Why does Refugee Festival Scotland matter?

Thousands of people arrive in Scotland each year after being forced to flee their homes. In an increasingly hostile environment and period of political upheaval, people rebuild their lives and homes in insecure and precarious circumstances.

Refugee Festival Scotland celebrates the contribution refugee communities make to life when they seek safety and settle in Scotland. It publicly demonstrates a wealth of local and international cultural backgrounds and talent. For two weeks in June, the festival programme offers people from different backgrounds the chance to meet and get to know each other better and to learn about issues of relevance to refugee communities.

It is not only a festival, it is a campaign for a fair and just asylum system and a movement of people dedicated to making Scotland a welcoming and peaceful place to live. Where everyone has the right to a home and the right to feel safe, welcome and part of a community.

Refugee Festival Scotland 2019 was launched on 20 June, World Refugee Day, and ran to the 30 June.
The Scottish Government is delighted to support Refugee Festival Scotland, which begins today, on World Refugee Day. The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government will be visiting an exhibition in Glasgow that has been designed and produced by refugees, and she will be hearing from those who are involved in the festival. The festival is co-ordinated by the Scottish Refugee Council, and it provides an opportunity for refugees to tell their stories and for us to recognise their courage, strength and resilience. It also gives us the opportunity to recognise the contribution that refugees and asylum seekers from all over the world make to life here in Scotland.

We must remember that refugees have sought sanctuary from war, terrorism and torture, and I am proud that they are welcomed here and can begin to rebuild their lives. I thank all those who are involved in supporting refugees across our country.’

Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland, Scottish Parliament, 20 June 2019
Public Attitudes

In March 2019, Scottish Refugee Council commissioned a poll to explore current public attitudes towards people seeking refugee protection. The poll took a representative sample of the Scottish population by polling 1000 people online.

- Just under 40% of respondents believe Scotland should welcome the same number of people seeking protection as it does now, with over 25% saying we should welcome more refugees
- 69% of people in Scotland agreed with the statement: ‘Refugees are ordinary people just like us’
- Over half of 18-24 year olds agreed that ‘people from a refugee background help Scotland to be more vibrant’

Although this public poll shows improved attitudes in Scotland towards people seeking protection, refugees, there is still much work to do to challenge negative attitudes and hostility. There is also work to be done in Scotland in promoting organisations and community groups who work with refugees. Refugee Festival Scotland plays an important role in our work to nurture more welcoming and positive attitudes towards people seeking protection here.

- 85% of those polled did not know any organisations or community groups that support refugees in their local area
- 87% of the population said they do not know or have contact with someone who is a refugee.
- Although a quarter of the population have heard of the Scottish Refugee Council, 60% of the population had not heard of a range of organisations who work with refugees.
In June 2019, housing provider Serco (contracted by the UK Home Office) announced that they would re-commence their lock-change eviction policy over the coming months, evicting 300 destitute asylum seekers’ from their homes despite ongoing legal challenges against them. The theme of this year’s festival stemmed from Serco’s initial attempts to evict people in 2018. We called on the people of Scotland to come together and help create a sense of home for those who are being forced from theirs. To protest against cruel and inhumane policies which have no place here. We asked communities and organisers, artists and activists to consider what is home for them? What does it take to create home? ‘Home is a place where you don’t feel people are looking at you differently’

As communities across Scotland continue to change, arts and culture play an important role in creating spaces for refugees and local Scots to encounter and learn more about each other. We know that the arts have the potential to illuminate complex narratives of cultural identity and belonging and to offer us fresh perspectives and greater understanding of each other. We commissioned and collaborated with international and local artists who have lived experience of seeking refugee protection, to share alternative stories of forced migration and to showcase their work to new audiences. ‘The arts provide a resource that people can use to make sense of the world as it is, and to imagine the future’

1 Anonymous, Scottish Refugee Council
2 Social Impact of the Arts Project, University of Pennsylvania
2019 in numbers

- This year we held the 19th edition of Refugee Festival Scotland
- **21,200 attendees** (over twice last year’s numbers)
- **120 events** across **19 locations** (Aberdeen, Arbroath, Argyll, Coatbridge, Cumnock, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Greenock, Inverness, Kilmarnock, Oban, Paisley, Perth, Portree, St Andrews, Stirling, Stornoway and Ullapool)
- **100’s of committed partners and organisers**, including artists, activists, communities and cultural organisations
- Scottish Refugee Council awarded **£21,358 to 43 community and grassroots organisations**, 37 of which held events during Refugee Festival Scotland
- Approximately 40 items of mainstream media coverage across the festival period

Out of 120 events in the festival programme, 68% took place in **Glasgow**, 9% in **Edinburgh**, 7% in **Dundee** and 16% in the **rest of Scotland**.

