



Events Strategy 2025/28



Renfrewshire
Council



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1. Foreword

Renfrewshire has built up a reputation as an exciting events destination and a capable host. Our major events provide unforgettable experiences, and position Renfrewshire as a great place to live, work and invest. Our events bring our place to life—telling the story of who we are and generating a deep sense of civic pride. This strategy offers the opportunity to share our ambitions for Renfrewshire’s events programme—an inclusive, accessible, and innovative calling card for the region.

Made up of vibrant and culturally rich towns, villages and rural communities, Renfrewshire is a place known for its welcome, its connectivity and the unique place-based experiences on offer that make it a fantastic destination for our people to thrive. Beautiful backdrops such as Paisley Abbey, The White Cart River, and picturesque villages, combine with a fascinating heritage of Thread Mills, weaving, punk music, and much more, to set the perfect scene for staging events.

This strategy is produced on the tenth anniversary of the launch of Paisley: The Untold Story—an ambitious cultural regeneration strategy that set Paisley on its way to bid for UK City of Culture 2021—a journey that transformed the whole of Renfrewshire, galvanising its communities in a single effort to succeed. At its launch, Paisley: The Untold Story, set out ambitious plans to transform Renfrewshire through cultural regeneration, which has delivered many successes over the last decade, not least the major and local events programme. Despite being unsuccessful in being awarded the title of UK City of Culture 2021 at the final stage in 2017, Renfrewshire’s commitment to investment in cultural regeneration prevailed. This included major capital investment in the region’s cultural assets underpinned by the Future Paisley programme, which set out to deliver five bold step changes by using culture as a mechanism for social and economic change.

Renfrewshire’s commitment to culture and events has been recognised nationally through our ability to access national funding programmes through EventScotland and VisitScotland and through national awards for excellence. This has driven growth of visitor events such as Paisley Halloween Festival, Paisley Food & Drink Festival and Sma’ Shot Day.

Funding for Paisley Halloween Festival from Scotland’s Year of Young People 2018 was a catalyst for change in how the council produced and delivered events. A new approach saw us engage young people from across Renfrewshire to co-design and programme events. For the first time, young people were able to shape their own cultural experience through the council’s event programme, and have their contributions recognised in a genuine and meaningful way. This work re-framed the delivery of events and sparked fresh thinking and new conversations around accessibility and inclusion with communities and partners, that have continued to shape and influence event delivery ever since.

We have developed strong partnerships locally with groups and individuals who have lived experience of physical and neurological disabilities, cultural diversity, poverty and other intersecting challenges. We listened to their experiences, and have shaped our events accordingly, championing inclusiveness and accessibility and providing participation opportunities for as many people as possible. As a local authority, Renfrewshire has taken a lead role in pioneering an events programme that is underpinned by story-telling and co-design with our local communities.

Our reputation as an excellent host of events of scale, secured the premiere event of the UK’s Unboxed Festival 2022, which attracted 50,000 attendees in its opening weekend, the Royal National Mod 2023, Scottish Opera’s site-specific staging of Pagliacci, the Scottish Album of the Year Awards and the Scottish Trad Awards.

The challenge of the pandemic and post-pandemic landscape created further opportunities and the drive to test and develop new models for participation and engaging with our audiences—shifting from one day major events to weeklong and month-long programmes. Over the past few years, we’ve seen audience confidence boom and an appetite for large-scale and spectacular live events return. Stronger collaboration between events, businesses and the third sector has strengthened our mandate for the events in our region and helped shape their significance to the people who live here.

Global changes including Brexit, conflict, the climate emergency and the cost-of-living crisis have all impacted event delivery, which brings us to 2025 and our new strategy for Renfrewshire. This strategy focuses on outdoor events of scale and engagement with our urban and rural communities, while connecting to the programming of Paisley’s new iconic cultural venues, and the participation of the wider cultural sector. Recognising the role events can play in community cohesion, well-being, developing the workforce and economy, and using sustainable approaches are pillars of this strategy, and we are proud to set out our vision for events in Renfrewshire from 2025 and beyond.



