

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM Musicians' Union

The Musicians' Union represents over 30,000 musicians across the UK working in all genres of music performing live, recording, teaching and composing. A significant proportion of these live and work in Scotland.

As well as negotiating on behalf of our members with the major employers in the industry, we also offer services tailored for the self-employed by providing assistance for full-time and part-time professional and student musicians of all ages.

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

As well as Creative Scotland, local authorities play a significant in arts funding. This means that the ability to obtain funding either as a group, organisation or individual cultural freelancer may depend on where you live, creating a postcode lottery.

Local authorities across Scotland have had devastating cuts imposed upon them year on year, which is having a direct, negative impact on the arts. Crucially, this is impacting on instrumental music provision in schools which is being decimated by the introduction of charges which vary wildly across all 32 local authorities.

Cultural provision is not a statutory duty for local authorities, meaning that cuts to cultural provision is an easy scapegoat, despite the negative impacts this may have on communities, society and in the long term economic future.

Further to this, there is much competition amongst cultural freelancers to obtain funding which is becoming increasingly difficult – particularly when cultural freelancers are in competition with network organisations for this funding.

Funding is mostly provided on a year on year basis which means that it is almost impossible for arts organisations and projects to plan and develop longer term plans.

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

The Scottish Government should ensure that funding provision remains in line with inflation to ensure that maintaining current levels of funding does not mean year on year cuts in real terms.

Furthermore, fluctuations within the sector should be assessed and scrutinised more regularly to ensure that funding is allocated where it is needed most.

For our members, the critical issues relate to the availability and accessibility of paid work.

There are talented and experienced musicians living and working in Scotland, over 2,600 of whom are MU members. Any funding which provided from the public purse, must ensure that any artists or musicians engaged at any level under this work are remunerated fairly and ideally in line with minimum suggested union rates – whether this be for work on a musical theatre project or as a tutor with a YMI funded project. This is not something which we currently see to any degree of consistency and further to this, we have witnessed a worrying increase in the number of musical theatre shows which use recorded music in place of live musicians.

Where public funding is provided to such projects, then there should be a robust stipulation that live musicians and other contributors are engaged and remunerated for this work to provide protection for the ever-dwindling income streams for professional musicians and other arts workers in Scotland.

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

There has been wide discussion as regards the concept of philanthropy as a source of support for the arts. Although philanthropy can perhaps play a bigger part in arts funding in future, it would be irresponsible to remove secure public funding in its favour. The example of America, where a number of orchestras and other arts organisations collapsed when donations and legacies lost value, should serve as a warning to us.

The MU welcome and encourage initiatives such as the Music Venue Trust's pipeline investment fund which aims to tackle the critical situation regarding the closure of grassroots live music venues. We agree that such a mechanism is vital to the sustainability of our grassroots touring network, which we consider as essential to the future health of the UK Music industry.

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

Working as a professional musician is already a hugely precarious working environment, with income streams being eroded from every angle Brexit brings additional uncertainty to our members and for most of the cultural workforce who are largely sole traders or very small businesses.

Many of Scotland's orchestras, rely on foreign Scottish based artists. A study undertaken by the federation of Scottish Theatre (FST) and the Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN) highlighted the potentially devastating impact, establishing that more than a quarter of artists and arts workers are considering or planning leaving Scotland after Brexit.

The MU welcomes the commitment from the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs on the EU Citizens' Rights Project and the anticipated consideration which should be given to providing support around obtaining visas, import, export and travel to mitigate the negative effects which are widely anticipated for touring, performing artists who

rely on working in the EU as forming part of their often dwindling income.

The MU is has been campaigning to introduce an EU touring visa for musicians working in the EU post-Brexit. We believe that an affordable, multi-entry, admin-light touring visa that covers all European Union member states is the best way forward.

The anticipated loss of talent, networks and funding post-Brexit is potentially devastating not only to cultural provision within Scotland but also to Scotland's international cultural profile.

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

Diversity is a huge issue in the arts in Scotland across the board. Many minority groups tend

to come from less affluent backgrounds and yet, we know that participation in the arts is becoming increasingly more difficult for these groups. It is inherently wrong that participation

and diversity within the arts should be stifled due to fiscal barriers. There must be a joined up approach to music education and the creation of an environment that promotes and encourages diversity from the outset and a holistic approach to funding.

The MU welcome initiatives such as PRS for Music foundation's 'Keychange' which calls for 50/50 male/female representation on music festival line ups by 2022. If a festival receives any amount of public funding, equality and diversity on the line up should be a robust stipulation.

We would like to see funding going to more diverse places, such as grassroots venues, alongside more help for new projects to make applications in order to make the process more accessible.

Caroline Sewell
MU Regional Organiser
Scotland and Northern Ireland
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