



**ALCHEMY**  
FILM & ARTS

**Equalities, Diversities and Inclusion  
Action Plan**

## **Alchemy Film & Arts**

### **Equalities, Diversities and Inclusion Action Plan**

Alchemy Film & Arts was established in 2010. Our core ambitions are to celebrate the most creative, innovative and thought-provoking experimental film and moving image; to reach and engage with both national and international makers and bring their work to the attention of the widest possible audience; and to work for the benefit of unique communities in the Scottish Borders.

We engage in developmental projects for film and moving image in Scotland, including our annual film festival, community filmmaking initiatives, artists' filmmaking residencies, a year-round exhibitions programme, filmmaking symposia, film commissioning and touring programmes. Our approach is distinctive in its dedication to experimentation, with an attitude that artistic opportunity is for everyone, rather than the privileged few.

We have worked with a wide cross section of the community to engage with the arts and creative processes regardless of their background and have a good balance of gender and international reach in the artists we work with.

As the communities of Hawick grow and diversify we aim to reflect this in our audiences. Alchemy Film & Arts is committed to the widest possible involvement and inclusion in its activities through all sections of its work: its staff and board, volunteers, audience and participants, and the artists it works with.

### **OUR VISION AND OBJECTIVES**

In the relatively short time since we were established, we have achieved a strong international reputation for our annual festival. In 2017, for example, from 1000 submissions, we presented over 140 new moving image works, installations, 46 world premieres and attracted over 80 filmmakers from all over the world. From the start, we have been active in working with a range of groups in our community, creating filmmaking workshops, residencies, using disused spaces in the town for installations, and encouraging creative learning and participation at many levels.

Whilst we have achieved much, and we believe that we can claim to be Scotland's and the UK's most important festival dedicated to experimental film and moving image, we have the ambition to continue to grow and develop the various strands of our activities over the course of the next few years.

As we develop we will continue to aspire to excellence in our core activities and to build and resource work that progressively supports our ambition and makes it accessible to our communities. This requires discipline and focus in selecting projects that will add value to our core activities.

One of our key resources is the people, staff and volunteers involved in Alchemy. An important part of supporting our vision is to ensure improved continuity to allow us to retain and make most effective use of such talent, allowing us to effectively deliver year-round inclusive activities based on longer-term strategic planning and objectives.

Our objectives can be summarised below:

- Retain our focus on the core purpose of supporting and promoting high quality artist and experimental film and moving image, locally in the Scottish Borders, nationally and internationally.
- Identify and nurture new and existing film-making talent.
- Devise and run training and workshops from entry level to peak career.
- Develop partnerships with like-minded organisations who can help us achieve our goals and add value to what we do.
- Develop the audience for experimental film, with innovative initiatives to excite and engage all sections of the community.
- Build a volunteer base to increase meaningful and rewarding involvement by and for the community.
- Reach out to excluded and marginalised sections of the community with targeted film-making activities and workshops.

### **Our Legal Duty as an RFO**

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

## Protected Characteristics

The equality duty covers equality strands that are known as protected characteristics. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Race / ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sex / gender
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Socio economic deprivation (poverty, rural isolation, urban deprivation and health inequalities)

Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristic.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

## Background

### *Programme*

Our initial focus was the creation of a film festival in Hawick, with a strong international outlook, aiming to show the highest quality experimental film and artists' moving image work from around the world. No such festival existed in Scotland or the UK at the time. Our model was inspired by similar long-running festivals across Europe and the USA, such as the European Media Art Festival, and Ann Arbor Film festival in the USA.

Creating such a festival in an economically deprived Scottish Borders rural town of 14,000 people was a significant undertaking, and it was also a conscious challenge to prevailing urban-centrism in terms of cultural provision. By taking an uncompromising approach to artistic excellence over its last eight annual editions, Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival is now "widely acknowledged as one of Europe's most important festivals of experimental film and artists moving image" (Scottish Arts News, 2017). Building on the significant national and international recognition the festival has achieved, our activities have expanded over the years to include:

- Our annual film festival, held in May each year.
- Filmmaking workshops throughout the Scottish Borders region.
- A year-round exhibition programme in the town of Hawick.
- A community volunteering scheme.
- Workshops and other creative skills programmes for young people.
- Artist residencies, held locally and internationally.
- Touring programmes of artists' film.
- Artists' film commissioning.

