

Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre

Planned budget increases

KEY MESSAGES

- Ultimately the budget comes down to choices and to date, the significant value culture delivers has not been as fully recognised as they could have been, has not been a priority nor has it received the investment at the pace or levels needed.
- Continuous, open and honest discussion with the culture sector is vital to ensure additional funds are directed to where it is most needed, where the returns are greatest and where it can have the most impact. For many arts-based organisations, this is a battle for survival, with the impact of the perfect storm of the impacts of Covid, cost of living crises, increased energy costs and reduced audiences meaning many are teetering on the edge of being Going Concerns, i.e. can meet their financial obligations when they become due. For Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre we have been able to navigate going concern and retained all staff throughout the pandemic and recovery phases. while continuing to deliver significant programme output. However this commitment to purpose, while longer term funding commitments were unknown, has created a structural deficit that can only be resolved with increased levels of funding.
- The claimed increased level of investment in culture in the 2024-25 budget included some investment which was not considered to be 'new' money including the replacement of the 10% cut made to Creative Scotland and investment in CS programmes already committed in the previous year. In addition, any increased investment to Creative Scotland has not been passed on to RFO organisations such as ours, leaving us on standstill funding for yet another year. We have effectively been on standstill funding since 2008. Our current award of award of £1.98m should equate to £3.2 million per annum if it had kept pace with inflation for the period 2008-2025
- An additional £25 million is 'aimed' to be committed for 2025-26 but there is no indication yet of the priorities for this investment and how this will be determined which makes business planning for our organisation very hard as we try to match our activity to Scottish Government desired outcomes and deliver significant public value against for the 'public pound'
- Culture needs the conditions to thrive which relies on having a flourishing sector of people, artists, creators and makers who create culture and arts. The arts, culture and creative sector, which also covers screen, software publishing and computer game design, is an important economic sector for Scotland. Latest data for the sector show that it employed 155,000 people in 2022, and contributed £4.4 billion Gross Value Added (GVA) to Scotland's Economy in 2020. Yet our workers are amongst lowest paid in the UK, with an estimated 58% of creative roles receiving a salary of less than the Scottish average of £28,363. Earnings for theatre freelancers in the UK are 17.5% below the average earnings for UK workers, with some reporting that when total hours worked are considered, hourly rates can fall below national minimum wages and

certainly fall below Real Living Wage - <https://freelancersmaketheatrework.com/big-freelancer-survey-2024/> [Big Freelancer Survey 2024 – Report - Freelancers make theatre work](#)

- There is a worrying exodus of skills and experience from the sector. A 2020 report using Office for National Statistics data, found that in the six months following the beginning of the Covid lockdown, there were 55,000 job losses, a 30% decline in music, performing and visual arts and significantly higher than average numbers of people leaving the creative occupations compared to previous years.
- Even worse, since April 2022 and March 2023, there were a further 35,000 job losses in the sector with numbers of performing arts workers down from 311,000 to 276,000, (*figures from DCMS.*) This exodus of skills and experience is deeply concerning and is likely to continue with the cost of living/mortgage crises, lack of funding and a reduction in opportunities with the potential permanent closure of venues. We need therefore to direct increased investment in infrastructure, capacity building and training to support our highly-skilled workforce of staff and freelancers.

ASK/SOLUTIONS

- Continued standstill funding will not enable the sector to thrive, develop and continue to make a strong contribution to the Scottish economy. We therefore request the Scottish Government allocate a substantial proportion of the £100 million investment forward, to prevent the immediate threats that many organisations, workforce and artists stand to face this year. This will allow organisations to stabilise and begin to plan for a more sustainable future. This must also be accompanied by providing Creative Scotland and other agencies with the assurance and ability to provide genuine multi-year-funding arrangements, that are less exposed to the annual, and often delayed, government budgeting cycle.
- We recognise Scotland fares poorly compared to the rest of Europe in terms of investment in culture and request the Committee support setting a target of at least 1% of overall Scottish Government investment in culture, which it has supported in the past.
- Once an adequate baseline of investment as above has been established, there should be minimum index linked annual increases.
- Employers are increasingly looking to recruit creative thinkers. Approximately 73% of organizations surveyed in the 2024 World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Survey reported that creative thinking skills were a top priority for them when considering talent as we move into the future, agreeing that this skill set is increasing in relevance and importance. Therefore we need greater investment in young people, skills and access to cultural education as well as providing support and conditions for freelancers, many of whom deliver this creative development work, to survive.

