Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee

Fact-finding visit to Ayr

Ayrshire College, Ayr Campus, 3 June 2019

Note of discussion

Introduction

Members of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee held a fact-finding event in Ayr, as part of the Committee's Inquiry into Arts Funding, on Monday 3 June 2019. The event was structured into two parts with discussion focussed on the key questions underpinning the Committee's Inquiry. Firstly, there was discussion with artists, creative freelancers and artistic stakeholders from Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway. Secondly, the Committee met with individuals, aged 16-24 from Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway, who wished to, or are, pursuing a career in the arts. The Members of the Committee who attended the event were—

- Joan McAlpine MSP (Convener)
- Kenneth Gibson MSP
- Jamie Greene MSP
- Stuart MacMillan MSP

In addition, John Scott, MSP for Ayr, attended the event.

The Committee wishes to place on record its thanks to all those who participated in the event and gratitude to Ayrshire College for hosting the event.

The discussions at the event were held on a Chatham House rules basis. Accordingly, this note provides an overview of some of the broad areas of discussion.

Discussion with stakeholders

Group 1 – led by Joan McAlpine MSP

The group began by discussing the **threats to funding** for the arts. Challenges cited included—

The sustainability of national lottery funding which contributes a significant proportion of Creative Scotland's budget.

The belief that **society doesn't value the arts** was raised as a significant threat. One participant said that in times of budget crisis the arts budget is the first to be cut. Some contributors said that if people don't have the opportunity to interact with the arts, they can't know how important they are. In terms of education, some contributors explained that the STEM agenda, while important, fails to recognise the importance of arts education and that it should be a STEAM agenda. Another

contributor discussed the wide range of opportunities for employment that the arts could include, such as television and film production and video game design.

The conversation evolved into a discussion about the **purpose of the arts** with many participants talking about the benefits of the arts for other policy outcomes such as health; but many also highlighted the need for art for its own sake. One contributor said that art can be appreciated at so many different levels, although another participant considered that publicly funded arts should be available to the widest possible audience.

One contributor noted that art venues are part of the heart of a community, which can bring volunteers together to support community arts. There was also They a perception that more radical arts take place in the city centres.

A contributor noted that it would be helpful if someone took the lead to take away the mystery of the arts and culture. They said that there is a lot of misconception between the difference between arts and entertainment but that art forms the basis of entertainment.

Touring theatres

One contributor noted that theatre projects are designed differently based on who the audience is and whether it will be toured (e.g. the need for cheaper and more flexible sets). They said that the production values will be greater in venues like the Lyceum but that there is greater public benefit in funding productions that are designed to be toured. Another contributor considered that the debate shouldn't be either/or.

One contributor commented that a very large proportion of people who enjoy and experience arts productions in the big cities are already wealthy and that this is effectively subsidising the arts for the middle class. They suggested that public money (as subsidy) will have the biggest impact in specific places.

Music Education

One participant said that the Youth Music Initiative now sits within the Scottish Government's Culture Portfolio and so this funding now comes from Creative Scotland. The council then uses this money strategically across the area. Music education programmes don't know how much funding they will have from year to year. The local authority is looking for the Initiative to be rolled out on a 3-year basis.

Another participant highlighted that a three-year funding cycle is key to assisting providers to plan in an effective way.

One contributor suggested that local authorities should have a grid to make sure that young people and citizens generally get equitable access to arts funding and that it should be more universally spread out.

A contributor said that there are funds within community education budgets that local authorities would like to access but it can only be used in the narrow prism of community education.

One contributor questioned whether Council funding and the Youth Music Initiative funding could be co-ordinated.

How should decisions be made?

There was considerable discussion about **match funding**. One contributor commented that Creative Scotland want to see some evidence of match-funding in order to be successful, something that is much more difficult to demonstrate for smaller organisations. Another participant said that match funding is a bad model because they all [organisations offering funding] have different criteria and different timescales and that is very challenging for artists and arts organisations. This was considered as resulting in everyone spending a huge amount of time completing application forms – lots of bureaucracy. Another contributor said that needing to match fund favours larger organisations to lever that additional match funding. They said that one can lever/play the system by using unrestricted funds one already has to evidence match funding for the purposes of an application, however, most of the funding for smaller organisations will be restricted funds.

