

## Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee

### Fact-finding visit to Dunfermline

Fire Station Creative, Dunfermline, 10 June 2019

#### Note of discussion

#### Introduction

Members of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee held a fact-finding event in Dunfermline, as part of the Committee's Inquiry into Arts Funding, on Monday 10 June 2019. The event consisted of a discussion with artists, creative freelancers and artistic stakeholders from Fife, focussed on the key questions underpinning the Committee's Inquiry.

The members of the Committee who attended the event were—

- Joan McAlpine MSP (Convener)
- Claire Baker MSP (Deputy Convener)
- Annabelle Ewing MSP
- Alexander Stewart MSP

The Committee wishes to place on record its thanks to all those who participated in the event and gratitude to the Fire Station Creative 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

##### Major threats to funding and main challenges for artists

Participants began by discussing the major threats to funding and the main challenges for artists.

Major threats identified included **Brexit and the amount of local and national spending**, with participants noting that the budget for the arts and culture is often reduced before other portfolio areas. **Tourism** was also considered to present issues as the local authority sees arts and culture as having the most value when tied to tourism objectives. Participants stressed, however, that the two policy areas have different aims and objectives so there was a concern that the arts are not valued for their own sake.

The group discussed the **main challenges** for artists as follows:

**Funding application forms** were identified as a major challenge, with the Creative Scotland application process mentioned in particular. Experiences were shared by contributors as to the complexity and length of forms for both small and large bids. The experience had left some questioning whether applying was worth the effort given the time and cost involved.

There was considered to be a lack of clarity as to what the funders are looking for – both in terms of artists and proposals, and the extent to which a project engages with the community. It was also said that it was difficult to improve applications, as feedback offered by Creative Scotland was poor. Obtaining **match funding** was also mentioned as a difficulty.

There was a discussion around measures which could **improve the process**, such as money being built into the system to cover the cost of applying; giving applicants a contact person to guide them through the application process; and a two-stage application process whereby an initial low-burden application form could be submitted, and – if successful – then a more detailed application could be submitted.

A **lack of support for artists** was also discussed. Increasing the funding for culture more widely was mentioned. The Enterprise Allowance Scheme, which was launched in the early 1980s, was referenced, as well as schemes in other countries, such as Germany, which offer support to artists. The discussion included the need to give artists the space and opportunity to create art and innovate without a need for it to be commercially successful. Art can benefit people locally by being seen, thought-provoking and challenging. It can have local if not commercial value. If funding is only provided for commercially viable work then the funding is dictating the art. It was also considered important to fund artists at different stages of their career, although caution was raised as to what constitutes an ‘established’ artist, as age alone cannot be considered as determining the stage an artist may be at.

A **lack of co-ordinated information** was discussed as a major challenge. A lot of artists work in isolation and therefore may not have information on possible support available from private trusts, as well as public bodies. The example of hubs for artists was suggested as a space to come together and work, but also to develop as important spaces on the local cultural landscape where artists can display their work. This was considered to be a bigger challenge outwith Glasgow and Edinburgh in particular, but also the central belt more generally.

**Convincing the public of the value of the arts** was perceived as being a significant challenge. There are benefits in terms of wellbeing and within education and health, however, participants considered that art should also be valued in its own right and that the benefits it can deliver in different policy areas don’t drive the art.

The **continuity of funding** was raised as a challenge. The short-term nature of funding can be challenging as this result in artists living project to project and as a result are unable to plan. It was suggested that if there was longer-term funding, it would allow artists to develop. There was discussion as to whether artists should have a commercially viable element to their work. Some artforms were considered to be more adaptable to this than others.

## Group 2 – led by Claire Baker MSP

### Challenges

Participants began by discussing the **main challenges** facing artists.