2. Introduction

Our Vision

Our vision is to deliver and enable **high-quality events** that offer positive and memorable experiences for **residents and visitors** and **contribute positively** to the lives of local people and the local economy; **positioning Renfrewshire as a great place to visit, work, learn and live.**

Our Mission

Utilising our **unique events spaces and backdrops**, we aim to create a **diverse programme** of exciting events that are authentic to Renfrewshire, and that **contribute meaningfully** to our economy, culture and communities, and are delivered in a sustainable way. From enabling grassroots activity and local events, to delivering events of scale, that attract visitors from out with Renfrewshire, **we aim to boost the reputation and profile of Renfrewshire both locally and nationally.**

Our Values

We are fair. We will:

- Be honest at all times - doing what we say we will do
- Be empathetic and non-judgemental
- Uphold the dignity of those going through life's most difficult experiences
- Support each other and challenge behaviour that is out of step with our values
- Value everyone's wellbeing

We are helpful. We will:

- Be open, friendly and kind
- Do our best every day—listen to feedback and ideas
- Take ownership of challenges, respond quickly and communicate clearly
- Ensure we use resources wisely
- Say sorry and fix things if they go wrong

We are great collaborators. We will:

- Be positive, passionate ambassadors for Renfrewshire
- Work with others to find the best solutions
- Be involved—get to know people and respect their knowledge and experience
- Protect our environment for future generations
- Say thank you—recognise and appreciate the contribution of others

We value learning. We will:

- Be open-minded—prepared to try new ways of working and engage in different conversations
- Be curious—seek out information for ourselves
- Take responsibility for our own learning and development and share learning with each other
- Embrace opportunities to adopt new tools and technologies

3. Consultation Process —background to the strategy

Renfrewshire’s Events Strategy 2022-2023 was produced at a time of significant investment in cultural regeneration, which resulted in the temporary closure of attractions such as Paisley Arts Centre, Paisley Town Hall and Paisley Museum for refurbishment; against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The strategy was designed as a mechanism to support the events sector, and the years of social and economic recovery that were to follow.

This new strategy is produced in a refreshed cultural landscape, with the region’s cultural venues and attractions re-opened—additional cultural programming offered by partners such as OneRen; and a renewed confidence in the public attending events since the pandemic.

Renfrewshire Council currently delivers a successful programme of visitor and local events, comprising:

Local events

- Renfrew Gala Day
- Barshaw Gala day
- Doors Open Days
- Renfrew Christmas Lights switch-on
- Johnstone Christmas Lights switch-on

Visitor events

- Paisley Food & Drink Festival
- Sma’ Shot day
- Paisley Halloween Festival
- Paisley Christmas Lights switch-on
- Renfrew Pipe Band Competition

The Council commissioned Research Resource to deliver a comprehensive and independent consultation and review of the events strategy and programme, to allow local communities and businesses to share their views on events and what matters most, and to allow the council to be clear on local priorities and benefits to be delivered. A total of 778 individuals responded to our online survey, augmented by four focus groups to gain deeper insight from key stakeholders:

- Renfrewshire residents
- Local businesses
- Cultural sector
- Local community groups

Key findings

- 90% of respondents have attended multiple local events; 27% have been directly involved through participation or performance
- The most valued events were Paisley Halloween Festival (81%), Christmas Lights switch-ons (80%), and Paisley Food & Drink Festival (79%).
- 93% of respondents agreed the existing strategic priorities were correct with local spend (68%), economic impact (65%) and inclusion and accessibility (64%) ranked as the most important.
- Barriers to event attendance include time constraints, cost, concern linked to overcrowding, lack of inclusivity, sensory overload, and limited information.
- Respondents recognise the importance of local economic benefits and felt focus should be placed on the key events which are the biggest economic drivers for Renfrewshire.
- Where resources are limited, feedback suggests the council should focus on visitor events, with community-led gala days run by communities.
- Engagement of businesses, community and cultural groups is welcomed, and recommendations for strengthening collaboration include improved communication, early notification, small grants, discounted participation fees, and streamlined application processes.