Methodology

We collated feedback from over 50 event organisers and 360 audience members throughout and after the festival - via interview, online surveys, external media and press coverage. Our staff and volunteers attended and participated in over 80 events.
Working with Artists
German-Syrian artist Manaf Halbouni’s public sculpture *Rubble Theatre* recreated a scene of destruction in Syria, featuring the rubble of a bombsite and an abandoned car. Vehicles (and most frequently cars) are a repeating theme in Halbouni’s work – whether as a means of escape or as a mobile home.

‘*With the car, a symbol of mobility, I try to reach a place that I can call home to take root again,*’ he says.

*Rubble Theatre* brought the theme of displacement to the city centre of Glasgow and acted as a catalyst for public discussions central to Refugee Festival Scotland’s theme of ‘Making Art, Making Home’ – enabling wider dialogue about the role of art in creating welcoming and inclusive communities, and provoking responses from audiences who would not normally engage with contemporary art or refugee issues.

*Rubble Theatre* was co-commissioned by Counterpoints Arts and Scottish Refugee Council and funded by Creative Scotland.
We launched the festival this year at the site of Rubble Theatre, simultaneously marking World Refugee Day to show solidarity and support for refugees across the world. Artists and activists Amal Azzudin, Pinar Aksu, Sabir Zazai and Manaf Halbouni spoke about experiences of making home and working for refugee rights.

Musicians in Exile invited the audience on stage to play the drums before performing Arabic, Persian and Kurdish music loved by many communities in Glasgow.
Iman Tajik’s two corresponding poster installations explored the ‘right to travel as a human rights concept, encompassing the right of individuals to travel from place to place within the territory of a country, and to leave the country and return to it’. Tajik’s work highlighted the 1951 Refugee Convention, a key legal document which defines the term ‘refugee’ and outlines the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of UN states to protect them. The images were of a refugee travel document, the artists’ own. For Tajik, the bird symbolises freedom and natural migration as well as landscapes that know no borders.

‘The idea is close to my own experience, my struggle with movement... Movement is something natural and we always move in the world for different reasons. Any movement has to be protected.’

This image contradicts the experience of many who have been forcibly displaced, who do not have freedom or a home. In keeping with the theme of ‘right to travel’, the art works were installed on the National Cycle Network 77 by the V&A in Dundee, and on the National Cycle Network 7 by the Riverside Museum in Glasgow. As part of Refugee Festival Scotland, we invited local audiences in Dundee to join Tajik in a collective flag making workshop and procession by the river, sharing messages of welcome and solidarity with people affected by forced migration.

Freedom of Movement was commissioned by Scottish Refugee Council and funded by Sustrans.
This year we were delighted to feature the UK premiere of Gesturing Refugees, supported by the CCA and funded by Creative Scotland. Created and choreographed by Palestinian dancer and choreographer, Farah Saleh and collaborators, this interactive performance intends to archive hidden stories of refugee hood using the bodies of refugee artists and audience members, while playing with other archive material, testimonies and imagination.

‘It is an unforgettable piece, dedicated to refugees past, present and future, and hard to categorise: part performance lecture, part workshop, and fortified through these funny, sad, chilling testimonials from others, it pulses like a heartbeat and makes the skin prickle. It is a very special and transformative work, with love – and dance movement itself – as a true weapon of resistance.’

3 Lorna Irvine, The List
‘It was a deeply touching performance. A very artistic approach to get the message to the audience. It showed that refugees and asylum seekers are artistic human beings, real people with real emotions, not just victims of forced displacement’

4 Audience member
Unconditional Being

OOMK (One of my Kind) in collaboration with artists Pinar Aksu, Mousa AlNana, Razan Madhoon, Paria Goodarzi, Aref Ghorbani, Najma Abukar and Iman Tajik created a publication that discusses language, identity, borders and censorship as part of the refugee and asylum experience in Scotland. Curated by CCA and funded by Creative Scotland.

