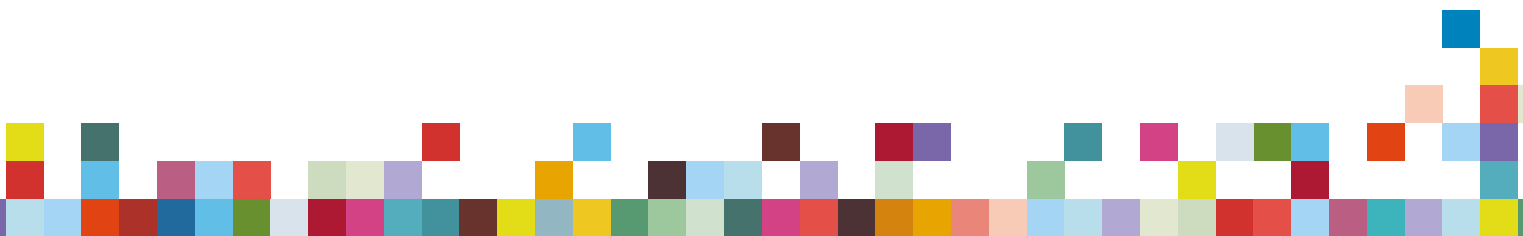


THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

# PHOTOGRAPHY FOR EVERYONE

Strategic Plan 2021-26



# THE IMPORTANCE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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We live in a diverse and multi-cultural society, where the ease and immediacy of photography offers unlimited potential for creativity and personal expression. Photographs and the complex language of photography empowers each of us to share our ideas and beliefs, to inform and alert, to influence emotions and to help fashion public opinion. Photography, and the imaging science that underpins the medium, can advance our social, cultural and economic well-being and our health.

As photographers we are creating a legacy of our environment, our politics, arts and science, all aspects of our society. We are preserving our public and private present through the photographs that we create of ourselves, of the people around us, and of our ever-changing world. The immediacy

and apparent truth of the photographic image can be easily misused or misinterpreted. We must become fluent in the language of photography, learn different ways of seeing, and understand how others will read the photographs that we create.

This new strategic plan is the outcome of extensive research and consultation by Trustees, Staff and Members. Since its formation in 1853, the Royal Photographic Society has played a leading role in the promotion of the art and science of photography around the world. Our plan recognises that this role is as important now as it has ever been, and presents a robust and sustainable roadmap for the future of the RPS.

**Simon Hill HonFRPS, President**

## INTRODUCTION

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At the RPS, we love photography, and the worlds of possibility that it opens to us - so we are all really excited to put this ambitious plan into action. Together with thousands of members, volunteers, photographers and partner organisations throughout the world, we will continue our much-loved exhibitions, journal, awards and education programmes, ensuring everyone feels welcome to join in.

But we want to go much further, to deliver a range of ambitious new projects, such as a community for young photographers, and the creation of the

UK's first Photographer Laureate. We will explore how the practice of photography impacts on mental health and develop new areas of photographic practice in this area; provide practical support for professional photographers; take a lead on issues such as environmental responsibility; and explain the fascinating science behind new imaging technologies.

I hope you will join us on the photographic journey ahead, and bring **Photography for Everyone** to life.

**Evan Dawson, CEO**

The Royal Photographic Society is committed to bringing photography to everyone. Founded when photography was in its infancy, today we are a world leading photographic community.

## OUR VISION

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A world where everyone is inspired, empowered and educated in the art and science of photography.

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## OUR MISSION

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To bring **inspiration, creativity** and **connection** through photography to people of all ages and backgrounds.

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The words “**inspire create** and **connect**” are the pillars of our strategy. Within each, we will deliver seven programmes, set out on the following pages.

## OUR AIMS

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Each of the following Aims underpin our programmes;

### Inclusion

At the RPS, we ensure that everyone can take part in photography, regardless of their ethnicity, their sexual and gender identity, age or any other aspect of their identity, background or circumstance. We have created an independent group of Critical Friends to help us track our progress.

### Environmental and social responsibility

The RPS recognises that our planet is experiencing a Climate Emergency. We will make every effort to reduce our own carbon footprint, while using the power of photography to influence the changes in society that urgently need to take place. Our Environment and Social Responsibility Committee is overseeing our work in this area.

### Member involvement

As a membership organisation, our greatest strength is the thousands of photographers who embody the RPS community throughout the world. We involve them in all our work as active participants, consultants and collaborators.

