**MISSION DOCUMENT**

*‘Regeneration can only heal our ailing towns when citizens are active participants.’*

Robert Singer, Project Director



*A FreshAyr CIC Project.*

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**MISSION.**

Our Mission is to inspire creative regeneration through collective authorship. We aspire to develop a sustainable circular economy focused on earning income from Food & Drinks. Profits will support creative professionals to engage with communities to build respectful neighborhoods.

Our three-year plan seeks to establish a cultural and social Hive in Ayr that provides sound reason for creative graduates, culture enthusiasts, shoppers and international visitors to spend quality time in Ayrshire.

Our objective is to become a self-sustaining business that supports artists in reimagining High Streets as vibrant creative market places fit for the twenty-first century.

**CORE OBJECTIVES.**

* Connect people and place creatively
* Deliver quality assured creative projects
* Encourage collective authorship
* Explore traditional and alternative economies
* Foster quantitative and qualitative creative research

**CONCEPT.**

*CREATIVITY = CAPITAL*

Annually, significant numbers of young people from Ayrshire and the South of Scotland gain places on degree level creative education. The ‘Terminal Decline’ of town centers, highlighted in the Mary Portas‘s 2011 review, is in no small measure aggravated by our Cultural Capital being usurped into the cities - lured by vibrancy and above all - commercial opportunities in the flourishing creative industries.

More recently Bill Grimsey’s *The Vanishing High Street UK* is the subject of his 2018 Report *[[1]](#footnote-1)* focusing on the issues facing High Streets across the country, makesit clear that *‘It’s time to reshape our town centres’*. This report suggests that, while retail is clearly important to town centres, real resurgence is a matter of each individual town finding a Unique Selling Point (USP). The publication argues that experiential sales are implicit in the revival of ailing town centres and Cultural Tourism will play a significant part.

There are many disparities as to what ‘Creative Industries’ are in the Government Paper: *Creative Industries in Scotland* (2016). It does however suggest a consensus that creative industries should be supported as a major growth sector. Indeed, according to the UK government, creative industries bring in £8.8 million per hour into the UK economy[[2]](#footnote-2).

There are a plethora of research papers emerging on the benefits of creatively-led organisations like The Stove Network in Dumfries, who are stacking up significant evidence that creative input is central to regeneration. Indeed, the Scottish government states clearly,

*Culture, creativity and a rich dynamic heritage sit at the heart of Scotland’s communities’*.

Scottish Government Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop announced in a National Cultural Strategy[[3]](#footnote-3) an advocacy to *‘*enhance the vital role of arts and culture in empowering communities, organisations and individuals.’

A number of problems are identified with the decline of town centers and ailing communities and there is no single answer as to how regeneration of people and place can be achieved. What is becoming evident is that it requires creative collaboration across many areas of interest, informed by evidence-based research.

**Above all, involvement with local communities must be a priority of creative regeneration.**

**ACHIEVING CORE OBJECTIVES.**

*3.1 Connecting People + Place Creatively.*

**Culture Strategy**

We would like to advocate research to explore the possibility of a Cultural Quarter to explore our philosophy that ‘everyone is an artist’ capable of participating in Town Centre Regeneration through engagement in Experiential Retail and Cultural Tourism.

The notion of a Cultural Quarter was first mooted for Ayr in 2001 focusing on places directly related to Cultural Activity like Ayr Town Hall, Ayr Academy Art Rooms, Loudon Hall and the Gaiety Theatre. Our mission to date has been in securing a permanent space to establish a buzzing hive for art and social events. That can attract national and eventually international reputation in line with the larger Culture Strategy for Scotland.

Access to art and cultural activity can be an excellent catalyst for regeneration, improves quality of life, and in some cases can directly save lives, as seen at Art Angel, Dundee - an arts organisation dedicated to providing a safe and stimulating environment for those suffering with serious mental health issues.

In *A Culture Strategy for Scotland*: Analysis of responses to the public consultation, Key Themes Report’ (Jan 2019) the Scottish Government has clearly stated that their own research mirrors our driving philosophy and belief that access to art and culture has a transformative effect on societies. Stating the Government’s cultural vision for Scotland, based on the data collected from their research, it says[[4]](#endnote-1):

*The vision statements are that:*

*• Culture in Scotland is innovative, inclusive and open to the wider world.*

*• Cultural excellence - past, present and emerging - is celebrated and is fundamental to future prosperity and wellbeing.*

*• Culture’s empowering and transformative power is experienced by everyone.*

*The ambitions are:*

*• 1 - Transforming through culture: Recognising that culture and creativity are central to Scotland’s cultural, social and economic prosperity.*

*• 2 - Empowering through culture: Opening up and extending* *culture so that it is of and for every community and everyone.*

*• 3 - Sustaining and nurturing culture to flourish and to evolve as a diverse, positive force in society, across all of Scotland.*

BREAD Arts Lab shares this cultural vision, especially through these crucial points:

* The transformative power of culture
* The importance of accessibility and inclusion
* The quality of the culture must be excellent.

In the following section, ‘the Importance of Excellence’, the report goes on to question how culture can be measured as ‘excellent’. It said that some respondents:

*Argued that the draft strategy could do more to recognise and support cultural excellence, or to strike a balance between ‘inclusive culture’ and ‘quality culture’… However, many more respondents were of the view that excellence implies there is a standard against which cultural activity can be judged, and that this could be seen as elitist and leading to exclusion.*

We address this issue in the following section of our Mission Statement, which is concerned with how we offer quality assured cultural experiences, while remaining unbiased and inclusive.

*3.2 Quality Assured Creative Projects*

We are an avant-garde arts organisation comprised of professional artists with a core interest in participatory practice and social engagement, as well as people from professional commercial and educational fields.

