

# distil

di' stil/  
*verb*  
verb: distill

extract the essential  
meaning or most important  
aspects of.

synonyms: purify, refine,  
filter, treat, process

## Strategic Plan 2017 - 2021

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# Executive Summary

DG Unlimited (DGU) is a strategic umbrella organisation that represents the collective strengths of Dumfries and Galloway's creative sector and other key stakeholders.

This strategic plan marks the end of a significant moment in Dumfries and Galloway's cultural history. The region's creative sector has emerged from a period of uncertainty and we, along with our partners, are proud of our contribution to creating a new era of stability, confidence and growth for our creative sector.

Our four-year strategic plan Distil, focuses on our strengths and provides a planned and pragmatic way in which we can build upon the groundwork that has thoughtfully and carefully crafted a new model for planning, delivering and promoting the region's rich and vibrant community of creative practitioners and organisations.

**This strategic plan is framed by our strong vision;**

***'To make Dumfries and Galloway the destination place, where all artists and arts organisations want to live, work and make a living'***

**and our mission;**

***'We seek to create Scotland's leading rural arts network by supporting creative practitioners and organisations to help themselves and each other; providing a collective voice; celebrating and nurturing talent; and growing the next generation of creative practitioners.'***

We do this with inclusion at its heart, advocating the social value the creative sector adds in improving the financial status, health and wellbeing of people's lives in Dumfries and Galloway.

Distil provides clarity of purpose for why our organisation exists, how we contribute to the creative sector and the differences we intend to make. It moves our unique delivery model from a state of flux to a position of refinement with three distinct ambitions, which are to:

1. Create Scotland's best rural arts sector
2. Advocate for the best conditions and support structures for the creative sector to flourish and to be accessible by all
3. Commission and develop new strategic interventions to advance the creative sector for artistic and public benefit

This plan sets out four strategic aims and the operational context that will provide the mandate for DGU to play a leadership role on behalf of the creative sector, they are:

## **1. Advocacy:**

To champion the role, the creative sector plays within the region and to promote it nationally and internationally.

## **2. Advice, Support and Skills Development:**

To guide and support our members and provide opportunities for the creative sector to network, learn, share and support each other to become more sustainable.

## **3. Investment:**

To encourage inward financial investment to our creative sector. Work with the creative sector by investing staff time on time limited strategic projects; administering funds and making recommendations to the Council on awards and commissions.

## **4. Sustainability and Resilience:**

To create a well-managed, secure and robust organisation that with efficient operational delivery, plays a role in improving the economic, health and wellbeing of people's lives in the region, through utilising our collective knowledge, expertise and experience.

The successful delivery of Distil will help us to be more independent, resilient and fit for purpose. By 2021 we will have achieved the following high level ambitions that are interlocked with our four strategic aims:

- Established effective platforms for the creative sector's voice to be heard
- Created an effective artists network that connects artists with each other and communities
- Fostered a sense of community and belonging across the creative sector through a strong network where differences are valued, and the spirit of collaboration is embraced to achieve our shared vision
- Recognised as an effective advocate for the creative sector with the ability to lobby on its behalf
- Consolidated and grown our partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council, and continued the successful delivery of their arts development responsibilities
- Secured the creative sector's trust to lead the coordination of large scale consortium bids, identifying and making use of partners' skillsets to improve chances of success
- Developed, nurtured and consolidated strategic partnerships in the creative sector and beyond – health, tourism, economic, community development
- Implemented a revised constitution, operational model, organisational structures, decision making and monitoring processes to enable us to effectively and efficiently meet our ambitions
- An expanded revenue model so we are less reliant on a single funding source to ensure our long-term sustainability.

This strategic plan and its aims and objectives will be regularly evaluated by the DGU team and Board of Trustees in consultation with majority funders. We will introduce an annual report that will include a summary of findings from our annual members' survey designed to scope out emerging ideas and needs, and to 'temperature test' our performance.



Photo by Kim Ayres (kimayres.co.uk)



# Guiding Principles

There are three key themes that will guide all our activities to ensure that we remain focussed and on track for the benefit of the creative sector, the wider public, and visitors to Dumfries and Galloway:

- **People** – we will put people first to ensure equity
- **Partnerships** – everything we do is built on cooperation
- **Place** – enable the creative distinctiveness of place and abilities of people

## People

We will ensure our organisational activities are developed in collaboration with, and in response to our members, stakeholders and the partners we work with.