The journal has since been launched by the artists at CCA, with all proceeds going towards Defence for Children Greece.
Over the course of a number of months in early 2019, we worked collaboratively with Scottish based artists and cultural practitioners with lived experience of seeking refugee protection, and whose work is helping shape the changing cultural landscape of Scotland. To share creative practices, identify ambitions and barriers, develop potential for collaboration, exchange and peer support. 5

An action in the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (2018-20) is to identify and promote existing support to refugee professional artists and cultural leaders.
As part of this work, we held an Artists Symposium during the festival led from the perspective of these artists. Hosted by Zimbabwean poet and performer, Tawona Sitholé, the forum provided a space for ten artists to share their practices and experiences of working locally and internationally, and to stimulate ongoing discussion around disruption and belonging within the arts sector in Scotland. Supported by CCA and funded by Creative Scotland.

‘Collaboration and co-operation of artists with similar lived-experiences is needed to better understand our commonalities and purpose of created work’ 6

Participants in the symposium included other professional artists from migrant backgrounds, curators, producers and cultural organisations who seek to foster new collaborations and nurture the development and visibility of artists working in this sector.

‘I will take away the continued importance of a dialogue about artistic practice over discussion of labels such as “marginalised” or even “refugee”, ensure to continue conversations around mobility and its importance in international working and find ways of better working with diverse artists and ensure discussion around their impactful work.’ 7

6 Najma Abukar, Artist
7 Thom Louis, British Council Scotland
Community Led
Community Small Grants

Through the AMIF-funded Small Grants Scheme of the New Scots Integration Programme, organisations across Scotland were able to apply for grants of up to up to £500 to host community events in their local area. These events could be part of Refugee Festival Scotland, or at another point in the year. The programme sought to improve social connections of refugees; capacity of third sector organisations; community understanding of refugees and involvement of refugees in policy-making. Events took place throughout Scotland, and the majority of the funding went to refugee-led community groups and charities.

- **37 funded events** through this scheme took place during Refugee Festival Scotland
- **3169 people** attended the events overall
- All organisers felt that their event helped people to have new experiences
- All organisers thought that their event helped to promote awareness of refugee issues

Funding was awarded by a panel of New Scots Communities, Culture and Social Connections Thematic Group members and 5 refugee community representatives. A focus was placed on arts, social, cultural and sport activities and particularly refugee-led applications. The Small Grants Scheme was promoted across Scotland, and drop-in sessions were held over two months for community groups to find out more about the process and ask for clarity on their applications.
In total, Scottish Refugee Council received **79 small grant applications**. **43 awards were granted** with a total of **£21,358** being provided to these groups.

Most funded groups (86%) chose to host their events as part of Refugee Festival Scotland which helped to raise the profile of participating organisations, as they were able to use the festival as a platform to promote their events and work.

The scheme also helped to add additional breadth and scope to the festival, with events taking part across Scotland. In total Refugee Festival Scotland hosted **120 events**, with **37 of these events** (31%) supported by the Small Grants Scheme.
Social Connections

- **BONDS** | with people with whom I share a sense of identity. For emotional support and the sharing of informal local knowledge.

- **BRIDGES** | with people with whom I can exchange resources. For access to services and the exchange of resources beyond those available from other people ‘like’ me.

- **LINKS** | with the structures and governance of society at large. For access to rights and contributing to the shaping of society.

‘Social Connections’ are defined as the different social relationships and networks that help towards integration. They are categorised in three ways, and all serve to connect an individual or group to the wider community. There is evidence that small grants funded events mainly promoted bridging social connections, bringing together people from different backgrounds. Feedback from organisers also shows that the funding was used to improve their events, and in some cases they would not have been able to host an event without the support of the small grant scheme. Evidence shows the events help to improve social connections, improve the capacity of third sector organisations and improve communities across Scotland’s understanding of refugees.
Groups Awarded (during RFS)

Forth & Clyde Canal Society
Unity in the Kurdish Community
Glasgow Afghan United
Scottish Asylum Seekers Residents’ Association
Interfaith
Knit For Unity
Africa Future
Active Enquiry
Connections Cafe
Isaro Social Integration Network
Communities Together
North Lanarkshire Muslim Women & Family Alliance (Nlmwfa)
Moments of Freedom
The Welcoming
Sudanese Community in Glasgow
Strathairlie Hub
Scojec

North Glasgow Integration Network
Multi-Cultural Family Base
Paria Goodarzi | Glasgow Women’s Library
Migrants Organising for Rights & Empowerment
Pachedu
Jasmine & the Thistle
East Renfrewshire Faith Forum
Edinburgh Alwaleed Centre | Bilingualism Matters
Saheliya
Refugee Survival Trust
North East Glasgow Framework for Dialogue
Central & West Integration Network
Miami Mohsin | Esolperth
Community Infosource
Glasgow Esol Forum
Govanhill Baths Community Trust
Ethio Scottish Community
Milk Cafe
Maryhill Integration Network
The Amal Project
‘Having a sense of belonging is a common experience. Belonging means acceptance as a member or part. A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter; feeling that you belong is the most important value in life.’

