

Literature, Nation

A Strategic Vision for Literature in Scotland 2008-2018

Understanding our present, connecting with our past, imagining Scotland's future

Produced by the
Literature Forum for Scotland

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Literature, Nation

Literature, Nation sets out a ten year strategic vision for Literature at the centre of Scottish society and the roots of its international influence. It updates and replaces the Literature Strategy for 2002–07 which was produced by the Scottish Arts Council and the Literature Forum for Scotland[†] on the cusp of the new millennium. The majority of the outcomes of the first Strategy have been fulfilled; additionally, many new initiatives which the Strategy did not anticipate, such as the historic designation of Edinburgh by UNESCO as the world's first City of Literature, have brought additional prominence and achievement.

As the Scottish Arts Council moves towards reorganisation and merger into Creative Scotland, there is a danger of missing the beat and losing the impetus and momentum vital to Literature's ongoing success. That is why the Literature Forum, which encompasses Scotland's key literary and writers' organisations, has set out this challenging strategy.

It is our conviction that Scotland's literature is critical to understanding our present, connecting with our past, and imagining Scotland's future.

Literature, Nation is a new strategy for Scotland's literature, allied with language and publishing. Its overall guiding purposes are to:

- **place literature at the heart of every community**, accessible to every citizen
- **raise the prestige** of Scotland's literature nationally and internationally
- **invest in writers and writing** as a means to ensure the creativity, prosperity and wellbeing of Scotland
- **sustain the linguistic diversity** of Scotland and, in particular, the contribution of the Gaelic and Scots languages to literature
- **position the publishing industry** in Scotland to meet the changing needs of the 21st century
- **fashion a framework and structures** to meet the continuing development of literature in Scotland.

Throughout this document we understand literature to include poetry; fiction; storytelling; history; philosophy; drama and screenwriting; cultural, social and political criticism; autobiography, biography and travel writing, and multimedia texts.

[†] See Appendix 1 for details of remit and membership

Summary of Key Outcomes:

- development and implementation of a **national readership strategy**
- the opportunity for every learner to **experience and study Scottish literature** in a structured way
- a sustained programme for **identifying and nurturing literary talent**
- increased **investment in the publishing industries of Scotland** and in their international promotion
- the regular presence of **Scottish writers at international festivals**, forums, and promotional events
- an integrated **support structure for the Scots language**
- a dynamic **network of literary festivals** and events across Scotland
- co-ordination of Scotland's **literary tourism**.

1. *Literature, National and International*

Literature is the living memory of a nation. It connects past and present and provides the essential vocabulary for describing who we are, whence we are coming, whither we travel.

No country that neglects its national literature can claim to be a modern nation or act as a civilising or even a distinctive force in world culture.

Literature underwrites the dynamism and diversity of the nation. Scotland has not one monolithic narrative but local, regional, national and international stories, metaphors and rhythms interacting, playing off and sparking against each other. Out of this comes a living, organic, evolving sense of ourselves as Scots, as Scottish, as world citizens grounded in the passionate, analytical, complex society that is Scotland.

Equally important, without renewing its stories a nation cannot properly nurture its own citizens with a sense of confident, self-critical belonging.

Aims

- establish a **strategic framework for the promotion of Scottish writers** in key markets and at key festivals in Scotland, the UK and internationally
- provide a **unified web portal** for information on Scottish literature nationally and internationally
- ensure that **Scottish writers of all backgrounds and languages** have a voice in the national and international media
- establish Scotland as an **international leader** in the nurture, development and promotion of literary talent
- tell confidently **the story of the history of Scotland's literature** to a national and international readership

- enable writers from Scotland to travel abroad in the service of **cultural exchange** and professional development
- **coordinate tours and visits** in Scotland by writers and maximise their benefit
- deepen and widen understanding of the **literature of other cultures** within Scotland, as part of an international movement of dialogue and exchange
- stimulate and **support effective structures for training**, professional development and career paths across the literature sector
- **recognise and reward outstanding achievement** by Scotland’s writers
- **sustain and strengthen an integrated network** of national organisations able to deliver on these objectives and to further develop nationally and internationally the role of literature, languages, publishing and writers, including poets, storytellers and dramatists.

