

**The Royal Photographic Society
of Great Britain**

Strategic Plan 2017-2022

“the vision to create”

Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

Incorporated by Royal Charter



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Introduction

The Society's trustees are responsible for preparing and keeping under review the Society's strategic plan. The 2017-2022 plan is the outcome of a wide-ranging consultation with the Society's Special Interest Groups, Regions and staff. It is intended to ensure that the Society's activities and resources are aligned to the seven objectives noted below and it is underpinned by an operational plan to which the staff and volunteers work. The trustees will review and report on progress in realising the objectives.

Note: reference to 'photographer' or 'photographers' is used throughout to mean anyone with an interest in photography, whether they are practicing or not. The Society's principal governing document, its Royal Charter defines photography as: 'the Art or Science of the recording of light or other radiation on any medium on which an image is produced or from which any image may by any means be produced.'

Strapline: *The vision to create*

Vision and objectives

The Royal Photographic Society is a United Kingdom registered charity (no. 1107831) and operates under a Royal Charter, By-laws and Rules.¹ It is the UK's leading photography organisation with a distinguished heritage, a relevance to the present and a vision for the future. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in photography. Although The Society is primarily focused on the United Kingdom in terms of its activities and membership it has an international reach. The Society's trustees define it as a United Kingdom organisation with an international membership.²

The Society's aim, defined at its inception in 1853, was 'to promote the art and science of photography'. The Society's Royal Charter, granted on 27 July January 2004, redefined its objectives to 'educate members of the public by increasing their knowledge and understanding of Photography and in doing so to promote the highest standards of achievement in Photography in order to encourage public appreciation of Photography.'

Both the art and science are accorded equal weight in the Charter's definition of Photography and both are as relevant today as they were when our Society was founded. The challenges to the Art posed by the growing capability of the science and technology are great and our Society must embrace both challenges if we are to continue to be the world's foremost body in Photography.

The Charter sets out the activities of the Society in realising these objectives as:

- holding or promoting events meetings, seminars, conferences and exhibitions
- organising or promoting competitions, examinations and appraisals whether or not leading to the granting of awards and distinctions
- promoting or carrying out research
- providing advice
- publishing or distributing information
- co-operating with other bodies
- supporting administering or setting-up other charities³

The Society's trustees interpret those objectives in the Charter as a vision and a mission for the future:

¹ The Charter, By-Laws and Rules, plus day-to-day Management, Financial and Distinction procedures and policy documents are published on the Society's website.

² Agreed by The Society's trustees and communicated by the President to the Overseas Chapters in July 2014.

³ The Royal Photographic Society [Charter of Incorporation](#), 27 July 2004 and published on the Society's website.

Vision

To be the leading, learned community for photographers, underpinned by a robust educational platform.

Mission

To promote and encourage the highest standards of photography through exhibitions, publications and activities; and to support individual achievement through education and recognition, through a community of like-minded photographers.

Strategic Aims

Delivering The Society's vision is dependent on achieving six strategic aims, each comprising a number of strategic objectives. An internal operational document provides a series of operational objectives and delivery plans (costed and with timescales) required to realise the strategic aims. The operational objectives set the framework for the day-to-day activities of the Society and ensure that the Society's future development is aligned to its vision and is responsive to the needs of photography, the Society's membership, and to the general public.

The aims are:

1. Build on our rich tradition and long history to strengthen our contemporary relevance.
2. Promote the highest standards of photography, photographic education and the science underpinning it.
3. Support photographers and writers on photography; act as an advocate for photography.
4. Enrich our membership.
5. Diversify our sources of funding.
6. Strengthen the cohesion between the different elements of the Society.

Strategic Objectives

1: Build on our rich tradition and long history to strengthen our contemporary relevance.

Context

Our distinguished history and tradition provide a solid foundation on which to build the Society for the future. Our association with the RPS Collection, distinguished photographers and scientists places us in an enviable position, when compared with other photographic organisations. However, we need to build on our tradition to ensure that we are still relevant in rapidly changing photography world.

Summary Objectives

- Maximise collaboration with the V&A to use the RPS Collection for the benefit of photographers.
- Build a contemporary permanent collection.
- Highlight our past and current members and develop opportunities from these associations.
- Stay informed about developments – aesthetic, scientific and cultural - in the photography world.
- Have a presence at national and international festivals, conferences , symposia and events.
- Recognise young talent through awards and bursaries
- Encourage previous award recipients to contribute to the Society's activities.
- Ensure the Society is seen as a significant contributor to the international arts and science community.

2: PROMOTE THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND PHOTOGRAPHIC EDUCATION

Context

The objectives of the Royal Charter demand the highest standards of photography. This is currently achieved through our prestigious awards ceremony, international exhibitions and promotion of scientific imaging. In recent years, our standards in other parts of the organisation have not always kept pace with developments in the art world.