Inspired by Glasgow based artist Paria Goodarzi’s research and public art project Under the Town’s Skin, Stories of Belonging was held at Glasgow Women’s Library and responded to the issues of migration, refugees and the sense of belonging. The experience of moving to a new country and finding a balance between adapting a new culture, in the concepts of community.
Moments of Freedom is a project led by New Scot women in Clydebank, in partnership with Outside the Box and West Dunbartonshire Council. They host community gatherings to build and strengthen relationships in the local area.

‘We set up a group, Moments of Freedom, as a way to make a contribution to our community. We are all busy women with lots of family responsibilities. We named our group after those precious moments that we have to ourselves. Freedom is such an important idea for us. To us, freedom means being free from restrictions, but also respecting the freedom of others.’

9 Moments of Freedom, interview with Commonspace
Art Speaks All Languages, hosted by the Edinburgh Alwaleed Centre and Bilingualism Matters, under the banner of Syrian Future Project, brought together 75 young people, students and lecturers from the University of Edinburgh.

The exhibition of art works created by members of the Syrian refugee community in Edinburgh, reflected on language and the sense of home. The aim of the event was to allow the Syrian refugee community to share their personal stories through art, and inspire viewers to reflect on their own experiences and understanding of bilingualism, refugee languages and integration.

‘The workshops were an amazing opportunity to bring Syrian youth together and empower them to tell their story. The exhibition built bridges as young people, University students and staff were discussing the art work and having conversations.’

The organisers of the event felt that they benefited from being part of Refugee Festival Scotland, stating it ‘allowed us to meet new people working on similar things or interested in our work, and we were able to establish new working relationships for future collaborations.’

10 Volunteer, Scottish Refugee Council
Pachedu are a charity based in Paisley that aims to increase the capacity of diverse minorities to be more visible and proactive in shaping their communities. Formed in 2016, they grew from a conversation trying to find ways to tackle social isolation for minority ethnic groups.

As part of the festival, they held Positive Steps – Breaking Down Barriers attended by over 60 people. The event showcased a film and created a platform for local communities to discuss different topics to promote unity and break down barriers.

‘Interesting discussions around diversity as well as spoken-word and art activities. Also great to hear some Scottish hip hop and Congolese folk music where a particularly memorable lyric had the audience singing along – ‘We don’t war again, everywhere is home!’’

11 Aneel Bhopal, Scottish Refugee Council
Open Programme
83 events took place in the festival as part of the open programme. We work with arts, cultural and human rights organisations throughout the year to develop connections and ensure meaningful participation for different audiences within the festival.

This year saw a significant increase in public programming from established cultural venues and producers, which resulted in new and bigger audiences.

Lives in Transit: written accounts and artistic expressions of refugee stories by COLOURS of Edinburgh at Out of the Blue Drill Hall in Edinburgh. This exhibition displayed the work of 11 local and international artists each providing their own perspectives on the transitory lives and experiences of migration.

COE are a student and graduate-led team who aim to create a platform for underrepresented voices of newcomers and challenge the misconceptions of refugees so often spread by the media.
Sow, Reap and Slowly Savour was a text and sound based installation that recorded stories, memories and sounds related to the seeds, spices, culture and mythology of women of colour and women with lived experience of the immigration and asylum system. Created by artist Raman Mundair, curated by CCA and funded by Creative Scotland.

The seeds were planted beneath our tongues
many moons ago
Now is the time
to reap
and taste
the language
Say their names
and slowly
Savour...
The **Open Museum** at Glasgow Museums co-curated an ambitious festival programme with refugee communities across Glasgow. They held 10 events developed with and for communities at **Kelvingrove Museum**, the **Botanic Gardens** and **Maryhill Integration Network**. For the first time since Glasgow Museums have programmed within Refugee Festival Scotland, they used the entire main hall of Kelvingrove Museum to host multi-lingual exhibitions, storytelling, workshops and literature events.

Groups such as **Glasgow Afghan Society** and **Unity in the Kurdish Community** exhibited and shared cultural practices in one of Scotland’s most visited gallery spaces. Audiences who had never heard of or encountered the festival before were introduced to some of society’s most unheard voices.

