



IGNITE
MORAY YOUTH ARTS HUB

**Strategy for Legacy
and Sustainability**

ignite x think.in.form

March 2017

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INTRODUCTION

Time to Shine, Scotland's first youth arts strategy, was published by Creative Scotland in 2013. The Strategy focused on three key themes: participation – creating and sustaining engagement, progression – nurturing creativity and talent and provision – developing infrastructure and quality.

The recommendations for delivering against the strategy objectives included the creation of nine regional Youth Arts Hubs. Applications were invited from consortia of cultural organisations working in partnership across artforms to coordinate and strengthen activity in their region. The Moray Youth Arts Hub, operating under the name of Ignite, was led by Findhorn Bay Arts, based in Forres and the programme of activity supported for a two year period until December 2016.

At the end of this initial period of funded activity, Creative Scotland has asked each of the hubs to explore how they can build on the legacy of work undertaken thusfar, and how this work might continue in future. This process has been undertaken in the context that the funds which supported the hub over the two year period have now closed.

PROCESS

Findhorn Bay Arts completed an evaluation of all Ignite activity in January 2017. This evaluation highlighted the range, scale and reach of activity that has taken place over the two years.

A workshop, facilitated by consultant, Sam Eccles, exploring outcomes of the activities supported by Ignite with representatives of partner organisations and individual creative practitioners was held in Elgin in December 2016.

The Ignite Youth Arts Ambassadors group meetings, facilitated by Findhorn Bay Arts also explored the project outcomes in relation to individual creative journeys over the two years.

In November 2016, Findhorn Bay Arts engaged think.in.form design & consultancy to explore options if and how Ignite could continue beyond the original funded period. This process considered two key areas: structures and communications and in particular what the useful role of a 'hub' might be going forward.

All partner organisations and individual creative practitioners who had been involved in Individuals in delivering Ignite activity were invited to contribute to this process - via one to one conversations.

The initial findings and recommendations of this process were shared and discussed at a meeting with partners and with the Youth Arts Ambassadors in March 2017.

THE FUTURE OF IGNITE

The process of exploring how these activities can continue has focused on three key questions:

1. In practical terms what happens to Ignite? What feasible route can be identified for comparable opportunities (to the funded period) for young people to continue and what resources are required to make this happen?
2. What is the future relationship between Ignite and Findhorn Bay Arts?
3. What other elements of support, beyond the immediate scope of Ignite activities are required to strengthen youth arts provision in Moray?

At the start of this process, three key ideas were defined and understood underpin the future of Ignite. These ideas were tested through the subsequent period of consultation, during which time, two further, additional themes emerged. These five threads were:

Led by Young People

Ignite has worked over the past two years to foster and develop a key group of Youth Arts Ambassadors (YAAs) who have participated in and driven many of the activities that have been included in the programme. It is essential to harness this energy and enthusiasm and continue to give them a key voice in what Ignite is and does going forward.

Making Connections

An important legacy of the work of Ignite has been the connections it has helped to facilitate between young people and creative practitioners both individuals and organisations across the region, and the broader partnerships between those within the cultural life of Moray who work with young people. These connections and partnerships should be understood as a valuable resource, that, with some ongoing support, can continue to grow and develop.

Sharing Outcomes and Learning

The legacy of this funded period of activity should include the sharing of the outcomes and learning with all those involved in delivery across Moray as a positive and deliberate action that reinforces partnership and collaboration across those working in the sector and in particular a openness to shared learning.

Embracing the breadth of Creative Industries

Creative skills and interests take on many forms and can be applied in many different ways for many different purposes and outcomes. Whilst it is natural that the core focus of an arts hub is the areas defined as art, a broader understanding that can embrace the closely related worlds of design, digital and making would significantly strengthen the offer for young people whilst also potentially opening up new partnerships and connections with related businesses and people in Moray.

Supporting Career Pathways

There is a specific need, often not fully addressed for young people within formal education or in extra curricular creative activities, concerning awareness of and entry routes to creative careers. Many of those most active within the youth arts hubs have been at this point of transition from being enthusiastic participants in creative activities to being interested in pursuing a career in the arts or creative industries. This career choice (further by study, training, placement etc.) can be particularly isolating in smaller communities and non-urban locations and, as such, is an area where the hub should explore in what ways it can help.

In practical terms, Ignite should aim for continuity of provision at a minimum resourcing level, which allows flexibility for growth and change in the future.

What does minimum resourcing mean? The Ignite two year programme, made possible by Time to Shine funding, supported a significant amount of creative activity in the area, but the closing of the fund that made this activity possible means that support at this level and duration is highly unlikely in the short to medium term.

However, Ignite has a legacy of other valuable assets – the networks it has established and strengthened – for both young and creative practitioners, the brand visibility it has achieved and the connecting up of different opportunities

for young people to get involved in creative activities. It is these functions - as a hub, that form the minimum resource - that Ignite can continue to connect, promote and signpost young people with relevant creative opportunities in Moray.