2. Literature, Literacy and Learning

Literature is central to education. Without inspiring models of creative language in all subject areas, there is no motivation for reading. Literature provides ideas, images and emotions that are benchmarks of aspiration and expression. Creative language is indispensable as a primary mode of learning. Literature is the key to a literate society.

To provide such ideas, images and emotions with a distinctly Scottish ‘accent of the mind’ gives Scotland’s citizens the ideal starting point for a confident, international mindset.

Scottish literature, in all its diverse genres, forms, and periods, is an abundantly rich educational resource that can give Scotland the international edge.

Aims

- **encourage a nation of readers** by stimulating curiosity, learning and imagination and to further develop a national lifelong readership strategy with appropriate partners
- enable and develop a stronger structure for **strategic cooperation** between national literature agencies, and central and local government
- encourage the love of books in every home in Scotland as part of a **national readership strategy**
- improve and secure the place of Scotland’s **literature and languages in the curriculum** in schools, colleges and universities
- embed an understanding of Scottish literature, languages and culture in initial **teacher education and continuing professional development**
- encourage all **Scottish libraries to acquire and promote Scottish literature**, and to support the role of libraries in schools
- **foster a dynamic two way relationship** between contemporary literature in all its forms and the education sector, including regular visits by writers to all schools and the development and provision of appropriate resources to support learning
- assist in developing **creative approaches to literacy** issues outwith formal learning
- promote **fuller coverage of Scottish literature** in the print, digital and broadcast media.

3. *Literature and Languages*

Languages are the currency of literary expression and humanity's most important tool for understanding world and self.

Scotland is a small nation enriched by linguistic diversity. We have three long standing and deeply rooted language traditions: Gaelic, Scots and English.

In addition, we have a broad range of new community languages, an abundance of dialects and a proud tradition of language learning, from Greek and Latin to Chinese.

Bi- or multi-lingualism is an educational and cultural asset, not a problem, and it is literature that underpins it. By encapsulating linguistic diversity at its best and translating between languages, literature provides both a guide and a purpose to language as cultural asset, social resource and human delight.

Aims

- celebrate multi-lingualism and **build confidence and pride in Scotland's linguistic diversity** in written and oral forms
- **support Gaelic and Scots** through the publication, promotion and study of literature in these languages
- secure the development of a **national strategy for the Scots language**
- **promote literature in translation** as part of a national readership strategy, including translations between Scotland's languages
- promote the translation of **Scottish literature into other languages** and the literature of other cultures into Scotland's languages
- recognise and encourage the role and diversity of **other community languages in Scotland**, including sign language.

4. *Literature and Citizenship*

The right to express oneself in a democratic society is meaningless without the ability to express oneself. By revaluing the currency of thought and expression, literature enables participative democracy. Scottish literary tradition is grounded in respect for the self, social thinking, equality and democracy. Scottish citizens of all ages, and irrespective of cultural origin, have the right to access their nation's traditions of thought and political expression. These in turn become the basis for Scotland's distinctive contribution to global citizenship.

Aims

- encourage the role of **literature in debate and discussion** regarding politics, social issues, cultural identity, philosophy, morality and religion, in educational and other public arenas
- recognise **the right to freedom of expression** and dissent through literature as a foundation of democratic citizenship
- **uphold the right of writers** to freedom of expression

- **champion the right of all Scotland’s citizens** to have the opportunity to learn about Scottish literature and culture
- affirm the role of writers in shaping national and international identities and values.

5. *Literature and The Arts*

The centrality of Literature to our national culture and society has sometimes been obscured by treating it as one artform among many. Nonetheless, literature is vital to the arts because it is necessary to them all. While playing a complementary role to images and sounds in the performing arts, literature provides the basis for critical discourse in all the arts. It is the medium through which we come to understand the role of the arts in self and social understanding. Without literature the cultural role of the arts is lost.

