



OFFICIAL REPORT  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Thursday 20 April 2023

Session 6



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**Thursday 20 April 2023**

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**CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**  
**12<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2023, Session 6**

**CONVENER**

\*Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)

\*Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab)

\*Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con)

\*Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

\*Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Rebecca Coggins (Dumfries and Galloway Council)

Kirsty Cumming (Community Leisure UK)

Billy Garrett (Glasgow Life)

Katie Nicoll (Renfrewshire Council)

Kim Slater (Moray Council)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

James Johnston

**LOCATION**

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)



# Scottish Parliament

## Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Thursday 20 April 2023

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:01]*

### Interests

**The Convener (Clare Adamson):** Good morning, and welcome to the 12th meeting in 2023 of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee. Our first agenda item is as a result of a change of membership. We again thank Jenni Minto for her service to the committee and wish her well with her new responsibilities.

We welcome Ben Macpherson, who joins the committee. I invite Mr Macpherson to make a declaration of interests.

**Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP):** Thank you, convener. Good morning, colleagues and witnesses. As a proud internationalist and the son of a designer, I am very pleased to be a member of the committee, and I hope to contribute positively. I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests. In particular, it shows that I am still registered on the roll of Scottish solicitors, which might be of interest in some evidence sessions. I also note that I served as Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development under the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture between June 2018 and February 2020, in case that is of relevance.

## Decision on Taking Business in Private

09:02

**The Convener:** Our second agenda item is a decision on taking business in private. Are members content to take items involving the consideration of evidence in private at this meeting and future meetings?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Culture in Communities

09:03

**The Convener:** Under our third agenda item, we will begin to take evidence as part of our culture in communities inquiry, which is focused on taking a place-based approach to culture. Our first evidence session is a round-table discussion with local authorities and cultural trusts. We are joined by Kirsty Cumming, chief executive of Community Leisure UK; Billy Garrett, director of culture, tourism and events at Glasgow Life; Katie Nicoll, cultural regeneration lead officer at Renfrewshire Council; Rebecca Coggins, principal officer for arts and museums at Dumfries and Galloway Council; and Kim Slater, sport and culture service manager at Moray Council, who joins us remotely. Heather Stuart, chief executive of OnFife, has been slightly delayed but hopes to join us, as does our committee colleague Alasdair Allan, who might join us in the next little while.

The committee is interested in three themes. I will try to stick to those themes, but I know that that can be difficult in a round-table discussion, which can be free flowing. Initially, we will consider local and national government issues. The second theme is unmet cultural need, and the third is place-based cultural policy.

To what extent does the Scottish Government's culture strategy influence cultural policy at the local level?

**Katie Nicoll (Renfrewshire Council):** Thank you very much for the invitation. In Renfrewshire Council, we have been working closely with cultural strategies, which have greatly influenced our direction of travel and have coalesced around the UK city of culture bid. We now have a partnership approach to cultural regeneration that is influencing our strategy, because we are trying to embed culture across all our services through partnership working. We are doing that across departments—housing, education, criminal justice and health and social care—but also with all our stakeholders and communities.

All that is influencing our strategy, because we are trying to embed culture in our services so that it sits not as an add-on but as part of everything that we do. The cultural conversation is taking place right across our council at the moment. Yes, the strategy is there as our foundation stone, and we are trying to enhance what we are doing through the council.

**Rebecca Coggins (Dumfries and Galloway Council):** Thank you very much for inviting me to be part of this inquiry. This is my first committee meeting, so I hope that you will bear with me.

In Dumfries and Galloway Council and in Dumfries and Galloway more broadly, we were very interested to see the national cultural strategy. Its arrival was good timing, because our own cultural strategy had come to an end.

I have a few points to make. First, we very much appreciated the consultation that went into producing the national cultural strategy. That is what we did when we took forward our own strategy. In similar ways, we asked, "How can we support the cultural sector in our area to impact on other areas outside culture—specifically, health and wellbeing, education, the economy and communities?" We asked our cultural sector, "Are these the right things to do and, if so, what is stopping us doing more?" That was what happened during the whole of 2019-2020.

Come lockdown, we had to stop for a while, and then we did another piece of work that looked at the impact of Covid. We then produced our own cultural strategy, which covers three main areas. The first is our people. That includes the cultural sector itself as well as the people with whom we are engaging.