We will ensure equity is built into everything we do by putting people first. We will advocate building a creative sector that has inclusion at its heart and we will work hard, and ask our partners to work with us, to remove barriers to engagement, particularly for those in our communities that may not normally engage in the arts.

We are committed to providing the best support and advice we can to practitioners, participants and local organisations.

We intend to create a community where our strength is drawn from our members and our members gain their strength through shared experiences and learning from each other.

## Partnerships

We understand that we can only become bigger than the sum of our individual parts by actively seeking, developing and nurturing effective partnerships to help improve economies of scale and make the biggest possible difference to people's lives.

We will be flexible, adaptable and strategic in working with partners to share risks and benefits. We will maintain

an equilibrium of delivering planned work but also being responsive to new opportunities as they arise wherever possible.

We are arts specialists and will work to ensure the creative sector is strategically represented on key community planning and other local and national policy-led initiatives.

We will endeavour to build trust and nurture relationships between artforms, across-sectors and the geography of the region, and beyond - encouraging the exchange of skills, ideas, knowledge and expertise.

## Place

We are dedicated to ensuring everything we do is locally relevant and, when appropriate, of national importance.

We will defend the value of the creative sector and promote their contribution in making the places where we stay better places to live.

We uphold the power the arts have in positively contributing to social renewal, community cohesion, resilience and individual growth.

We will champion the vital role creative practitioners play in contributing to the health and wellbeing of our communities and their important contribution to our economy.

We aim to empower the region's professional creative sector to develop and grow whilst simultaneously supporting grassroots community activity to flourish by placing parity of esteem on both.

We have a strong belief in the transformational power the arts can have on our communities and their potential to unleash the creative distinctiveness of place and abilities of people.





Photo by Kim Ayres ([kimayres.co.uk](http://kimayres.co.uk))



## Who We Are



DGU is the day-to-day operating name of the Dumfries and Galloway Chamber of the Arts.

We are a membership organisation that works with, and provides a voice for, Dumfries and Galloway's creative sector. DGU champions and advocates the vital role creative practitioners and organisations play in contributing to the wellbeing of our communities and economy.

### Background

DGU was established in 2012, as a result of a number of challenges for the creative sector converging at once. We became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation in 2013.

A strategic hiatus appeared in the region's cultural landscape following the demise of the Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association (DGArts) in 2011. Up until then DGArts was a very active arts development agency

and the only arts organisation south of Glasgow and Edinburgh receiving revenue funding from the national body for the arts - Creative Scotland.

In parallel, Dumfries and Galloway Council was undergoing an extended period of restructuring.

As a result, the creative sector found itself in a state of flux.

### DGU – a new arts model

There have been many significant voices involved in shaping DGU. This process began in 2011 with a public stakeholder meeting known as 'Dalbeattie One'. At this landmark event over 100 committed people from the region's creative sector, helped establish the investment priorities for the Council's Place Partnership Plan.

Place Partnerships were at the time, a new initiative by Creative Scotland designed to encourage and support local partners to work together with their creative sector.





The partnership aimed to make significant interventions to address opportunities and issues, and help to strengthen creative development in their area.

With DGArts no longer in existence, this appeared to be a perfect opportunity to create and test drive the 'new arts model' that is known today as DGU.

Council officers submitted a key committee report to elected Members in March 2012 outlining what was required to create DGU and deliver the Place Partnership.

The report was ratified and immediately achieved a number, of crucial things:

- Safeguarded funding for arts and culture within the Council's budget
- Set the priorities that were to be delivered via the Place Partnership
- Provided delegated authority to Council officers to agree arts commissions in consultation with DGU

DGU became a key partner in the delivery of the place partnership programme. This enabled us to thoroughly test our complex operating model which was a constantly evolving process as we sought to respond to the shifting cultural landscape and find our place within it.

The ambitions of operating a sector-led model where the majority of decisions are made by consensus, proved to be beyond the level of resources available. However, we are proud of our sector-led approach and this strategic plan outlines the next stage of its development. [see Finessing The Delivery Model]

# What We Do

*"The main purpose of networks is to build consensus between members and partners on a common narrative, supported by evidence-based research that serves to mobilize others to join and take action."*

**Contributor: D'Art Report 49:  
International Culture Networks, 2016**

DGU is an innovative sector-led model. We are an advocacy, support and information organisation with a growing membership, creating a network of over 300 creative practitioners and supporters of the Dumfries and Galloway's vibrant creative sector.

We operate as a strategic umbrella organisation working with the region's creative sector, exploring areas of mutual interest for public benefit, the advancement of the arts and our creative sector.

