

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM CLAIRE STEWART

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

There are many issues in 2019 which I will simplify under 4 headings

Pure economic - The cost of living & inflation means that standstill funding is materially decreasing in value. Rising rents (such as Stills Gallery are experiencing with City of Edinburgh council)

Economic threats to funding sources - sponsorship has become more challenging to obtain, local authorities as already noted are facing a financial squeeze.

Operational funding constraints - Funding sources are allocated on a periodic or one-off time-based basis, this is the mode under which almost all funding operates and is inherently unsustainable as it can't be relied upon to be repeated or renewed. The way this operates in reality is that it bars those without other sources of income and support from entering careers in the arts in the first place. (usually

Contextual - the additional criteria placed on arts funding, such as that it fits into strategic objectives, (i.e. Open Funding at Creative Scotland) places barriers in the way of obtaining funding. And there needs to be higher ambition from funders to attract new sources of funding into Scotland and from business and private donors.

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

The funding criteria does not suit their work, the admin workload is too high and the artificial project-shaped awards are not conducive to sustainable support. They also encourage overwork, burnout and stress which does not promote wellbeing in the way that more flexible grants and stipends do.

It is worth mentioning under this header that the very ability of artists and cultural freelancers in Scotland to remain doing this kind of work is under threat, because under the UK tax regime, people lose their tax credits if their business is deemed not to be profitable enough. This particularly affects women who may rely heavily on tax credits for survival - and has been discussed extensively in the Women in the arts Scotland group.

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

I have many ideas on this, and thoughts on how they could be achieved. For the sake of expediency, again I will outline broadly.

Measures by SG to encourage CS to remove some of their criteria on impact for a portion of funding would help individual artists and freelancers. This would decrease the bureaucratic barrier and give individuals the possibility to compete for scarce funding.

Measures by SG to encourage CS to ask for increases in funding as needed - the concept that Creative Scotland should be asking for more funding on behalf of the brilliant burgeoning arts sector does not bear out in a cultural sense (as in the culture of the sector) - there is a scarcity mindset that I have observed for many years, and in practice the SG has actually supported increases where needed. Economic returns on arts, culture and creative industries need to be part of the case for higher levels of funding, but not part of the criteria for award.

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

Overall the trend has been to simplify and streamline public services and this model does not support innovation to the extent that it could in the arts. Innovation needs small experiments and pilots, and also larger, bolder ones. These need

Measures to innovate in the collection and analysis of data relating to the many impacts of the arts, culture and creative industries. Impact studies, conducted in innovative ways, could illuminate new models and forms of return to the country as a whole. For example, a pilot of 100 artists funded in small amounts accompanied by a longitudinal study of the effects of this funding on beneficiaries. There are ways we can utilise simple and readily available tech to alleviate the reporting burdens on artists and create valuable datasets which could in turn benefit funds.

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

I believe a model of stipends (similar to universal basic income models) for individuals could create significant impacts. With light-touch reporting and innovative data-gathering techniques. Also organisations which service the needs of freelance and micro-businesses at affordable rates would be transformative. I am happy to discuss further the ideas that I have around this and models I have learned of.

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

I believe this cannot be simplified and codified using traditional methods. Experiments must be done around this to determine the best ways forward. The impact measurements in place at present are not designed for individuals and place barriers in their way.

I do believe a separate organisation to form an open accountable channel of communication between the arts sector and Creative Scotland would be enormously beneficial and again am happy to discuss my ideas around how this would work and the benefits it would bring.