A number of contributors discussed the **grant application process.** One contributor said that the capacity to complete grant applications and to get them all to integrate in a sustainable way is difficult. Another said that it would be very helpful to see what a 'best practice' application looks like, so that applicants have an idea of what funders are looking for.

One contributor said that when there isn't enough money, lots of people will be turned down. They said that during the last RFO round, many applications were assessed as being very good, however, the reason for not funding was a strategic one. However, there is a lack of clarity on the various strategies.

One participant said that they had always avoided applying for funding, as their work has been the result of winning national or international competitions or through previous clients [commissions]. Asked if that would be the case for young artists, the participant said that in their experience it was, although it's was about the nature of the client. They said that in a council, many people don't feel competent to discuss aesthetics with artists. They said that they took on graduate artists as assistants, to give them a leg up. Another contributor said that they were looking for these types of opportunities. One participant said that they don't know that there's a good funding strategy out there to help young artists. Another contributor said that colleges try to help students with funding applications, linking with businesses and local authorities who can also help.

A participant said that there just isn't sufficient demand in the public or private market place for as many people who want to be artists. When people are saying there's not enough funding, it might be that there is more supply than demand.

Several contributors mentioned that artists in the 1980s could receive support from the state in the form of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme. One participant said that it was the same amount of money as being on unemployment benefit and while you had to apply for it, it was quite easy to get. Another participant considered that the Enterprise Allowance Scheme had been exceptionally important.

Fair Pay

Several participants raised concerns about fair pay. One participant said that a lot of people are doing work for nothing. Another said that some artforms have less established rates. Yet another said part of the problem is people saying they'll do it for nothing. People are selling themselves short. Artists need to build a sense of value for the arts. It's about the understanding and respect for the arts. A contributor pointed out that Creative Scotland do stipulate rates of pay guidance, however, the problem about fair rates of people is that people enjoy their work. Lots of people associate work with a negative, so people think 'you don't need money'.

A contributor observed that lots of people think that students are desperate to give their skills, knowledge and time for free to people who are running their own businesses. Funding models in Finland were highlighted as an interesting example in this regard. One contributor said that in certain circumstances you might need more than just funding, for example, reducing the cost base for artists to work.

One participant said that support for individual artists and infrastructure is most easily sorted as part of the benefits scheme, such as the old Enterprise Model; it is not a long-term thing. But giving someone a year could really help. But infrastructure is required. Creative Scotland is a central funding source – and there is a very patchy support for the arts across local authority areas. The judgements being made by Creative Scotland are happening centrally. So Creative Scotland might do a good job in making a decision about something that has creative merit, but it will never know or be able to take account of the local context. Two people in Creative Scotland dealing with localities and covering the whole of Scotland was considered to be insufficient A more sustainable model suggested was decentralise decisions into local hubs in order to bring decision-making nearer to the complex local issues.

Another contributor said that local authorities are getting less and less money from the Government, so they are having to make very difficult decisions. Some other vehicle then has to be found. There are It was considered that there were other models to look at, such as enterprise hubs.

A contributor noted that the issue with central funding is it becomes driven by application forms, rather than conversations; and an understandable need to defend decisions when you are fundamentally not going to fund everyone.

Another contributor said that Big Lottery have moved over more to a place-based model. Lloyds have also moved over to place-based funding. The People's Postcode Lottery application process was considered to be less onerous albeit there was uncertainty expressed with regard to how well this process was working overall. .

<u>Group 2 – led by Stuart McMillan MSP</u>

The group began by discussing the **main challenges** facing arts funding.

One participant highlighted reductions in local budgets and diminishing civic spaces and an associated loss of arts workers. They also said that it is almost as if the voluntary sector is doing the arts development work for the area. Participants emphasised the importance of community spaces and the impact of the loss of these spaces.

Another participant highlighted the lack of understanding of the impact of the arts within schools – grades improve with music and the arts in the curriculum. A participant cited the example of Finland and how the arts is integrated into the curriculum.

One participant said it was challenging when the Scottish Government and Local Authorities make different choices, e.g. music tuition. Another noted that a programme lost its local authority funding after having bought £30k of instruments.

One participant highlighted the importance of choice in schools and commented that everything must be measured, not just numeracy and literacy. It was also highlighted that the OECD are bringing in creativity measures into PISA and there is a need to look beyond just literacy and numeracy.

