

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

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What are the major threats to sustainable funding of the arts in Scotland?

The presence of only one major funder – Creative Scotland – and the subsequent inevitable reliance of many arts organisations and artists reliance on this source is not a healthy or desirable situation. The falling-away of local and regional authority arts funding in recent years has put huge pressure on Creative Scotland's funding and created an imbalance.

A lack of long-term strategic thinking leading to short-term, project-to-project decision making that can stall artists' ambition and their potential for development.

What are the main challenges for artists and cultural freelancers in obtaining funding in Scotland?

The competition for a small range of funding schemes. There is an inevitable privileging of organisations and individuals who already have funding – if you have funding then you are more likely to be paid (to a greater or lesser extent in different circumstances) for the time to write another funding application; if you don't have funding, you are using your unpaid time to seek funding, and possibly foregoing paid work in order to have time to write an application.

There is often a power imbalance where it appear that the funder is setting an agenda that artists have to adapt their work to suit. For example, one-off funding schemes with specific criteria (e.g. Year of Young People, Year of Trees, etc) create a culture of projects thought up to fit these short-term funding priorities rather than a culture in which artists create work that will develop their practice for the longer-term. While strategy is important (the success of theatre for young people over the last 15-20 years arose from strategic intervention), it is essential that it is long-term, not constantly-changing.

Funding should be flexible enough to encourage ambition and continuing development, but ambition should mean the continuing desire to make work that is the best the artist can make at this moment, not 'bigger than the last time.'

What measures could the Scottish Government take to ensure a sustainable level of funding for the arts?

Find ways to set levels of government arts funding more than three years ahead – this creates a culture of short-termism and makes long-term planning hard.

Ensure that local authorities play their part in providing comparable levels of funding so that Creative Scotland does not become the only available source for core or project funding, giving it the unwanted and undesirable position of often being the only player in town.

Encourage a culture in which the arts are viewed as a valuable and essential part of Scottish life; encourage more private support for the arts at all scales - not just for big institutions - through publicised tax breaks. A government-led, nationwide programme of

highlighting the best of the arts - through broadcast media, social media, poster advertising – to raise a wider awareness of the contribution of the arts to the quality of life in Scotland.

How could Scotland be innovative in attracting greater funding for the arts?

More examples of public/private partnerships like the one between City of Edinburgh Council and the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo which led to a small project fund being created.

How should public money be made available to support artists and cultural freelancers in Scotland, including any relevant international examples of best practice?

Consider a scheme where artists with a track-record of professional work in Scotland over a period of years, a proven commitment to working in Scotland, receive tax breaks (Ireland) or are guaranteed a minimum level of income as long as they are producing work (Norway).

What factors should be considered and how should decisions be made about which artists or cultural freelancers should obtain public funding in Scotland?

What is the quality of the work likely to be? What might it lead to? What is the quality of previous work? What will happen if the work isn't funded? How important is it that this should happen now? Where is it happening (regional spread)?