12,000 engagements – reaching people of all ages in activities ranging from a writers group in our most deprived community to weekly youth theatre available on a pay what you can basis.

**Supported** and co-created with a range of emerging and established artists including Wonder Fools, Shona Cowie, and Kenny Boyle.

**Included** a wider range of artists, audiences and participants than ever before, with particular success with increasing our relevance to people with disabilities, engaging people with dementia and carers, and reaching more people on low incomes.

**Reduced** our own emissions with incremental investments in energy management, and significant progress in Green Book implementation for productions.

In short, we are now well placed to build on our achievements over the last decade, to take a next step in our journey as a major artistic hub in Ayrshire and an innovator in the regional Scottish theatre landscape. We are particularly keen to build on the work we were able to initiate over the pandemic and throughout 2023 with funding from Creative Scotland's PAVRF, RFCO and Culture Collective funding.

## Vision, mission and values

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### Vision (long term)

Our core purpose is: "To enhance individual and community well-being through the performing arts."

This goal is based on our understanding that cultural participation is an essential element of human existence, fostering connections, enriching lives, and nurturing the creative spirit. It means bringing artists and communities together to explore meaning, to challenge, to grow, to experience joy, and to change both themselves and their world.

In our vision, spaces across Ayrshire, large and small, indoor and outdoor, host artists creating performances and audiences engaging with them. Many of these performances are co-created with communities. So they speak to and about the triumphs and challenges that are relevant to our lives. 'Cultural Democracy' is ultimately what drives us – delivering on the human right to a cultural life for all.

### Mission (10 years)

We will work towards our vision by bringing the best theatre makers and other creatives with an increasing proportion of all sections of our community together in spaces across Ayrshire. This will of course mean in our own theatre spaces and creative engagement base. But it will also mean in rural and other venues across Ayrshire, with around half the schools in Ayrshire, and in community centres – as well as outside in town and village centres, parks, woodlands and on our fantastic beaches.

In every setting our work will be characterised by bringing and nurturing the very best and diverse artistic talent we can secure. And at the same time reaching out to all our community to be truly inclusive in ways that suit them, rather than expecting them to come to us.

### Values

**Ambition** – we are not content to be 'just a theatre', nor with repeating past successes. Every year we try new initiatives, forge new partnerships and aim for greater impact.

**Risk** – we carefully balance assessing and mitigating risk with the challenge of stretching artistic and financial boundaries – our success has been built on risk-taking and will continue to be so.

**Quality** – the drive for artistic quality is at the heart of all we do, from creative engagement to curating and producing work for our urban and extensive rural venues

**Inclusion** – we are passionate about the value of culture for everyone. Reducing barriers is part of this. But as importantly we get out of our buildings and engage with our whole community.

## External environment

### Environmental analysis (PESTLE)

Factor	Description
<b>Political</b>	<p>Public funding and grants availability for arts and culture under threat</p> <p>Local government focus on tourism and economy</p> <p>Potential shifts in cultural policy and funding priorities due to changing political landscapes at UK and Scottish governments</p> <p>Increased emphasis on the role of culture as instrumental – particularly in relation to health</p>
<b>Economic</b>	<p>Disposable incomes under threat from cost of living crisis</p> <p>Funding and sponsorship opportunities unclear</p> <p>Economic impact of Brexit regulation on costs</p> <p>Potential impact of the Ayrshire Growth Deal</p>
<b>Social</b>	<p>Changing demographics and audience preferences in Ayrshire – ageing population.</p> <p>Council-led community engagement and educational programs.</p> <p>Community-led development agencies (in Carrick)</p>
<b>Technological</b>	<p>Advancements in digital and streaming technologies, offering new ways to create and distribute content, but superseding even new equipment</p> <p>Increased use of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) in performances and exhibitions</p> <p>Growing importance of data analytics for audience engagement and personalised marketing</p> <p>Increased availability and expectation for technological enhancements in stage production and lighting</p>
<b>Legal</b>	<p>Compliance with safety regulations in community and buildings</p> <p>Intellectual property rights related to performances and online content where these are co-created</p> <p>Contract and other legal requirements in the context of producing</p>
<b>Environmental</b>	<p>Escalating emphasis on sustainability and environmental responsibility, impacting operational practices</p> <p>Potential regulatory changes aimed at reducing carbon emissions and waste in the entertainment sector</p> <p>Increased community and stakeholder expectations for environmental stewardship and green initiatives.</p>

## SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Only fully equipped theatre of scale in Ayrshire</li> <li>□ Local profile and affection</li> <li>□ National brand recognition</li> <li>□ Intimate 500-seat refurbished auditorium</li> <li>□ 100+ committed volunteers</li> <li>□ Reputation across the sector</li> <li>□ New creative engagement space</li> <li>□ Proven track record in creating partnerships and co-productions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Building externals, studio and stairs</li> <li>□ Limited staff resource which can lead to under-delivery</li> <li>□ Perceived as outdated by some potential audiences</li> <li>□ Weak balance sheet</li> <li>□ Very limited core funding</li> <li>□ Distance from central belt makes recruiting staff and artists harder</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Potential Ayrshire growth</li> <li>□ More local audiences for right offer</li> <li>□ Potential donors and legacies</li> <li>□ Untapped potential of volunteers</li> <li>□ UWS/Ayrshire College links</li> <li>□ Collaboration with other theatres</li> <li>□ Community links</li> <li>□ Touring quality &amp; appealing shows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Potential Ayrshire decline</li> <li>□ Lower income groups financial squeeze</li> <li>□ Pressure on public funds</li> <li>□ Economic downturn</li> <li>□ Lack of appealing touring theatre</li> <li>□ Fragility of Scottish Theatre sector</li> <li>□ Competition from tribute bands at other local venues</li> <li>□ Weakened public transport</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats

## Implications for our planning

In summary, we are operating in an uncertain context where macro trends driven by economic and climate change threaten to have a major impact on our communities and our organisation. The local funding and political climate is also uncertain, and while sales and donor income may increase, there is a structural gap in our finances. If we are to deliver on our goals, rather than (at best) simply keep a building open, we will need to secure additional funding. There are opportunities however, in particular in partnering with other similar theatres to share costs and expertise. And in partnering more locally with education, health and community organisations. Overall we will need to continue to operate in a responsive and entrepreneurial fashion to make our way through a very challenging world.



## Aims

Over 2025-28 we will continue to develop and deliver a broad programme of events and participatory activity. Much of this will involve steady improvement of what we already do – and this is reflected in our resourcing and financial planning. But we will also work towards changes in five key areas. None of these are completely new, and all build on work we have delivered to date. But taken together they represent a significant step forward for the organisation

### Aims overview

<b>A More drama and original music</b>	Year on year growth in artists creating, presenting and performing quality drama and original music across Ayrshire.
<b>B More creative engagement</b>	More communities and leading artists engaging, participating and co-creating work of local importance and wider resonance.
<b>C Reaching more people through audience development</b>	Reaching right across Ayrshire and beyond to encourage more people to engage with theatre across every space and community we work with
<b>D Greater access, inclusion and diversity</b>	Success will be evident across all our activity with increased numbers of artists, audiences and participants from currently excluded demographics
<b>E More socially engaged artists</b>	More artists at all stages of their career to develop and deliver socially engaged practice across Ayrshire and, importantly, beyond.
<b>F Broader response to the climate crisis</b>	Significant reductions in our own carbon footprint and increasing engagement with audiences and our community to catalyse wider action.

Importantly these six aims are inter-related and reinforce each other. For example:

- The commitment to increased Creative Engagement is also a route to audience development for more drama and original music.
- Some of the co-creation work within Creative Engagement will lead to productions that will feature as part of our enhanced drama programme.
- Greater access, inclusion and diversity will be achieved in part through programming and producing drama of relevance to, and featuring performers and creatives drawn from currently excluded demographics.
- Delivering on our Creative Engagement and drama production goals will require more socially engaged artists than we currently have access to.
- Creating productions that reference and explore responses to climate change will enable both new audience development and meeting our goals around net zero.

## **A More drama and original music**

### **Current position**

Driven by financial considerations and the demands of our audience, much of our main stage programming involves quality cover bands and themed celebrations. Drama is a modest but gradually growing part of our offer, as is presenting original music old and new, children's theatre and contemporary dance. We have built a good audience for both opera and ballet – and a good proportion of our current audiences indicates an interest in drama. For example we have successfully built a programme of co-productions in our studio with A Play, A Pie and A Pint, which now normally sells out.

### **Issues, challenges and opportunities**

There is limited availability of quality drama that has the appeal to secure viable audiences. Without a regular diet of drama in our main auditorium, we cannot build such audiences – but of course without such audiences we cannot afford to programme much drama. The main way forward is in collaborations with other similar theatres, which we have already initiated with some success. For music the availability is less of a challenge, so the main focus will be on audience development (also a key focus for drama).

### **Direction and success (see Appendix 3a and 3b for detail)**

The main initiatives over the next period that we plan, if funded adequately are:

- ❑ Collaborating with other receiving houses to create viable touring routes for theatre companies delivering quality appealing drama, and shared creative engagement.
- ❑ Co-producing with other theatres to increase the supply of touring quality Scottish drama with audience appeal.
- ❑ Co-producing with our communities and innovative artists to create new work with resonance for new audiences.
- ❑ Continuing to programme Touring Fund supported drama – particularly in our studio and for rural venues.

Success will be year on year growth in artists creating, presenting and performing quality drama and original music across Ayrshire. In total our delivery will increase by 2028 to:

- ❑ 24 performances from 4 of our own productions a year (now 2 and 2 ex panto)
- ❑ 124 drama performances from 45 professional productions (now 76 from 20)
- ❑ 36 Children's theatre productions from 16 productions (now 2 from 2)

### **Resources**

Delivering on this aim will involve retaining our recently created Producer role as well as part funding for co-/productions and rural touring and additional tech and FOH.