**Funding application forms** including the amount of time it takes to apply. Some [larger] organisations have paid, dedicated workers to apply for funds, but sole traders/artists spend time applying instead of working. There was discussion on the burden of information to be provided including the evaluation, both for individuals and organisations. The Creative Scotland process was contrasted with other organisations which were said to have a more straightforward process. It was suggested that there is also a lack of clarity in the wider cultural strategy therefore it is unclear what criteria is being used to judge applications, and there does not seem to be a geographical or sector overview when considering applications.

A **possible alternative** was proposed that there should be a cascade system of support through organisations to individual artists. However, this would only work where there is enough funding and a recognition of the real costs involved for artists. There was also a discussion as to whether application forms should be different for individuals and organisations, and whether different sectors should have different forms.

Another challenge discussed was the **lack of money** available for art and artists. The funding from central government for Creative Scotland is 0.2% of the Scottish Government. Public funding for central and local government has been reduced and, as a result, artists are depending on other types of employment to earn money. Income streams are so volatile that it isn't sustainable. There was discussion of how the money is distributed between artists and organisations including network organisations. The idea of a basic income for artists was also discussed. Allied to the about a lack of money was a lack of knowledge about potential funding, from public but also private sources.

**Sustainability** was identified as a challenge. In terms of the amount of public money supporting the arts, artists need to consider ways to increase income. Some are considering raising the price of tickets, which they do not want to do, especially as it impacts on funding possibilities. It was said that Creative Scotland focusses on artists becoming sustainable entities in financial terms over 5 years, however, it was argued that this is not how creativity operates. It was also suggested that artists are being forced to change their projects or diversify by funders, as they were being asked what they can do rather what they are good at doing.

There was also a discussion on the **value of creativity**, both from society and policy makers but also from artists themselves. There is a perception that artists will do work for nothing and organisations such as schools look for artists to work for free. Artists need to value what they do and people need to recognise the value in the arts. To this end the Scottish Artists Union are doing a piece of work on fees for exhibiting and is based on a Canadian model – called CARFAC (Canadian Artists Representation Le Front Des Artistes Canadiens). At present this value is measured through economics. If you cannot sustain the perception that creativity has a worth

then how can you have a sustainable arts system. We need to recognise the power of culture to sustain our nation. Creativity is important in schools, in boosting mental health and wellbeing. Creative arts have a value in themselves but also for a wider benefit and impact for society. The comparison of Ireland was raised which had a system whereby artists did not pay income tax and could be eligible for unemployment benefit.

The discussion turned to **educating artists**. The focus on STEM is diverting many students from arts subjects. Concern was raised that the arts are not seen as a feasible career particularly for people from a working-class background who cannot afford to work as an intern or as an artist's apprentice to gain experience and skills. with lack of access to arts and arts careers if you are from a working-class background particularly of concern.

There was discussion of the role of the **Cultural Enterprise Office**, which provided tailored support on employability to colleges/universities but frequently the students would not turn up to these courses. The CEO would also support artists to develop a sense of what they wanted to do, and how they could achieve that, so that they could articulate it in an application form for funding. Although the CEO still exists, it has a small budget.

There was discussion about the **challenges for artists outwith the central belt** who perceived Creative Scotland as being Edinburgh-centric. It was said that there are opportunities for training and development as well as access to facilities outwith large cities. It was suggested that this has an impact on Open Project Funding – as Creative Scotland need to balance the different factors e.g. geography, diversity also difficult to fund an organisation that does not have the relevant infrastructure etc. There was a discussion around the importance of people being able to access cultural experiences locally so that they can engage and know that these experiences are for everyone. This extends beyond interaction with local artists to include touring productions from National Theatre of Scotland etc.

The group identified **access to facilities** as a challenge. Local authorities or ALEOS (if they are the organisation managing culture and cultural spaces locally) now charge [more] to use their facilities, whether it is studio space or rehearsal space etc. which makes it difficult for artists and performers.