4. Strategic Context

As the cost-of-living crisis continues, Renfrewshire is committed to delivering events that are free-to-attend or low cost to access. Meanwhile the cost of delivering events safely, and sustainably, continues to rise in line with supplier costs at least 20% higher than in 2019. The funding landscape is more challenging than ever, as investment in culture and events is reduced at a national level. There is no doubt that these are [challenging times for the delivery of events](#). (LGIU: The Impact of funding cuts on local events and activities)

To meet this challenge, Renfrewshire's events strategy recognises the necessity for collaboration between event producers, businesses, and the cultural, public and third sectors, and the important role partnership plays in sustaining a vibrant and impactful events programme that is right for our people and place. A collaborative and flexible approach forms the foundation of our delivery plan.

Renfrewshire's events' strategy is developed against the backdrop of **Scotland's National Events Strategy 2024-2035**, which provides an opportunity for Renfrewshire to align with the priority outcomes for events set out at a national level by **EventScotland** and **VisitScotland** and in collaboration with the industry, which are: [economy, community, environment, workforce, reputation and profile](#). The strategy recognises the need for events to remain agile and responsive to shifts in technology and events trends.

Events have been instrumental in reinforcing the place brand—**Paisley** and cultural regeneration programme **Future Paisley**—'growing events and festivals' as a driver for visitor growth and civic pride, and as way to introduce Paisley to relocators, visitors and investors. Events remain a priority action within **Renfrewshire's Economic Strategy 2020-2030** and **Tourism Plan 2024-2027**.

As Future Paisley concludes, the council's

events strategy will continue the legacy of cultural regeneration in Renfrewshire, and the [impact of this work on our cultural sector and communities](#) (*PhD Policy Insight Report Niclas Hell—A Case Study of Paisley's City of Culture Events Legacy*). Collaboration with the cultural sector and **OneRen**, and at a national level with **Creative Scotland**, to develop appropriate cultural funding provision and support to the sector is key to ensuring our events programmes and artistic commissions are of the highest quality and encouraging excellence and innovation.

Wider policy frameworks for **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**, the work of **Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership**, and [Creative Health Quality Framework Principles](#), support the development of an events strategy that meets the needs of as many people as possible, with an ambition to eliminate barriers to participation and attendance. The establishment of **Fairer Renfrewshire** and the **Lived Experience Panel** has provided a forum for continual improvement of approaches to equality and inclusion within events. Accessibility and inclusion must be at the heart of our events delivery, to better meet the needs of local people. **Renfrewshire Community Plan 2017–2027**, underpinned by the **Community Empowerment Act 2015**, further underpins the necessity for an approach to events that are developed with, and for, local people, leading towards greater community cohesion and wellbeing.

Developing our work force, pathways into work, and ensuring volunteering opportunities are also a strategic priority, as we strive to support the wider events sector, work force and economy, adhering to **Fair Work First** and **Living Wage** provision in our procurement of event suppliers and collaborating with our partners in Education.

“Locally, publicly funded culture and events are integral to community wellbeing and economic vitality. They are key drivers in the economic renewal of town centres, attracting visitors and stimulating local economies.

They contribute to creating resilient places, promoting social mobility, and addressing health inequalities. They foster a sense of community, improve quality of life and provide platforms for local talent and creativity.”

→ (Source: LGIU the impact of funding cuts on local events and activities, June 2024)



Strategic Priorities

1.

Events that are Unique to Our Place

Our priority is collaborating with the local business, cultural, and third sector, to position Renfrewshire as leader in delivering sustainable events across suitable civic spaces that bring people together and are accessible, inclusive and unique to Renfrewshire.

Good looks like...

The events we deliver must be the right events for Renfrewshire. Events will generate significant civic pride, showcase our cultural and natural assets, nurture and develop local talent, pioneer innovative and high-quality programming and will be delivered in a responsible way. An events programme that continues to attract visitors and appeal to residents, and that contributes to the national cultural landscape, calendar and workforce.

2.

Events that boost business

Collaborating with wider industry sector to generate opportunities for businesses, economic impact and local spend, boost reputation and profile and attract visitors from out with the region to spend time in Renfrewshire and encourage re-locators to the region.

Good looks like...

Our approach to business engagement will be sustainable and responsible, ensuring we work with local suppliers where possible, and deliver events efficiently—protecting the environment and encouraging good practice.

3.