The second area is our places. One of the first things that we thought about, which perhaps ties into the inquiry, was that Dumfries and Galloway has its own sense of place. People looking in think of Dumfries and Galloway as one place, but it, of course, covers Dumfriesshire and Galloway. The feedback was very much, "No, wait a minute; it is not one homogeneous area." Each community is different and has its own culture, if you like. The idea was very much that we need to support that happening in places.

The third area is how we can make a difference. What does it take to make a difference to health and wellbeing for our communities, to community development and to education? We have a strategy, which is great—it is not just the council's strategy but the whole region's strategy—so we are now at the stage of thinking about how we make things happen. We are in the process of trying to establish a cultural partnership that will create a framework to support that to happen. It is early days, but sessions such as this will be useful in feeding into that process.

I hope that that is helpful.

**Kim Slater (Moray Council):** I will be honest and say that the strategy has not necessarily influenced anything at a local level yet. The sport and culture service for Moray is relatively new, so we are taking a bottom-up approach and looking to gather baseline data on all our local cultural activities and opportunities to help to identify the gaps. We will then know where we need to go and be able to construct a plan to move forward. By taking a bottom-up and top-down approach, we

hope that we will identify the synergies and—as one of the previous speakers said—embed culture in all our services through that partnership-working approach.

In Moray, a large percentage of cultural activities are managed, operated and created by our voluntary sector, so it is important that the council engages with that sector. As I said, we hope that, in due course, the strategy will influence what we aim to achieve in the Moray area.

**Kirsty Cumming (Community Leisure UK):**

Thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning. A lot of my thoughts probably reflect the previous speakers' thoughts on the strategy. From our members' perspective, it has provided a framework for discussion, which has been useful. As was mentioned, the consultation process as the strategy was developed was welcome, because it opened up discussions about the importance and value of culture, which is what our members' feedback focused on. There needs to be more focus on the value of culture, particularly now. The cultural strategy provides a springboard to enable that conversation to happen, and it gives a sense of legitimacy to the conversation at a local authority level. When decisions are being made about the delivery of services, having that strategy in place gives a sense of empowerment to the conversation about culture and its importance.

In relation to how the strategy has influenced delivery at a local level, the picture is perhaps a bit mixed across the country. It depends very much on local authorities' priorities and how they implement and embed the strategy.

Another key strand—which Katie Nicoll mentioned—is embedding culture across services and portfolio areas and taking it out of the silo that it has perhaps traditionally been in. It still feels as though there is a bit of work to do on that but, again, having the strategy enables the conversation to take place. The intention is very much to look at the contribution of culture across policy areas for our members.

**Billy Garrett (Glasgow Life):** I echo everyone else's words in thanking the committee for the invitation.

You asked about the extent to which the national strategy is influencing local strategies. My immediate answer is that it significantly influences how we conceive, deliver and conceptualise culture in Glasgow. In a sense, that is quite right, because I would argue that, without a strategic framework, it is very difficult to create a direction of travel, a platform and a framework in which to make decisions, create priorities and create and assess platform decision making across culture. The national picture or strategy is really important and is the platform on which conversations with

national agencies take place. From our point of view, that ecosystem is therefore incredibly important.

I thought that what Kim Slater said was interesting. I agree that the approach has to be both top down and bottom up so that that influence is part of a wider process. For example, the national strategy is influencing how we are refreshing and creating a new cultural strategy for Glasgow, and that process involves widespread consultation with the sector in the city. The national cultural strategy is an essential part of that overall context, so I encourage a continued focus on it.

I echo Kirsty Cumming's words about the strategy reinforcing the significance of culture at a community level, a metropolitan level and a national level across a range of agendas covering the social impact, the economic impact, soft power and so on. I would argue that investment in the national strategy is incredibly important.

**The Convener:** We want the discussion to be as free flowing as possible, so if you want to come in on a question or come back with further comment, please indicate to me or the clerks and we will try to include everyone as much as possible.

I move to questions from committee members, and I introduce Sarah Boyack.

09:15

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** It was good to hear the opening comments from the witnesses and to see the submissions that we have had so far.

How do we see the action taking place? I refer to the work between local and national government and voluntary and third sector organisations. Funding is not our job, but local authorities have experienced a 29 per cent cut over the past decade. It is a challenging environment, so how do you make the most of your resources at the local level? How do you work together?