### Financial sustainability

In recent years, the RPS has run an annual deficit, which cannot be sustained any longer. We must now ensure all our operations and initiatives are properly resourced. In time, a wider funding base will provide new opportunities to expand our activities.

### Profile raising

We want to support everyone who loves photography, regardless of whether they label themselves a ‘photographer’. To achieve this, we will form new partnerships, open many more opportunities to non-members, and reach out more regularly to the general public.

# 1. INSPIRE “SEE PHOTOGRAPHY”

**We are inspired by great photography and photographers. We help everyone to access and understand this work, preserving it for future generations. We harness the unique power of photography to shed new light on subjects of importance and the changes in the art and science of photography.**

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## 1.1 Exhibitions

An inspiring programme of contemporary photography exhibitions that educate and engage visitors. Our exhibitions support creativity, science and new ideas, nurture photographic excellence, and strive to make photography accessible to everyone. Our open-call exhibitions (including the historic International Photography Exhibition) celebrate the work of international photographers and encourage new and emerging image-makers to participate.

## 1.2 The RPS Awards

The RPS Awards is a celebration of individuals who have made a significant contribution across different genres and applications of photography, including its art and science, alongside members who have supported the RPS. The categories continue to evolve, reflecting new ways of seeing, making and sharing photography.

## 1.3 The RPS Journal

First published in March 1853, the RPS Journal has appeared continuously ever since. With an award-winning new design in 2020, it continues to show inspirational, diverse and relevant photography from historic and contemporary photographers, alongside debating wider issues affecting photography and the RPS.

## 1.4 The ‘New’ RPS Collection <sup>NEW</sup>

The RPS’s historic collection is now housed at the V&A Museum in London.

The RPS will form a new Collection of photography relevant to its own history, relating to significant members, or that will support its educational activities. It will undertake to preserve it and make it available online and in person.

## 1.5 Campaigns <sup>NEW</sup>

The RPS represents the widest interests of photography, and will use its voice to speak on behalf of the science, art form and its creators through public communications and debates. This encompasses all the RPS’ activities, promoting them to the most relevant and engaged audiences.

## 1.6 Photographer Laureate <sup>NEW</sup>

In partnership with our Patron, the RPS will appoint a national Photographer Laureate to act as an ambassador for photography, record key national events and to engage in educational activities across all ages and groups. The Laureate will be awarded biennially.

## 1.7 Publication / Print Sales <sup>NEW</sup>

The RPS has a growing collection of historic images, and access to photography through its Honorary Fellows, Awardees and members. It will seek to make these more widely available through commercial activities, to support individual photographers and its own activities.

## 2. CREATE “MAKE PHOTOGRAPHY”

**Making photography helps us to lead creative and fulfilled lives. We support everyone to make the best photographs they can, encouraging a deeper understanding of the art and science of photography, and recognising those who achieve its highest standards. We provide leadership and resources for photographic education.**

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### 2.1 Education programme

We support everyone to improve their own practical and creative photography skills through a wide range of resources, talks, workshops and funding opportunities. This includes providing accessible and free support for individuals to help with the creation, understanding and appreciation of their own image making and that of others.

### 2.2 RPS Distinctions and Qualifications

RPS Distinctions are one of the most widely recognised and respected photography awards throughout the world. We support people to undertake our structured assessments through a tailored and friendly education programme, with a high standard of care and support for everyone.

### 2.3 Chartered Photographer <sup>NEW</sup>

The RPS will launch a Chartered Photographer scheme recognising professional competency in photography, through academic qualification, experience, professional membership, and other evidence. Supported by the leading professional bodies, managed by the RPS, it will provide the public with confidence that they are commissioning photographers working to the highest standards.

### 2.4 The photography “journey” <sup>NEW</sup>

Whether you use a smartphone camera or have an arsenal of sophisticated lenses, the RPS will support you on your journey in photography. We will create new ways to help you record and celebrate your progress.

### 2.5 National Photo Day <sup>NEW</sup>

Bringing together all parts of the RPS, we will create an annual event that celebrates photography and inspires the public to get involved through themes, live challenges, collaborations and events.

### 2.6 Photography for Wellbeing <sup>NEW</sup>

The practice of everyday photography can have a very positive impact on mental health. We will develop the evidence base for this, working in partnership with health and social care charities, to develop new practices and projects, helping people from many disadvantaged groups.

### 2.7 RPS House <sup>NEW</sup>

RPS House in Bristol has state of the art gallery and educational facilities, including a lecture theatre, library and digital classroom. It is a home for all photographers. We will develop new hands-on opportunities for families and individuals to enjoy experiences in photography.

