

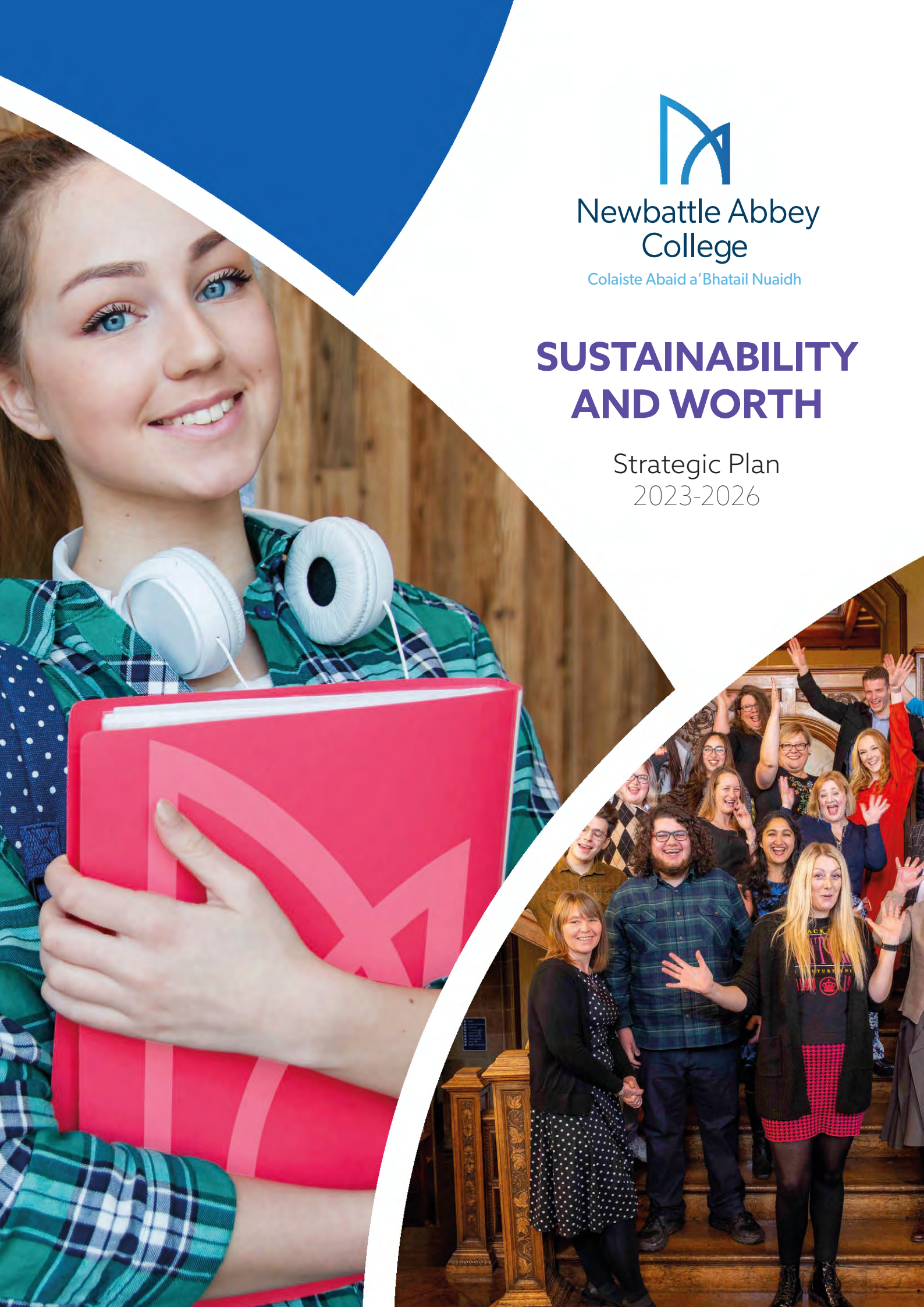


Newbattle Abbey
College

Colaiste Abaid a' Bhatail Nuaidh

SUSTAINABILITY AND WORTH

Strategic Plan
2023-2026





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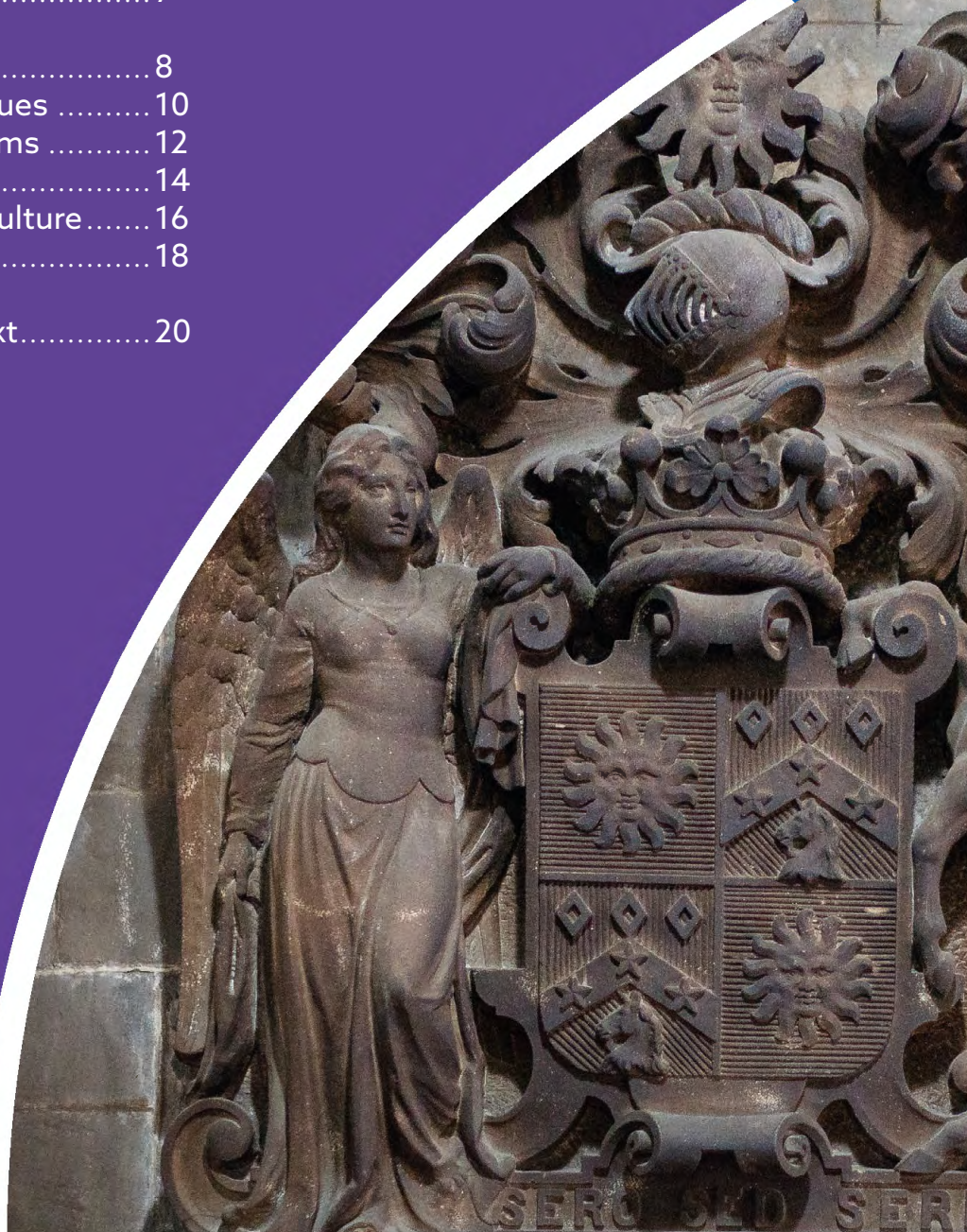
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Introduction

Newcastle Abbey College is a unique and special place.

Since our estate was gifted to the people of Scotland in 1937, the College has changed lives by providing routes into education. As times have moved on the College has moved with them, always staying true to the ethos of providing access to further and higher education. Our beautiful estate is steeped in culture and history, from its roots as a Cistercian monastery founded in 1140, through its time as a stately home for the Earls of Lothian to the College it is today. The estate is our campus, and it enriches the experiences of our learners and visitors. Looking ahead, Newcastle Abbey College has never been more relevant. We are determined to ensure that the special experiences and opportunities that the College provides make a significant contribution to creating a more equal and inclusive Scotland. This Strategic Plan recognises the challenges and opportunities ahead as well as the need for the College's provision, and sets out how we will continue to provide exceptional learning experiences and change lives.

