

Strategic Plan 2026 – 2030 Art Matters



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Foreword: art matters

Scotland's art collection spans seven hundred years – from the Middle Ages to the present day – and the historic buildings of the National Galleries of Scotland have stood for almost two centuries. As custodians of our nation's cultural heritage, we know the decisions we make now set the path for future generations. What does it mean to be a good ancestor?

Together we have been reflecting on that question through key leadership changes in our organisation, alongside a shifting global landscape and financial uncertainty. Whatever the future holds, we firmly believe that art matters. It is central to everything we do.

At the start of this new journey, with fresh challenges and opportunities, we need to map what we want to do, where we want to go and who we want to be. Just as decisions made centuries ago have a bearing on us today, these initial steps taking us to 2030 will put the National Galleries of Scotland on the path to 2050 and beyond.

Our biggest priority over the next four years will be to complete The Art Works. This transformational project will enable us to share the nation's art with even more people now and in the future. The Art Works building, and everything it makes possible, will significantly advance all three of our strategic priorities: Audience, Collection and Resilience.

We want to accompany people on their life journey, engaging audiences from 'birth to beyond'. On the path to 2030 we will be focused on children and young people across Scotland and reflecting on how to tackle the systemic issues of racism and ableism, while supporting socio-economic inclusion.

Art, and artists, have always been essential to a thriving society. Now, more than ever, we need to celebrate their positive impact on our lives, from our understanding of the world and our evolving history to the benefits to our own health and wellbeing.

Art helps us learn, it helps us remember, it connects us. It can comfort us in times of need, encourage reflection and inspire joy.

The power of art to support health, emotional resilience and overall quality of life should be available and readily accessible to all.

Art matters.

Anne Lyden

Director-General,
National Galleries Scotland

Catherine Muirden

Chair of the Board of Trustees,
National Galleries Scotland

Plan at a glance

Our vision: Art for Scotland, inspiration for the world

Our purpose: We make art work for everyone

Our priorities:



Audience

Connection
Equity
Creativity



Collection

Safekeeping
Relevance
Research



Resilience

Money
People
Climate

Our key focus: The Art Works

Our values: Together we care

Our message: Yours to discover

About us

We are the National Galleries of Scotland, and our three Edinburgh galleries are the National, Modern and Portrait. We house and care for Scotland's amazing world-class art collection.

Discover great Scottish art by Allan Ramsay, Henry Raeburn and Phoebe Anna Traquair alongside work by international artists Sandro Botticelli, Titian and Vincent van Gogh. The very best modern and contemporary art, from Joan Eardley to Jasleen Kaur, and from Pablo Picasso to Everlyn Nicodemus, as well as portraits of pop culture icons, and photographic archives; it's all here.

We are yours to discover

- In 2024-25, we welcomed **2.63 million visitors** across our galleries – one of the highest attendances to a cultural venue in Scotland.
- Our collection of more than **130,000 works of art** features Scotland's greatest artists as well as internationally renowned creators.
- We collaborate internationally, **reaching over 3.3 million people** in 2024 – 25 through 110 loaned artworks to 48 venues in 12 countries. This activity raises Scotland's international profile and in 2024-25 it generated nearly **£1 million in exports** for the Scottish economy.
- Our online platforms connect audiences worldwide, with more than **20 million digital engagements** annually through partner platforms, social media and web content.
- We contributed **£254 million in 2024-25** to Scotland's economy through tourism, jobs and cultural activity.
- Our learning and engagement programmes inspire over **50,000 people annually**, supporting creativity, wellbeing and lifelong learning.
- **84%** of visitors felt that their experience had a positive impact on their wellbeing. In 2024-25, the health and wellbeing benefits generated by the National Galleries of Scotland were **valued at £31.8 million**.

Together, these achievements demonstrate the impact and value of the National Galleries of Scotland as a dynamic cultural resource, both a driver and provider of economic and social benefit, and a source of pride and inspiration for Scotland and the world.

