# Campaign rallies to save Aberdeen Arts Centre as funding deadline looms



Colin McKay stood at the forefront of a passionate gathering in the Aberdeen Arts Centre auditorium, reflecting on the profound impact this venue has had on his life. “This place made me feel safe, loved, and accepted,” he shared, holding back emotion as he addressed the crowd. McKay, joined by numerous others, congregated to rally support for the historic theatre during a campaign meeting aimed at securing its future. The centre, which has been a cherished space in Aberdeen for over six decades, recently faced a critical juncture after missing a significant funding opportunity from the local council. The campaign is targeting an ambitious fundraising goal of £660,000 over the next three years, with an urgent need to secure £180,000 by July 1 to demonstrate community support ahead of a pivotal council meeting.

As stories were shared, spanning generations, the collective bond to the arts centre became increasingly evident. The previous manager, who recalled performing at its opening ceremony in 1963, highlighted the venue's long-standing significance. It not only serves as a platform for the arts but has also acted as a supportive environment for various communities. McKay, who now works for Alcohol and Drugs Action in Aberdeen, spoke about how the centre has played a vital role in people's lives, including his own. His emotional declaration that “this place saves lives and supports mental health” resonated strongly within the audience.

Successful community involvement seems crucial to the centre's lasting legacy. A vibrant call to action echoed through the auditorium, with attendees proposing fundraising initiatives ranging from a 24-hour musical performance to local productions with proceeds aimed at supporting the campaign. Among the supporters, notable personalities like Brian Cox and Laura Main expressed their commitment to preserving the venue, with Main reflecting on the invaluable experiences it offered during her childhood. “It sparked something in me,” she said, highlighting the arts centre's role in nurturing talent and fostering creativity within the community.

The urgency of securing funding highlights a broader context within the cultural landscape of Aberdeen. Although the Aberdeen City Council offers support to various not-for-profit arts initiatives, recent funding decisions have left some groups vulnerable. Just last year, the Creative Funding programme aided 26 organisations, reaching over 10,000 people and contributing substantial financial support to the local arts scene. Nevertheless, the dynamics of securing sustainable funding remain complex, especially for grassroots entities like the Aberdeen Arts Centre, which niche productions and community access rely on.

At the forefront of the campaign, Eve Nicol, the centre's programming and creative director, articulated the arts centre's essential role in fostering resilience and opportunity. “We are uniquely positioned within the city and country,” she asserted, aiming for a future where the centre can continue to support and showcase local talent. Feedback from supporters, including former manager Verna Ward, underscored the urgency of community action, with Ward recalling the centre's previous close call with closure in the late 1990s, where similar community mobilisation had successfully secured its future.

As both the audience and campaigns ramp up momentum, the call now falls to local authorities and the wider community to recognise the centre's value. Councillor Sandra Macdonald, also backing the initiative, encourages the public to lobby their local representatives, stressing that “we cannot let the Aberdeen Arts Centre go.” There is a belief that, despite the challenges ahead, the potential for the centre to thrive remains strong, as long as the community rallies together in support of a venue that has been an integral part of Aberdeen's cultural tapestry for decades.

In a city where community engagement and the arts often intersect, the future of the Aberdeen Arts Centre hangs in the balance. As fundraising efforts continue, there lies an opportunity not only to save a beloved venue but to uplift the entire community, potentially setting an example for other arts organisations facing similar challenges across Scotland.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6767096/aberdeen-arts-centre-campaign/), [[2]](https://www.aberdeeninspired.com/article/meet-the-levy-payers-arts-centre-2)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6767096/aberdeen-arts-centre-campaign/), [[2]](https://www.aberdeeninspired.com/article/meet-the-levy-payers-arts-centre-2), [[3]](https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/news/creative-funding-scheme-open-202425)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6767096/aberdeen-arts-centre-campaign/), [[5]](https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/funding-boost-for-belmont-revival-and-aberdeen-performing-arts), [[6]](https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/creative-scotland-pledges-1m-to-aberdeen-performing-arts)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6767096/aberdeen-arts-centre-campaign/), [[3]](https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/news/creative-funding-scheme-open-202425), [[4]](https://www.portofaberdeen.co.uk/news/port-of-aberdeen-launches-25-000-fund-for-local-community-projects)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6767096/aberdeen-arts-centre-campaign/), [[2]](https://www.aberdeeninspired.com/article/meet-the-levy-payers-arts-centre-2), [[6]](https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/creative-scotland-pledges-1m-to-aberdeen-performing-arts)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6767096/aberdeen-arts-centre-campaign/), [[3]](https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/news/creative-funding-scheme-open-202425)
* Paragraph 7 – [[5]](https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/funding-boost-for-belmont-revival-and-aberdeen-performing-arts), [[6]](https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/creative-scotland-pledges-1m-to-aberdeen-performing-arts)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6767096/aberdeen-arts-centre-campaign/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.aberdeeninspired.com/article/meet-the-levy-payers-arts-centre-2> - Aberdeen Arts Centre, converted from a church and opened in 1963, is celebrating its 60th anniversary with a year of festivities. Amy Liptrott, the centre’s director since October 2022, discusses the centre's history, its transition from council management in the late 1990s, and the pivotal role of Annie Inglis in saving the centre from closure. Castlegate Arts Ltd was established as a charity to continue the centre’s work and has been doing so ever since.
3. <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/news/creative-funding-scheme-open-202425> - Aberdeen City Council has opened its Creative Funding programme for 2024/25, offering support to not-for-profit cultural organisations, community groups, charities, and individual artists. The programme aims to enhance the city's cultural sector and attract tourism. In 2023-24, it supported 26 organisations and two individuals, reaching over 10,000 people and contributing more than £168,000 in additional funding to the city. Applications close on 29th July 2024.
4. <https://www.portofaberdeen.co.uk/news/port-of-aberdeen-launches-25-000-fund-for-local-community-projects> - Port of Aberdeen has launched its 2025 supPORT-all charity programme, offering £25,000 in funding to support local community projects. Charities and community groups in areas close to the port can apply for grants of up to £7,500. In 2024, nine local charities and community groups received funding for initiatives ranging from interactive sound play activities to community physiotherapy sessions. The programme aims to positively impact local communities by partnering with diverse groups.
5. <https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/funding-boost-for-belmont-revival-and-aberdeen-performing-arts> - Creative Scotland is backing the bid to revive Aberdeen's iconic Belmont Cinema with a significant investment, as well as increasing its funding of Aberdeen Performing Arts. The development body for the arts and creative industries in Scotland is to contribute £169,000 per year, in a multi-year deal, to efforts to reopen the Belmont, being led by charity Belmont Community Cinema Ltd. Meanwhile, Aberdeen Performing Arts, which runs His Majesty's Theatre, the Music Hall and the Lemon Tree, announced an increase in its multi-year funding from Creative Scotland.
6. <https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/creative-scotland-pledges-1m-to-aberdeen-performing-arts> - Creative Scotland has pledged £1 million to Aberdeen Performing Arts over the next three years in the current round of Regular Funding. APA Chief Executive Jane Spiers said: “We are absolutely thrilled to have secured £1m funding for the second time from Creative Scotland, and look forward to delivering our three-year plan Imagining New Futures, which sets out our ambitions for APA, the city and the North-east, and places arts and culture at the heart of community.”
7. <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S5W-32110> - The Scottish Parliament has provided details on the level of funding allocated to various organisations, including Aberdeen Performing Arts, which received £750,000. The funds were delivered in multiple payments, with the first payment made on 10 August. As regularly funded organisations, the remainder of the award will be added to the organisations’ regular cashflow payments in October and January.