Jan Polley
Chair of the Board of Directors

Roddy Henry
Principal and Chief Executive

Our Context

Newbattle Abbey College has a proud track record of meeting the needs of adults and young people at points of transition, helping them change their lives for the better.

Set within an historic 16th century building and 125 acres of ancient woodland and parkland in Midlothian, a few miles from Edinburgh, the College operates under a Governing Deed of Trust, the Trustees of which have historically included the Principals and Vice Chancellors of Scotland’s ancient universities.

We receive core funding from the Scottish Funding Council as a specialist college, in recognition of our unique nature and contribution. The balance of our income is generated through a portfolio of funding and through commercial activities, the income from which is invested back into our curriculum and infrastructure to support our purpose.



Our Curriculum

Our curriculum is constantly evolving to provide the best possible opportunities for access and progression while staying true to our values.

Partnership working and collaboration have always been key strengths, and we work tirelessly with partners to extend our curriculum and progression pathways. The Associate Degree programme delivered via our long-standing partnership with Queen Margaret University provides a direct route into second year of a number of the University’s degrees. The Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Horticulture is delivered in partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands, Argyll College, providing an industry-relevant qualification with practical elements carried out on our estate. The Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) provides a route into higher education for adults returners and our Preparation for Further Education course enables people returning to learning or leaving school to find their feet before choosing their next steps. Our Rural Skills course utilises our beautiful estate to provide an outdoor-learning access route and a progression pathway into further learning or employment.

We offer a number of short courses, including beekeeping and a range of woodland craft and outdoor learning courses, often with a wellbeing focus. We have celebrated and promoted Gaelic language and culture for a number of years and deliver beginner and intermediate Gaelic language courses with support from the Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (GLAIF) and Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Our innovative Forest College delivers Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards (FOLA), providing skills and leadership qualifications across SCQF levels 2 to 8, and a range of other outdoor learning and wellbeing opportunities. The College is the awarding body for FOLA and also for the Adult Achievement Awards (AAA), which enable adults to gain accreditation for their learning and achievements in a range of contexts, including volunteering and the workplace. AAAs are available from SCQF levels 2 to 6. Both FOLA and AAA are delivered across Scotland by accredited centres, including other colleges, universities, local authorities and third-sector organisations.

We work with a range of partners, including Midlothian Council and local and national third-sector organisations, who promote and sign-post our curriculum and support adults and young people in transition. A recent collaboration with the Open University in Scotland will further enhance progression options for Newbattle students.

“The curriculum is designed to promote inclusion and access for learners of all abilities and backgrounds”

Education Scotland, Jan 2022



Our Reach and Impact

The College makes a significant contribution to its local community and plays a strategic, national role both through its provision and in promoting adult learning through representation, extensive partnership working and collaboration. We constantly strive to ensure our provision reflects local and national economic and social needs with a clear focus on access and inclusion. In addition, the College has a growing international dimension, with new partnerships adding value to our student experience and raising the profile of Newbattle and Scotland with a wider audience.

Local and Regional

The College makes an important contribution to the people and communities in Midlothian and the wider Lothian and Borders region, responding to the needs of individuals and the economy. Many of our students have faced challenges and find our curriculum and special environment create the right place for them to take their next steps towards fulfilling their potential.

"Almost all learners benefit significantly in relation to their own personal development through attending programmes delivered at Newbattle Abbey College. They experience improvement in self-esteem and increased levels of self-confidence and self-worth"

Education Scotland, Jan 2022

The College is a key member of the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership and supports the East Lothian Adult Learning Partnership through its outdoor learning programmes. We work in close collaboration with other providers in the region, including colleges, universities, local authorities and third-sector organisations.

We have strong links with Midlothian's Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability team and with local schools. Young people in secondary, and some in primary, have attained our Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards (FOLA). For some young people, and those facing the biggest life challenges, the FOLA is the only qualification they leave school with.

We also work closely with the Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 Project, a third-sector organisation who support and encourage over 300 young people every year. Y2K and Newbattle work together to help young people in need of support to transition from school to further learning.

As well as being an important employer in the local area, the College's commercial activities support a range of local businesses and organisations by providing an events and meetings venue.

The Newbattle Business Park, which the College operates on behalf of the Trust, is home to over 40 small and medium sized businesses.