Vision and purpose

Art makes a positive difference to our lives and is essential to a thriving society. Here at the National Galleries of Scotland **our vision is: Art for Scotland, inspiration for the world.**

We are holding the nation's art collection in trust for the people of Scotland, for their children and grandchildren, and for generations to come. We are the custodians of today, ensuring a legacy for the custodians of tomorrow.

Our purpose is: We make art work for everyone.



Our priorities

Over the next few years to 2030, our work will focus on three priority areas which will guide our planning and inform everything we do: Audience, Collection and Resilience.

We identified these priorities through engagement, internal consultation and horizon scanning. They represent our response to the immediate operating environment we find ourselves in and focus on areas where our work can best enrich the lives of all Scotland's communities, promoting Scotland on the international stage as a modern, dynamic nation.

We will channel our resources into these priorities, with each one held as essential and carrying equal weight. Underpinned by our values, Together we care, this will shape the way we approach our work as an organisation.

Audience: Connection | Equity | Creativity

We are committed to placing our audiences at the centre of what we do, becoming a genuinely audience-led organisation.

Our aim is to remove barriers to participation so that everyone, regardless of age or background, can access and engage with art and Scotland's national collection.

This includes artists and supporters, people who visit our galleries in person, those who explore our digital content, and people who participate or engage in our programmes.

As part of our 'birth to beyond' commitment, our priority will be children and young people, recognising that early encounters with art can spark lifelong curiosity, creativity and wellbeing. This aligns with both Scottish Government and UK Government priorities in reducing child poverty, and Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognises the role of arts, culture and creativity in the lives of children.

We also seek to encourage inter-generational connections through art, recognising that it is important to foster links between elder and younger generations as part of fulfilling our ambition to be good ancestors.

Art helps us learn, it helps us remember, it connects us. It can comfort us in times of need, inspire reflection and generate joy. The power of art to support health, emotional resilience and overall quality of life should be available and readily accessible to all.

Informed by a substantial body of global research, we acknowledge art is critical to good health and will continue to expand our work in this area. We will actively

develop and partner in programmes that demonstrate the positive impacts of art on people and society.

Alongside this, we will widen inclusion and accessibility, ensuring equitable opportunities for engagement. Through our Museum Transformers partnership with Museums Galleries Scotland, we are seeking to embed anti-oppression in our practice, reflecting on how to tackle the systemic issues of racism and ableism while supporting socio-economic inclusion. This vital work will inform and enrich all that we do.

We will engage with Scots around the world – those whose heritage connects them to Scotland – and forge international partnerships to deepen understanding of the collection and extend its global impact.

We will continue to develop creative and inclusive approaches in our practice, seeking innovative ways for people to value, support and develop creativity. Central to this will be strengthening co-creation with our audiences and supporters, enabling us to deliver our strategic ambitions and embed them more deeply across the National Galleries of Scotland, truly living our message of Yours to Discover.



Collection: Safekeeping | Relevance | Research

The collection of fine art that we care for is extraordinary in its quality and breadth, ranging in date from the Middle Ages to the present day – and it belongs to the people of Scotland.

It includes historic paintings, contemporary installations, prints, drawings, photography, sculpture, time-based media and live works. We also own works in partnership with other organisations including the ARTIST ROOMS collection, acquired jointly with Tate.

We have a duty to ensure that the collection continues to grow in ways that reflect the diversity of Scotland's people, history and place in the world, and we will ensure our collection represents the best of Scottish art alongside international works of the highest calibre.

As custodians, we will keep the collection safe through high standards of care, conservation and collections management, both today and for future generations. This includes maintenance and upgrades of our existing buildings, many of which need significant investment to future-proof them.

Most importantly it means completing The Art Works: a new free-to-visit home in north Edinburgh for over 130,000 of Scotland's artworks, complementing those on display in the National, Portrait and Modern galleries, or out on loan. Currently only 3% of the nation's art objects are on display and the remaining 97% is held in storage.