Culture Strategy Action Plan

KEY MESSAGES

- The Plan was an opportunity to show vision and take decisive action backed by appropriate levels of investment. However, it is largely reactive and does not provide the level of detail required (who, what, when and how) to understand how the strategic ambitions will be achieved and this has still not been provided. The proposals do not match with the resource available and there is a real risk that the sector will be too lean to change and respond to the refreshed Action Plan without significant investment. Genuine commitment to action must be directly linked to realistic levels of resource provision, otherwise the risk is that the Action Plan is seen as nothing more than a 'wish list'.
- It is still unclear how the Culture Strategy is being delivered and actioned and what the role of the sector is and observations are that not a lot has happened over the past 7 months since its launch.
- The Cabinet Secretary has referred to reform of the culture sector in his update on progress to the CEEAC Committee (5 June) however what this means has not been communicated. Clarity on this matter is urgently required.
- The plans, timeline and strategies for public service reform and how these will impact on national institutions and public sector cultural bodies are unclear and where future funding will be directed.
- SG working with Local Authorities and cultural organisations to collaborate, particularly around community based cultural assets is vital.

ASK/SOLUTIONS

- SG should work closer with the sector to deliver and take forward objectives of the Culture Strategy and commission those who work with communities or provide sector support on its implementation.
- A means of communicating activity with the sector calling for input, evidence etc would be useful.
- We call for a Strategy for the Creative Industries and for clarity on where leadership on the creative economy currently lies

KEY MESSAGES

- We are not convinced that the Culture Strategy Action Plan should inform budgetary decisions given the ambiguity and lack of clarity noted above. It does however need dedicated budget to enable the delivery of its ambitions.

ASK/SOLUTIONS

- Meaningful ongoing dialogue with the sector to develop understanding of issues and challenges should inform budgetary decisions.
- Scotland's spend on culture as a percentage of GDP is still one of the lowest in Europe lying 28th out of the 34 nations ([Statistics | Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](#) 2021 and [Country and](#)

[regional analysis: 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)). If Scotland aspires to set an international example as a progressive nation and lead the way in its cultural investment, then the current budget levels need to significantly improve to realise this and meet the ambitions proposed within the cultural strategies.

- As noted above genuine three year funding commitments should be made to RFOs. This investment in longer-term planning will provide a more robust platform on which to secure and leverage additional investment, build programme, increase public engagement and extend the reach and impact of the Scottish cultural sector.

Progress on innovative funding solutions

KEY MESSAGES

- There must be an understanding of the distinction between core funding which should be supported by core investment and innovative funding solutions which are not necessarily sustainable and cannot be relied on to support the core ongoing.
- Other than the Visitor Levy Bill little progress has been made to take forward innovative funding solutions.
- Commercial and corporate sponsorship is virtually non-existent for us currently and massively increased pressure on trusts and foundations and the many calls on individual donors means philanthropy cannot be relied upon to cover any budgetary shortfalls.
- The requirements of meeting net zero and operating an aging building are challenging when all budgets have been cut to the core and we are working with an operating deficit. Investment in adapting to and mitigating the effects of the climate emergency is urgently needed.
- Cross-sector investment is happening in the areas of health but needs to be captured, evaluated and promoted better. We know from our own work in health contexts, (including two dramatherapy programmes) and justice (including a recent year-long programme with the Scottish Prison Service,) of the value that this work can bring.
- A genuine commitment to cross-portfolio working to truly explore the contribution culture can make to civic and public life in Scotland, as well as other Scottish Government policy areas is required. This will require bringing cultural leadership to the heart of the policy conversations for the nation and thinking through the adaptation of policy and budgetary structures, that all too often, and sometime inadvertently, push the cultural dimension (and possible solutions) to the side-lines and into the 'nice to have' category as opposed to the 'essential'.

