

STRATEGY 2023-2026

The previous strategic planning period for the Arts Society came to an end in the autumn of 2021. At that point the pandemic was not over but we were in a position to look at our successes and failures, particularly since March 2020 at the start of the first lockdown, to where we stood in September 2021. Changes in the personnel of the Board coincided with this period and a new Treasurer and Chair had been appointed. Because of the seismic shifts caused by the pandemic, it was felt unwise to launch a new strategy immediately following the end of the previous one, as the situation was still too fluid. So instead, we made plans to make a strategy at a later stage and in the meantime took time to identify our challenges, explore new opportunities and think about the charity in a new way.

A VISION FOR A HYBRID FUTURE

The pandemic has shown that online, cultural institutions can have an impact on a global scale. The Arts Society has already successfully demonstrated that new possibilities and ideas appeal to our existing audiences. Now we want to expand this and create a digital experience for a new generation that will “make art mean more to more people”.

We will be a hybrid organisation because while we are committed to our members who engage with us through local Societies we also need to reach out to new audiences and meet them wherever they are: in the digital space, on social media or on their phones. Getting more people to sign up with us creates more opportunities to attract new members - this is why we are launching a new digital content production team, The Arts Society Studios.

Underpinning this hybrid ambition is our unwavering belief that quality matters. With over 50 years of experience of bringing outstanding content to audiences, we are committed to the highest standards of arts education selected and curated to cater for the needs of our local Societies and now beyond. This will not change, whether in local venues or in the digital realm, we will continue to curate relevant, inspiring, and stimulating content for different audiences by offering a new proposition.

OUR CHARITABLE OBJECTS

Charitable objects are the specific goals that a charitable organisation is established to achieve. These objects outline the primary aims and activities that the organisation will undertake to fulfil its mission. Charitable objects provide a clear and legally defined framework for what the organisation intends to accomplish, ensuring transparency and accountability in its operations. For The Arts Society, the charitable objects are:

The promotion and advancement of the education of the public in the cultivation, appreciation and study of the decorative and fine arts; the conservation and preservation of the artistic heritage of the United Kingdom and other countries for the benefit of the public; and the advancement of the arts, culture and heritage, in particular, but without limitation, the decorative and fine arts.

Our objects are wide-ranging and expansive. For the purpose of our 2023-2026 strategy our primary objectives will focus on our mandate for our current audiences and new beneficiaries

- to deliver high quality arts education
- to promote appreciation of the arts
- to advance arts, culture, and heritage.

We recognise more than ever, that our work also has broader secondary objectives which are

- to achieve greater inclusivity
- to foster emotional well-being
- to enrich lives
- to deliver benefits in the community
- to promote social cohesion.

OUR STRATEGY

We want to make the arts mean more to more people. We believe our traditional model cannot achieve this alone and research we have undertaken suggests that the federated, local Society model is no longer sufficient, by itself, to satisfy the proper fulfilment of the Charity's objects. Because of this, and to carry on delivering our charitable objects, we must invest resources in building new capabilities and expanding our business model to reach a more diverse range of audiences in new places. We will do this by prioritising technology and digital channels in our future planning and investment decisions, and by re-shaping our relationship with local Societies as a streamlined service. In order to create a self-reliant (*and self-sustaining*) business model for the charity we will restructure the governance and funding arrangements appropriately.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- We will continue to support Societies with services they need at a cost that is more affordable to both parties: our focus here is on creating platforms, frameworks and toolkits to aid Societies become more self-sustaining
- We will diversify our income streams through developing a range of new products
- We will increase access to our services to a broader audience
- We will restructure the financial model of The Arts Society
- We will seek funding for some of our activities through sponsorship and or fundraising
- We will revisit our Volunteering strategy to strengthen the role of Societies in their communities
- We will review our governance structure and implement a structure that is fit for our new goals

BY 2026 THE CHARITY WILL

- restructure to strengthen and support local Societies to do what they do well, ‘be for and reflect the local community.’ In doing so we will strengthen our own identity and purpose in order to tackle the issues and challenges that local Societies find more difficult to deliver, such as attracting a much younger and more diverse audience.
- execute a strategy to seek out non-Society based opportunities that will secure a long-term future for the organisation as a whole.
- recommit to delivering our core charitable objects of arts education, but this will be reframed with a new language and narrative relevant for audiences today in order to bring a younger and more diverse audience to the arts.
- reframe our objectives to allow the organisation to focus on fulfilling the charitable objects through a series of activities designed and executed centrally in addition to the existing model.
- take on the task of attracting a young audience through Cultur.art (at our own cost) to build future awareness of The Arts Society and deliver the charitable objects to a wider more diverse audience. Cultur.art will be a new, digital-only product to reach new audiences for The Arts Society.
- create a new unit we have called ‘The Arts Society Studios’ which will commission and curate content for the needs of both The Arts Society and Cultur.art.
- commit to a revision of our Society training programme.
- redefine and relaunch our programme of charitable giving to feed into and support the charitable objects.
- introduce appropriate governance structures to meet future challenges and increase the number of co-opted trustee members to the board with specific skill sets and experience that are relevant to the organisation’s growth and development for the long-term.
- actively promote volunteering and the localism of Societies.

WHAT CAN LOCAL SOCIETIES EXPECT?

- **Support for digital transformation**
As your audiences change from Baby Boomers to Generation X, they expect a different membership experience that includes digital interactions with you. We want to support you with this.
- **An upgraded Training programme**
Training and networking between Societies is a vital part of our service. We will make this even more accessible and user friendly.
- **An upgraded Directory**
The long-awaited upgrade is under way and will be launched within the next year. Directory Days will be held in person at suitable venues whilst we also develop accessible and sustainable options to take part.
- **Reduced Service Recharge**
On a trial basis we will seek ways to reduce the Service Recharge.
- **Consultation on Governance**
Following an external governance review the Trustees will put forward proposals to modernise and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Board.

- **Upgrades to the central website & resources area**

A full review and overhaul of our websites will be undertaken.

- **A social media campaign aimed at 55-65 years olds**

Our member research has shown that 45% of Members use Facebook; and 33% of all Facebook users in the UK are over 45 years old - an ideal platform and opportunity to raise awareness for The Arts Society in a measurable, cost-effective, and targeted manner.

- **Continued Grants for Societies' charitable activities**

Grants to local Societies have proven to be effective in helping to forge local connections with other organisations. They also help with grassroots outreach efforts.

- **Toolkits for local marketing, communication and membership experience campaigns**

We will create simple and adaptable plans for Societies to run their own campaigns to raise awareness and attract new members.

- **Streamlined design services**

We are reviewing our service of supplying posters and other promotional materials to Societies. We are aiming to provide this service more cost-effectively.

- **Online AGMs**

During this strategic period our AGMs will be held online. Virtual Town Hall Meetings will continue to be held twice every year.

- **Area Support**

Areas will continue to provide the usual services. Areas without an Area Support Team will receive additional support from Staff and the National Support Team.

BEING AGILE

The COVID pandemic and political and economic uncertainties in recent years have shown us that setting a fixed-term strategy is no longer an adequate way to deal with complex situations and changing environments. Therefore, the Strategy 2023-2026 will be executed in a series of short term revision processes with multiple reviews and revisions. This will enable the Trustees and management to make changes and course corrections in response to external and internal events that might affect the execution of the strategy.

OUR MISSION

- Enriching lives through the arts.

OUR PROPOSITION

- Making art mean more to more people.

OUR PURPOSE

- Making the arts accessible to all.

OUR VALUES

- Connected, Knowledgeable, Welcoming, Pioneering