Our ambition for cultural transformation is in three parts.

1. Supporting professional artists (defined as those whose practice is their career) by offering them a paid platform to exhibit/perform/engage.
2. Encouraging amateur creative interests by sharing skills, knowledge and experience – facilitating and aiding professionalisation of their practices.
3. Being the catalyst for economic and social regeneration, with specific focus on town centre high streets.

The BREAD Arts Lab, will provide a hive that encourages diverse communities and individuals to engage and participate in contemporary exhibitions, music, theatre, poetry events, along with making spaces available for meetings/presentations. Anyone can make an application to use the spaces for anything they can think of. Offering cultural and social purpose based on the notion ‘everyone is an artist’.

We want to offer people from the whole spectrum of what we call ‘the arts’ a place to go – from hobbyist craft and making, to high end, aspirational contemporary arts. Our organisation is led by forward thinking, formally educated contemporary artists with a deep understanding of fine art, participatory practice and socially engaged art. These are the right people to ensure quality experiences, as we believe there doesn’t have to be a divide between ‘quality culture’ and ‘inclusive culture’ because we can provide inclusive cultural activity of an excellent standard.

We are currently formalising our inclusion policy. All aspects of our curatorial process, admin operations, and the way our organisation will behave as a whole, will be governed transparently with high standards and values implicit in our inclusion policy.

BREAD arts lab will be collaborating with UWS to research: *A case study on the role of arts and culture within the changing demands on town centre high streets*. The research results data will be compiled into a report, which will constitute a large part of our subsequent business plan. To assist this research a program of exhibitions and events (15th March – 31st May 2019) have been curated with space for additional projects and events that will provide opportunities to measure the needs of artists and the opinions, ideas and interest of the public for permanent Creative Hives on town centre high street, founded on real experience.

The other way we will ensure inclusivity is through our philosophy of the importance of ‘collective authorship’, detailed in the following section.

*3.3 Collective Authorship*

A creative, collaborative approach to research and development can be instrumental in regenerating Ayr as the pulsing heart of a vibrant creative marketplace, eventually with a salutary network of interconnecting creative hives across Scotland.

We are presently developing a database of graduates with a connection to Ayrshire past and present from Scottish Art Schools and Institutions of Creative Education that form the Creative Industries mentioned earlier in this paper.

The primary objective of this research is to encourage Ayrshire's Cultural Capital to consider bringing their emerging creative talents back to their home county - creating a more homogeneous collective in developing Ayrshire's Creative Economy.

Other social engagement we can implement to encourage collective authorship are our Culture Conversations, which are meetings open to the public where we discuss the importance of culture generally and other important local issues specifically, and how a space like ours could help. These conversations are essential to our ongoing development and decision-making process.

We are committed to reaching out to the wider community to encourage attendance at our culture conversation to enables creative diversity that empowers engagement. We do this through building strong working relationships with local organisations like schools, higher education institutions, community centres, job centres, other socially engaged initiatives and local businesses. We also believe in the power of face to face interaction with individuals. We speak to members of the public whenever possible to raise awareness of our project and encourage a sense of community.

Establishing cultural hives like BREAD arts lab will in turn attract ‘out-of-towners’ which will grow and add to a viable sustainable cultural economy. It is important for this to happen without alienating local people through gentrification. We will avoid this by encouraging local people with a strong empowering sense of AUTHORSHIP of the BREAD Arts Lab project.

**Children + Education**

We have been working with Newton Primary School in the Wallacetown area with a malaise of some problematic social problems. The school children were asked: *‘what would make your area a better place to live in’*. This has now developed into a regular weekly ‘Culture Group’ where the children are given responsibility in running their own meetings and projects, while developing skills in critical thinking within a framework of learning about contemporary art. Working with children is an important part of changing our countries attitude to the arts, engraining an understanding of the importance of art and culture into the ‘every day’ from an early age.

A Festival and collective artwork will be delivered on 21st June 2019 celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Scottish Parliament Building, on the site where Robert the Bruce in 1315 held a parliament in St. John’s Tower in Ayr.

Other community based projects include investigating the disused underground parking space at Davison Place toward a ‘Remakery’, inspiring residents to investigate alternative economies centering around zero waste, remaking, sustainability and up-cycling that can grow into the other areas of Wallacetown and beyond.

* 1. *Exploring Traditional and Alternative Economies:*

 *Plans for Self-Sustainability*

Food offers the most lucrative and sustainable means of earning income. Most successful art centers (e.g. the CCA, DCA, Tramway, Trongate, Fruitmarket Gallery) outsource their café, bars and restaurants to third party companies – who make huge profits. This profit is then of course kept by that company and not redistributed into the arts.

After a three-year start up plan, we aim to become a fully self-sustainable business, baking and selling bread to ‘earn the dough to make a crust’, i.e. support ourselves, our artists and our cultural program financially. We are currently working on a business plan for a bakery and a café. We have a baker (also an artist) who we are in discussions with about the finer points of our business model.

We will sell bread because it is the most basic staple food that has fed humanity since the beginning of agrarian societies. Food is not only our basic need, it is the most sustainable means of creating income that can support a vibrant creative economy.

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1. The Grimsey Review 2 (http://www.vanishinghighstreet.com) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Media and creative industries (https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/media-and-creativeindustries) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http:www.heraldscotland.com/news/15298451.First\_major\_step\_in\_new\_National\_Cultural\_Stragegy\_ to\_be\_made\_in\_Glasgow\_next\_month/?ref=twtrec [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **F**resh**A**yr CIC

*www.freshayr.co.uk*

** [↑](#endnote-ref-1)