Hawick is a town that has suffered from profound economic decline, with its traditional woollen mill industry decimated, multiple areas listed within the 2016 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and a strong impetus to find renewal in its purpose and identity. The presence of Alchemy, and the contribution we are making, has now become a key part of that conversation. This year, for example, and for the first time, Hawick's Provost hosted a welcome reception for visiting filmmakers at the Town Hall. A key part of our work includes opening out disused spaces and removing barriers to access – de-institutionalising the art experience - including the use of empty high street shops, warehouses, the park, castles, empty offices, agricultural barns, community halls, country houses, remote bothies and even a horsebox.

### *Community Engagement*

One of our proudest achievements is the work we do to reach out to the most excluded sections of the community. All our activities are strongly rooted in, and supported by, our local community. We engaged with 80 volunteers last year, provided filmmaking workshops for over 100 participants, and our festival audience was 45% local people. The opportunities we provide for young people to get involved across our range of activities have multiplied year on year, and we have created multiple opportunities for freelance employment in the creative sector.

Our first filmmaking training programme took place in 2014 and since then, we have worked with local organisations including Burnfoot Community Hub (in one of the most deprived housing estates in Scotland), New Horizons mental health charity, Tomorrow's People (employability scheme for low aspiration school-leavers), TD1 Youth club, Scottish Borders Housing Association, Rowlands Dry Bar in Selkirk, Duns Volunteer Centre, Scottish Borders Learning Disability Service, The Wilton Centre, Earlston High School, Hawick High School and Borders College. Between 2014 and 2018, we have delivered a wealth of workshop programmes working directly with community groups.

Our outcome reports demonstrate real value in community cohesion, skills, inclusiveness and reduction of isolation for participants. Alchemy Film & Arts has dramatically improved local and regional access to artistic experiences – film-watching, attending exhibitions, and film-making, in a region that has little equivalent contemporary art provision.

Summer 2019 will see the launch of Film Town: a community oriented creative learning programme, delivered by Alchemy Film & Arts in the town of Hawick. This will involve the establishment of an open access media lab, community filmmaking workshops delivered with partner organisations, local screenings and exhibitions, and the development of our volunteer programme.

### *Artists, Staff, Volunteers and Trustees*

Alchemy Film & Arts is managed by a board of trustees from diverse professional backgrounds with a range of skills, experience and connections. Trustees are also directors of the charity for the purpose of the Companies Act. The constitution provides for the board to be refreshed. Trustees are responsible for overall governance, financial accountability and guidance, meeting at least six times per year. Annual accounts are independently examined.

The principal leadership and creative knowledge is provided by the Creative Director appointed by the board. Project leaders and managers are appointed as required and report to the Creative Director. The company has no employees. All staff are contracted as consultants. Much of our success will continue to depend on our investment in building and retaining the expertise of our team.

## Review

Alchemy Film & Arts is committed to creating opportunities that are inclusive to a variety of communities.

Synopsis of protected characteristic representation within Hawick:

- Age: Hawick High School takes pupils from many feeder primary schools, as far as Newcastleton. Hawick has several nurseries, several homes for the elderly and sheltered accommodation. There is a dedicated school, The Arches, in Hawick to support children with behavioral and social difficulties, who cannot access mainstream education. These children are referred to the centre through social work services or other schools.
- Disability: Hawick has two local health centres and dedicated disability support we have worked with in the past.
- Race/Ethnicity: Hawick has predominantly a white British population. There are Asian and Eastern European communities and Syrian refugees have joined the Borders community over the last year.
- Religion/Belief: There are at least 20 churches in Hawick, which is predominantly Christian. The Borders Islamic Society operates from Galashiels and the Borders is also home to other spiritual centres such as Samye Ling Tibetan Buddhist Monastery and Chisholme Institute, which offers non-denominational courses in spiritual education.
- Sex/Gender: Prominent cultures of the Common Riding and rugby in Hawick are relatively male dominated. We recently connected with Trans Alliance Scotland for Trans rights training.
- Sexual Orientation: There is an active LGBT Equality group in the Borders. We have engaged with them through Diversity Week and are in conversation about filmmaking workshops.
- Socio economic deprivation: The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, the Scottish Government's official tool for establishing a scale of deprivation throughout Scotland, lists multiple areas in Hawick as '1' in its Most Deprived Decile rankings. This includes areas in the west of Hawick, with other areas in central Hawick ranking slightly better at '3' and a large area remaining firmly at '1' in Hawick's Burnfoot community. We have delivered workshops previously with Burnfoot Community Hub and began to shape our approach around the participants specific needs and interests.