There are three things to think about: leadership, access to venues—how do you support one another on that?—and employment. I mention those because, in work that we did last year, we found that leadership is important but there were also issues with access to venues, investment in venues, rocketing prices and people leaving the cultural sector. How do local authorities work together with different cultural organisations to maximise the impact if we now have a new strategy to make things happen and let communities access the support?

Is anyone volunteering to go first?

**Katie Nicoll:** I would be happy to go first. Unfortunately, I do not have a pen in my bag to write down all your points. [*Interruption.*] I have just been given one—thank you very much.

**Sarah Boyack:** I was asking about leadership, venues and employment—the practicalities to enable access in our communities.

**Katie Nicoll:** On leadership, I will refer to our governance for the future Paisley programme, which is the cultural regeneration partnership programme, the investment for which sits with Renfrewshire Council. We have a partnership board that picks up on all our council members. It has representation from external stakeholders and community involvement across the piece. That drives our conversation about how we are engaging culture in a way that is genuinely about embedding and is not just a touch point but gets into the mix of things.

One key point and the example that I will give is that we have worked hard with our culture and arts sector and our health and social care partnership. We have placed a cultural co-ordinator into the health and social care partnership, which is an unusual model, because such a role usually sits externally in an arts team. By placing that role in the heart of the partnership, we are now, for quite modest sums of money, reaching organisations and communities that we have not been able to touch before.

That work is happening with our third sector organisations, so we are able to start to consider a community wellbeing network. We are working alongside another partner, Engage Renfrewshire, which is the third sector interface.

We are working with a local information system for Scotland—ALISS—to look at cultural provision through that database so that professionals and individuals can find resources, services and activities in their local area that they can support. We can see cultural offer as part of an alternative offer for our social work client base, for example.

We have put money into building capacity funding, making arts and culture accessible and a creative wellbeing fund. One of those funds has a maximum amount of £2,000 and one has a maximum of £1,000, but really incredible projects are coming through that funding. There is also education and a transfer of knowledge between professionals and the third sector and artist-led organisations to understand what the offer is.

There is a rich seam of activity. We hope that the future Paisley programme will influence—as Billy Garrett said, it is about influencing—and enhance policy on aspects of the matter. Our long-term goal is that we are able to start changing policy across the council.

That is an example. We have put proper investment—just over £200,000—into that project. The idea is that we will work hard to ensure that it is mainstreamed once the future Paisley investment finishes in April 2024.

**The Convener:** Does Billy Garrett want to go next? If any of you wants to come in, you can put up your hand and I will come to you. Go ahead, Billy.

**Billy Garrett:** Thinking about the question, and listening to Katie Nicoll, I think that I can sum up my answers on leadership, venues and employment, and the wider question, with two words: partnership and wellbeing. We are approaching the challenging landscape that currently exists across the sector nationally with an innovative agenda on partnerships and wellbeing, exactly as Katie outlined.

We can still be ambitious and meet the aspirations of communities, and of individuals and citizens, by enhancing, amplifying and accelerating partnerships across the health and regeneration spaces. There is a whole range of innovative and imaginative partnerships on which we can focus.

Culture has an intrinsic value, but we now know—there is a significant body of evidence to show this—that it also fits in with the instrumentalism agenda. Culture is an incredibly powerful instrument, in terms of its impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of people who engage in cultural activity. There is now an incredibly strong body of evidence on that.

Utilising that evidence and taking it to partners allows us to access resources, assets and funding that may not historically have been accessed for cultural activity. That is certainly the way that we are approaching it in Glasgow; our submission included some examples of that.

The approach in Glasgow is very similar to what has been described. The live well community referral pilot that we are currently running in the east end of the city is based on social prescribing architecture, but it goes much wider than that in moving away from the medicalised view. It is part of a wider agenda—it is about trying to focus resources on prevention rather than treatment and create a vision of health that is community based and socialised as opposed to medicalised.

If that pilot demonstrates a positive impact, as we are confident that it will, we will talk to a range of partners about how we scale it up and shift the dial in some of the most deprived communities in Scotland. That initiative is based on a series of partnerships with health organisations and regeneration agencies, so we are immediately tapping into the employability agenda as well.