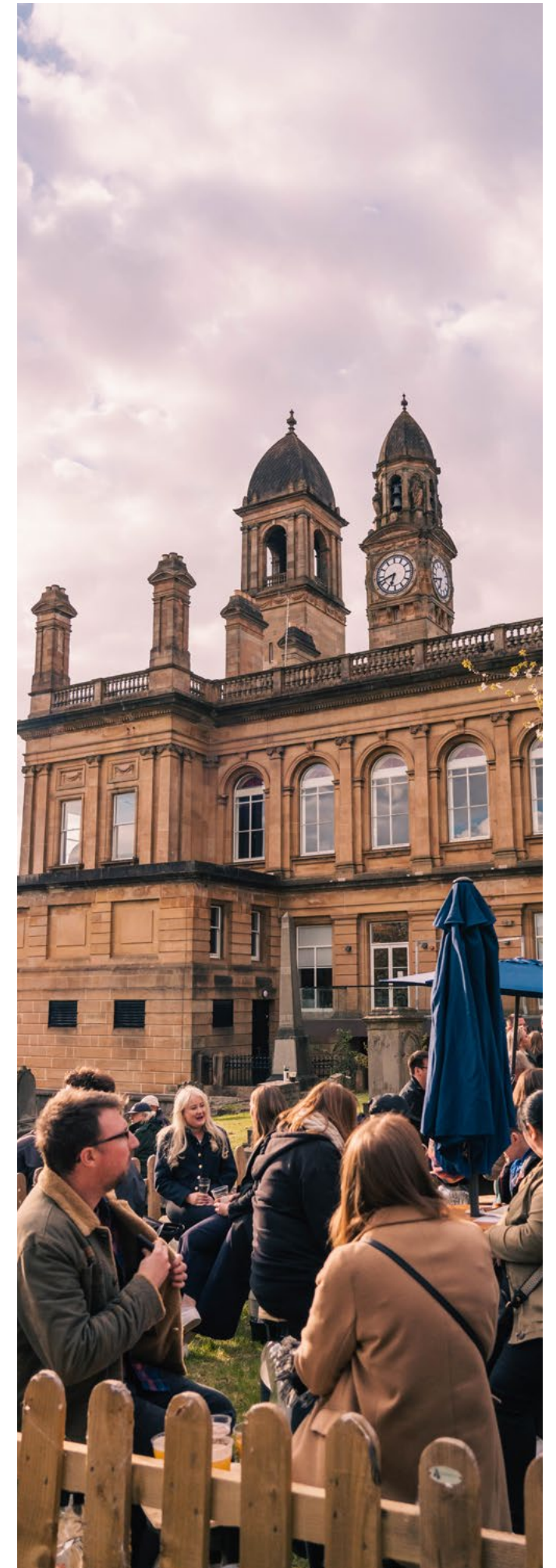
Events that are informed and open to everyone

Our priority is to create accessible, inclusive and collaborative events that allow as many people as possible to participate by reducing barriers, ensuring accessible transport links and working in partnership with local communities and the third sector to ensure event delivery is informed by lived experience.

Good looks like...

Our events will support the work of local cultural and community groups, and access to wider cultural funding opportunities, as well as providing practical support and promotion. This work will help to inform the development of a year-round calendar of events in Renfrewshire and maximise joint funding opportunities.

An events programme that offers varied and exciting volunteering workforce development opportunities and examines the role events play in bringing people together in the place where they live—building safer, more cohesive communities. We will work with the in-house marketing and communications team to continue to build a positive profile of the events programme and encourage visitors and local people to attend and share their positive experiences.



5. Aims & Objectives

By delivering our three strategic priorities — **unique to our place, good for business** and **informed and open to everyone**, we will generate positive economic, social and cultural impacts for Renfrewshire and our residents.

We will achieve this by:

Events that are Unique to Our Place

- Deliver an exciting events programme that is authentic and promotes civic pride and emotional connections for locals and visitors
- Illuminate stories and issues that are important and showcasing the best of Renfrewshire
- Investigate how events can contribute to RenZero and tackle and raise awareness of climate change

Priority Actions:

- Work with the cultural sector through the Events Partnership Group to design a year-round cultural calendar for local residents and visitors, grounded in Renfrewshire's heritage.
- Examine our history, illuminate untold stories and celebrate talent through design of an annual programme informed by audience and partner feedback.
- Work with Creative Carbon Scotland and participate in the circular economy through the culture/SHIFT programme.