National

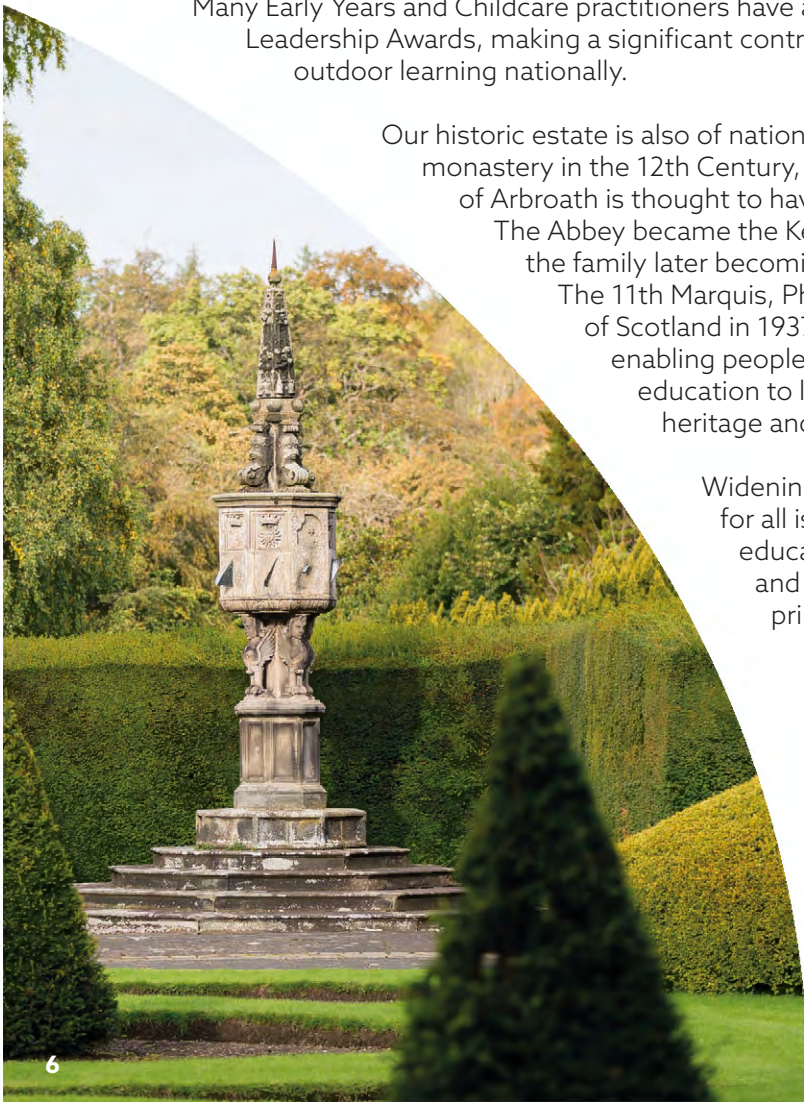
Newbattle has long been a symbol of the national commitment to adult learning and to widening access to higher and further education. The College was instrumental in the formation of the National Adult Learning Forum in 2013 and has hosted the annual Adult Learning Conference since. It is now a key member of Scotland’s Adult Learning Strategic Forum and helped draft the Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland 2022-2027.

Following their development in 2015, our Adult Achievement Awards are now delivered by accredited centres all over Scotland. These Awards are leading the way in terms of increasing access to accredited learning underpinned by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), creating positive pathways for adult learners.

Our Forest College initiative has flourished since it was launched in 2019, with 13 accredited centres across Scotland currently delivering around 500 skills and leadership awards annually. Many Early Years and Childcare practitioners have achieved our Forest and Outdoor Leadership Awards, making a significant contribution to promoting and supporting outdoor learning nationally.

Our historic estate is also of national significance. Founded as a Cistercian monastery in the 12th Century, the decision that led to the Declaration of Arbroath is thought to have been made at the Abbey in 1320. The Abbey became the Kerr family home in the 16th Century, the family later becoming the Earls and then Marquis of Lothian. The 11th Marquis, Philip Kerr, gifted Newbattle to the people of Scotland in 1937 to become an adult residential college, enabling people who had missed out on further education to learn in an environment rich in heritage and culture.