## B More creative engagement

### Current position

Our Creative Engagement work started in 2013. It grew through our local leadership of Creative Scotland's Time to Shine programme, partnering with NTS for the Year of Young People and *Pages of the Sea*, also with YTAS for the National Festival of Youth Theatre since 2015. Creative Scotland's Culture Collective programme allowed us to extend our work in rural communities and North Ayr (1% most deprived areas of Scotland). This work has seen artists and communities co-creating everywhere from beaches to our main stage.

In 2024 we opened our new Creative Engagement base – enabling us to provide fee-paying participatory activity for all ages. In addition to its intrinsic value this will play an important role in longer-term audience development. Alongside this, our work in our most deprived neighbourhoods continues, with a long-term co-creation project seeking to develop individual and community voice with a touring production as one outcome.

### Issues, challenges and opportunities

Short-term and disconnected funding for outreach work is the main challenge we face – particularly in our work with low income communities. Far from being appropriate for inexperienced artists at the start of their career, the key to artistic and personal success has lain in engaging highly skilled and experienced (and more expensive) artists for long periods. An apparent end point of a production or other 'product' is not enough – longer term engagement over several years is vital if true cultural transformation is to occur.

### Direction and success (see Appendix 4a and 4b for detail)

The main initiatives over the next period that we plan, if funded adequately are:

- Continuing and developing our work in North Ayr, co-creating with leading artists and pioneering culture-led transformation with 500 community members.
- Working alongside our rural touring programme to deliver for 4,000+ rural young people – building on the success of our touring Christmas shows.
- Increasing links with our productions and presentations to build future audiences.
- Growing our participatory all ages theatre groups to 600+ individuals.
- Delivering an enhanced schools programme in around 20 schools each year.

Success will be more communities and leading artists engaging, participating and co-creating work of local importance and wider resonance.

### Resources

Our new base will cover its costs from fee income, as will our schools work and some projects. Core funding for our Head of Creative Engagement and for our North Ayr work is essential however – overall there will be 3 new posts by 2028.

## **C Reaching more people through audience development**

### **Current position**

Being heavily dependent on our ticket income, we already enjoy a higher than average rate of audience reattendance, with around 30% of our visitors attending more than once over a 2 year period since the pandemic, (compared with an industry average of 24%). And around 17% of our audience members come from outside of Ayrshire. This adds up to a thriving audience, with around 65,000 tickets sold a year since re-opening the theatre in 2012. 2023 in fact saw us reach a record audience of over 70,000 people.

### **Issues, challenges and opportunities**

If we are going to achieve our goals for 2025-28 however, we will need to build quickly and extensively on this base. This will involve not only renewing our commitment to engaging with marginalised groups in our community, but also building on our audience numbers and ticket sales across all audience segments – including the more affluent – to meet our financial objectives, and ensure the future of The Gaiety. By 2028, we aim to have increased our annual reach to 80,000 people and at the same time engaged our audience in a more diverse artistic programme.

### **Direction and success (see Appendix 5a and 5b for detail)**

The main initiatives over the next period that we plan, if funded adequately are:

- Continue to promote and embed a sustainable pricing policy – offering a range of pricing options and free activities, that maximize income and reduce barriers.
- Increase access across our digital platforms improving our online offering for the excluded groups and people with needs that stop them coming to our venues.
- Attract and engage younger people as a core part of our audience, meeting a series of different needs and interests within the group, engaging in new ways.
- Promote greater general diversity within our audiences, and sustain and grow attendance through targeted development activity
- To build a highly engaged audience of regular drama attenders through additional interpretative activity and ‘theatre club’ events.
- To maintain our brand identity and current levels of audience engagement – ensuring we continue to take our existing audience on the journey forward with us.

Success will be reaching across Ayrshire and beyond to engage more people to engage with theatre across every space and community we work with, and sales of 80,000+

### **Resources**

Delivering on this aim will involve creating a new Audience Development role to expand our Communications and Development team to five members.

## D Greater access, inclusion and diversity

### Current position

In 2024 our programme includes performances created and delivered by a diverse range of artists, including work about, by or involving people with disabilities, from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and includes most protected characteristics. Our audience and volunteers are diverse and we are steadily improving on this by partnering with particular community and interest groups. Creative Engagement initiatives for people with learning difficulties, care experienced young people and people with dementia and their carers will involve around 200 people during 2024 in addition to audiences in all our venues. Investment in accessible facilities, BSL, AD and captioning will decrease obvious barriers.

There is further to go however, and priorities for the next period continue to be: socially and economically excluded people; people with disabilities; and people who face rural isolation – three groups remaining under-represented in our audience and participants.

### Issues, challenges and opportunities

Possibly the second biggest barrier for our audiences, after lack of money, is the perception that theatre is not for them, and has nothing to offer. Despite investment, there continue to be physical barriers to accessing our various venues for some people. But psychological barriers, including a perceived and often actual lack of relevance, are more widespread and harder to tackle. Our challenge is to build on smaller successes to date.

### Direction and success (see Appendix 10, and also 3a, 4a & 5b)

The main initiatives over the next period that we plan, if funded adequately are:

- Targeting audience development resources on underserved groups, working in particular with local groups and organisations serving people with disabilities.
- Further increasing the diversity of performers on our stages and provision of BSL, AD and captioned performances.
- Developing our Rural Touring and engagement offer in quality, quantity and reach.
- Extending free and reduced price tickets and fees to those on low income.
- Developing the quantity and quality of our outreach Creative Engagement, including theatre/music/dance groups for carers, people with learning difficulties and people with disabilities.