‘Refugee stories are at the heart of Glasgow’s story. Glasgow Museums is working to recognise this by bringing these stories into our record of the city’s past and present. The festival gave us framework that communities were familiar with to work around activities they weren’t familiar with. They now know that we are willing and looking to work with them and their expertise. It gave us a chance to honour that. There were so many people who got involved who never would have otherwise. Kelvingrove will feel more confident in the future and bolder to speak about migration issues.’

12

12 Mia Gubbay, Glasgow Museums

Image: The Future of Iran in Drumchapel, Botanic Gardens
The Sea of Paperwork by conFAB and Maryhill Integration Network was developed in collaboration, and through a series of workshops, with young people from Knightswood Secondary School, St Fillans Primary School, Evergreen Outdoor Nursery, Dunard After School Care. Together they explored the UK asylum system and how it affects people. conFAB and MIN launched the book as part of the festival this year, with readings from participants.
Take One Action, Christian Aid Scotland and Kinning Park Complex presented the Scottish premiere of Soufra, the inspirational story of Mariam Shaar. A generational refugee determined to change her life in the Burj El Barajneh camp in Lebanon by launching a catering company.

The screening was preceded by a community meal, by social enterprise Soul Food Sisters.
Participating artists and organisations

Centre for Contemporary Arts
Counterpoint Arts
Ethiopian Community in Scotland
Glasgow Women’s Library
Forth & Clyde Canal Society
Catrin Finch | Seckou Keita
Canongate Youth
Refuweegee
Oxfam
Your Voice
A Moment’s Peace Theatre | Küche
Küche
St Andrews University Museums
Cultural Documents
Glasgow City Mission
Young Academy of Scotland
Glasgow Quakers
Glasgow Museums
The Open Museum at Kelvingrove Museum
Language Landscape
The Botanic Gardens
Take One Action Film Festivals | Christian Aid
Scottish Documentary Institute
The Glasgow Barons
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

COLOURS of Edinburgh
Rise Pop-up Restaurant
East Ayrshire Leisure Trust
The Travelling Gallery
conFAB
Saint Fillan’s Primary School
University of Strathclyde Law Clinic
Simon Bishopp | Katja Frimberger
Gallery of Modern Art
Standing Tall
Aberlour Child Care Trust
UNHCR
Maryhill Integration Network
The Glad Café
Maslows
University of Edinburgh
University of Glasgow
Refugee Tales
Scottish Detainee Visitors
Stand Up To Racism - Scotland
Scottish Action for Refugees
Scottish PEN
Ruth Webber
Roza Salih

UNESCO Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts
Refugee Survival Trust
Connection Café
Steeple Church
Me. My Bike, My City.
The Voices Network
Glasgow St Pauli
Glasgow Film Theatre
V&A Dundee
The Project Café
OOMK (One of my Kind)
Raman Mundair
Ubuntu Women’s Shelter
Uriel Orlow
Manaf Halbouni
Iman Tajik
Farah Saleh
University of Stirling
GRAMNet
Glasgow Esol Forum
Glasgow Disability Alliance
Kinning Park Complex
Mwldan Arts Centre
Garnethill Multicultural Centre
Media
In the press

Examples of headlines in mainstream media from the run up to Refugee Festival Scotland, featuring artist Manaf Halbouni and festival ambassador, Rana Alzin.
OUR REFUGE.  OUR HOME

RANA'S STORY

New home, new friends and new accents three years on from fleeing war-torn Syria

By Stevie Gallacher
sgallacher@sunburypost.com

Rana’s story isn’t much like the typical image of a refugee. Since arriving here from war-torn Syria, Rana, her husband and two young children have built a new life for themselves as a family with a bright future in Scotland.

It’s been a long journey since the family set foot in Hamilton as the first Arabic refugee family. When we came here neither my husband Samah or I spoke much English,” she explained. “There was no community for us here. But after a few weeks we began to make friends. The people here are so friendly.

“We started to talk with our neighbours, and he was very helpful. We didn’t speak much English but he took time to speak with us and make us feel welcome.

“Friends are one of our good friends now and I make him food sometimes. We need help with some things, he is there to speak with us.

Rana’s daughter Sara, 10 and son Feras, nine, are settling into school and have developed strong Scottish accents.

“It’s only been three years but they are very Scottish now,” she laughed. “We recently went to London on holiday and we wanted a family picture.

“Sara asked a lady passing by if she could take a photograph. The lady was delighted. She was originally from Glasgow but had lost her accent.

“She was so happy to hear Sara’s Scottish accent. It was so funny! Rana has an economics degree, but last week completed her first year of a business studies course, while her husband has started his own Arabic ice cream company.