There was a discussion of schemes that were or had been used to support artists including a New Deal for Musicians; Youth Opportunity Programme; and the piloting of a shared craft apprenticeship in which apprentices develop skills and business skills through a craft apprenticeship. Such apprenticeships have been undertaken in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Inverness, with the possibility of apprenticeships in Dumfries and Galloway

## Group 3 – led by Alexander Stewart MSP

### Major threats to arts funding

The first threat identified was **funding cuts** from central government. It was said that these cuts have had a noticeable effect and have resulted in the loss of cultural dialogue and cultural capital. Funding cuts from local government have also had an important impact. It was suggested that the Scottish Government could do more to encourage local businesses to invest in local arts and culture. They benefit from the economic activity that the arts and culture sector generate within local communities.

### Challenges to artists

One challenge raised was **sustainability**. There was an acknowledgement of the importance of one-off payments, which can kick-start a project but that there is a need for funding to be sustainability to funding is key; where funding comes from raises issues around sustainability. The example was cited of Ireland where individual arts receive tax breaks, to help them make a living as an artist.

Another challenge discussed was **application forms**. It was suggested that the process of applying for funding does not support an equitable approach to disbursement of funds. The rigorous application process can be quite onerous for external organisations, never mind individuals, and therefore can be off-putting. It precludes certain communities and groups from applying.

Filling in these application forms is a skill. There are some people who do not have the skill-set, the knowledge or experience to fill in these application forms; therefore it tends to be more educated, more affluent, more professional areas / organisations which have the skills to attract funding. Young artists also need to develop skills in filling in arts funding applications forms.

There was agreement that one size doesn't fit all. The application process needs to be adaptive and responsive to be more inclusive. It was said that the funding application process is a big barrier to accessing funding. Participants asked to what degree does Creative Scotland sit down with aspiring artists/bodies and help them to apply for the money? The funding should follow a process of dialogue. It was then suggested that funding bodies should also be development agencies - supporting the arts, not just with money so that the funding body helps to shape the arts initiative.

The point was also made that artists should also not be penalised for managing to get by without funding. It was suggested that there needs to be a neutral space in the funding application process where this issue is removed as a barrier. It was also said that very often the second year is the stage at which artists need national level funding. Funders tend to fund at the first-year career entry point, and not subsequently. In this way, artists feel that Creative Scotland is punishing success.

Another challenge identified was the **lack of emphasis of the role and impact of arts on culture in wider society**. Heritage tourism and its impact on the local economy and health and well-being needs to be stressed. There needs to be a

recognition that the arts are valuable, in their own right, but also for the economic impact and the contribution that they make within other policy areas such as health & wellbeing and education. Their needs to be funding of arts but also, given the cost effectiveness, funding of the arts to support wider national government priority policy areas.

Local arts organisations are having an impact locally, but this can be scaled up if the funding is more easily available. An example cited was Dumfries & Galloway which has around 20 festivals, which the community embraces. They understand that these festivals bring people into the area and that it generates economic activity in the area. Orkney was also cited as an example where there is strong championing of the arts, which the local community buys into. It was suggested that community cultural ambassadors might be a way to replicate this across the country, to have people who specialise in attracting the funding to local areas and who are based locally to support local groups/communities.

Another challenge raised was the **opportunities for young artists** as the transition from education. Fife College provides studio space over the summer for new graduates to assist/support them in this transitional phase. This is, in effect, small financial support, but it pays dividends, as it can kick-start a sustainable career.

Another challenge is **support for artists working outwith the central belt**. It was said that Creative Scotland needs to adopt a more regional focus in terms of its presence. There was also mention of micro-localities whereby funding is provided to arts and cultural activities taking place in local communities including tiny coastal villages etc. and agreement that this needs to be supported. The question was asked if the current Creative Scotland funding process adequately reflects this move towards localism. It was suggested that there is a move for people to come to local communities and localities for arts and culture; rather than for the arts and culture to migrate to Glasgow, Edinburgh and that this should be actively encouraged, supported, and funded.

**Support for infrastructure** is a challenge which was discussed. It was said that infrastructure is crucial - once people are supported locally to take part in and contribute to the local arts sector, they take ownership of the process – including the process of applying for funding. It was noted that fledgling organisations need to be sustainably supported beyond the first year of funding.