The Art Works will enable us to share more of the nation's art with more people, allowing us to make a greater cultural

impact. As the largest net zero building of its kind in the country, The Art Works is also integral to our pathway to net zero. It will be a place to visit and will also make it possible for more art to travel across Scotland and beyond, for everyone to enjoy.

Our understanding of the collection will deepen through research, which we will share through revelatory storytelling. We will advance the National Galleries of Scotland as a centre of excellence in Scottish art and photography, building on our collection, expertise and knowledge in this area, where we are world leading. Similarly, we will build on existing work on our world-renowned collection of Dada and Surrealism as another key area of research.

Through this stewardship, research and sharing of the collection, we will ensure it remains both a vital expression of Scotland's cultural identity and a source of insight, dialogue and inspiration for audiences everywhere – delivering art for Scotland, inspiration for the world.



Resilience: Money | People | Climate

In looking to the future, we will ensure that the National Galleries of Scotland continues in its mission to make art work for everyone. We will meet the challenges of financial uncertainty, technology disruption and climate crisis head on – preparing our people and buildings for the changes ahead.

Our organisation will be a safe, equitable and inclusive place for our people to work and thrive in. We will express our values, Together we care, at the core of everything we do. With dedicated colleagues applying their experience,

knowledge and skills in many different roles, we will strive to work together in creating an inclusive culture of respect and support.

We will maintain a free public offering, while seizing the chance to diversify and amplify our income opportunities and increase our philanthropic activities. Our goal is to raise money to support our ambitions and future-proof the galleries, creating a more sustainable and resilient National Galleries of Scotland that will thrive long into the future.



Our impact



Culture: our development of the national art collection and exhibition programme seeks to address under-representation so we can celebrate the richness and diversity of our national culture.



Environment: in 2024-25 the National Galleries of Scotland was ranked second globally among cultural organisations transitioning toward sustainability by the University of Lausanne. This reflects the environmental response across the organisation that has seen our carbon footprint fall by 60% since 2008-09.



Health: art is a significant and proven contributor to health and wellbeing – whether through viewing or actively participating. We are a partner in Healing Arts Scotland, working collaboratively to recognise and celebrate the arts in health and wellbeing.



Fair work and business: the National Galleries of Scotland contributes to several of the indicators for this Scottish Government outcome by providing contractually secure work, employee voice and gender balance.



Education: in addition to our research-informed exhibition programme, our complementary in-venue and online adult learning programme informs and inspires on topics related to the nation's art collection and exhibitions.



Children and young people: Your Art World is an online community by and for 3-18 year-olds: a place for children and young people to think, wonder, create and share their art online.



Economy: in 2024-25 the National Galleries of Scotland generated a total of £253.3 million GVA for the Scottish economy and supported around 6,750 jobs.



International: through international loans and touring we share Scotland's collection internationally, growing awareness of Scotland's national culture, building partnerships, and contributing to Brand Scotland.



Poverty: gallery visits for schools align closely with the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence to nurture creativity, develop skills and deepen understanding of culture in Scotland and the world. This develops the valuable transferable skills that young people need to thrive. Additional monthly online sessions ensure opportunities are accessible to children throughout Scotland.



Communities: we work with a wide range of community groups, including the visually impaired and those living with dementia and their carers, using the collection as a catalyst for sparking imagination and creating spaces for connection and expression.

Our 2030 outcomes

Adopting an outcomes-led approach, we will use our three priorities: Audience, Collection and Resilience to deliver positive impact against our own strategic goals and the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework.

Our work aligns with the top four priorities in the Scottish Government Programme for Government: Eradicating Child Poverty, Growing the Economy, Tackling the Climate Emergency, and Ensuring High Quality and Sustainable Public Services.



Audience

Connection

We will build stronger connections with those who visit us in person, engage with us digitally, or experience our work in their communities, whatever their life-stage. We will change the way we work to put children and young people at the heart of our planning process, ensuring that they have access to art in the widest sense – whether in person or digitally. We will seek to understand and engage with our audiences in broader and diverse ways, including building the foundations to engage audiences to co-create programmes with us. We will extend our geographic reach to ensure that the nation's collection is yours to discover, wherever you are.