I will give some examples. Going back a few years, we worked with Clyde Gateway as part of a population health initiative in the east end, which worked with the health board to get people from the east end of Glasgow into jobs in the board. That is an example of a specific and tangible employability programme.

Our approach is about partnerships and the wider wellbeing agenda, and working with partners to a much greater extent, in a way that we may not have done in the past.

**Kirsty Cumming:** I echo Billy Garrett's thoughts around partnership and wellbeing but, to look at it from a slightly different angle, I would look at some of the challenges that go alongside that. There is evidence of what happens when there is good practice and partnership working, which should be celebrated; Katie Nicoll highlighted that very well. Equally, there are challenges where culture does not have a high profile at a local level.

With some of the changes across local authorities, we are seeing that there are not necessarily people with a cultural remit in the local authority. That expertise is lost somewhere. Where there is a culture trust, there is not necessarily a connection to the local authority with the expertise to really understand and embed some of the issues. There is certainly a change in the level of local authority expertise, and in the angle on that.

We can also look at community planning partnerships, in which, again, the voice of culture is not consistent across the country. Again, there are opportunities—as Billy Garrett said—for partnership working and for real opportunities to come through that. Where there is no connection to community planning partnerships and health and social care partnerships, or to the local authorities, however, we are seeing significant issues around the value of culture coming through.

The partnership absolutely needs to be there, but we also need the right flags in the ground so that we can connect the different agencies. Otherwise, one organisation takes on the ownership of driving culture, which is where we see the move back towards silo working. That is not where we want to be.

As for other issues that have been raised such as access to venues and employment, we have highlighted in our submission that employment continues to be a significant challenge across our members, with regard to not just recruiting people into the sector but retaining them and ensuring that they see this as an attractive opportunity, with a career pathway that they can progress through. People not seeing this as an attractive opportunity when they look at which sector to go into is indeed a significant challenge, and there is also a

challenge with regard to levels of pay. Again, we have highlighted in our submission the real challenge of our not being able to compete with other sectors or the private sector on remuneration and of making it attractive to people to stay in the sector.

Among our members, there are specific hotspots where there is a real lack of staff and an inability to recruit into those positions, and that impacts on the delivery of services.

**Kim Slater:** I want to pick up on Kirsty Cumming's comment about silo working. The areas covered by culture are very diverse, and we have found it difficult to bring the different themes together. The people and organisations involved focus on very niche markets or specific areas, be they music, heritage, the arts et cetera, and the difficulty is in pulling all of them together so that we can collectively move the cultural theme forward. As far as leadership is concerned, it is all about trying to pocket these communities of interest together for greater gain, and I would say that we in Moray have found that to be a challenge.

As for the issue of venues that was also raised in the question, we would say that in Moray there has been a lack of investment in that respect. A lot of our venues—community halls and even council facilities—do not necessarily have the technology or set-up to provide cultural activities to the extent that organisations are seeking. However, we have been carrying out significant work with our learning estate colleagues and through our open spaces team in support of our open parks and green spaces and to promote the cultural activities and programmes that could operate in Moray. That approach has been highly successful since our return from Covid, with a greater increase in the use of open spaces for culture. Considering the Moray climate, I would say that that can be a challenge, but it is certainly an area of interest for us to develop.

**Rebecca Coggins:** Picking up on some of the points that colleagues have made about the profile of culture in councils, I point out that we are one of the few services that directly run cultural facilities such as museums, galleries and a small cinema. Fifteen years ago, however, we had an arts manager, a museums manager, two development officers on the visual arts and crafts side of things and four curators; now, we have just me, with responsibility for arts and museums, two curators and no development officers. I am the only one in the team who does not have a role in a venue.

Although I am taking forward the cultural strategy, I am actually three tiers down. I noted the reference to the culture conveners; although our council is incredibly positive and supportive with regard to cultural and creative activity, that comes

under the remit of the communities committee, which covers governance and assurance, roads and infrastructure, community engagement and neighbourhood services. I am part of neighbourhood services, along with customer services, registration and libraries, financial wellbeing and revenues, the fleet, transport and operations, the buses and community assets—which include the many village halls, a lot of which have been devolved to communities. Then you get to leisure, culture and wellbeing and our 13 museums and galleries. It is therefore difficult to make the case up the way. To get into community planning, I have to go two tiers up, go across and then go down.