Success will be evident across all our activity with increased numbers of artists, audiences and participants from currently excluded and/or underserved demographics.

### Resources

We will continue to build in access costs for all our work, and to seek further capital investment. Other than capital, these costs are built into the delivery of our other aims.

## E More socially engaged artists

### Current position

There are limited opportunities for artists to develop truly socially engaged practice in Scotland at present – echoed in the challenge we have identified in recruiting such artists to deliver on our Creative Engagement aim. In part, the situation arises from socially engaged practice and ‘community theatre’ being seen by many as having less status than ‘mainstream’ theatre. And because co-creating with communities involves a wide range of skillsets and opportunities to develop them in a structured way are limited.

*“The project has had a huge impact on me as a practitioner ... It has allowed me to learn, observe and grow as an artist and also as a compassionate human being. My whole ethos of person-led workshops and active community listening comes from my involvement in the CC projects with the Ayr Gaiety”* CC Creative Practitioner

### Issues, challenges and opportunities

As with effective creative engagement work in communities, a key challenge in developing socially engaged artists with real skills in co-creation is the need for a longer timescale. A few workshops is no substitute for long term engagement with structured support. But the commitment of UWS to a similar approach with their performance students provides a key partnership opportunity. And our strong links with established practitioner Jeremy Weller and Robbie Gordon and Jack Nurse of Wonder Fools provide further opportunities.

### Direction and success (see Appendix 4a and 4b for detail)

The main initiatives over the next period that we plan, if funded adequately are:

- Year-long placements for emerging artists from Ayrshire and across Scotland, working in ambitious projects involving co-creation with communities.
- More partnership work with UWS providing opportunities for their students and resources for more social engaged work in communities.
- A regular programme of seminars and workshops for artists across Scotland interested in developing socially engaged practice and community co-creation.
- Partnering Collaborating with other theatres interested in developing a similar approach.

Success will mean more artists at all stages of their career to develop and deliver socially engaged practice across Ayrshire and, importantly, beyond.

### Resources

We anticipate needing to secure further resources to deliver this work, as for our Creative Engagement programme, and the scale of activity will depend on our level of success with this. In addition we have built in an annual residency for socially engaged coach/mentor.

## **F Broader response to climate crisis**

### **Current position**

By the end of 2024 we will have delivered on our commitment to Theatre Green Book basic level across the organisation – other than where new capital investment is required. Our board and staff Green Champions are well established and have influenced key progress to date including more efficient heating and ventilation, low energy lighting both on stage and front of house, and delivery of our own productions to Green Book basic level. A recent 'Act Green' survey by Indigo indicated that our audience already feel we are more active on this front than average for theatres in the study. And the programme at The Gaiety and our rural venues significantly reduces the need for our audience to travel.

### **Issues, challenges and opportunities**

But our gas fired heating system is nowhere near net zero and our 120-year old building is poorly insulated. Meeting Green Book production standards requires storage and remaking facilities. And our influence on the touring productions that form a significant part of our activity is limited. At the same time we are a trusted voice in our community and have the potential to influence broader change. The Green Springboard we initiated and for which we drew in commitment and leadership from UWS and three Councils indicates how we can leverage our modest resources to make a wider impact.

### **Direction and success (see Appendix 6)**

The main initiatives over the next period that we plan, if funded adequately are:

- ❑ Securing further capital investment to reduce our carbon footprint.
- ❑ Action to achieve at least intermediate level across Theatre Green Books 1, 2 & 3.
- ❑ Developing our wider partnership with UWS, the three Councils and artists to promote and support wider engagement of the arts community in green action.
- ❑ Include in our main stage programming more shows which highlight the climate crisis and encourage thought and debate around climate sustainability.
- ❑ At least reference the climate crisis in some way in all our productions.
- ❑ Initiate and drive a programme of education and collaborative action to help our audiences and participants reduce the impact of their travel to our events.

Success will mean significant reductions in our own carbon footprint and increasing engagement with audiences and our community to catalyze wider action.

### **Resources**

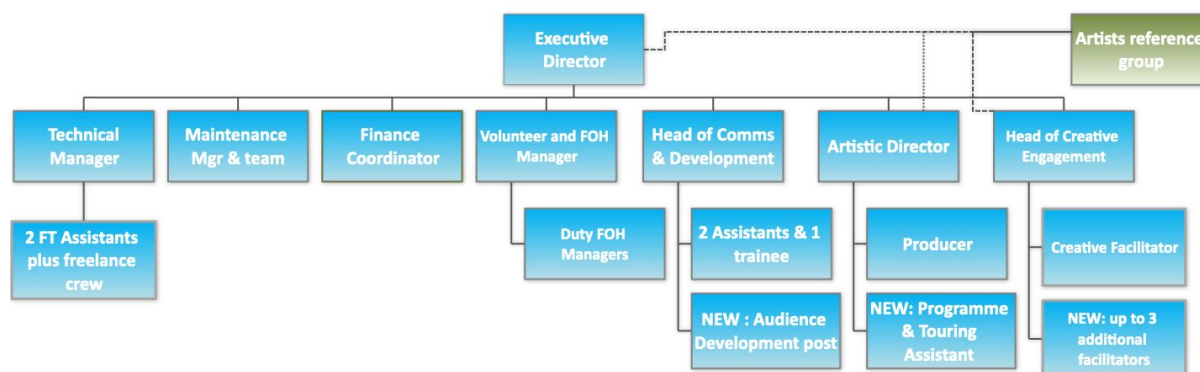
Some of this work can be achieved by using existing resources – production planning for example. We will need to raise significant capital however. And budgeting for increased energy costs (from 2030) will allow us to electrify heating more quickly.