## 3. CONNECT “SHARE PHOTOGRAPHY”

**Sharing photography is how we connect. We are a friendly community of member photographers around the world, sharing images, best practices, ideas, information and skills. We maintain centres of expertise in specific areas of photographic importance, and promote a sense of belonging, mentorship and inclusivity.**

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### 3.1 Regional Hubs

RPS members lead 16 active regional hubs throughout England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland. We ensure these are friendly and inclusive ways to engage with local photographers to share images and ideas.

### 3.2 International Community

We are a world-wide community of photographers. We have many active members, groups and “Chapters” throughout Asia, Australasia, Europe and North America. Over the years ahead, we hope to expand these further, providing more support for international members, and creating new connections between them through the work being done in the UK.

### 3.3 Specialist Groups

The RPS provides expert leadership across a range of different branches of photography, including Imaging Science, Landscape, Documentary, Nature and more. Membership of these groups is open to all RPS members.

We provide advice and expertise on matters relating to the science that underpins imaging and scientific photography. We initiate and support projects and educational activities around these areas and assists the editor of the RPS’s peer-reviewed Imaging Science Journal.

### 3.4 The RPS “at Home” **NEW**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the RPS has provided all of its projects and services online, reaching many more people than ever before, proving much-needed connections to the outside world. We will continue developing ways to engage people at home.

### 3.5 Young photographers **NEW**

We will create a vibrant support network for children and young people interested in photography, linking to our education resources and partnerships, with opportunities for personal development. We will also develop a programme for teachers and practitioners which is child led and will help to further the support network and deliver to a wider community.

### 3.6 Mentorship **NEW**

As a generous community of photographers, we will help individuals to improve through a new mentorship programme, linking beginners with more experienced photographers.

### 3.7 Multi-media destination **NEW**

The RPS is home to a wide range of important and inspirational photography, including video and multi-media content. We will continue developing our website and other channels to ensure these unique resources are widely accessible.

## WE CAN ACHIEVE THIS TOGETHER

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The RPS is a community of thousands of people who love photography and believe in its importance as an artistic, scientific and expressive medium. This strategy has been created with them, and will only be successful if everyone plays a part in its delivery, no matter how small. Our regional, international and specialist groups are all led by volunteers; and many eminent photographers also volunteer to help us with distinctions assessments, advice, talks and mentorship. This spirit of generosity has been the hallmark of the RPS since its foundation.

As a membership organisation, we receive an annual subscription from each of our members, which varies depending on their circumstances. This income will usually enable us to provide the “core” activities of the RPS - such as its regular Journal, website, education resources and competitions. We have also received some

generous gifts and legacies that enable us to provide annual bursaries and other support for specific projects.

Many of the new programmes we hope to deliver will need new funding to bring them to life. If you are able to help us in some way, please get in touch - we would love to hear from you. We are building a fund to help us start some of our most ambitious programmes - such as the new network for children and young people; and the mental-health and wellbeing programmes. These will be so exciting, leaving a lasting impact for thousands of people, and the practice of photography itself.

You can make a donation or find information about volunteering on the Support Us page on the RPS website [rps.org/support-us](https://www.rps.org/support-us), or do write to our CEO directly at [evan@rps.org](mailto:evan@rps.org) to start a conversation.

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This strategy has been created to provide a clear and ambitious direction for the RPS for the next five years. With special thanks to the volunteers, staff, friends of the RPS and the Board of Trustees that contributed to it; and specifically the sub team consisting of Evan Dawson, Heather Field, Andrew Golding and Simon Hill.

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**Back Cover images:** Top row; from top left, **Carlotta Cardana** Title TBC, **Jonathan Knowles** Frances and Nunu, **Henry Iddon** Title TBC, **Hazel Gwatkin LRPS** Honesty, Middle row; from middle left, **Mat Hay** Tree, **Alys Tomlinson** Daria, **Mat Hay** Tree, **Alys Tomlinson** Daria, **Susan Meiselas** Dee and Lisa on Mott Street, **Mary Anne Chilton** Upside Down Jellyfish, Bottom row; from bottom left, **Catherine Hyland** Maddens Wind Farm, **Nicholas Jones** Coral or Trees, **Natalie Christensen** A Good Day,

# PHOTOGRAPHY FOR EVERYONE

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## Patron

HRH The Duchess of Cambridge

## The Royal Photographic Society

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