We have two key functions - **Enable and Influence**

## Enable

We are an enabler. We work with the creative sector to help them help themselves. We build on the collective voice of the creative sector to raise the profile and help the arts flourish. We understand the powerful contribution of the creative sector on social renewal and how they can help a community come together and flourish.

## Influence

We aim to influence those closest to us, and those furthest away from us in equal measures. Our unique position allows us to occupy neutral ground whilst at the same time challenge our members and partners to work strategically to maximise impact. We influence ways of working by creating a new lens to view things through. We champion the arts and the vital role of creative practitioners in our communities and we influence decision-makers and policy on a local and national level.

We deliver a year-round programme of activities with, and on behalf of, our members and the creative sector which includes:

- An annual conference celebrating the region's creative sector
- *Connecting With You* regular informal one-to-one advice surgeries
- Information sharing and networking events,
- Convene and chair the Regional Arts Hub Working Group
- Professional development opportunities

- Research activities
- Advise the Council on the priority areas for its Regional Arts Fund and contribute to the decision making and monitoring processes
- Manage two funding streams for supporting creative practitioners' development and community focussed arts and culture projects
- Distribute a regular e-bulletin – *Connected* – with the latest news and opportunities
- Chair the Creative Industries Working Group – consortium of local businesses and organisations working together to support the Creative Industries sector in the region

We are a network of creative practitioners, arts organisations and supporters who are committed to working together whilst recognising and embracing differences.

We focus on strategic initiatives and nurture collaborative projects to:

- coordinate activities and planning
- encourage collaboration and partnership working
- enhance the creative sector's magnetic draw beyond the region
- improve economies of scale
- pool resources
- create a culture of shared learning
- investigate and research impact, gaps and opportunities
- enhance professional development, and
- create a sense of community and belonging for our membership

DGU is the glue that binds a diverse and widely dispersed creative sector spread across every nook and cranny of Dumfries and Galloway - Scotland's third largest local authority area.

## How We Do It

We understand that our journey has, and continues to be, an iterative process, and that our delivery model requires further finessing and streamlining to ensure that it is fit for purpose for our next phase of development.

There are two key factors that this strategic plan seeks to address to enable DGU to effectively deliver its ambitions and strategic aims:

1. **Organisational purpose:** creation of a clear and succinct vision, mission, strategic aims and objectives
2. **Delivery model:** finessing and providing clarity on the 'flow of conversations' and decision making processes



Photo by Colin Tennant (colinjamestennant.com)



## Case Study: **The Stove**

The Stove Network is an artist-led organisation that develops partnership projects with local people, groups and organisations that focus on rethinking the future identity and purpose of Dumfries.

The Stove runs an open public arts resource in the centre of Dumfries and runs regular activities around the themes of music, word, visual and food.

Blueprint100 is The Stove's innovative artists programme, run by and for young people looking

to grow careers in the creative industries. Three quarters of those on long-term contracts with the organisation are under 27 which contributes to increased confidence and activity of ability and society in the arts and in people taking an active role in their community.

DGU has represented the work of The Stove at a regional and national level and the organisation recognises DGU's important role of growing trust and partnership between arts organisations and community groups across the region.



# Vision & Mission

## Purpose

We exist to celebrate, advocate, support, connect, advise, challenge, coordinate, mediate, promote and nurture collaborations between creative practitioners, organisations, disciplines and other sectors to make Dumfries and Galloway a renowned cultural destination.

## Vision

To make Dumfries and Galloway the destination place, where all artists and arts organisations want to live, work and make a living

## Mission

We seek to create Scotland's leading rural arts network by supporting creative practitioners and organisations to help themselves and each other; providing a collective voice; celebrating and nurturing talent, and; growing the next generation of creative practitioners.

We do this with inclusion at its heart, advocating the social value the creative sector adds in improving the financial status, health and wellbeing of people's lives in Dumfries and Galloway.