Outcome 1:

Our audiences are broader and more diverse, reflecting the rich demographic make-up of Scotland and the wider world.

Outcome 2:

Children and young people influence our audience offer, resulting in greater engagement with, and access to, art.

Equity

We want to make art work for everyone. We will identify and break down barriers to engagement with art and cultural spaces, not only those linked to protected characteristics, but also the social and economic differences that limit access to culture. We recognise the value and impact of cultural experiences in supporting health and wellbeing. We will take an accessibility first approach to ensure our programmes, communications and spaces are inclusive and accessible, and can deliver positive impacts on health and wellbeing across society.

Outcome 3:

Accessibility, inclusion, and anti-oppressive practices are embedded across all areas of our work, enabling more equitable experiences for all.

Outcome 4:

Connection with art and culture through the National Galleries of Scotland makes a measurable contribution to improved health and wellbeing.



Creativity

We will seek out new and innovative ways for our audiences to value, support and develop creativity. We will be brave enough to take informed risks, innovate by drawing on the latest research and embrace digital transformation. We will seek to create experiences that are relevant, inclusive, informative and enlivening for our audiences and participants, wherever they might be.



Outcome 5:

Audiences experience high-quality, relevant, and deeper engagement with the national art collection.



Audience

By 2050, we aspire to:

- Be a fully inclusive organisation in all we do
- Enable every child and young person in Scotland to have regular access to their national art collection
- Ensure that everyone in Scotland has at least one meaningful engagement with the National Galleries of Scotland
- Work together to make art and culture accessible and inclusive, so everyone can feel part of something special
- Be an active agent in delivering health impacts through arts engagement
- Connect, collaborate and create with audiences across the globe

Collection

Safekeeping

In our desire to be good ancestors and to meet our statutory obligations, we will safeguard the collection through high standards of care, conservation and collections management today and for future generations. This includes maintenance and upgrades of our existing buildings, many of which need significant investment to future-proof them, and, most importantly, completing The Art Works project. It also includes modernising our digital systems and data practices and improving physical storage and display conditions, so that Scotland's art collection is properly protected and accessible for future generations.

Outcome 6:

There will be improved care of and access to the national art collection.



Relevance

We will ensure the collection continues to grow in ways that reflect the diversity of Scotland's people, history, and place in the world. This commitment to cultivating a relevant national collection, and the work we share through our programmes, includes pursuing acquisitions that improve representation. It also means working in partnership, nationally and internationally, through co-creation, loans, and touring programmes.

Outcome 7:

The nation's collection and the way we share it will be reflective of contemporary Scotland and representative of Scotland's past, present and global context.



Research

We are a knowledge organisation, and as such our knowledge and information are critical assets that we must maintain and share with the world. We will deepen understanding of the collection through research and share this in more diverse ways with our audiences. Research will help us to strengthen access to the collection and inform its conservation and management. We will grow our research environment internally and for external researchers. We will work more purposefully in partnership to enhance visibility, awareness and understanding of the nation's art collection.