Widening access to further and higher education for all is now a central policy driver in Scottish education, and Newbattle is still an active and symbolic force for that important principle.



International

Newbattle has a growing international profile and reach. The online conference held in 2020 to celebrate the centenary of the conception of the Declaration of Arbroath reached an international audience.

The College has hosted international language school groups for many years, the draw of our estate and location proving a popular gateway to Scottish culture for hundreds of young people from across the globe.

In 2022 we welcomed the first cohorts of Faculty and students from the University of Wisconsin System to Newbattle. This long-term partnership will see students staying and studying at the College throughout the year, many studying Scottish politics, history and culture. Both parties are excited about this new partnership and the potential for collaboration across students and staff, enriching and enhancing the student experience.

“The current curriculum offer attracts learners who are seeking the high quality support and nurturing approach the college offers”

Education Scotland, Jan 2022





Our Purpose

Our purpose is three-fold:



To be a nurturing learning community that changes and enriches lives



To champion lifelong learning and access to education for all



To be a progressive custodian of our historic and beautiful estate

There are broadly three aspects to our work:



Curriculum:

The courses and experiences that we create and provide for, and with, our learners.



Community and Culture:

The nurturing community of learners and staff that makes the College what it is, and the wider community of lifelong learning, of which we are part. The rich culture and heritage that we are rooted in as an historic site and place of learning.

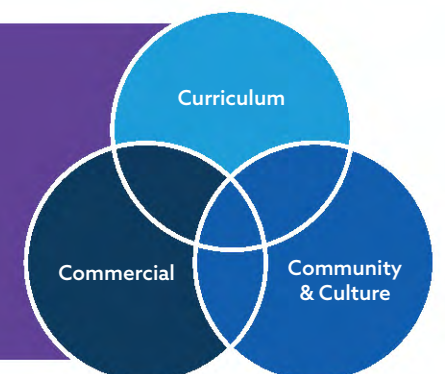


Commercial Activity:

The experiences that we create and provide for our visitors and the individuals and organisations who use our services.

Embracing the connections

It is the nature of and the interdependency between these three aspects of our work that make the College special. Each aspect informs and enriches the others and we will thrive by actively seeking opportunities for further enrichment.





Our Vision & Values



Newcastle Abbey College will:



Change lives and unlock opportunity



Be a wonderful place to learn, work and visit



Thrive as a model of sustainability and worth

Our Values

Inclusive



We actively promote and embrace diversity and we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity.

Caring



We act with compassion, integrity and respect at all times, whether supporting our students and visitors or working with our partners and colleagues.

Forward thinking



We look to the future in an ever-changing world, welcome new ideas and fresh approaches and act responsibly to protect the environment.

Empowering



We empower our students by unlocking opportunity and empower our staff by supporting their autonomy and confidence to make decisions and solve problems.

Collaborative



We work as a team to achieve our purpose and with our strategic partners to realise our vision.



Our Strategic Aims



Our Curriculum

We will stay true to the core ethos of enabling access to education on which the College was founded.

We will ensure that we work with our partners and communities to continue to identify those in most need of the unique environment the College offers, and shape our provision in response.



Community & Culture

We will maintain a culture of compassion and respect within our nurturing learning community.

We will reach out to and invite in our local community, and utilise our history and profile to highlight the need for lifelong learning and access to education nationally and internationally.



Commercial Activity

Recognising that all revenue from our commercial activities goes to supporting our learners, we will maximise opportunities for income generation.

We will strive to align our commercial activities to our core ethos with the joint goal of achieving financial sustainability, in a challenging time and furthering our purpose and vision.



Curriculum



Curriculum Strategic Objectives

We will:

- Provide an excellent experience for our learners, evidenced by high retention and attainment.
- Grow our curriculum offer to increase access and progression opportunities
- Extend our curriculum and progression routes through partnership and collaboration
- Utilise our whole campus, including its history and culture
- Focus on need and demand
- Provide preparation for employment as well as for further learning
- Maximise our local contribution to providing access to learning for all
- Maintain and adapt our national and specialist roles





Community and Culture



Community and Culture Strategic Objectives

We will:

- Ensure a vibrant, forward-looking community of learners, visitors and staff
- Invest in our staff to build a culture of creativity, empowerment and accountability
- Be an integral and valued part of our local community
- Ensure that equality, diversity, access and inclusion are explicit in all we do
- Place wellbeing and environmental sustainability at the heart of our work
- Embrace our cultural heritage
- Raise our profile and contribute to lifelong learning locally, nationally and internationally
- Develop our Alumni and supporters/friends of Newbattle