## Values

Integrity, ambition and cooperation are at the core of our organisational culture and reflects what we value:

- **Sharing:** We are committed to sharing experiences, success and learning
- **Respect:** We carefully create mutually respectful relationships with stakeholders to ensure our vision and journey is a shared one
- **Honesty:** We operate with openness, transparency, compassion and integrity across everything we do
- **Flexibility:** We aim to be flexible and adaptive to meet our members' needs wherever we can, and work towards achieving long-term organisational sustainability
- **Quality:** We challenge ourselves to do the best job we can in everything we do and to deliver what we say we will

## Standards

We seek to achieve 'gold' across the following standards to ensure we meet and surpass our responsibilities to stakeholders:

- Robust and exciting partnerships and collaborations
- Sound financial management
- Comprehensive support and guidance
- Strong, fair and honest leadership

Photo by Anya Bisset  
(Bunbury Banter Theatre)



## Case Study: Bunbury Banter Theatre Company

The Bunbury Banter Theatre Company combines the dynamic intensity of audio with the theatrical traditions and excitement of performance. The Company often works with new writing, as well as experimenting with other forms of drama and storytelling. Through a programme of classes, workshops and projects, audiences and participants benefit by increased confidence, knowledge and skills, not to mention a newfound passion for the arts.

Bunbury Banter travels across the UK and Europe making new connections to work on collaborative projects and is just as enthusiastic about working with local partners. Its creative learning projects contribute to the Company's vision of bringing the arts to all, regardless of financial and geographical barriers.

DGU has worked with the Bunbury Banter team since their move to Dumfries and Galloway and provided support, advice and networking opportunities for their first projects here.



# Finessing The Delivery Model

This strategic plan intends to set the tone and ways of working for DGU moving forwards, all of which have been distilled from a full and rich ongoing process of consultation, debate and discussion.

In many ways, the DGU model is a ground-breaking piece of action research. We have drawn on the numerous documents, reports, strategies, proposals, discussions and views since our inception to create this framework for streamlining our governance structure and ways of working whilst maintaining our commitment to being sector-led.

Pulling all these strands together to achieve clarity is vital for DGU to be able to successfully meet our ambitions and strategic aims over the next four-years and beyond.



To be able to work with and on behalf of the creative sector, DGU needs to confidently demonstrate leadership with a mandate derived from its members, key funders and the pARTners Group (Regional Arts Hub Working Group). To achieve this, we will simplify the 'flow of conversations' that inform our decision-making processes.

*Left: A summary of the finessed model.*

## Inform

DGU Members provide insights on what's important to practitioners, supporters and service providers of the arts to inform DGUs organisational activities. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the arts, culture and creativity of our region.

## Greenhouse

pARTners Group (Regional Arts Hub Working Group). This group acts as DGU's critical friend, a platform for information sharing, and a greenhouse for exploring emerging ideas, debating critical issues and nurturing collaborative working. It fulfils an important strategic role in assisting DGU fulfil its aim of advancing the region's creative sector, through a commitment to sharing insights, expertise and partnership working, whilst recognising and embracing differences.

It's a safe place where DGU can test new ideas and thinking which will shape and inform our operational activities.

The pARTners group consists of as wide as possible artform representation from the region's arts organisations, with the potential for recruitment of short-term expertise when specialist knowledge is required. Membership is by expression of interest and is regularly reviewed.. The group has a terms of reference outlining its purpose, ways of working and expectations of group members.

## Strategy

The DGU Team led by the arts development director is the strategic and operational enabler for setting strategy, the mandate for which is derived from engaging with members and considering the specialist artform guidance provided by the pARTners Group.

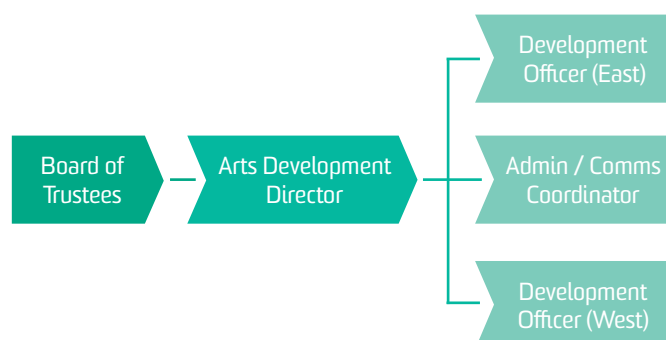
## Governance

The DGU Board ensures that the organisation is well governed, ratifies strategic direction, and checks progress against delivery of the organisation's strategic aims.

Trustees are recruited from our membership, and we seek to ensure we cover areas of knowledge, skills and experience identified through a regular skills audit.

It's also within the Board's gift to co-opt two additional trustees to undertake specific activities or to provide the Board with additional expertise.

The proposed structure of the company, required to deliver the ambitions of this strategic plan is:



## In Summary

This refined framework clarifies the processes required to enable action. By clearly defining roles and responsibilities this will provide the DGU team with, the confidence and mandate to work in collaboration with the creative sector for the benefit of the whole community of Dumfries and Galloway.