To be honest, it has always been like that, and part of our success in Dumfries and Galloway is the fact that we have acknowledged that we are not the only cultural providers. We have to work with the voluntary sector and individuals out there, and since I have been there, which is more than 20 years, we have always taken a kind of enabling role. I guess that that is where the leadership comes from.

09:30

In 2012, when things were looking particularly difficult, we were lucky in getting one of the first place partnerships with Creative Scotland. That helped us to invest in creating a network in our cultural and creative sector. That was initially called the chamber of the arts; it is now called DG Unlimited. With regard to its membership, it is a bit like what Kim Slater was saying about how you can draw together all the voices, including some of the bigger arts organisations, bigger museums and independent museums, but also freelance potters, musicians and so on. Supporting networks can do that, and the cultural strategy has given us another opportunity to look at how we configure that.

As well as the Dumfries and Galloway chamber of the arts, we have a heritage network, which is growing. That has been done with the support of Museums Galleries Scotland. One key thing that makes these things happen is capacity. As I think that I said in my submission, what we need to get this all going is, as Billy Garrett said, working in partnership but also building that capacity.

A recent study showed that, if you include freelancers in employment figures for the sector, the number of people who are employed and active in the sector across Dumfries and Galloway is actually bigger than the number of people employed in agriculture. Therefore, there are a lot of people out there, but it is a very fragile existence—it is very hand to mouth.

I was thinking about the earlier question about what the cultural strategy has done. The Culture Collective programme supported the Stove Network in Dumfries and Galloway to create the What We Do Now project, which takes a creative place-making approach to regeneration in towns across the region. However, a lot of its time is spent fundraising. I see that with a lot of our cultural organisations. When we lost our development officers, Upland took on the role from the council of developing visual arts and crafts businesses through things such as the Spring Fling open studios. It is spending a lot of its time just fundraising to ensure that it can continue for the next year. That is the situation in the employment area, although we have a lot of really dedicated people there.

Venues are definitely a challenge in a very rural area. From the museums side of things, there is also the issue of the energy costs to keep things going. I am thinking of the museums that we and our independent partners have. We are the custodians of the heritage of our communities. It is vital work but, to keep those things safe, we need energy to run the buildings and we need to maintain the environmental conditions, so it is challenging.

**Sarah Boyack:** That is really helpful feedback, because part of the issue is about how things are being co-ordinated at a local level. Points were made in relation to who is doing that co-ordination and leadership in each local authority area so that there is somebody who then makes the connections with health, venues or third sector organisations. It is about that architecture.

With the cultural strategy, is there sharing of best practice between local authorities in different areas, such as rural and city areas? How do you share best practice with other council department areas or health and social services so that they buy into that wellbeing approach as opposed to taking a health approach, as was suggested?

**Ben Macpherson:** I would like to ask the witnesses to elaborate on what has been said. Do witnesses want to reflect any feedback or ideas and initiatives with regard to their engagement with Creative Scotland on the implementation of the strategy? Do witnesses have any other feedback or constructive suggestions with regard to how they engage with national Government going forward?

**The Convener:** Does anybody want to come in first?

**Billy Garrett:** Sorry, but I did not catch the end of the question.

**Ben Macpherson:** I am sorry about that, Mr Garrett. In relation to the implementation of the strategy, do you want to feed back anything on

your engagement and collaboration with Creative Scotland and national Government more widely over and above what is in your submission?

**Billy Garrett:** Thanks. I mentioned in my submission that we could do better in a number of areas. One of those areas is principally about connections and connecting, which relates to the question that Ms Boyack asked about the extent to which we are sharing best practice across agencies, local authorities, trusts and so on. We could do better in that area. I am not sure that there is a comprehensive process that would allow us to do that. However, I might argue, and this is where I will comment on your question, Mr Macpherson, that that is one area where we are starting from a reasonably strong position.

One area where we could do better is in relation to the connection between national, metropolitan, regional and local levels. I am not sure that that is completely coherent. There is probably more that we can collectively do about that.

Our relationships with the national agencies such as Creative Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland are positive, but given the challenges that we face—some of them have been mentioned and some of them are in our submissions—we have to do a bit better. Recent funding decisions display a slight lack of coherence between local authority and national Government levels, whether that is at the Scottish or UK level.