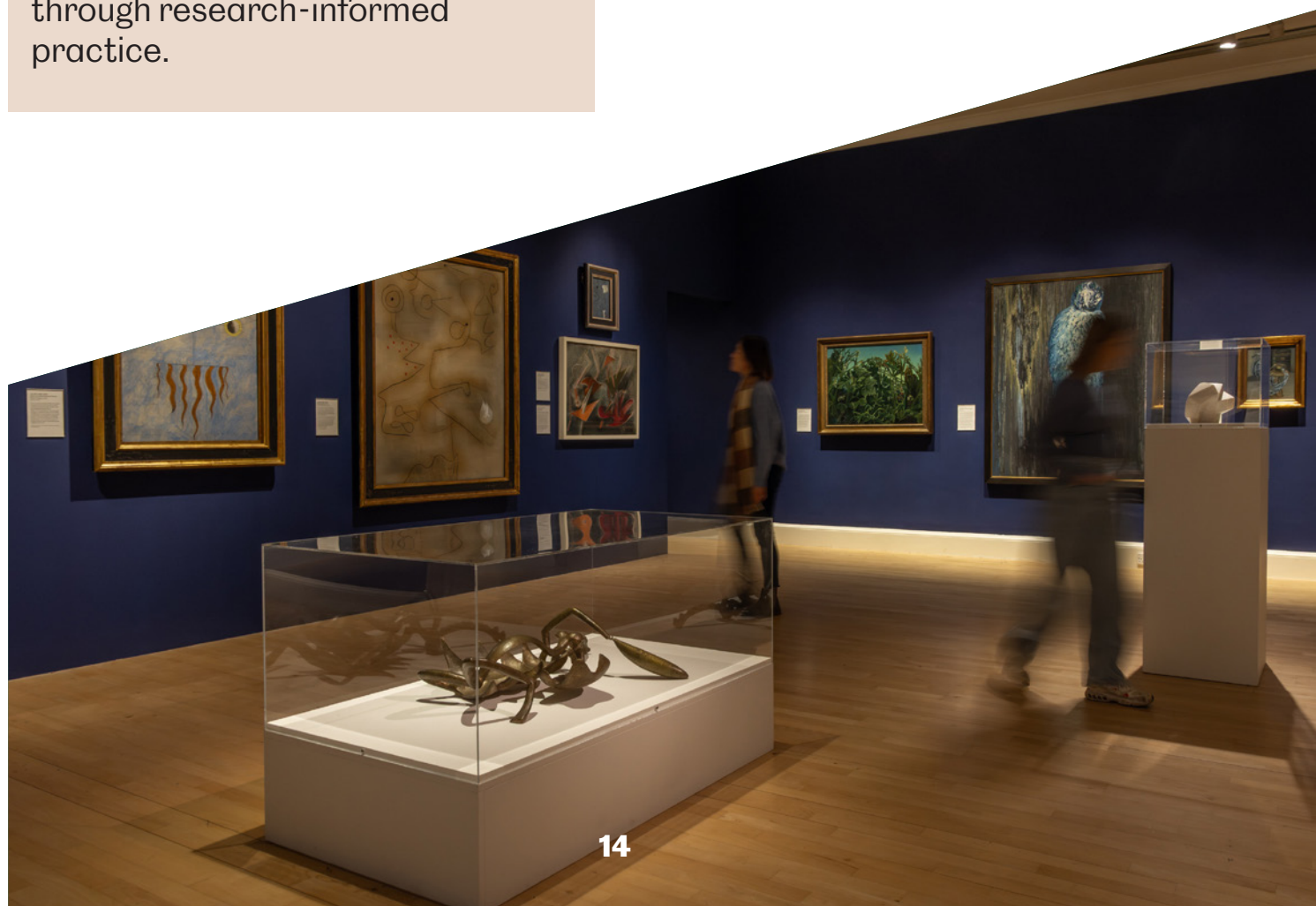
Outcome 8:

Our audiences will have a deeper understanding of and connection to the national art collection through research-informed practice.

Collection

By 2050, we aspire to:

- Have a fully digitised and catalogued collection that is accessible, actively used and housed in the appropriate conditions
- Have an art collection that is reflective of our national past and present and its global context
- Have established our centre for Scottish art and photography and centre for Dada and Surrealism
- Be sector-leading in areas of conservation research



Resilience

Money

We will build a financial model that is sustainable, adaptable and aligned to our strategic priorities. This includes increasing income from a range of sources, growing fundraising and commercial revenues, improving efficiency through transformation, protecting our core services and future-proofing the organisation.

Outcome 9:

Our financial resilience will increase, so we can invest more in making art work for everyone.

People

We will provide a safe, equitable and inclusive working environment where our people can thrive. We will support wellbeing and development and foster a culture of trust where colleagues are empowered to deliver their best work whilst upholding our values. In doing so, we will strengthen trust and connection with our audiences.