Photo by Colin Saul  
(Kirkcudbright Arts and Craft Trail)

## Case Study: Kirkcudbright Arts and Crafts Trail

Kirkcudbright Art and Crafts Trail brings hundreds of creative people together to show and sell their work, across disciplines and career stages. This attracts thousands of visitors to the town, and the region.

The volunteer group behind the Trail transforms Kirkcudbright for the four-day event, creating a creative buzz and festival atmosphere in the region's Artists' Town.

DGU supported the organisation with their application to the national EPIC awards – which the Trail won! DGU helped promote The Kelpies maquettes which were exhibited in the town. The Trail also received funding from DGU's community arts fund - *Get Involved Get Inspired* - for an interactive Fantastic Travelling Machine that engaged the youngest visitors. The mobile sculpture, full of buttons, horns and steering wheel could take them wherever their imagination desired.

To ensure this is effective we will implement ways to capture the voice and views of DGU members, and develop opportunities for networking to take place across the membership. As a membership organisation, we are committed to ensuring that the voice of our membership is heard, listened to and reflected in decision-making processes.

The clarity of this refined model combined with our vision, mission and strategic aims will clarify DGU's purpose and contribution to the region's creative sector.

### Ways of Working

The How do we get there? section [see pages 18 - 23] describes the high-level development priorities and objectives we have identified. Many of the objectives will be delivered as part of DGUs organisational functions which in turn are administered through specific team roles.

There are some objectives, such as collaborative projects, that will require input from the pARTners Group (Regional Arts Hub Working Group) and sometimes short-life working groups. In those instances, it is the role of the DGU team and working groups to make recommendations and table preferred options for ratification by the DGU board, who are the final decision-making body.

This process can be simply outlined as follows:

### Idea Development

Strategic projects and initiatives are identified through dialogue with members and stakeholders. They are explored and if appropriate developed with the pARTners Group (Regional Arts Hub Working Group).

### Ratification

Proposals are brought to the DGU board for ratification. It is unlikely for the board not to adopt a proposal unless it doesn't pass a process of due diligence or fit with the purposes of the organisation. At this stage, the board can do one of three things:

- 1 Proceed** – ask the DGU team to move to delivery
- 2 Review and redraft** – request reworking of the proposal based on feedback
- 3 Stop** – request the DGU team not to progress any further

If the proposal is ratified it becomes the responsibility of the DGU team to progress it.

# Where are we Going?

We are an ambitious organisation that's committed to establishing Dumfries and Galloway as the destination place for the arts. This is our first strategic plan since we were created in 2012 and it acknowledges that a lot has changed in our regional cultural landscape since then. The changes may be less visible on the surface but they are deeply embedded in what and how our creative sector does what it does. The strategic hiatus that the creative sector experienced in 2011 empowered many creative practitioners and organisations to do more for themselves. Some have grown and flourished, others have been less successful.

We believe this strategic plan provides the creative sector with a framework so that it doesn't operate in isolation and makes the route to collaboration and partnership easier. It provides a support network and strategic rudder to test thinking and to share learning.

Distil provides DGU with the platform to move forwards with confidence. We have a clear organisational purpose, we have an inspiring vision and set of succinct strategic aims that provides a road-map for our next phase of development.

Our strategic plan sets out how we intend to contribute and add value to Dumfries and Galloway's creative sector. It shows how we intend to be a stabilising and supportive voice; how we plan to motivate members and other stakeholders to join us on a journey to achieve a shared vision; and our intention of becoming an agent for change, by demonstrating leadership for a strong commitment to collaborative working and a sense of shared ambition to maximise impact for the public and economic benefit of the region.

## Next steps

To achieve our ambitions will require a strong commitment to collaborative working, a shared vision and a sense of shared responsibility from the DGU team, DGU board, DGU members, pARTners Group (Regional Arts Hub Working Group) and key stakeholders.

Through the delivery of this strategic plan, we will:

- Work with the region's creative sector, providing a shared voice to help the arts flourish
- Provide a strategic overview of the creative sector and represent its mutual interests
- Champion the role the creative sector plays in transforming places and people for public benefit

- Harness the collective strengths of our members to promote a cohesive strategic approach to service delivery
- Nurture and facilitate creative collaborations, professional development and the exchange of skills to help creative practitioners and organisations flourish
- Promote and shine a light on Dumfries and Galloway's creative sector
- Work towards building a creative sector that has inclusion at its heart, is open to testing bold new thinking, taking risks and being resilient to new challenges



Photo by  
Mike Bolam  
(Sanctuary  
Lab 2014)

## Case Study: Sanctuary

Sanctuary is a 24-hour site-specific public art event that takes the form of an environmental public art laboratory exploring what happens when environment, art, technology, science and culture meet. It creates an experimental space for new work, and a platform where artists and audiences come together for 24 hours to form a temporary community within the Galloway Dark Skies Park.