There is no basis for criticising anyone, but we could probably all do a bit better at ensuring that there is a coherent picture up and down and across the sector. I am not sure whether that answers your question, but that is how I would describe the situation.

**Ben Macpherson:** It does. If you think of any reflections or constructive propositions today or following the committee meeting on how that greater co-ordination could be facilitated, that would be interesting to hear.

**The Convener:** I bring in Kim Slater then Rebecca Coggins.

**Kim Slater:** I will make two points. First, we have an excellent relationship with Creative Scotland. However, music is very much our focus, and we end up going slightly back to silo working in terms of progressing that across the theme of culture. Certainly for Moray, the connection with Creative Scotland is very much focused on music, and the Scottish Library and Information Council is very much focused on libraries, learning and heritage. We work very well with national organisations, but, again, we may struggle with the overarching culture piece.

Secondly, I come back to the connection with health and social care. In Moray, we are

progressing with social prescribing. Culture has a place in the social prescribing model, and we are working to connect all private, public and third sector agencies to that model.

**Rebecca Coggins:** The national approach should mirror the regional approach. We see the culture partnership that we are trying to establish as having a connecting role between the different elements of our sector and, say, the health service. There is an introduction role, and we certainly see that as being one of the first things that the partnership will do in Dumfries and Galloway with, for example, the health and wellbeing teams. We know that there is an understanding of the benefits that culture can have, which is very much part of the preventative agenda. There are people in the culture sector who are keen and willing to engage in that, but they do not have connections—neither side knows about each other and they do not know what the potential is. The culture sector knows that it has value, but it does not know how to translate that into a health setting, whether that is a clinical or community setting. Likewise, clinical and community health services do not really know what the potential of culture is.

I guess that learning from each other is happening, connections are being made and partnerships are in place in the region, but that also needs to happen at national level. I have found Creative Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland to have a similar connecting role. If I think back to the place partnerships, before lockdown, Creative Scotland arranged for all the place partnerships to come together every now and again to learn from one another. I remember going to Aberdeen with some of the creative and cultural organisations from Dumfries and Galloway just as we were starting to think about our cultural strategy. It was hugely valuable to hear from other place partnerships about how they were doing it, and a lot of that learning translated into what we did in Dumfries and Galloway. The danger is that we get too focused on our own little situation and do not see what is happening elsewhere.

We have another opportunity across the south of Scotland in that we have South of Scotland Enterprise and the south of Scotland regional economic strategy, which has culture and creativity as a focus. That has started us thinking more about Scottish Borders Council and Live Borders, but they do things very differently from us. Often, it is just about making the time to get your head up and to look round, which is one of the reasons why it is so good to be here today to hear from everybody else. Those opportunities will be very welcome, if they could resume.

**Katie Nicoll:** I want to pick up on the relationship with Creative Scotland and on

Rebecca Coggins' point about place partnerships. It feels as though there is so much good content there, because it is embedded in communities. Renfrewshire Council has a place partnership agreement with Creative Scotland. Of the £400,000 investment, £200,000 comes from the future Paisley programme and £200,000 comes from Creative Scotland. We are delivering on five place partnership programmes, which are all at slightly different levels. One of them, for instance, is about creating the Johnstone textile space, and we are working in partnership with a business consortium, a historical society and makers, including ReMode Renfrewshire CIC, which is a hub for ethical and sustainable clothing. It is about coalescing around an idea and embedding it as a public-facing and community-led partnership.

There is so much opportunity for us to build on. We are building a film and media space in Paisley, which, again, is a rather inspired space. It sits in the campus of the University of the West of Scotland, but it is front facing on to Storie Street. It will be a place where we can talk about archiving footage as well as new digital media. All those things are coming up from grass-roots level and being consolidated by business.

We are developing the Cycle Arts Renfrewshire festival, which will be in its third iteration this year. We have received money from EventScotland to support the UCI cycling fringe programme, which is really exciting because that will happen just in advance of that organisation's main event.