Events that boost business

- Continue to reposition Paisley on a national stage and generate positive print, broadcast and digital media coverage
- Encourage more people to attend and participate in Renfrewshire events including local people and day visitors
- Develop partnerships locally and nationally that strengthen the capacity of our cultural and creative sectors and create opportunities for local talent
- Maintain high audience satisfaction rates and ensure a first-class event experience that generates a network of place champions.

Priority Actions:

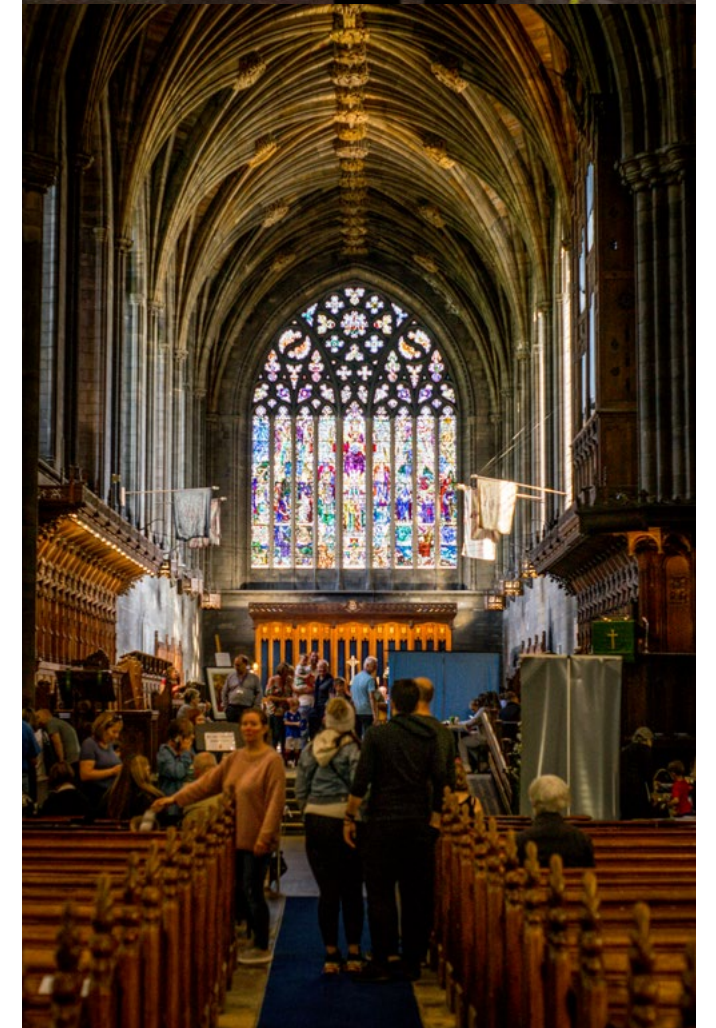
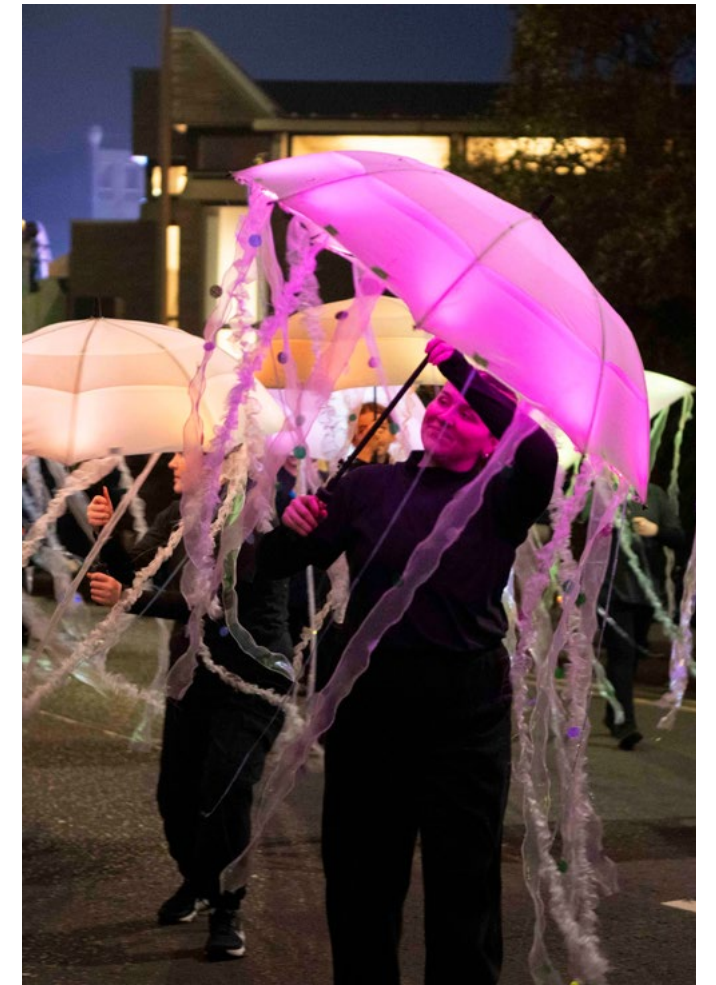
- Support local businesses to fully maximise the benefits of supply opportunities, publicity and footfall generated by events, by sharing advance information
- Work collaboratively with OneRen and other cultural partners to design a year-round cultural calendar attracting visitors and promoting Renfrewshire as an excellent host for events.
- Support the delivery of Renfrewshire's Tourism Action Plan (2023-26) by continuing to deliver a high quality product that encourages visitors to sample the region.