The curators work with a number of local partners to make it happen including Wide Open, Creative Scotland, DG Unlimited, The Holywood Trust, the Forestry Commission Scotland and Dumfries and Galloway Council. The unique 24 hour event connects people and brings people of all ages and walks of life together under one of the most beautiful night skies in the world.

DGU has worked with Sanctuary to promote the opportunities for artists, as well as the event itself, which has now become an internationally important public art event.





# How Do We Get There?

## Strategic aims and objectives

We have identified the high-level development priorities [see tables below] in line with our strategic aims, that we need to focus-on to successfully meet the intentions of this strategic plan. The list is not exhaustive.

## 1. Advocacy

We will:

- Use our experience and the collective knowledge of our members to identify areas of importance that need to be addressed
- Seek key influencers and build relationships, partnerships and collaborations

- Develop our networks and identify those that we should have an 'equal seat' on
- Engage key stakeholders and utilise the broad based creative expertise of the pARTners Group (Regional Arts Hub Working Group)
- Challenge deep-seated perceptions about the arts to better demonstrate the value of what we do to those who don't understand its value
- Ensure the voice of the creative industries influences local and national government policy and key decision makers
- Work with the creative sector to carry out or commission research and intelligence gathering to create cohesion and encourage cost-effective collaborations

## Strategic Aim: Advocacy

To champion the role the creative sector plays within the region and to promote it nationally and internationally

Objectives	Outcomes	Observable Indicators	Risk Factors & Assumptions
Effective platforms for the creative sector to have a voice	<p>Stronger and more visible network of creative practitioners and organisations</p> <p>Improved understanding and knowledge of creative sector's strengths, challenges and opportunities</p> <p>Improved access to support, information and services</p>	<p>Annual DGU members survey, drop-in surgeries, annual conference</p> <p>Revamped members section on DGU website</p>	<p>Creative sector's consensus on DGU's advocacy role</p> <p>Committed and motivated members</p> <p>Members contribute to annual survey, attend drop-in surgeries, engage with annual conference</p> <p>Funding for DGU freelance commission</p>
Convene a robust and effective advisory body (pARTners Group)	<p>pARTners Group meets regularly</p> <p>Increased cooperation across members</p> <p>Strong partnerships with organisations across the region</p> <p>Improved understanding of partners' strategic aims and ambitions</p> <p>Strategic cohesion for the creative sector</p>	<p>pARTners Group remit and terms of reference</p> <p>Transparent membership selection</p> <p>Members identify increased economies of scale</p> <p>Increase in number of collaborative partnerships across the sector led by pARTners Group members</p>	<p>Membership consensus on arts development director chairing as a DGU function</p> <p>pARTners group continues to represent the region's artforms</p> <p>Funding for DGU to provide admin and chairing</p>
Build a productive relationship with the Council's Creative Industries Working Group	<p>Joined-up approach to providing advice and guidance for the creative industries</p> <p>Improved understanding of partners' strategic aims and ambitions</p> <p>Improved signposting and planning cycles</p> <p>Increased number of collaborations for the benefit of the creative industries</p>	<p>DGU arts development director convenes and chairs</p> <p>Agreed Terms of Reference</p> <p>Agreed planning cycle</p> <p>Identifiable contribution to council led and other strategic partnership groups</p>	<p>Council gives mandate to DGU to convene and chair</p> <p>Partners continue to attend.</p> <p>Funding for DGU to provide admin and chairing</p>

Photo by Emma Dove (emmadove.net)



## Case Study: [Stuart Macpherson](#)

Stuart is a freelance bassist and composer, a versatile and creative musician who explores repertoire in jazz, classical, folk and world traditional music, bringing a unique playing and writing style to each genre. He enjoys working with artists from different disciplines, drawing on his experience within the workshop environment as well as his skills as an improviser to bring about innovative responses to creative questions.

Through support from DGU's professional development fund – Innovate Create Cultivate – Stuart was able to explore new ways of working, including new audio platforms and audience participation methods, as well as film and visual projection alongside composition and sound samples. His work centred on Barnacle Geese from Norway to Caerlaverock and will inform his application to Creative Scotland for the next phase of the project.