“It was difficult for Sameh,” explained Rana. In Syria, he was in charge of a marble factory, with many people working for him. It was a public company and it was an important role.

“When he came here, he was unemployed and didn’t speak any English. It was a struggle but it was better than where we were.

“Now he feels better, and he is supplying a few companies with the food he makes.”

“Back home, things got very bad and we had to leave. But I don’t want to focus on that. I want to focus on the future now.

“My husband likes Scotland, and so do I. I love every day I’m here. Every day, I thank my god every day that we are here.”

Rana, Feras and Sara have built a new life in Hamilton after leaving war-torn Syria three years ago.
Ambassador Programme

A Refugee Festival Scotland Ambassador is an empowered spokesperson for the festival and for themselves. Six ambassadors were trained and supported by Scottish Refugee Council to do media interviews in the run up to and during Refugee Festival Scotland, and were a part of our festival campaign. This role is voluntary, for people who have sought refugee protection in Scotland and who wish to share their experiences. Media Training was held in order to empower ambassadors to feel comfortable in media interviews, to feel comfortable on camera, and most importantly, to feel comfortable saying no to inappropriate questions.

Scottish Refugee Council worked with groups such as The Voices Network, Maryhill Integration Network, Govan Community Project and our own Services teams, in order to develop the project and identify and support people to get involved. We also made an open call to reach further networks. The ambassadors (Rana Alzin, Alaa Asad, Mada Basbous, Marwa Daher, Ruba Wakkaf and Itai Mutizhe) shared expertise and made working connections with each other, Scottish Refugee Council, journalists and other organisations in the sector.
The Refugee Festival Scotland Media Awards honour the work of journalists covering refugee and asylum issues. The awards celebrate coverage that is fair and responsible and that contributes to greater public understanding of issues around forced migration in Scotland. The 2019 Media Awards took place at the Corinthian in Glasgow. The event brought together approximately 70 journalists, editors and community activists along with friends and supporters. We are grateful for the Scottish media’s continued interest in responsible coverage of refugee issues and we are proud of everyone from the refugee community who shared their insights and expertise with the media last year.
Volunteering

Refugee Festival Scotland would not be possible without the tireless support of our volunteers. This year, 25 people from different backgrounds attended festival events, supported organisers and communities, and gave information to members of the public about the festival and Scottish Refugee Council’s work.

Every volunteer undertakes a training programme with us so that they can raise the profile of refugee issues and help people to understand why refugees flee their homes and seek safety in Scotland and other countries.
Working together – the Festival in context

New Scots Refugee Integration strategy

Scottish Refugee Council is a key partner in the New Scots Refugee integration Strategy 2018-2020. New Scots is Scotland’s national strategy to achieve the vision of a welcoming Scotland where refugees and asylum seekers are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive. The Festival, Media Awards and support to artists from refugee backgrounds are included as activities to achieve the strategy’s objectives that:

- Refugees and asylum seekers engage in cultural, heritage and sport activities and celebrate their own culture, talents and contributions;
- Social isolation experienced by refugees and asylum seekers is reduced, as they become active in their local communities; and
- Communities are aware of the needs of refugee and asylum seeker communities and actively seek to involve them in community life.

World Refugee Day and Refugee Week

World Refugee Day started in 2000. Each year on June 20 the United Nations, United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and countless civic groups around the world host World Refugee Day events in order to draw the public’s attention to the millions of refugees worldwide who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, conflict and persecution.

Since 2000, Scottish Refugee Council has co-ordinated Scotland’s response through Refugee Week UK. Whilst continuing to work closely with partners across the UK, we renamed Refugee Week Scotland to Refugee Festival Scotland in 2014 to encompass the increasingly greater number of events taking place in Scotland as well as to bring greater focus to celebrating the talents and contributions refugees make to Scotland.
2020 will mark 20 years since the inception of Refugee Festival Scotland. It is an important time to reflect on how far we have come – working towards a fair and just asylum system, and in making Scotland a welcoming and peaceful place to live. It is an equally important time to look ahead – at what work there is still to do to protect people who have been forced to flee their homes, and how we can support them to rebuild their lives.

We are looking for funders, local authorities and partners to support Refugee Festival Scotland 2020 and beyond to allow us to develop and deliver the anniversary festival.
Thank you to all of our friends, supporters, participants, community groups, audiences, volunteers, funders, ambassadors, partners and collaborators. Refugee Festival Scotland would not exist without you.