Events that are informed and open to everyone

- Remove barriers to event attendance and increase participation across all our communities
- Use the events programme to grow the capacity of our cultural and creative sectors through co-design and co-production
- Support our cultural sector to deliver their own diverse events programmes

Priority Actions:

- Continue to work with local groups at the outset of planning to ensure genuine co-design and participation opportunities are maximised
- Work with local communities to support them to design and deliver their own events through the events toolkit and sign posting to funding
- Continue to develop and maintain relationships with key cultural and community groups to develop their year-round calendar of events and festivals
- Continue to monitor and evaluate all events and learn from feedback, always refining our offer.





6. Delivering the strategy

Collaboration between business, communities and the cultural and third sectors

Collaboration and co-ordinated is at the heart of, and fundamental to the success of this events strategy and a year-round calendar of vibrant and enjoyable events in Renfrewshire.

This work begins by understanding the role of the various partners in shaping events, sharing the positive stories of events with our residents and businesses, encouraging coordinated action of partners in event delivery.

Role of the Events Partnership Group

Inspired by the work and achievements of the Future Paisley Partnership, our research highlights a need for the development of a Council-led, cross-sector Renfrewshire Events Partnership that will:

- Add value and perspective and support delivery of a Renfrewshire events programme
- Continue to drive the precedent set by Future Paisley for co-design with Renfrewshire's communities. (Source: Future Paisley Evaluation Report).
- Foster collaboration and connections to drive delivery of the events strategy
- Increase visibility and highlight the support required to drive grassroots, local events
- Support the delivery of the Strategy Action Plan

The development and implementation of this group is a key task for during year one of delivering the strategy.

Role of the Council Events Team

The Renfrewshire Council events team are responsible for all aspects of planning, creative design and safe implementation of a select programme of local and visitor events, as well as supporting the hosting of major events, and enabling grassroots events through advice, connections and support.

The events strategy integrates with the council's marketing and communication strategy to build brand, transform perceptions and position Renfrewshire positively in the eyes of visitors, relocators and investors.

Co-designing with communities

Co-designing with community groups is embedded in event delivery from conception and planning to live event days. We believe this is unique to Renfrewshire and why our events resonate deeply with local people.

We will continue to work with Engage Renfrewshire and our third sector partner and community groups, in particular those from our underrepresented communities to develop our co-design approach.