Finally it was said that space (and funding) for safe failure is important for artists to develop.

## Group 4 – led by Annabelle Ewing MSP

How do people feel that the current system is working?

There was a discussion around the **strengths of the current framework**. There are informal arrangements in place to support arts students after graduation. Students are encouraged to earn as they learn. The college is hoping that there will be funding so that students can work with local authorities and can get real opportunities. Although it is happening already in some ways, small ways such as reduced rates to your and work placements, it is hoped that there could be something more formal in place and build on them.

There have been of modern apprenticeships in technical theatre, however, theatres struggle to pay for them. These provide young people with skills and experience whilst getting paid.

There was a discussion around the **issues with the current system**.

It was said that there is a **disconnection between national and regional** funding/strategy. Creative Scotland has a small team who work hard but do not have the links to local areas, and local/regional organisations don't have links to national body. The point was that stronger relationships could help inform funding decisions, an example was given of an organisation which administers a Culture Scotland budget whose application form is considerably easier to fill in because of the sectoral knowledge that they have. It was suggested that decision making should be devolved to an organisation who could work with local authorities to recognise their outcomes. It was also suggested that there should be context applied in funding decisions, so if national funding is being given to an artist/organisation, there needs to be knowledge of the context of that decision, what support and infrastructure there is in place. Leading from that, the point was made that local authorities do not have the capacity to fund building of cultural infrastructure locally so funding to help that development would be helpful.

Creative Scotland's **funding application process** is incredibly long and difficult. It was said that this was, in part, because they do not have relationships with the organisations and therefore have no prior knowledge. Engagement is easier with Visit Scotland and Events Scotland compared to Creative Scotland so some organisations frame their applications for funding for those organisations, emphasising the tourism benefits of their project. Events Scotland also provide constructive feedback when applications are unsuccessful.

The point was made that, in some cases, national cultural organisations are not national in outlook but rather focussed on Glasgow and Edinburgh.

**Peer review** model could be more helpful in evaluating the merits of applications.

Questions were raised as to who moderates the spending of Creative Scotland, and what was the geographic spread of the Board members.

Although technical theatre modern apprenticeships were generally successful, art modern apprenticeships were less successful as the apprentices were anecdotally used by artists to do administrative tasks rather than developing their craft.

The group discussed a lack of information and signposting for new and young artists. These artists are not aware of different [sometimes any] funding streams that they can apply for.

### Improvements for the future

It was said that nationally there is a recognition that Creative Industries is a growth area but it hasn't filtered down to local areas in terms of being a priority. The group discussed the benefits of more **strategic thinking**. It was suggested that after Regional Outcome Agreements are set by local authorities, there could be strategic consideration of how local priorities are met using arts and culture and everything else. The example of Finland was cited where there is a firm link between priorities, actions and measurable outcomes.

There was agreement within the group that, at present, Creative Scotland application forms are difficult to understand. It was suggested that it would therefore be helpful for **young people to have a mentor** from Creative Scotland to help understand the form and to offer feedback.

Colleges are doing what they can to **support their graduates' transition** into life as working artists, providing access to space and equipment. However, attempts are being made to create opportunities to allow artists in residence positions for graduates. It was suggested that funding for such opportunities to create a stop-gap to get artists started would be helpful. The discussion then developed into the possibility of support in kind. It was agreed that a conduit is important to join us resources but also to define what the key issues/priorities/challenges are and then act to affect them. Assistance could then be provided by economic development and/or asset management assistance from local authorities/ALEOS/colleges to allow artists' studio space at reduced rates etc. Such joined up working could then attract funding. It is important to increase capacity as, at present, graduate students are still coming in to use equipment because they need that support, but it impacts on current students.

The group discussed the idea of Creative Scotland **funding being contingent on conditions** such as paying people fairly.

Finally, there was agreement within the group that a Cultural Ambassador would be helpful, someone who could be an arts champion and pull together groups on a local level but also a national culture champion.