## 2. Advice, support and skills development

We will:

- Work with the creative sector to identify common areas of professional development to enable the sector to become more sustainable
- Use our experience, regional and national connections to programme informative and fun social networking sessions
- Work in collaboration with partner organisations to identify skills gaps and areas for career progression for the creative sector and emerging talent

### Strategic Aim: Advice, Support and Skills Development

To guide and support our members and provide opportunities for the creative sector to network, learn, share and support each other to become more sustainable.

Objectives	Outcomes	Observable Indicators	Risk Factors & Assumptions
Provide a range of effective services to support the creative sector	<p>Increased levels of support and guidance</p> <p>Increased range of skills and confidence</p> <p>Increase in number and quality of funding applications</p> <p>Improved access to information and services</p> <p>Improved visibility and access to DGU team</p>	<p>Annual programme of drop-in surgeries across the region</p> <p>Suite of self-help toolkits and guidance available on website</p> <p>Members and pARTners group identify areas of support</p>	<p>Creative sector attendance at drop-ins</p> <p>Creative sector accesses online toolkits</p> <p>Creative sector helps identify areas of support</p> <p>DGU team supports/signposts effectively</p> <p>Funding for DGU freelance commissions</p> <p>Creative sector attends and values networking events</p>
Provide networking opportunities for the creative sector	<p>Increased opportunities for the creative sector to share learning</p> <p>Stronger and more visible network of creative practitioners and artists and organisations</p> <p>Increased number of collaborations and partnerships</p> <p>Improved knowledge and intelligence gathering</p>	<p>Annual conference</p> <p>Programme of networking events</p> <p>Links and contribution to partners events</p> <p>Members identify new collaborations and partnerships</p>	<p>DGU team and pARTners group programme events that meet creative sector's needs</p> <p>Partners consensus on linking into events</p> <p>Funding for DGU freelance commissions</p> <p>pARTners Group consensus on joint working</p> <p>Identification of relevant areas of support</p>
Work with key partners to identify skills gaps and areas for support	<p>New methods of delivery and ways of working</p> <p>Increased levels of support and guidance</p> <p>Increased cooperation across partners to jointly deliver complimentary services</p>	<p>pARTners Group identifies appropriate areas of support</p> <p>New strategic interventions</p> <p>Increased uptake of existing programmes</p>	<p>New funds or reframing of existing resources</p> <p>Funding for DGU freelance commissions</p>



Photo by Colin Tennant (colinjamestennant.com)



### Case Study: Jack Finlay

Jack Finlay is a young professional theatre maker originally from Kirkcudbright. He works across many areas of the creative industries such as PR, communications, performance and stage management.

He has worked with a variety of organisations and events, including The Electric Theatre Workshop in Dumfries, Big Burns Supper and Carlisle Fringe Festival.

Jack directed a powerful and thought provoking piece of youth theatre called *Follow Follow* which was performed at the Civic reception for DGU's Connections conference in 2016 at the Theatre Royal, Dumfries.

Jack was supported by DGU so he could attend training in rigging resulting in a nationally accredited qualification. He is now a freelance aerial performance rigger, a skill much needed in the region and is expanding his horizons within the sector.

### 3. Investment

We will:

- Secure the creative sector's trust to lead the coordination of large scale consortium bids, identifying and making use of partner's skillset to improve chances of success
- Use our specialist knowledge and harness the expertise of the creative sector to explore, develop and implement new strategic interventions to advance the creative sector for public benefit
- Embrace new and mutually beneficial collaborations with non-arts sector agencies and organisations
- Work hard to ensure that the role and value of the creative sector is understood by decision makers and influence the allocation of resources
- Work with the creative sector to grow and reach new audiences and participants
- Connect our communities with creative practitioners to contribute to community cohesion and wellbeing through the unique power of the arts

#### Strategic Aim: Investment

To encourage inward financial investment to our creative sector. Work with the creative sector by investing team time on time limited strategic projects; administering funds and making recommendations to the Council on awards and commissions.