## Resourcing

Our organisation is now moving into its second decade. While continued change and development is both inevitable and desirable, the focus for the next few three years or so will be on delivering on the ambitious initiatives and aims we have already developed more than seeding new initiatives at the pace that was appropriate during start-up phase. This has already been set in train to a significant degree, with development of the staffing structure, creation of some additional and revised posts and a succession programme for the founding board. Over 2025-28 this process will continue – focusing on ensuring the core Gaiety operation provides a welcoming, supportive but also challenging context for artists to work with us and our communities.

### Changes to organisational design

Our organisation has changed incrementally over the last decade and more significantly since the pandemic. The organogram below summarises the structure that we anticipate will serve as a main template for the next three to four years. We are seeking to modestly increase the programming and production team and the audience development and fundraising teams, but the most significant change initiated over 2023-24 and to be consolidated and bedded in over 2025-26 is the creation of an artists' reference and collaborators' group. As a producer and curator-led organisation in respect of our stages and artist led in respect of our creative engagement, the success of our organisation depends on forging and maintaining strong links with artists who wish to collaborate with us and are broadly supportive of our vision – this is outlined in appendices 3a and 4a.



### Fair Work policy

We are fully committed to Fair Work, have been paying the Real Living Wage since 2019 and generally seek to pay above industry minima. We also have a strong commitment to the wellbeing of our staff and freelancers, reflected in support services and activities we offer. The policy is set out in more detail in Appendix 13 Staffing and Fair Work.

### Organisational development

We already have in place structured training and development, with internal development opportunities and mentoring and a development budget of £1,000 per staff member.



Many past members of our team attest to this focus on development with progress to a range of more senior roles in Scottish theatre. Having recently reviewed our terms and conditions and staff policies as well as engaging external HR support on a contracted basis, our plans involve continuing with these initiatives and ensuring our team have the widest possible opportunities for development. We will be adding to our development programme with a series of opportunities for our collaborating artists and (as noted in our aims) a development programme for socially engaged artists.

The reorganisation of our volunteer effort, and employment of a specialist volunteer manager in 2024 will continue to lead to an enhanced programme of support and development for our volunteers. As well as growing the size and skills of our volunteer body, we have committed to providing increased opportunities for our volunteers themselves to participate in creative activity – as key beneficiaries and ambassadors in our community.

## EDI

While our EDI policies are sound, for staff, our aged building has meant in practice there have been physical barriers to recruiting a more diverse workforce. The opening of our new creative engagement base now provides us with more accessible office space and, as our staff team has grown, so we anticipate our existing recruitment and employment policies will lead to a more diverse staff team over time.

## Governance

We reviewed our governance structure in 2023 and put in place a new structure of subgroups for the board. Each meet quarterly, as does the main board of trustees:

- ❑ **Finance & Risk**, including budgets, capital, building, risk, audit etc
- ❑ **People**, including staff and volunteers and lead for EDI
- ❑ **Care and compliance** including H&S, Environment, licensing, general legal compliance

The founding board have put in a substantial amount of work, first to initiating, then to developing and, in particular through the pandemic, to leading the organisation to its current success. However, the board had gradually lost its diversity and also required some fresh views and energy. A review and refresh process established a new approach to balancing board representation and skills. By 2024 this has meant of 11 trustees:

- ❑ 6 will have served under two years, 5 much longer
- ❑ The gender mix has improved with 3 female trustees (up from 1)
- ❑ There is representation of ethnic diversity and lived experience of disability
- ❑ The average age has dropped from 64 to 55.

Our new fundraising strategy (outlined in Appendix 11) does involve greater input by some of our board members and this, along with the gradual refreshing of the board, creates a need for a more intense programme of board member development than has been required in the past. We have therefore put in place a programme of quarterly board development workshops in collaboration with other similar local organisations.

## Capital development plans

The Creative Scotland backed refurbishment of the interior of our theatre in 2016 has underpinned our whole development since then – without it the theatre would by now have closed. Our new premises in terms of our nearby store and creative engagement base are modest in requirement and we have been able to fund capital requirements from small-scale grant applications. However, our main theatre building is in increasingly urgent need of attention in terms of:

- The building exterior, which is tired and increasingly a blight rather than an asset within the townscape; and
- Investment ranging from a new roof over the stage through insulation to solar and air exchange heat pump energy sources, as well as new electric boilers.