ASK/SOLUTIONS

- Meaningful discussions at minister level needs to take place to agree and take forward strategic cross-portfolio investment. The sector has limited powers in delivering this at a strategic level without high level intervention and will. Cultural expertise and leadership should be present in all revised thinking about policy priorities for the nation. That is what placing culture at the 'heart of the nation' really looks like.

- Percentage for the Arts scheme, which was a 2021 Party Manifesto commitment
- Enable better use of spaces out of hours and sharing of buildings and the importance of affordable rental. Put support in place to enable the upgrade, maintenance and purchase of buildings by creative organisations.
- Ensure the cultural tax reliefs remain permanent.
- Connectivity across services – support for partnerships between transport and cultural venues and events – encourages audiences and is environmentally more sustainable

Creative Scotland's Multi-Year Funding Programme

KEY MESSAGES

- Both ourselves and many colleagues we conferred with, found the process was onerous and took considerable time away from core activity for key and primarily senior staff members.
- We note that the MYF programme created one process for all regardless of artform, location, organisational scale, level of investment sought or skills and experience. We believe this was extraordinarily challenging for some smaller organisations and equally for larger, more complex organisations such as ourselves. Stage 1 was overly simple and did not have enough opportunity to communicate the complexities involved..
- How decisions will be made in terms of prioritising applications is not entirely clear in terms of how national policy priorities and assessment of applications will combine to inform decisions in the current competitive landscape.
- The decisions taken at the end of October are likely to have significant repercussions for Scotland's cultural landscape and on us as we seek a significantly-increased budget to allow us even to maintain our current levels of activity and try to plan for future activity without knowing what any award from Creative Scotland is likely to be, noting current available budget stands at around £40 million for applications totalling £87.5 million.

ASK/SOLUTIONS

- Despite the current Scottish Government pledging in their 2021 Party Manifesto to agree 3- year funding settlements for Scottish Government core funded cultural organisations, this has not come to fruition and Creative Scotland's budget is currently only confirmed to March 2025. Multi- Year settlements are vital for strategic planning, particularly with the long lead-in times required to research and develop and produce successful stage productions and tour them nationally and internationally.
- We welcome ministers' commitment to invest at least £100 million more annually

in arts and culture by 2028-29 but allocating more of this funding now and the Scottish Government and Creative Scotland aligning their planning in October, would enable strategic planning and vital investment for Creative Scotland, the sector it supports and the communities they serve across Scotland, when it is most urgently needed.

- Clarity on decision making and the plans for transition support and funding are still unknown.

Fair Work

KEY MESSAGES

- Artists, makers, and creatives are the heart of the sector and need to be paid fairly for all that they do and produce.
- It is difficult to be fully understand the extent of progress on Fair Work due to a lack of sector wide data. Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre signed up to be Living Wage Employers in 2021, have been accredited since early 2022 and supports and commits to all aspects of Fair Work First across the sector. However, we are a large employer with 99 staff FTE (with a greater head-count), it is expensive to implement and there have been no additional resources made available to cover these wage increases.

ASK/SOLUTIONS

- Essential to include freelancers in these structures, legislation and in contracts.
- Ensure that there are adequate structures in place to capture data and evidence around Fair Work to comprehensively guide policy development.
- Ensure the Culture Fair Work Taskforce can influence policy and the wider sector are able to feed into this process.
- The culture sector can share experiences with other sectors who are further behind.