Commercial Activity



Commercial Activity Strategic Objectives

We will:

- Maximise the utilisation of our residences and event spaces
- Grow our non-core funded learning provision
- Focus on activities with best return on investment and closest alignment to our purpose and vision
- Invest in our accommodation and quality of service
- Make the most of our estate
- Seek non-recurrent grant funded work that aligns to our purpose and vision

Monitoring Our Progress

We will develop measures of success and monitor progress against our strategic aims and objectives regularly, reporting annually on our overall progress, and adjust our goals to take account of the rapidly changing environment we operate in.



Strategic Context

Scotland’s National Performance Framework describes the Scottish Government’s ambitions for Scotland. It aims to create a more successful Scotland; by ensuring all people have opportunities and increased wellbeing, by creating sustainable and inclusive growth, by reducing inequalities and by giving equal importance to economic, environmental and social progress.

The National Outcomes describe the kind of Scotland the Framework aims to create. The purpose, vision, values and strategic aims laid out in our Strategic Plan respond and contribute to the National Outcomes identified in the Framework.



Strategic Agendas

We have identified four strategic agendas with the most direct relevance for and influence on our Strategic Plan at its outset, and which illustrate the College’s local and national roles:

- Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland 2022 to 2027:**
The strategy sets out Scottish Government’s actions to improve life chances for adult learners across Scotland. It outlines how the Government will ensure there are accessible opportunities for adults to learn throughout their lives. The Adult Learning Strategic Forum for Scotland, of which the College is a lead member, guided the development of the strategy and will oversee the implementation of its action plan.
- Single Midlothian Plan 2022-23:**
The plan shows how the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership (CPP) will meet the needs of its local communities, make improvements in people’s lives and improve outcomes for individuals and communities. The College, as an anchor institution in Midlothian, is a member of the CPP and of the CPP Board. The Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland and the Single Midlothian Plan are key strategic agendas for the College at national and local levels respectively.
- Scottish Funding Council Review of Tertiary Provision:**
The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is the national strategic body that funds colleges and universities. In June 2020, Scottish Government Ministers asked SFC to review how it could best fulfil its mission of securing coherent, good quality, sustainable tertiary education and research in changing times. The Review reported its findings in June 2021. The College is mindful of the Review’s recommendations and will play its part in developing the emerging Purpose and Principles of post-school education in Scotland as part of the wider educational reform.
- Scotland’s National Strategy for Economic Transformation:**
The strategy recognises the challenges and opportunities facing Scotland and sets out how it will make the Scottish economy more prosperous, productive and internationally competitive. The College’s strategic aims and objectives resonate particularly with the Programme of Action for a Skilled Workforce and addressing disadvantage and inequality.