A key to our forward plans will therefore be seeking modest capital grant funding from external sources. Appendix 7 Capital Plan includes a summary of a feasibility study and plans for investing in the externals of the building and our current estimate (which has been significantly increased since the feasibility study) is that this will cost around £1.5 million. We are also looking to future fundraising from donors to be used to invest in building maintenance and development rather than day-to-day running as at present. In the medium term the current approach is unsustainable as the building costs will mount and the unsatisfactory nature of the externals and carbon consumption will become unsupportable.

## Intellectual property and brands

We have no specific plans to develop intellectual property, but we are increasingly collaborating with mid-scale receiving and producing houses across Scotland and it is possible that part of this might include the creation of intellectual property. At the very least this will result in a series of co-productions – but some form of formal joint venture and potentially protection of intellectual assets might be required.

## Digital and systems development

Over the last five years we have reviewed and revised our use of digital systems across the organisation. This has meant installing new cloud-based finance and ticketing systems (replacing previous cloud-based systems), increased use of MS 365 collaborative tools and investing in digital technology and skills in our technical team. Of these the only priority at present for further development is in the use of digital technology and skills in our technical team, building on our track record – initiated over the pandemic, in livestreaming.

## Finance

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### Financial plans and model

Our financial model is based on securing significant contribution to overheads from receiving a wide range of shows with deals negotiated largely on split of ticket sales. Our mainstream creative engagement work is fee based and also provides a contribution and all their other work, including co-creations, productions and our creative engagement work in communities, is project funded with a variety of public and private sources. Private donations, ranging in scale from the very small to the moderately large, are an important part of our financial mix.

In total however the net income from these sources does not cover our outgoings. In part we meet the potential gap through a highly effective staff team and judicious deployment of volunteers. But to exist at all we require modest public support – as we do to continue to develop and deliver any but the most mundane artistic programme. Going forward we will be able to thrive as an organisation if we can by 2028:

- Cover our core running costs from a combination of ticket income, public sector grant income (unrestricted) and restricted project income.
- Secure continued and increased donations to invest in our building, facilities and development projects rather than keep the basic organisation going.
- Continue to develop our volunteer activity for front of house and ticket desk activities and extend involvement in heritage and creative engagement activity.

Increasing our ticket income is a key goal and we have been successful in doing this year on year and anticipate continuing to do so over the next three to four years. We judge it unlikely that we can do this to such an extent that our core activity will not require public investment however.

As noted above we are seeking significant capital investment around about £1.5 million – this will have a positive impact on our revenue position by reducing energy costs in particular, but also by increasing the external attractiveness of our main theatre, assisting in attracting audiences and ticket purchases. We will also have a less tangible impact of raising our overall image, which will underpin our wider work.

Our projections indicate a gradual strengthening of our cash flow and moving towards meeting our organisation reserves policy – we met this briefly towards the end of the pandemic, but have used our reserves in continuing to function since. Given our experience of the pandemic and the uncertainty created by economic turbulence and climate change building an effective reserve now has a greater priority for our organisation than in the past.

## Projections 2024-2028

		2024-25		2025-26		2025-27		2025-28	
Income		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
	NOTES								
Activity/programme related									
Sales	1	1,346,200		1,548,130		1,702,943		1,873,237	
Contras	2	40,000		44,000		48,400		53,240	
CC recoveries	3	15,000		16,500		18,150		19,965	
Sponsorship	4	10,000		15,000		20,000		25,000	
			1,411,200		1,623,630		1,789,493		1,971,442
Non-activity/programme related									
Rental income	5	50,000		50,000		50,000		60,000	
Confectionery and ices	6	35,000		38,500		42,350		46,585	
Merchandise	7	10,000		11,000		12,100		13,310	
			95,000		99,500		104,450		119,895
Creative Scotland RFO/Multi-Year Funding	8	0		250,000		265,000		280,000	
Creative Scotland other	9	85,000							
Local Authority	10	150,000		150,000		150,000		150,000	
Creative Industry Tax Relief	11	143,000		160,000		180,000		200,000	
Other Public Funding	12	93,000		50,000		50,000		50,000	
Private: Donations, Gifts and Legacies	13	150,000		165,000		180,000		195,000	
Trust and Foundations	14	65,000		70,000		80,000		90,000	
Other	15								
			686,000		845,000		905,000		965,000
<b>Total income</b>		<b>2,192,200</b>		<b>2,568,130</b>		<b>2,798,943</b>		<b>3,056,337</b>	
<b>Expenditure</b>									
Artistic and Creative Programme									
Salaries	16	267,000		335,010		375,060		416,312	
Fees to external companies	17	451,500		496,650		546,315		600,947	
Fees to freelancers (including production cast & crew)	18	502,000		567,260		641,004		724,334	
Expenses	19	46,000		50,600		55,660		61,226	
Technical costs inc stage maintenance	20	20,000		30,000		40,000		45,000	
Set/costumes/props	21	50,000		75,000		82,500		90,750	
Hires	22	15,000		16,500		18,150		19,965	
Other production costs	23	20,000		40,000		44,000		48,400	
			1,371,500		1,611,020		1,802,689		2,006,934
Administration									
Salaries	24	162,000		166,860		171,866		177,022	
Data and comms	25	27,000		27,810		28,644		29,504	
Training and HR (staff & volunteers)	26	30,000		30,900		31,827		32,782	
Professional and other fees	27	14,000		14,420		14,853		15,298	
Gen admin	28	7,500		7,725		7,957		8,195	
Ticketing system and CRM	29	25,000		27,500		30,250		33,275	
Contingency/misc	30	20,000		25,000		30,000		40,000	
			285,500		300,215		315,396		336,076
Building excluding Gas/Oil/Electric									
Salaries	31	29,000		29,870		30,766		31,689	
Rentals (storage and Creative Engagement base)	32	34,000		34,000		34,000		40,000	
Maintenance and cleaning	33	40,000		60,000		70,000		80,000	
Insurance	34	30,000		36,000		43,200		47,520	
Miscellaneous	35	8,000		8,800		9,680		10,648	
			141,000		168,670		187,646		209,857
Gas/Oil Electric	36	70,000	70,000	77,000	77,000	84,700	84,700	93,170	93,170
Marketing and Communications									
Salaries	37	81,000		113,430		116,833		120,338	
Print and distribution	38	25,000		25,000		25,000		25,000	
Web, social and other digital	39	20,000		25,000		30,000		35,000	
Design	40	20,000		22,000		24,200		26,620	
Misc and contingency	41	15,000		16,500		18,150		19,965	
			161,000		201,930		214,183		226,923
Project Access Costs	42	7,500	7,500	15,000	15,000	16,500	16,500	18,150	18,150
Other (loan repayments & interest)	43	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	100,000	100,000
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>2,186,500</b>		<b>2,523,835</b>		<b>2,771,115</b>		<b>2,991,110</b>	
<b>Income less expenditure</b>		<b>5,700</b>		<b>44,295</b>		<b>27,828</b>		<b>65,228</b>	