## Identifying Barriers

### *Audience*

We are committed to the widest possible inclusion in Alchemy's festival, exhibition and events. Potential barriers to this are:

- Location: Hawick is situated in the Scottish Borders and is a rural town without a train station. This is restrictive in terms of time and travel costs. Most of our audiences are either local or international visitors for the large event of the festival. There is a barrier to national audiences making the trip to Hawick for our exhibitions and public events.
- Costs: Alchemy hosts a mixture of free and ticketed events; always keeping affordability in mind. With the lack of travel provisions, costs tend to rise.
- Accessibility: Alchemy hosts events, where possible, in venues with disabled access and facilities. Partners such as Heart of Hawick, where our office is situated, are well equipped to welcome audiences with disabilities.
- Harder to reach groups: Alchemy advertises events and exhibitions widely in the locality and targets local groups to encourage participation. Often people have a pre-determined opinion on the arts and it not being for them. We try to tackle that by finding crossovers in points of interest.

### *Artists and Filmmakers*

Alchemy is committed to working with a range of artists with different backgrounds and cultures, potential barriers to this are:

- Accommodation: Accommodation options in Hawick are extremely limited, especially during the busy festival time, and often cause organisational strain.
- Visas: International artists are required to apply for a tier 5 visa in order to come to the UK for a limited period. As restrictions on immigration continue to increase this has an effect on the time and costs involved in securing the visa.

### *Board of Trustees*

Alchemy believes it is important for the board to have representation from a broad range of members from the local community, from key professional fields, from a range of ages and a balanced gender mix, potential barriers to this are:

- Local interest: There are a limited number of local people available with the skills to join the board.
- Travel: Board members from other parts of Scotland and the UK would be required to travel long distances to board meetings.

### *Staff*

Alchemy is committed to employing the best person for the job, regardless of background. Potential barriers are:

- Location: Hawick is relatively rural and without the train line. This can be restrictive for employing staff that are willing to relocate. Bus routes between more local towns and villages are continuing to decrease, making rural isolation an increasing problem for those without access to a car.
- Diversity: as there are fewer people from an ethnic diverse background living in the area, it is less likely to engage such people as staff.

## **OUR PLAN**

We want to continue to diversify the audiences, staff and artists we work with. We have identified two protected characteristics in particular from the list provided to focus on: Age and Socio Economic Deprivation. We will endeavour to do all that we can to continue to consider the other protected characteristics on the list, and we are also committed to creating inclusive opportunities for those suffering from mental health issues.

We want to:

- Improve visibility of our performance against equality outcomes.
- Increase understanding among the staff and board of what a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion means.
- Diversify audiences in line with the diversification of the local community and encourage participation of people from protected groups, providing them with equal opportunities

Over our current three-year programme Alchemy will focus on the following protected characteristics:

- Age: Hawick's elderly population is increasing as the provision of sheltered accommodation and care homes has increased in recent years. We want to reflect this large portion of the community in our audiences. We also want to bring the older generation together with the younger, and introduce more creative opportunities to younger people. Alchemy is the only Creative Scotland Regular Funded Organisation in the Scottish Borders, and currently culture is underprovided for, with young people travelling to the city for creative opportunities.
- Socio economic deprivation: Hawick's overall economy has weakened at a rate quicker than any other Borders town in recent years. With the loss of significant core industry - employers such as Pringle and Peter Scott - the Hawick population has been steadily decreasing, at a record low, contributing to significant economic and social decline in the area. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, the Scottish Government's official tool for establishing a scale of deprivation throughout Scotland, lists multiple areas in Hawick as '1' in its Most Deprived Decile rankings. We want to encourage pride of place in Hawick and allow opportunities for skills development (both technical skills and softer skills).

How do we plan to do this?

