

# the stove network

## **ABOUT: The Stove Network**

The Stove Network is a Dumfries-based arts organisation that is active throughout Dumfries & Galloway. Since its foundation in 2011, the group has grown rapidly towards future sustainability and has demonstrated excellence in participative public arts practice.

Using a dynamic, artist-led structure, which challenges the traditional reliance on a middle tier of umbrella arts administration, The Stove Network has pioneered a model of collective cultural leadership in its immediate community and wider region. It is focused on delivering arts projects for and with the community that are accessible, that create opportunities and that foster creative learning.

Through this approach, the organisation has delivered projects that have received national support and have gained international recognition for their ability to draw in essential participation in public places, issues and education.

While The Stove Network is inclusive and supportive of all participants, it is guided by a Curatorial Team, who have daily, strategic and project management involvement. The team currently comprises Katie Anderson, Matt Baker, Linda Mallett, Will Levi Marshall and Colin Tennant - creative practitioners ranging from international standing to emerging artists.

The Stove Network was registered as a company limited by guarantee (SC411667) on 21 November 2011 and subsequently appointed a democratically elected Board of Directors. The Board, which supports the Curatorial Team, is made up of individuals from a variety of different backgrounds and sectors. Together they represent a regional and national membership of over 130 people, ranging from café-owners and wild-food chefs to video artists and musicians.

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## **ABOUT: The Stove Building**

The Stove Network began as a collaboration between a group of artists who were keen to work with Dumfries & Galloway Council and Dumfries & Galloway Chamber of Commerce on their 'Showcase Dumfries' project. DGC and DGCoC purchased a building at 100 High Street with Scottish Government grants in 2010, in 2011 The Stove Network was founded and negotiations began about developing plans for the management of the building as a cultural hub for the town.

The Stove Network successfully gathered local support and raised capital funding for transforming the building into a fully functional and accessible public space. The group developed a business plan for Dumfries & Galloway Council, outlining ways of generating revenue to support creative work and public engagement. This was a crucial step in getting local authorities to recognise that the project could be successful and that it was likely to make a major impact in the town centre as a sustainable arts presence.

On 3 September 2013, the Council's Policy and Resources Committee agreed to take the building's ownership from Dumfries & Galloway Chamber of Commerce, to carry out the work necessary for making it DDA compliant, and to lease the building to The Stove Network. Additional capital funding has been raised by The Stove Network from Creative Scotland and The Holywood Trust to finance the development of the building beyond DDA compliance into a fully functioning arts venue.

The Stove Network's Curatorial Team has invested significant time and resources into exploring business opportunities for 100 High Street. This has included negotiating Heads of Lease terms with the Council, working on architectural plans and researching options for tenancies and third-party collaborations within the building.

Every aspect of the building will be considered and designed with the overall objectives of involving the community, maximising accessibility, creating opportunities and fostering creative learning.

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## Our Mission and Vision

Our vision for The Stove Network is to be an arts organisation that's stitched into the fabric of our local community, while simultaneously connected to high quality contemporary practice, debate and audiences - nationally and internationally.

We see the arts as something that can reach beyond the 'arts audience' to make a vital contribution to society on all fronts. The Stove is a vehicle for practical partnerships with people and organisations working in health, education, tourism, regeneration and the environment.

The creative arts is one of the top ten economic sectors in Dumfries & Galloway. The Stove Network is an expression of confidence, professionalism and ambition for that sector - placed physically and symbolically at the heart of the evolving future of our region.

We aim to use socially engaged arts practice to embed creativity at all levels of civic society by developing participative artwork projects for public spaces, events and place-making, in partnership with groups and individuals. In doing so, we will provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy and participate in the arts, while developing opportunities for local artists to expand their practices and careers.

By developing links nationally and internationally with artists and organisations, we will bring new inspiration to the local area and raise the profile of our region and country on a bigger stage.

At 100 High Street, we are creating a hub for creative exchange and learning. Wherever possible, we are embedding digital technology in our practice.

Through collaboration with organisations like The Dumfries and Galloway Chamber of Arts and Creative Scotland, we will keep artists directly involved at a strategic level of decision-making in society. We will work with educators and young people to support a viable pathway into the professional creative industries. And build a sustainable, social enterprise organisation that is resilient and resourceful, embracing of future challenges and respectful of the environment.

As part of our commitment to progress, we will continue to raise the bar in the field of socially engaged public art and place-making by building an organisation as an open and inclusive network embedded within our local community through creative leadership.

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## **Delivering Our Mission and Vision**

The Stove Network will deliver its aims in a number of ways. It will run premises at 100 High Street, Dumfries as a fully accessible public arts space, facility and resource for the people of the town and the wider region. It will continue to develop innovative ideas for participative arts projects and raise funding to support them. And it will build an organisation as an open and inclusive network embedded within the local community, connecting with organisations, artists and communities nationally and internationally, and use network and community links to undertake commissioned place-making projects.

Since 2013 and throughout 2014, The Stove Network has been supported by Creative Scotland via its Cultural Economy Programme, as it researches and develops its operating business model. The focus of this work is laying the foundations for its artist-led social enterprise model, which will ensure it thrives and reaches its full potential.

The current Stove Network three-year plan moves forward on three fronts: Practice and Projects, Place and Premises, and People and Process. It has an imaginative, innovative and achievable programme of work around three interconnecting themes: Inhabit, Experience and Connect.

At the end of this three-year plan, The Stove Network will have established 100 High Street as an arts venue with a national profile, operating at the heart of the Dumfries community. It will have built solid foundations for the continuing sustainability of The Stove Network as a new-genre arts enterprise. It will have delivered an arts programme of high quality, socially engaged artworks and will have created opportunities in the arts sector, while providing greater access to the arts for the general public and the creative community. On top of that, it will have set-up 'Young Stove' as a sustainable youth body within the organisation and established The Stove Network as the collective 'Town Artist' for Dumfries.

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## Our Accomplishments

Key milestones since The Stove Network's foundation in 2011:

- Raised over £400,000 of project funds
- Raised £160,000 of capital funds
- Negotiated a 25-year lease on 100 High Street. Formed a project team with DGC to deliver the required improvements to 100 High Street
- Delivered 14 major art projects in Dumfries town centre focused on partnerships, local engagement, capacity building and regeneration
- Won and completed a public art commission in Creetown, delivering a series of public engaged projects resulting in a permanent sculptural installation
- Key organisation in setting up The Chamber of Arts, a new arts-led structure in Dumfries & Galloway
- Contributed to national and international conferences and research programmes
- Established working partnerships with national and international organisations
- Initiated and co-produced an international festival (Environmental Arts Festival Scotland)
- Selected to create work for the Bordeaux Biennale 2016
- Initiated a partnership with the University of the West of Scotland to create a new MA in Applied Arts
- Created new audiences of over 9,000 people for our artworks projects, which have involved the direct participation of over 850 people and various groups and organisations in their production