## Assumptions and Council funding

The assumptions used as the basis for these projections are summarised in Appendix 1 Finance. The Council (SAC) has supported AGP in a variety of ways since inception, including revenue support around £150,000 pa. SAC also replaced a high interest loan from SIS for refurbishment (2.5% pa instead of 10% pa). In 2023 the Council wrote off this loan – which would have cost just over £600,000 in repayments and interest 2023-27, instead of the revenue contribution for that period. We have therefore shown that notional income and spend applied over the four years 2023-27 to reflect SAC's support.

## Financial strategies – planning and management

**Financial planning** – is shared across the senior management team and board. This involves careful consideration of previous year's results, key trends, income forecasting based on the proposed programme and cost forecasting based on a line-by-line assessment of future trends and potential commitments. A contingency allowance appears in each project/production budget as well as an overall contingency for the year.

**Our reserves policy** requires us to work towards holding sufficient funds to be able to cover overheads for three months so that we can affect an orderly close down of the organisation in the event of a crisis. We hope in the future to raise this figure to provide a reserve to underpin new ventures but achieving this is some way off.

**Budget control and reporting** is delivered through the use of an integrated cloud based finance system involving Xero as our accounting package and Zahara as a compatible Purchase Order management system. This allows us to set budgets and delegate these with differing levels of spending limits to all spending staff and associates.

**Oversight** of the process is achieved through a series of measures:

- Monthly budget reports reviewed by the management team;
- Weekly review by the Treasurer
- Quarterly management accounts reviewed by the Finance, Risk and Fundraising subcommittee of the board; and
- Monthly review by the whole board.

**Risk management** is also overseen by the finance subgroup and reviewed by the board. We have a full risk management process in place that cascades 'up' the organisation from each team member and ultimately provides a report on top ten business risks and progress with mitigations to the board. This process is likely to be refined further in 2024 given the recent recruitment to the board of a financial risk management specialist.

**Compliance** with legal obligations of all types across the organisation is separately overseen by the Care and Compliance sub group. A compliance register is reviewed by the sub group each quarter to ensure that all our legal obligations, including those arising from charity legislation, are met in full – and recorded appropriately.

## **Risk**

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In general we review and regularly update a series of risk assessments covering operational risks, financial risks and health & safety risks. All follow the same practice in terms of working collaboratively to:

- Identify potential hazards
- Assess potential impacts on a 3 or 5 point scale (depending on context)
- Assess likelihood of occurrence on a 3 or 5 point scale (depending on context)
- Calculating overall risk and the consequent RAG rating
- Identifying mitigation strategies and recalculating 'treated' risk
- Monitoring mitigation implementation

There is a tendency for all types of risk assessment to become overly bureaucratic so we also put effort into carrying out key assessments and mitigation planning in a group setting rather than simply through a paper based system.

Operational and financial risk assessments are reported to the board through the Finance and Risk sub group; and health and safety risk assessments through the Care and Compliance sub group. The latter also reviews the legal register we maintain of all legal and licensing obligations.

### **Key Risks and Mitigation Strategies:**

For 2025-28 we have noted some of the key risks and mitigations below, with more detail provided in Appendix 8 Risk Assessment.