Aims

- **strengthen cooperation** and creative exchange with other artforms
- recognise and **support the role of playwrights, storytellers screenwriters and multimedia writers** alongside other literary forms
- foster **lively and informed critical writing** in respect of all artforms and of culture as a whole
- encourage **cross-curricular collaboration** in the expressive arts in education
- promote knowledge of the **history of Scottish literature** in the full context of the histories of the other arts in Scotland, such as Scottish painting, music and architecture.

6. *Literature and the Creative Economy*

Literature provides the backbone of the publishing industry in all its print and multi-media forms. Literature is also central to the broadcasting media and the digital sector. Without a distinctive and evolving corpus of texts, concepts, scripts and stories, there cannot be a small nation creative economy –only a branch office sub-economy.

This is not to ignore market disciplines but to recognise that, without tempering the market through distinctive creative involvement, the small nation cannot be a significant player.

Literary success is an important fulcrum in this arena, and Scotland’s writers offer both the track record and role models for economic success. But Scotland needs to retain a greater share of the benefits of its intellectual property by investing in a productive infrastructure and the skills base.

Aims

- **strengthen and diversify publishing** in Scotland and its place in the global economy
- support **new business development** in literature related areas including publishing, distribution, book sales and digital media
- campaign to **improve the economic conditions** for publishers in Scotland
- **connect writers and storytellers** of all kinds with such business opportunities
- provide appropriate **training and mentoring for cultural entrepreneurs** and writers, in liaison with appropriate government agencies, industry bodies and educational institutions

- maximise the positive **potential of intellectual copyright to create wealth** and support literary endeavour
- support **literary magazines and related forms of publishing** and their role in providing a ladder of opportunity for literary talent
- **ensure the availability** of important Scottish texts
- promote opportunities linking literature with other artforms and **maximise creative and commercial collaborations**
- encourage the production and supply of practical resources for use in schools, colleges and universities.

7. Literature and Tourism

Scottish tourism was created by its writers, from Macpherson's Ossian and Sir Walter Scott to John Buchan, Neil Gunn, Ian Rankin and J.K. Rowling. Through books, films and the media Literature stimulates the curiosity that draw people to Scotland and, in turn, enriches their experiences when here. Literature is the gateway to the appreciation of landscape and culture and the motivation to travel.

This asset gives Scotland a strongly competitive position in the global stage but it is a presumed, rather than a consciously exploited, asset. Literary tourism is not a niche market or a branch-line, but a highway to the enjoyment and appreciation of Scotland.

Aims

- develop a **national infrastructure for literary tourism** in combination with national and regional agencies and market Scotland as a prime destination
- **promote the birthplaces and landmarks** associated with Scottish literature in every city and region, and stimulate imaginative forms of access and interpretation
- **market Scotland's literary festivals** in a coordinated year-round way as an attractive reason for visiting Scotland
- champion Scotland as an **international model for literary tourism**, contemporary and historical.

8. Literature and Society

The point of a national Literature is not to sustain distinctiveness for its own sake, but to reflect the diversity and character of a society. By expressing common values and conflicts, Literature provides the basis for conversation and so of civilised cohesion. Through Literature in all its forms, including journalism, we can understand each other better. Writers can give minority and marginalised voices a proper hearing and ensure that no-one is excluded from the social dialogue. Scottish Literature has excelled in this social role and is currently reaching out across contemporary society to share the means of expression that are democracy's most important cultural entitlement.

Aims

- nurture an **inclusive sense of community** through story sharing and the exploration of language
- **celebrate diversity** as part of a shared culture which includes new Scots, refugees and asylum seekers
- **strengthen families** as places where stories are shared and explored
- encourage the **sharing of experience** between generations and the inclusion of older people in creative activity
- encourage creative language and expression amongst **marginalised, excluded, and restricted groups** within society
- increase access to Literature for **people with learning difficulties** and promote best practice
- increase access to Literature for **people with a disability** and promote best practice.

9. Literature, Health and Wellbeing

Literature in all its forms, written and oral, encourages communication and self-expression as well as an understanding of ourselves and other people.

Participating in such communication enhances wellbeing and contributes positively to the prevention and treatment of illness.