- Collect equalities data for staff, interns, artists and trustees
- Identify with Creative Scotland a way forward to collect data from the community in a non-intrusive manner
- Choose an EDI Leader from both the staff and the board to take the lead
- Choose EDI champions for each of the protected characteristics our EDI plan is focussing on
- Identify training for staff
- Integrate EDI into programme, festival and events planning
- Develop partnerships with local and national advocacy groups and service deliverers

Monitoring

- The EDI audience data will be reviewed at quarterly staff meetings to establish progress
- The Director and staff will demonstrate commitment to the EDI plan, building it into the business plan and collecting data

## Objectives

Objective	Task	Target and date	Measures of success	Actual performance
<p><b>To diversify audiences in line with the diversification of the local community and encourage participation from a wide age range, providing them with equal opportunities.</b></p>	<p>1. Link with care homes and sheltered housing to gain insight into professional expertise. 2. Link with schools and youth groups to identify appropriate programming.</p>	<p>1. Period of research October 2018 – January 2019 working with potential partners. 2. Distinct strategy for inclusion by Autumn 2019. 3. By Winter 2019 programme of engagement events launched target towards inclusion of wide age range. 4. One fully intergenerational working example per year.</p>	<p>Target audiences have increased by 10% year on year. At least one barrier to inclusion identified and mitigated each year.</p>	<p>The period of research is underway, with clear progress being made. Many of our volunteers are either retired or young students.</p> <p>Relationships with elderly communities and local/national specialists are already established and will be expanded on to achieve targets.</p> <p>We held an exhibition in January 2019 that engaged diverse intergenerational audiences.</p> <p>We have begun conversations with Film Town partners regarding partnership working and delivery of filmmaking workshops.</p>
<p><b>To diversify audiences in line with the diversification of the local community and encourage participation of</b></p>	<p>1. Further develop partnerships with local groups and Borders Council to assess potential barriers and solutions. 2. Create a programme with regular evaluation</p>	<p>1. Initial meetings with Borders Council housing department and Burnfoot Community Hub by January 2019. 2. Work with facilitators to develop workshop methods that develop</p>	<p>Target audiences have increased by 5% year on year. At least one barrier to inclusion identified and mitigated each year.</p>	<p>We have worked in the past with Burnfoot Community Hub and have confirmed with them a capacity to work together in the coming year.</p> <p>We are currently developing an information sheet that highlights to potential partners, such as</p>

<p><b>people affected by socio-economic deprivation providing them with equal opportunities</b></p>	<p>that is informed and shaped by participants' feedback.</p>	<p>skills in both technical aspects and 'softer' aspects, such as working together. 3. 6-12 week programmes with local partners 4. Evaluation methods developed to monitor growth and impact.</p>		<p>educational psychologists and those working in employment pathways, the ways experimental filmmaking can encourage growth in communication, team working, visual reading and other social benefits.</p>
<p><b>Ongoing: Increase awareness and understanding of the board and staff of EDI best practices and the performance of Alchemy</b></p>	<p>1. Review equalities policy in conjunction with the staff and board. 2. Identify relevant training needs and opportunities.</p>	<p>1. HR and equalities policy reviewed and amended by December 2018. 2. Board champions established by February 2019.</p>	<p>Equalities policy updated. Training plan undertaken between February and December 2019.  Greater overall understanding and engagement with EDI from staff.</p>	<p>Alchemy's Programme Manager has previously attended training regarding mental health awareness, working with minority ethnic communities, intergenerational working and more recently, Trans rights training. She will continue to seek training surrounding EDI in a wider sense, and Age and Socio Economic Deprivation specifically.  Trustees of the board come from different professional backgrounds, such as education and disability support, we will continue to harness their knowledge.</p>

<p><b>Ongoing:</b> <b>Improve</b> <b>visibility of our</b> <b>performance</b> <b>against equality</b> <b>outcomes</b></p>	<p>1. Discuss and produce methods of collecting equalities data. 2. Monitor performance against EDI targets at board meetings.</p>	<p>1. EDI data collection method in place by Summer 2019, for audience, staff and board. 2. Above targets met at their specified times</p>	<p>Data collected and published for discussion at board meetings and for reporting to external stakeholders.</p> <p>More detailed audience data, for future planning and targets, by August 2019</p>	<p>Audience analysis of digital communication is now being regularly reviewed.</p> <p>We are keeping records of our audience statistics, including volunteers and new participants.</p> <p>We are undergoing a period of research, looking into examples such as Is this the Best it Can Be? Toolkit from Creative Scotland/Artworks Scotland. Also considering Evaluation Support Scotland.</p>
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