#### **Financial Risks:**

Risk: Fluctuations in funding availability or unforeseen costs.

Mitigation: A contingency fund within the programme budget to address unexpected financial challenges. We also diversify funding sources to reduce dependence on a single funding stream. Key weakness – we need to build a greater reserve.

#### **Artistic Quality and Audience Engagement:**

Risk: Difficulty in achieving the desired artistic quality or engaging target audiences.

Mitigation: We closely collaborate with associate artists, audiences, and community groups to ensure that programming aligns with their preferences and expectations. Continuous feedback loops help us make real-time adjustments to improve engagement.

#### **Sustainability and Environmental Impact:**

Risk: Inadequate progress toward sustainability goals or unintentional environmental harm.

**Mitigation:** We have a dedicated Green Champion and comprehensive sustainability policies in place. We conduct regular environmental impact assessments and commit to addressing any issues promptly.

## **Logistical Challenges:**

**Risk:** Unforeseen logistical challenges, such as transportation issues or venue-related problems.

**Mitigation:** We conduct thorough risk assessments before each programme element, addressing potential logistical issues proactively.

## **Social Impact and Inclusivity:**

**Risk:** Failing to meet social impact and inclusivity objectives.

**Mitigation:** We engage with communities and partner organizations to ensure that our co-creation activities are inclusive and relevant.

## **Monitoring Risks During the Programme:**

Our approach to risk management extends throughout the programme's duration:

**Feedback Mechanisms:** We will maintain open channels of communication with stakeholders, including artists, audiences, and community members.

**Adaptive Planning:** Our flexible approach allows us to adapt and refine our strategies in response to changing circumstances or unforeseen risks.

**Quarterly Reviews:** We hold quarterly reviews to evaluate progress, identify any risks that have materialized, and make necessary adjustments.

**Collaborative Problem-Solving:** When risks do arise, we collaborate with relevant stakeholders to develop and implement solutions promptly.

**Documentation:** Detailed documentation of risk assessments, mitigation strategies, and actions taken ensures accountability and transparency.

## Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are important drivers of learning and effective delivery. Our evaluation strategy involves a combination of tracking key indicators, measuring progress towards explicit goals and exploring the impact of what we do. The latter is the most important – but also the most difficult to achieve.

### Tracking key indicators

On monthly basis for the management team and quarterly for the board, we track a series of key indicators that give an overview of the general health of the organisation as shown opposite.

Going forward we have set out in the table below the key measures that we will use to track our success on a quarterly basis.

Indicator	Annual target	To/at date	Rating
Non panto audience numbers	44,000	41,646	
Gross profit margin from non-panto shows	38%	45%	
Panto audience numbers	26,000	25,624	
Total panto income	£430K	£395K	
Creative participations through Creative Engagement	10,000	11,000+	
Active volunteers	100	90ish	
Audience Net promoter score ( <u>ex panto</u> )	70	82	
Audience Net promoter score panto only	80	88	
Visiting company satisfaction	80	OK <sup>1</sup>	
Donor fundraising	£120K	£95K	
Net carbon consumption	↓ 5%	2 <sup>2</sup>	
Project implementation			
Spektrix (ticketing)	May	100%	
Xero/Zahara (finance)	June	80%	
MS Office 365	Aug	20%	
Breathe introduction(HR system)	June	100%	

### Tracking progress to goals

For each project we deliver – from delivering on the major aims articulated in this plan through to introduction of internal systems, we have a set of milestones that indicate progress. We review each at least quarterly and use the results to feed into our planning and delivery. Appendix X includes an set of high level milestones for this plan.

### Evaluating outcomes and impact

While tracking of indicators and milestones is useful, ultimately wider evaluation is required to understand the full impact of any organisation. With such a large reach and range of activity, it would be easy to get bogged down in processes that might appear useful but in practice would be too complex to be implemented properly. Our approach therefore involves three elements.

<b>Wellbeing and quality</b>	We use a range of simple survey tools, including the “ONS4” subjective wellbeing questions and post-event surveys to gather data on the changes to wellbeing and quality our audiences, participants and artists experience
<b>Reflective narratives</b>	Complementing surveys we use a story-based evaluation tool, ‘Most Significant Change’ to systematically gather and reflect on the experiences of artists, participants, audiences and anyone who we support or work with
<b>Project evaluations</b>	For productions and key projects we also commission external evaluations – for example see Appendix 4b



## Table of Appendices

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The following appendices are submitted separately.

Appendix 1	Financial projections
Appendix 2	Objectives, outcomes and key milestones
Appendix 3a	Performance and production programme
Appendix 3b	Examples of past productions
Appendix 4	Creative Engagement programme
Appendix 4b	Culture Collective evaluation
Appendix 5a	Audience analysis
Appendix 5b	Audience development plan
Appendix 6	Environmental action plan
Appendix 7	Capital plan
Appendix 8	Risk assessment
Appendix 9	Resilience plan
Appendix 10	EDI action plan
Appendix 11	Donor Fundraising plan
Appendix 12	Volunteering policy and plan
Appendix 13	Deleted
Appendix 14	Staffing Policies and Fair Work