Objectives	Outcomes	Observable Indicators	Risk Factors & Assumptions
DGU is an efficient and effective commissioning and funding body	<p>Resources available for the creative sector</p> <p>Effective processes in place to administer funds and identify new resources</p> <p>Priorities to advance the creative sector are identified</p>	<p>Application, assessment, monitoring and evaluation processes for each commission are documented</p> <p>pARTners Group advice taken into account</p> <p>Additional inward funding received by DGU, pARTners Group members, DGU members and practitioners as a direct result of commissions</p>	<p>Skills within DGU team to draw up commissioning documents</p> <p>Adequate resources to administer and monitor</p> <p>DGU does not deliver creative product and therefore does not compete with arts organisations within the region.</p> <p>pARTners Group and other organisations maintain goodwill towards DGU</p>
To effectively facilitate and coordinate large scale funding bids on behalf of the creative sector in collaboration with partners	<p>Stronger mutually beneficial partnerships</p> <p>Increased cooperation across partners to jointly deliver large scale projects for the benefit of the region</p> <p>Increased opportunities for partners to pool resources and widen impact</p>	<p>New strategic consortium projects</p> <p>Members identify increased economies of scale</p> <p>Increased investment in the creative sector from sources outwith the region</p> <p>Increased activities, events, creative outputs</p>	<p>Consensus on DGU coordinating bids whilst utilising partners' skills</p> <p>pARTners group and other organisations want to work collaboratively</p> <p>Shared ambitions and a will to pool resources</p> <p>Funding for DGU freelance commissions</p>
Effective deployment and investment of DGU team's time to support the creative sector	<p>Increased levels of support and guidance</p> <p>Improved signposting and access to other sources of support</p> <p>Increased connections between practitioners and organisations across and outwith the region</p> <p>Enhanced skills and confidence of the creative sector</p>	<p>DGU team's workplans respond to aims and objectives of strategic plan</p> <p>Process established to monitor support requested and provided</p> <p>Identifiable contributions to council led and other strategic partnership and network groups</p> <p>Review process developed to measure performance of DGU team commissions</p>	<p>Creative sector consensus that DGU has a role to play</p> <p>Skills within DGU team to support the creative sector</p> <p>DGU is recognised as the region's advocacy body for the arts by non-arts sector networks / partnership groups</p> <p>Funding for DGU freelance commissions</p>

## 4. Sustainability and Resilience

We will:

- Use our diligence to ensure the long-term sustainability of our organisation
- Effectively and responsibly manage our resources to deliver first-class services that have the greatest and widest possible impact on public benefit
- Strategically plan to improve our long-term viability and ensure we are fit for purpose and a leader in our field
- Ensure that we have the necessary delivery model, ways of working and clear decision-making processes to enable the organisation to achieve the biggest positive impact on the creative sector and wider community

### Strategic Aim: Sustainability and resilience

To create a well-managed, secure and robust organisation that with efficient operational delivery, plays a role in improving the economic, health and wellbeing of peoples' lives in the region, through utilising our collective knowledge, expertise and experience.

Objectives	Outcomes	Observable Indicators	Risk Factors & Assumptions
Develop an effective organisation with an efficient operational model	<p>Shared and common understanding of DGU's purpose, remit and contribution to the creative sector</p> <p>Clarity on roles and remits of DGU board, DGU team, pARTners Group and the Council</p> <p>Improved 'flow of conversations'</p> <p>Clear and succinct ways of working</p> <p>Ensures the organisation is fit for purpose</p>	<p>DGU strategic plan</p> <p>Review and update of DGU constitution</p> <p>DGU Board members are selected in response to a skills audit</p> <p>Commissioning of DGU team</p> <p>pARTners Group terms of reference</p> <p>Service level agreement with the Council</p> <p>Monitoring and reporting processes</p> <p>Organisational policies and strategies</p> <p>Expanded revenue model</p>	<p>Consensus from board, pARTners group and the Council on strategic plan and refined operational model</p> <p>DGU Trustees and team have the required skills and experience</p> <p>pARTners Group continues to work in partnership with DGU</p> <p>Maintaining and growing funding for DGU</p>




Photo by Kim Ayres (kimayres.co.uk)

### Case Study: Absolute Classics

Absolute Classics uses classical music to address social and economic challenges faced by people living in Dumfries and Galloway. Its mission is to enable the remote population of the region to attend and experience high quality musical and cultural events that are normally only available in major cities.

The organisation brings world-class musicians and performers to the region and runs a 10-day festival in August, a concert series from September to March, as well as education and outreach programmes.

DGU has provided advice, guidance and funding towards the concert series, enabling Absolute Classics to attract new audiences and investors. This resulted in major business sponsorship and donations, new partnerships with local venues and delivery of outstanding music tuition. This all contributed to highlighting the region as an attractive destination amongst wider audiences, corporate sponsors and the international community of performers.





[dgunlimited.com](http://dgunlimited.com)

Photo by Colin Tennant ([colinjamestennant.com](http://colinjamestennant.com))