Role of the Multi-agency Group

The safe delivery of events, including the well-being and safety of attendees, volunteers, staff and participants, is at the core of the Council's planning process. Event safety and risk management and live event delivery are overseen by a multi-agency, cross discipline group with membership from the Council Events, Health & Safety, Civil Contingencies, Environment & Infrastructure, Public Health & Regulatory Services teams, Police Scotland, Scottish Ambulance Service, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service and security agencies.

Role of the Cultural Sector

Renfrewshire has a dynamic and thriving cultural sector across all genres, with organisations working across the region in visual arts, dance, theatre, digital media and music. Our state-of-the-art cultural venues such as Paisley Town Hall, Arts Centre and Museum, libraries, and community centres, operated by OneRen, alongside churches, re-purposed buildings, heritage cottages and civic spaces, provide a multitude of opportunities for artists and cultural organisations to perform, create and programme.

Events provide a high-profile platform for showcasing local talent via live stages, temporary performance arenas, parades, workshop programmes, installations, animation of buildings and more.

See the spotlight on Creative Organisations on p19.

We will continue to work with our cultural organisations to design an annual events strategy that pools resource and creativity and offers multi-art form events and engagement.

Role of the business sector

Town centre businesses play a key role in events. We will continue to work with businesses and organisations including Paisley First, Johnstone Business Consortium and Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce to maximise mutual benefits and increase participation.

We will maximise the opportunity for local businesses to engage with the events programme and benefit from increased footfall and visitors, businesses play a key ambassador role for the area and help promote local identity and heritage.

As part of our sustainability, we would like to work with the sector to identify area of sponsorship or funding to develop future programming, the business sector will be a key representative on the new Event Partnership Group.

Developing Workforce & Volunteering

Volunteering opportunities through local events provides valuable hands-on experience, allowing individuals to develop skills in teamwork, leadership, communication and in turn fosters a sense of social responsibility and civic pride which are essential for a vibrant workforce.

Volunteers are essential to the success of local events, playing a variety of important roles that contribute to smooth operations and positive experiences for participants and visitors. Their involvement fosters a collaborative atmosphere and a sense of collective responsibility in bringing events to life.

It is recognised there are challenges across the industry in both attracting and retaining volunteers, which has an impact on the ability of communities to deliver independent events. We will continue to work with Engage Renfrewshire, University of the West of Scotland and West College Scotland to develop volunteering roles throughout the programme and to build volunteering capacity across Renfrewshire.

Spotlight on Creative Organisations...

Creative Renfrewshire play a key role in connecting, informing and shining a light on creative and cultural people and activities.

The Sculpture House Collective combine working studios and professional practice with outreach, community engagement and social inclusion.

Paisley Opera reimagine opera and make opera accessible to everyone

Community Circus Paisley deliver an accessible and inclusive circus school for children, young people and adults.

Brick Lane offers a music education hub and professional recording studios

Erskine Arts inter-generational local arts and music venue including film and event production

Fèis Phàislig promoting and facilitating Gaelic arts interest and tuition

CREATE youth arts and well-being charity

Kairos Women+ inclusive and creative community led women's space

Loud 'n' Proud youth music school and professional recording studio

Outspoken Arts creative learning and visual arts hub

PACE Youth Theatre performing arts experiences for young people

Pachedu diverse creative and cultural group reducing isolation and promoting cultural diversity in the community

Refractive Collective artist led digital art and film maker hub

ReMode sustainable fashion and workshop social enterprise

Right2dance community dance school

School of African Cultures highlighting contemporary and traditional cultures

STAR Project community organisation promoting connected, resilient communities

Waterbaby Arts inclusive movement training



7. Evaluation & Performance Measurement

Success will be measured against key performance indicators:

- Direct economic impact and visitor spend
- Local spend by residents
- High satisfaction ratings from all attendees benchmarking at over 90%
- Number of local people attending
- Number of local people participating and performing
- Number of local volunteers
- Percentage of local people who say events make them feel proud of their place and give a sense of civic pride.

Achieving our objectives will be measured through independent evaluation of economic and social impacts.

Key Performance Indicators will be set annually reflective of the programming.

We will review our progress against strategy objectives and targets on a six-monthly basis and report our progress as part of the Council Plan performance reporting.