Strategic Objectives

2a. Promote the highest standards of photography

- Support and publicise the work of the Society's award recipients.
- Ensure Groups, Regions and Chapters maintain the Society's quality standards.
- Provide a home for cutting-edge and experimental photography.
- Produce learned publications, such as online essays and an annual printed volume.
- Establish a Society gallery

2b. Promote the highest standards photographic education

- Provide access to educational opportunities to facilitate an individual's progress.
- Enhance our online experience.
- Ensure our distinctions and qualifications remain relevant to current photographic practice.
- Introduce collaborative arrangements with higher education bodies.
- Establish an in-house modular diploma.
- Develop a programme of learning with both physical and virtual components.
- Increase our physical learning spaces

3: SUPPORT PHOTOGRAPHERS AND USERS OF PHOTOGRAPHY; ACT AS AN ADVOCATE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY.

Context

The Society's original objective was to promote the art and science of photography. This was at a time when photography was a new art form, yet to claim a place amongst the established arts, and the science behind it was barely understood. Today, some 160 years later, its original objective is still relevant despite changes in the science and technology of photography, because these changes have expanded the boundaries of photography, and that future changes will continue to expand the boundaries..

The Society is in a unique position to promote photography and imaging. Its charitable status requires it to do so and with a broad membership covering all aspects of photography and image making, as well as individuals using images, it has the expertise to do so.

The Society has a brief to support all photographers irrespective of their status as professionals or amateurs, whether they take images, make use of them or develop the science behind them and irrespective of whether they are members or not.

Strategic Objectives

- Respond to major issues affecting photographer at all levels and those using images
- Initiate campaigns that seek to preserve or enhance the status of photography.
- Provide expert opinion on photographic history, science, trends and current matters.

4: ENRICH OUR MEMBERSHIP.

Context

As a registered charity the Society is required to undertake work for the public benefit. As a membership organisation, largely reliant on subscription income, the Society's members are central to its viability. Our membership is currently around 11,700 and split UK (85 percent)/international (15 per cent); male/female (76/24 percent) with an average age of 61 years.

Strategic Objectives

- Ensure that there are no barriers to membership on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity and for those with disabilities.
- Broaden the membership base to include more members, who are not necessarily practicing photographers, but are working with photography, for example, scientists, authors, curators, printers and art directors.
- Improve our membership benefits.
- Engage with professional and student communities.
- Introduce a meaningful volunteer policy.
- Create networking opportunities.

5: DIVERSIFY OUR SOURCES OF FUNDING

Context

Around 61 percent⁴ of the Society's annual turnover of c.£1.6 million comes from members' subscriptions. The remainder is made up of operational income, plus income from its investment fund, corporate support and sales of merchandise and publications. Full details of the Society's income and expenditure can be found in its *Annual Report and Accounts* on the Society website or on the Charity Commission website.⁵

Strategic Objectives

- Reduce the Society's dependence on membership fees.
- Maximise the opportunities afforded by our heritage.
- Organise high profile fund-raising initiatives for specific projects.
- Develop commercial activities.
- Cultivate collaborations with organisations sharing our interests.
- Source sponsorship.

⁴ Based on total gross income, excluding donations.

⁵ See: <http://www.rps.org/about/organisation/rps-documents> or <http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=1107831&SubsidiaryNumber=0>

6. STRENGTHEN THE COHESION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF THE SOCIETY.

Context

Whilst the main thrust of the Society's initiatives is originated by its headquarters staff, an increasing level of activity is instigated by the Society's volunteers within seventeen geographical Regions, fourteen Special Interest Groups and nineteen Overseas Chapters. Additionally, the Society has a number of committees, members of which are drawn from photographic, scientific and educational experts.

Strategic Objectives

- Increase collaboration and foster good working relations between the different sections of the Society.
- Ensure that there are no conflicting objectives amongst these sections.
- Identify and infill the gaps in the Society's organisational structure.
- Facilitate a better understanding of the complexity and diversity of the organisation, so that the volunteers can ensure their own sections remain relevant to the Society's needs.

Governance and Contacts

Governance

The Society's strategic aims are set and reviewed by its trustees who form its Council. The trustees comprise: the President, Vice President, Treasurer and four elected members, plus up to three co-opted members. Trustees are elected every two years and the next elections are due in 2017, 2019 and 2021.⁶

Council is supported by an Advisory Board consisting of representatives from the Society's Special Interest Groups and UK Regions, plus up to six elected members; in addition a number of committees work support the Society's staff and help the Society realise its objectives.⁷

Contacts

The Society can be reached at:

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The Chief Executive is: Dr Michael Pritchard FRPS:

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Details of the Society's Officers, trustees and staff can be found on the Society's website at:

<http://www.rps.org/about/organisation>

⁶ Following a review of the Society's governance conducted in 2016 the Society is likely to move to a rotating system of elections with effect from 2017.

⁷ The governance review proposed changes to the composition of the Advisory Board and these changes are due to approved by the membership at an EGM early 2017 and take effective with the new cycle starting from September 2017.