Another contributor said that there is a lack of understanding of what arts education can bring. They said that transferable skills need to be built into music courses and present an attraction to people who do not see another way forward. Arts funding is always the first to go when money is tight.

One participant noted that funding everywhere is decreasing. They also noted that some programmes e.g. Awards for All have shifted to a regional model which has resulted in a significant decline in South Ayrshire awards. They suggested that, as a result, local groups in South Ayrshire were no longer applying.

One participant said that they had applied for funds from Creative Scotland's Open Project Fund, however, they said that only 1 in 5 has a chance of success. Another participant said that this is not just arts funding, the same is true of regeneration funds, citing an example of £48m of bids to a £20m fund. They said that it's not a problem with applications but the level of demand.

There was a wide-ranging discussion about the complexity of filling in funding application forms and consequently the time commitment that this required. There was a general perception that a particular skillset required in order to effectively complete these forms. One contributor noted that some artists get advice on how to complete Creative Scotland forms from their local authority, regarding the complexity of breaking down the financial information. However, it was considered that although local authorities have external funding officers, it doesn't necessarily follow that those officers would have knowledge of the creative sector.

One contributor said that the University of West of Scotland's Commercial Music Degree builds in business skills as virtually all artists are self-employed. Another pointed out that the Cultural Enterprise Office, funded through Creative Scotland – provide business skills mini-courses on issues such as tax etc. Another contributor said that artists wanted something more bespoke than the Business Gateway, so the Cultural Enterprise Office was created. Some participants had found the Business Gateway helpful. One participant mentioned the Digital Boost Fund to develop your business on social media.

One participant asked why students aren't allowed to access funding yet have to set up businesses as part of their course and whether this could be re-visited.

The group concurred that the main challenges were:

- Completion of forms – rules and regulations are not clear as to why organisations get funds;
- Complicated landscape – participants would mention organisations or funding initiatives that others hadn't heard of.

The group then discussed what measures the Scottish Government could take to ensure a **sustainable level of funding** for the arts.

One participant suggested a percentage for the arts schemes and highlighted the operation of schemes of this kind in Bolton and Guernsey. Another suggestion was that funds could be diverted from community payback schemes. One contributor said that an online resource clearly stating what funding is available to apply for and what it could cover would be useful. It was recognised that some local authorities provide this information but it was considered that making this information on a Scotland-wide basis would be useful

Many participants agreed on the positive impact of the arts for arts' sake in schools upon attainment.

Some participants mentioned place partnership funding from Creative Scotland which they praised.

Some contributors mentioned measures that have been successful in the past but are now no longer in place including:

- Longer-term funding, there is now an emphasis on shorter-term funding;
- Scottish Government no longer gives freelance artists the pay increases that teachers get when doing youth music in schools in Ayrshire;

The participants discussed **how should public money be made available to support artists and cultural freelancers in Scotland** and what factors should be considered and how should decisions be made about which artists or cultural freelancers should obtain public funding in Scotland. There was a wide-ranging discussion about whether 'successful' artists could contribute back into the arts.

There was a recognition that some artists already do this and also that determining what constituted 'success' could be problematic.

In final remarks, the following points were highlighted:

Participants mentioned the lack of geographical spread of funding from national funding pots and it was suggested that some sort of weighting to incentivise monies to areas that are less successful in obtaining monies could be applied. In terms of how decisions should be made, it was observed that one difficulty is that the people who appear to get funding are those who have figured out how the funding system works. Creative Scotland was considered as being a difficult organisation to access funding from. Some contributors said that people are keen to be judged on merit, rather than jargon, and considered that peer review would be helpful in assisting with this.

Participants also emphasised the role of Community Interest Companies and Social Enterprises as an increasing useful channel of funding for artists. Contributors also highlighted the economic benefits that arise from the arts and culture and that there is a very small amount of public funding in return. Lastly, a range of participants stressed that culture should be treated as a core part of the curriculum in the same manner as English and Mathematics.

Group 3 – led by Jamie Greene MSP

The participants began by discussing **what is working in funding in the arts** at the moment.

There was a general discussion with regard to Creative Scotland with views expressed including that that there were lots of good people at Creative Scotland doing their best, that they had good dialogue and support and that Creative Scotland understood their organisation. Views were also expressed that that even if Creative Scotland might not be the right model, but that an organisation is essential. They said that Creative Scotland covered a huge remit and were the main funder. It was observed that Creative Scotland had come through a tough time, that they were never going to please everyone and that the organisation has a huge amount of responsibility given the size of their remit.