For this to happen, the following resources need to be in place:

The retention of the Ignite brand and associated assets

The Ignite brand and visual identity was developed in discussion with young people at the outset of the project. The name and what it represents have achieved good visibility with both young people and the sector in Moray. Feedback has confirmed that brand has positive associations and that, having a standalone identity is helpful.

An ongoing role for the Youth Arts Ambassadors in shaping provision and priorities.

Participation in the group has been of meaningful benefit to young people, and in particular, for those who are aiming to pursue a career in the arts or creative industries, has provided an important focal point for development, friendship and support. There is considerable benefit of changing membership to evolve into an informal network of support between individuals at different ages, stages of their learning or career journeys.

A online platform that signposts young people with creative opportunities.

A new online presence for Ignite is key enabling the functions of the hub going forward. The existing web presence needs to evolve to a more targeted practical resource that can link young people with relevant events, activities, organisations and people most relevant to their creative interests. The new site should be underpinned by a directory of these resources, a noticeboard that can simply publicise upcoming opportunities and a place to showcase activity of young people. Content for the noticeboard should be updated directly by (approved and moderated) partner organisations rather than via an administrator.

A funded post for an Ignite support and engagement officer to enable all this to happen.

No provision, online or offline, organises itself. The presence of a person, to enable these things to happen is vital. Engagement is key to the ongoing activities: in the first instance, engagement with young people to ensure they are aware of what Ignite can offer and engagement with creative organisations to ensure that they are taking advantage of how Ignite can help them promote

what they do. This role, which could be initially feasible as a part time post, again could grow or change as demand and opportunities for more activity or support arise.

This structure of provision for Ignite has the following clear benefits:

- In the immediate term, it allows for continuity of provision at very minimal resourcing level. It continues a role for young people at the centre of defining what the hub is and does.
- It enables young people to connect with opportunities and/or to promote their own. It enables creative practitioners or organisations to signpost their opportunities.
- It puts in place a structure that could grow and adapt to run more activities or projects.
- It holds assets that could be transferred or even disbanded if resources are no longer available.

IGNITE AND FINDHORN BAY ARTS

The evaluation at the end of the funded period has afforded Findhorn Bay Arts an opportunity to consider how the role of leading the Moray consortium has sat alongside its other activities.

Findhorn Bay Arts

Findhorn Bay Arts, established in 2012, has become firmly established as a prominent part of the cultural infrastructure in Moray, specifically through the flagship events of the biennial Findhorn Bay Festival, which hosted its second edition in 2016 and the annual Culture Day held in Forres.

The organisation has been confident and ambitious, and has consequently secured significant success in project fundraising, including leading the successful bid to win a Creative Place Award for the Forres and Findhorn area.

Young people and practitioners have acknowledged and welcomed the presence of the organisation within the Moray cultural scene and elements of its programme have been regularly cited as being of key importance to the creative development of young people in the area particularly in performance. There has also been a close and positive connection between members of the Youth Arts Ambassadors and the team at Findhorn Bay Arts.

However, Findhorn Bay Arts is still also a small and to some extent a fledgling organisation. The organisation currently relies on a funding mix of project funding and earned income from events, rather than longer cycles of core funding or other independent sources of income. This naturally requires the organisation to grow and contract as programme delivery and related resources allow. At present, having completed a large programme of activities in 2016 and with the end of related project funding streams, the organisation is currently planning for the next period of programme and resourcing from 2017 onwards with a view to consolidation and sustainability.

Existing Provision

It is important to note that youth arts hubs were not established as constituted organisations, but as partnerships projects, and as such, they are by default hosted by an organisation. The assets generated by their existence, and the administrative resources required to run them are all held by the consortium lead, and as such, by default, should be understood as naturally being part of the activities of Findhorn Bay Arts.

In the wider Moray context, there is no default host for the hub, as can be found in many of the locations where hubs are based, for example, a centrally located, building based multi-arts organisation with extensive public programmes, or an established arts organisation with primary focus on creative learning and young people or a region wide arts trust with multiple facilities and resources. The cultural sector in Moray does not currently consist of these kinds of provision, being at a smaller scale, made up of individual practitioners and small companies and without any central point of coordination.

However, the sector in Moray has demonstrated determination, resilience and cooperation in finding routes to share, support and grow. This has been evidenced through the constructive grass roots engagement with the preparation of the Moray Cultural Strategy and the emergence and ongoing evolution of Culture Cafe. Two organisations in the Findhorn / Forres area Bodysurf Scotland and Findhorn Bay Arts have been particularly instrumental in driving this cooperation.

This success has of course been further acknowledgement at national level, through the Forres Area Creative Place Award and through the public sector partnership securing much needed Moray Place Partnership funds.

Providing a Host

With this context in mind, both existing arrangements remain logical at least in the immediate term: that Ignite remain a 'hosted' project and that Findhorn Bay Arts continue to host.