There is all this learning, but I agree with Billy Garrett that, in some ways, it is about local authorities being able to share best practice. We at Renfrewshire Council believe that some great models have come out from the ambition of the Paisley's bid to become the UK city of culture. We are pushing some really innovative thinking. Cultural co-ordinators are sitting within health and social care. We run an incredible partnership in which Castlehead high school is linked with Glasgow School of Art. That is progressing a whole new way of gaining qualifications on creative thinking that sits outside the Scottish Qualifications Authority framework. It is about saying to young people that there are possibilities for finding work in the creative and culture sector so they should not discount it, including as they go from primary school into secondary school and make subject choices. There is still the need in the sector for marketing, technology and accountancy—those things still all exist together. We are building a really strong base from which to offer up possibilities for employability.

One of our main step changes concerns the younger generation, how we build our new creative workforce and what the stepping stones are. We are working across our council, our youth

services and our developing the young workforce and careers teams, and we are working with the University of the West of Scotland and West College Scotland, and with Skills Development Scotland. All those bodies are represented on our partnership board.

09:45

We want to get a much clearer linear picture that can show us how best to progress and bring together all the disparate strands that we have been talking about today. In Renfrewshire, we are trying to bring all those together into one comprehensive offer.

**Kirsty Cumming:** To pick up on partnership in particular, I note that one of the few positives that came out of the pandemic was an increase in partnership working. During Covid, when we were in lockdown, a number of agencies that had not previously sat together in the same meeting came together—albeit virtually—in order to understand how to respond to the pandemic from a cultural perspective. That was important, and we have been working hard to maintain that partnership.

We facilitate the culture partners group, which comprises a range of partners, including Creative Scotland, the Scottish Government, the Scottish Library and Information Council, Museums Galleries Scotland, COSLA, Regional Screen Scotland and Screen Scotland. It meets monthly, but the feedback that we had, and our view, was that that connection was really important. It was not there before Covid—we had not really engaged as a collective previously.

That goes back to Kim Slater's point about engagement with national agencies functioning in a silo. We need to think about how we start to join up a bit more under the broad cultural umbrella, and how we work together as museums, theatres and libraries to talk about the value of culture through that partnership.

There are opportunities to do more to continue with that partnership working. I know that there is also some discussion around a network for local authority and culture trust arts officers. That work is being led by Creative Lives, which is looking again at the void that exists and exploring whether it can pull together a network of learning and sharing.

We have had some discussions with COSLA on the culture conveners initiative with regard to how that works and what its purpose is. We want to think about shaping that a little bit more so that there is more value and a clear purpose there.

Overall—as Billy Garrett said—some areas could certainly be improved. The national-local dynamic needs a bit more co-ordination, but there

has been significant progress that has come out of the pandemic.

**The Convener:** I will bring in Donald Cameron.

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Good morning, everyone. I want to explore two areas. The first concerns what might be termed barriers to culture. We have had a lot of individual responses to the committee's inquiry. The issues that have arisen will not come as a surprise to many of you. They include a lack of public transport, especially in rural areas, and a lack of options for young people and young families. One issue that resonated with me was raised by a person from the Highlands, who said that there were more events during the tourism season and not so many at quieter times of the year. Other issues included access for disabled people, prices and availability of venues.

As I said, I do not think that those issues will come as a surprise, but I wonder if I could have your observations on all, some or any of those issues. I do not know who wants to go first—perhaps Rebecca Coggins.

**Rebecca Coggins:** I am certainly familiar with a lack of public transport as an issue. Dumfries and Galloway is 100 miles across and covers 6,000km<sup>2</sup>, with a sparse population of 150,000. There is definitely an issue with regard to how to programme events and support things that are happening. For example, we have Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival, which puts on events across the whole region. It has—funded by Creative Scotland and by the council's small resources—been supporting the Arts:Live programme, which supports community-based promoters to put on events in their own communities. Nevertheless, there is an issue with regard to how we make that sustainable and address the cost issue. It costs to put things like that on.

There is also the whole climate issue and the environmental cost of bringing something in, and then there is the question of access if you were to charge people whatever would cover the costs of putting something on. If you did that, it would not be affordable to your small community. That is definitely the case.

We are hearing the same thing with regard to young people. I suppose that there are quite a few things on during the tourism season, and events that are put on during the shoulder season see quite a lot of local activity, but it comes back to the demographic issue. How do you serve the people who you have as well as the visitors coming in across such a wide and sparsely populated area? How do you make that possible?