Aims

- encourage the use of creative reading, writing and storytelling as **a means of self expression**, communication, empathy and wellbeing
- explore the role of literature and creative language in the **treatment of illness**, in partnership with appropriate professional agencies
- **enable the voices of people** who are ill, and their carers, to be included and heard.

10. Review

Aim

- **review** regularly our activities to ensure that we are achieving our strategic aims and objectives and to update our strategy appropriately.

LITERATURE FORUM FOR SCOTLAND

Background and Remit

Background

The present Literature Forum for Scotland was originally formed in 2001 at the invitation of the then Literature Committee of the Scottish Arts Council.

Initially it had two specific functions:

- (a) Following the Scottish Arts Council commissioned audit of literature organisations, it was felt that communication and cooperation amongst the different bodies needed improvement.
- (b) The Forum provided a vital sounding board and partner in the development of a first national strategy for literature as an artform – *Literature, Nation* (2001).

Subsequently, however, the Forum continued to develop. Writers' organisations were brought into membership and key bodies such as the National Library of Scotland and CILIPS, who were not necessarily in receipt of Scottish Arts Council grant aid, also joined.

Remit

The Forum has provided a useful advisory role in a period of policy change and, following internal reconstruction of Scottish Arts Council Committees in 2002, it has been able to play a vital role in enabling the Literature Department to remain in close contact with the views of the literature sector as a whole. In addition, the Forum has greatly increased joint working and collaboration across the whole sector, particularly in education. Since 2005 the Forum has played a central role in positioning literature strategically in the context of the policy changes arising from the Cultural Commission, and the transition to Creative Scotland.

In 2006, a review of the Forum's remit was undertaken in consultation with the senior management of the Scottish Arts Council. The Forum was formally recognised by SAC as a national Advisory Council for Literature, and its aims, purposes and protocols were revised accordingly. These are set out below.

LITERATURE FORUM FOR SCOTLAND
The Advisory Council for Literature in Scotland

Purposes

1. To foster creative excellence in all written, spoken and broadcast language media in Scotland
2. To encourage awareness of contemporary literature and oral literary traditions in all the languages of Scotland and in all sectors of society
3. To increase knowledge of Scotland's literary heritage
4. To advance education in formal and informal settings by these means
5. To advance the well-being of writers in their local, national and international contexts
6. To advance publishing in Scotland as a vital part of our literary, educational and cultural infrastructure.

Aims

1. To liaise with governmental, non-governmental and inter-governmental agencies and, in particular, the Scottish Arts Council and its successor body, Creative Scotland
2. To be an advocate for literature in Scotland, and a consultative forum for funding and development agencies.
3. To provide a coordinating focus for literary, publishing and writers' organisations, discussing new developments, advising collectively on policy, and preventing duplication of effort.

Membership

The members are:

- Association for Scottish Literary Studies
- Bookseller representation
- CILIPS (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland)
- COSLA (The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)
- Edinburgh International Book Festival
- Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature
- The Gaelic Books Council
- Itchy Coo
- Moniack Mhor
- NALD (National Association for Literature Development)
- National Library of Scotland
- Playwrights' Studio Scotland
- Publishing Scotland
- The Saltire Society
- Scots Language Centre
- Scottish Book Trust

- Scottish Language Dictionaries
- Scottish Society of Playwrights
- Scottish PEN
- Scottish Poetry Library
- Scottish Storytelling Forum
- SLAM (Scottish Literary and Arts Magazines)
- Society of Authors in Scotland
- Writers' Guild of Great Britain (Scottish Region)

Bodies can be invited into membership by minuted resolution of the Advisory Council. Members are invited to nominate one voting representative and, if desired, an alternate.

Administration

Administrative support and secretariat is provided *ex officio* by designated Literature Officers of Scottish Arts Council/Creative Scotland.

Chair and Vice-Chair

These will be elected every two years by the Forum, on a rolling programme with the option of a two year extension.

Legal Identity

It is not at present proposed that the Literature Forum hold funds or have a separate legal identity. Practical initiatives will be forwarded by the agency and/or member organisations.

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