Hosting of Ignite by Findhorn Bay Arts fits comfortably with one of its core objectives as an organisation that helps people, including young people, to access opportunities to participate in creative activities.

Ignite can continue to benefit from proximity to the programme run by FBA, which has so clearly been a positive experience for many, whilst also benefiting from the confidence and connectedness of FBA to the rest of the sector in Moray.

Findhorn Bay Arts should continue to manage the Ignite project in a distinctive way and reaffirm the subtle but important difference defined by the role of hosting, aided by the following approaches:

- Continue to place young people at the centre of decision making, through the YAA group or other initiatives.
- Maintain active dialogue about how Ignite is organised and delivered with the wider sector via an active youth arts reference group.
- Explore ways to share the learning outcomes of the two years of project funded work with the wider sector in Moray, encouraging openness and dialogue across youth arts provision.
- Establish a process that enables regular objective review points from those involved on how Ignite is working with this structure and be open to changes, small or large, in response to this.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The process of evaluation has raised several issues that, whilst outwith the immediate scope of the practical future of IGNITE, are captured here for noting.

A cultural strategy for young people

The Moray Cultural Strategy: We Make Moray was prepared in 2013 and published in 2014 and is now due for a refresh. In tandem with this process and to complement the refresh, a cultural strategy for young people in Moray should be created. This strategy should articulate in the words of young people what creativity is and means to them and how opportunities can be accessed. It may be that this process cross references with the headline themes of We Make Moray and the national objectives of Time to Shine. It should be prepared as a practical document which can help organisations and individuals to set what they do against area wide objectives - short, sharp and accessible.

This process has not sought to determine who should lead this process, but it would be logical to ensure that IGNITE, and in particular the YAAs have a key role in any such development.

Resources for creative careers

In relation to the key theme of career pathways, questions have emerged during the consultation process on the visibility and joined up nature of creative careers advice in Scotland. Signposting to relevant resources should be considered as part of the IGNITE website build - for example including directory entries for relevant providers in neighbouring Highland and Aberdeen/shire as well as those national organisations (the national companies and youth companies) that provide opportunities for young people.

The larger question of whether more could be done to inform and signpost those interested in taking forward a career in the arts and creative industries in Scotland is a task that requires a strategic approach at national level.

Online Listings

Similarly, the challenge of locating opportunities or events at national level directed towards young people remains. Listings of events and opportunities continues to be fragmented and diffuse. Feedback from users on the Time to Shine Youth Arts Events website, captured during this process was that, whilst commendable in intention, the website only partially helped this need.

Evaluation of this provision and the future requirements is not within the scope of this process, but the need for more effective and joined up approaches to events and opportunities listings remains a challenge that needs to be addressed.

Creative spaces for young people

All creative practitioners value spaces to create in. A dedicated space, a studio, a rehearsal room, a workshop whatever form it needs to take. Perhaps as best articulated by the Room 13 model, young people are of course no different in this regard and a space within home, or school, or making temporary use of a space used for other purposes does not fully compensate for this. What opportunities are there to explore provision of creative spaces specifically for young people in Moray – for different artforms, in different locations for different types of events?

Specifically, this area should be considered as part of the review/development of a Moray Cultural Strategy for Young People.

CONCLUSION

Over the past two years, Ignite has helped to connect young people in Moray with opportunities to engage with and participate in arts and culture. opportunities. The Moray Youth Arts Hub consortium, led by Findhorn Bay Arts, has distributed funds awarded through the Time to Shine programme to enhance creative activities for young people in the area through partnership working with cultural organisations and individual creative practitioners.

The current strand of funding came to an end in December 2016. However, the vision for creative possibilities for young people throughout Scotland, as defined in the National Youth Arts Strategy remains - despite the limitations of resources going forward. In the context of Moray an area which in the recent past has had limited infrastructure and resources for sustained cultural activity it is vital that the legacy of the delivery and partnerships that have been built up during this time can continue to develop.

The challenge that all those involved in delivering projects supported by Ignite to date should strive to meet, is to continue to provide young people with better access to creative opportunities than they had prior to the establishment of the hub.

However, the reality of significantly less resource to fund this activity cannot be ignored. Whilst some funding directed towards opportunities for young people via the Moray Place Partnership may be available, it is clear that in the immediate term, this cannot be expected to maintain activities to the level of funding that the hub enjoyed.

This proposal has outlined how a strategic approach to resourcing, centred around an effective communications platform can provide some elements of continuity for the connections and partnerships that have been developed through the hub. The key vision is that, going forward, Ignite is repositioned as a 'platform' which can help to signpost opportunities, connect people and organisations and celebrate creative achievements in Moray.

For more information about Ignite, the ongoing legacy and the projects delivered during the funding period visit:

www.ignitemoray.com

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Document prepared by Ignite and think.in.form

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