Outcome 10:

Our people will work and thrive in a safe, equitable and inclusive environment with a more diverse workforce and a culture of ongoing learning and personal development, collaboration, accountability and trust.



Climate

We will manage and invest in our operations to support net zero targets and the long-term protection of our assets to improve our climate resilience. This includes reducing our carbon footprint, minimising our environmental impact, embedding climate awareness across the organisation and with our audiences, and ensuring our buildings are safe, sustainable and climate resilient.

Outcome 11:

Our environmental impact will be reduced, we will take steps towards net zero and our audiences will be actively engaged in our climate action plan.



Resilience

By 2050, we aspire to:

- Be fully financially sustainable and resilient to deliver our mission
- Have reached net zero and increased our climate resilience
- Have an inclusive culture of trust and empowerment – where every individual is inspired, supported, and enabled to realise their full potential
- Have a workforce reflective of Scotland's society, across all areas and levels



Major capital programme

Our major capital programme sets out our exciting plans for the National Galleries of Scotland's historic estate over the next four years and beyond.

This programme represents a significant investment in our infrastructure and will also allow us to proactively use this moment to transform how we operate across all our galleries.

We will maximise the opportunity to embed more agile, efficient, and audience-focused ways of working. We will build resilience and meet our targets for net zero, contributing towards Scotland's green recovery. This programme is a central focus of our work for the next four years and critical to the successful delivery of this strategy.



The Art Works

Our biggest priority is completing The Art Works building: a new free-to-visit home for over 130,000 of Scotland's artworks, complementing those on display in the National, Portrait and Modern galleries or out on loan.

This is a pivotal moment in planning for our future and ensures the long-term care and accessibility of the national art collection for generations to come.

Without it, Scotland's national art collection is at risk. Located within the National Collection Hub in Granton, North Edinburgh, The Art Works will be a major cultural focal point. It is a game-changing project which will significantly advance all three of our strategic priorities: Audience, Collection and Resilience.

It will enable us to share the nation's art even more widely, making more of a difference to people's lives. It will be free and accessible to all, with learning, engagement and green spaces to discover, all linked by new paths and better connected active travel routes. Importantly we will be strengthening and growing our partnerships with the local community.

Improved logistics mean we can share artworks with even more venues and people across Scotland, the UK and internationally, supporting touring, partnership and commercial opportunities.



The Art Works will bring together artworks currently held across multiple sites under one roof and transform how the collection is accessed and managed. For the first time, we will be able to store and display large-scale works from the ARTIST ROOMS collection, jointly owned with Tate, alongside the historic collections of the Royal Scottish Academy and the Demarco Archive.

Designed by John McAslan and Partners, the 13,000 m² building will provide a flexible permanent storage solution, with capacity to grow, and best-in-class museum standard spaces for all of Scotland's art collection.

The project will transform our research, digitisation, and conservation capabilities, with modern studios that make this work more visible, including opportunities for the public to observe conservation in practice. We also look forward to working with researchers and international collaborators.

It will also act as a strategic response to sector-wide challenges in collections storage. As part of Public Service Reform, we are actively collaborating with other organisations to tackle this challenge and deliver public value. Our close partnership with the National Museum of Scotland means that The Art Works is a key component of the National Collections Hub.

This will be the largest cultural building in Scotland built to the environmental Passivhaus standard. This means the design results in ultra-low use of energy and creates a healthy environment for everyone spending time in the building.

The Art Works will make significant inroads in decarbonising typically energy-intensive collection care and deliver long-term climate resilience integral to our and Scotland's journey to net zero and green recovery.

The project makes economic sense. For every £1 spent, over double will be returned in wider benefits to Scotland. It also provides more space to grow the collection, at a lower cost than commercial storage.



Join us

The Art Works is one of the most ambitious developments in our history. It will strengthen public engagement with art while delivering wider benefits, including skills development, employability, community engagement and progress towards net zero through sustainable design and operation.