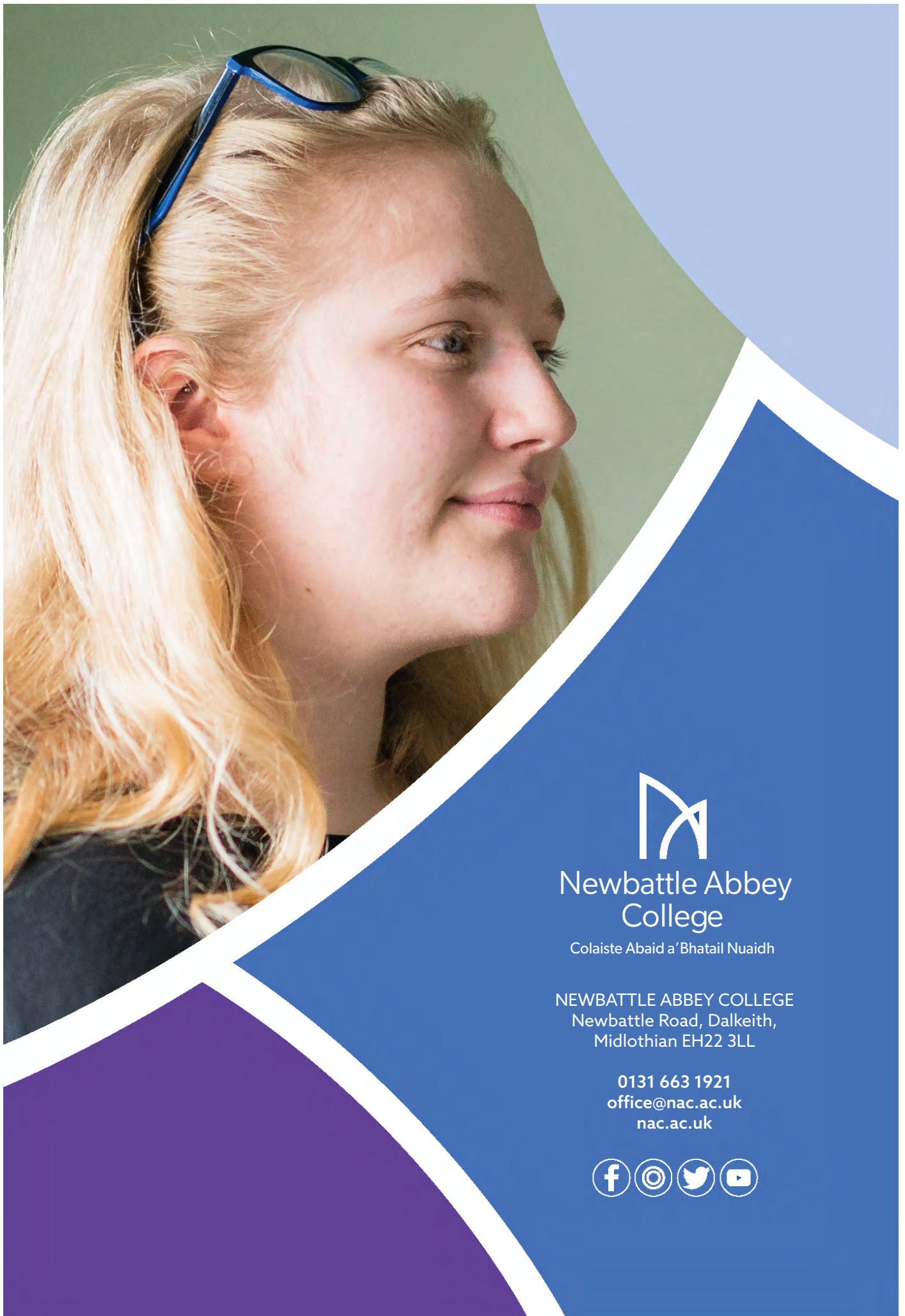


Strategic Plan 2023-2026: Alignment with Key Strategic Agendas

NAC STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026	ADULT LEARNING STRATEGY 2022-2027	SINGLE MIDLOTHIAN PLAN 2022-23
Curriculum Community and Culture Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to accredited learning to support progression/transition for adult learners • Increase online learning options for adult learners • Increase availability of/access to family learning • Build accessible, integrated and positive pathways for lifelong learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase adult learning opportunities • Raise adult qualification levels • Improve destinations and outcomes for young people, young carers and care experienced people • Outdoor learning for adults and young people • Family learning • Reduce educational inequalities • Pathways to employment
Community and Culture Curriculum Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase learning activity that supports democratic involvement and community engagement • Partnership working to ensure needs of adult learners are at the heart of decision making • Increase public awareness of adult learning opportunities, locally and nationally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting people • Trauma informed practice • Supporting mental health and wellbeing • Increase digital inclusion • Climate action • 20 minute neighbourhood • Biodiversity and citizen science • Promote local food growing
Commercial Curriculum Community and Culture		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development • Tourism

SFC REVIEW OF TERTIARY PROVISION: RECOMMENDATIONS	SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widening access • Lifelong learning opportunities • University collaborations/tertiary pathfinders • School-College partnerships • Micro-credentials • Online and blended learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the aims of the adult Learning Strategy • Develop digitally-enabled learning at SCQF level 6 • Short courses for industry • Skills planning in partnership • Green skills • Lifelong learning, upskilling and retraining • Embed entrepreneurship in the curriculum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate on estate usage • Climate action • International education connections • Alumni connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to learning to meet the needs of people in poverty • Learning to help people into the labour market • Attract and retain talent and make the best of our staff skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation • Financial sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace and support entrepreneurial thinking





Newbattle Abbey College

Colaiste Abaid a'Bhatail Nuaidh

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