Discussion also considered the 'place' of culture within local authorities. It was observed that with economic development in the council, culture and tourism are not joined up. It was considered that some things are steered towards Events Scotland and Visit Scotland. There was also a perception that it was easier to access funds if projects were steered through tourism, rather than cultural funding streams. Some contributors considered that the application process for funding was too difficult and impacted adversely upon individuals.

The discussion moved to **how to ensure funding supports both individuals and organisations.**

There was a view that there needs to be a better awareness of funds and that the volume and complexity of funds makes applying for funding challenging. One contributor mentioned that they rarely get feedback from applications and were critical of the questions in the application. Others observed that there are a huge amount of applications using different criteria for different funds and that this benefitted larger organisations and had also resulted in organisations paying professionals to complete funding application forms.

The discussion moved on to the **role of Creative Scotland**. There was a view that a huge amount of support was going to the central belt and that there is no infrastructure to develop a grassroots approach. There was a perception that there was a centralisation of funding and participants suggested a more localised approach was required.

The group discussed the **role of local authorities.** There was a general perception that local authorities culture budgets were reducing, and that as a consequence you lost people who were involved in culture support and there isn't the same level of expertise when people are applying for funding, that those deciding tend to be civil servants but with no understanding of the arts. There was also a view that there was a requirement for greater arts leadership, backed up with a coherent culture strategy and general agreement that there was a need for a more localised approach with local pots for that area.

The discussion then moved on to **how would this more localised funding be allocated**. One participant suggested an arts association model, e.g. Arts Council with funding devolved to local authorities. Another contributor said that some form of independent body that you can have relationship with and it's not just about outcomes.

Views were expressed that artists don't get experience in funding applications until after they have obtained their professional qualifications, so Scotland needs to provide greater support for younger artists. Another said that there were evaluation and accessibility issues regarding the funding forms for individual practitioners and that at present the funding model was too much of a one size fits all approach.

One contributor pointed out the value of working with people and allowing them to be creative and that in these interventions the arts can make the difference to the lives of people in certain demographics.

Afternoon Discussion with 16-24 year olds

- Where do young people and recent graduates get support about how to apply for arts funding?

Participants tended not to have applied for arts funding. There was a general sense that it would be helpful to know more, not just about the application process but also about setting up a company, filling in tax returns etc.

A recent graduate highlighted the support provided by a local college as having been very beneficial and that this college had now set up a scheme offering an advice on how to set up a business. Some students had been told to research possible funding opportunities as part of their coursework but were not given any tuition about how to apply for funding.

- What financial support is available for young people seeking to pursue an artistic career?

Of those who had applied for funding, there was limited knowledge of what funding was available, or which funding bodies would be most appropriate. The idea of a basic income was considered to be of interest to many of the contributors.

- What has been their experience of applying for funding (if applicable)?

Participants offered a range of experiences. For example, one artist successfully applied for a bursary, which was helpful and went towards their rent. Another had been successful in obtaining funding. Other applications by the young artists had been unsuccessful and many of the artists had never applied for funding.

A recent graduate made specific mention of the Princes Trust. They were unable to apply for funding as they worked too many hours in their part-time job, which they did to support themselves. They felt that this arbitrary cut off meant that it was a fund that was not available to people who were striving to improve themselves.

A contributor suggested that educational bodies could have a role in determining who gets funding, as the educational body would have a better knowledge of the artist, although it was also appreciated that those making funding decisions couldn't be too familiar with those applying.

- What financial support do young people need to pursue a career in the arts?

There are internships available, although highly competitive, but they are unpaid so without support from public funding and/or family support, these opportunities are only available to a small group of people. This was contrasted with the approach in Germany and Norway, which offer paid internships which support artists while allowing them to create.

Different mediums have different costs, but they are all considerable. Whether visual arts, paints, canvases, photography equipment or rehearsal space, the costs to be

able to create art are significant. Therefore, enterprise funding to get started was considered as being helpful.

Several contributors talked about the importance of their mentors and the support that they had received from them. The idea of funding for artists' assistants was also discussed – where experienced artists would be able to take on an assistant and show them the ropes. Participants noted that funding to support mentoring of this kind is available in London, although not in Scotland.