We invite strategic partners and funders to work with us in shaping and supporting the project, bringing shared expertise and investment to create lasting public value for Scotland and future generations.



Mound Level Galleries

Our major capital programme goes beyond The Art Works. Looking further ahead, we are beginning to plan for the Mound Level Galleries project at the National gallery.

Home to the nation's European and Scottish art collection, the William Playfair building dates from 1859 and is at the heart of the historic Mound Precinct. It holds a unique position in Edinburgh's UNESCO World Heritage site. Our plans include a refurbished and modernised building with a refreshed suite of galleries and displays that will take us through to 2050 and beyond.

From its beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century, the National has contended with issues relating to our changing climate, growing collection and widening audience profiles. Looking ahead, we see a tremendous opportunity to ensure a thriving and engaging future for this landmark site. Taking inspiration from the radical access provided by The Art Works, we seek to further accessibility and inclusion at this site. Adaptations to the fabric and plant of the building, including updating the heating, plumbing, roofing and electrical systems, will allow audiences to safely enjoy this gallery well into the future.



Delivering the strategy

Our Strategic Plan sets the direction. Delivery will be driven by a Business Plan which translates our priorities and outcomes into clear actions, milestones and responsibilities.

This ensures that our ambitions are not abstract statements but real commitments, delivered year by year.

Each Directorate and team will align their workplans with this framework to create a direct line of sight between individual roles, departmental objectives, and our organisational priorities.

Progress will be reviewed regularly by the Extended Leadership Team, Leadership Team and Board of Trustees.

Measuring success

Each of our outcomes is matched with a key performance indicator (KPI) in our Business Plan. These indicators will be the headlines that we will judge our performance on, and what we will report against in our Annual Reports.

Each outcome will also have a set of actions associated with it, which we will track in our Business Plan along with a wider set of measures.

Tracking these KPIs will allow us to adjust delivery of this Strategic Plan and help to guide our resourcing decisions. Through this approach we will ensure successful delivery and keep sight of the wider impact of our work.

Our planning framework

We receive our core funding from the Scottish Government. While the strategies and policies of the National Galleries of Scotland are the responsibility of our Board of Trustees, we work within the wider context of policy established by the Government.

We are closely aligned with the Scottish Government's purpose, priorities and National Performance Framework.

National Performance Framework

National Galleries Scotland Strategic Plan

National Galleries Scotland Business Plan

National Galleries Scotland Directorate plans

National Galleries Scotland Goal setting for all our people



Our values: Together we care

Making art work for everyone is as much about the way we work as it is about what we're working on.

The people working at the National Galleries of Scotland are caring, curious and kind. We respect diverse voices, skills and experience, and want to make decisions today that our future selves can be proud of.

Our colleagues apply their knowledge and skills in many different roles, and we all work to show Together we care in everything we do.

This guide to our values in action is rooted in colleague ideas and feedback and is aligned with our ambitions for more collaboration and care across our organisation in the weeks, months and years to come. It sets out how we all approach our roles, our colleagues and our audiences.

We live our values *Together we care* when we all:

Show care, curiosity and kindness in all we do

Respect diverse voices, skills and experience

Make decisions our future selves can be proud of

Ask ourselves and others 'how can I help?'	Value new perspectives	Connect everyday actions to our purpose
Give thoughtful feedback and welcome opportunities to learn	Explore different views and challenges together	Help get better results by being clear and courageous
Listen to understand, and be present in our conversations	Make time for reflection and creativity	Agree expectations and commitments early
Keep developing our skills and expertise	Share information and requests in good time	Try new things together
Consider what others may need to feel recognised and supported	Choose openness and transparency, even when it's uncomfortable or inconvenient	Think ahead – what impact might our choices have now, next year and beyond?



Yours to discover

Find out more and help make art work for everyone

A Gaelic language version of this document is available on our website. To request a copy in an alternative format, such as large print or Braille, please call 0131 624 6473 or email: equalities@nationalgalleries.org

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**National
Galleries
Scotland**