Recently, we have been interviewing for an access officer for one of our museum teams. I will

not name any names, but one bright young person whom we were interviewing said to us, "The photographs on your website are mainly of older people and families. Where's the activity for young people? Where's the activity for working people who might not want to go into a facility and be overrun with small children? Have you thought about changing your opening hours? Are you sure that what you are providing is what people want?" That is one of the things that we and our cultural partnership need to look at; we need to find out whether there is any way in which we can support our cultural sector to rethink our current model. Perhaps it needs to be tweaked and made more responsive.

That is basically what we are saying: to overcome the barriers, you need to be responsive and listen to what people are saying in order to find out what those barriers are and how you deal with them. I guess that it comes back to the question of leadership. How can you push these things down the line? It should not be some top-down thing, in which we give people access to what we decide that they should have. Instead, how do we support our communities to get involved and grow the things that they want? Does that make sense?

**Katie Nicoll:** On the question of barriers, I think that there are quite a lot of options to talk about. How are we trying to break down the barriers in organisations? We are doing a lot of work with the Promise and with care-experienced young people and children and young carers, and a lot of that is about breaking down barriers. The barriers could be to do with the economic climate, attitudes, logistics and so on, and it is all about trying to find some way of going out to those people.

In that regard, we are doing quite a lot of work with four of our care homes in Renfrewshire, and we are also doing a huge arts and culture programme in which we ask people what they want. It is very much a youth-led approach that is all about co-production and co-design. We are not saying, "We're telling you to come and do this."

It has been extraordinary to see the growth that we have had as a result of that exercise. For example, we are building a network of Promise champions and are trying to introduce them to many different opportunities. Indeed, if we are discussing the impact of inequalities, I would say that we are trying to find a level playing field and to tackle the barriers in that regard. For instance, it is better to use the word "creativity" than "culture" for groups such as the Promise.

I go back to what Rebecca Coggins said about discussing these things with our organisations and finding out what needs to be done. Because we have an incredible foundation of cultural organisations that do work throughout the year, we

can populate the year with events. I am talking not just about key festivals such as the Paisley book festival and the big Halloween event; we always have other offers in between, whether they be in Erskine, Johnstone, Paisley itself, Kilbarchan, Renfrew and so on. We are trying to get to the point where we can ensure that these things can be accessed.

As we work through our services, we are trying to find ways of tackling barriers by not having high ticket prices, for example, or by providing opportunities to young people to volunteer at events. We are just trying to find some way of saying, “These things do not sit outwith your own opportunities—they are all accessible to everybody.” As I have said, that is the position that we are trying to get to.

**The Convener:** Before I bring in Billy Garrett, I just want to ask a very quick supplementary about what Rebecca Coggins and Katie Nicoll have been talking about. One of the things that we are trying to examine is the disparity in the offering between urban and rural areas. Katie Nicoll mentioned the book festival and when I think of your area, Rebecca, I think of the Wigtown book festival, the Stranraer oyster festival and the Portpatrick folk festival. Is Dumfries and Galloway Council engaged with those festivals as they happen across your region?

**Rebecca Coggins:** Yes, we are. Many of those organisations are prominent in our cultural partnership.

We are also fortunate that, in Dumfries and Galloway, the council has invested in an events strategy, with about £360,000 being used to support events across the region. There are six signature events, of which four are cultural, including Dumfries and Galloway arts festival, the Spring Fling open studios event, the Wigtown book festival, which you have just mentioned, and the Big Burns Supper.

All of those events have a strong impact. The strategy was originally an economic development strategy, in a way, and looked to draw people into the area, but those organisations also have a key impact on the communities that they work with. Each has a wider developmental role. That is one thing that we saw with the establishment of the chamber of arts; there is a feeling that the developmental role has passed from the council and the arts agency that we used to have to those organisations.

For example, Wigtown Festival Company runs the festival, but it also sees itself as playing a developmental role in literature, writers and readers across Dumfries and Galloway. It works with the Moat Brae literature centre in Dumfries,

and both have their strategic head on with regard to developing literature and access to it.

It is the same with the Dumfries and Galloway arts festival, which is developmental with regard to performing arts across the region, while the Spring Fling open studios event is very much about how we support individual visual artists’ and craft makers’ businesses and support those sole traders to come together. As for the Big Burns Supper, it is one of the most inclusive festivals that we have and really engages with the community in some of the poorer and more deprived areas in and around Dumfries and gets them involved.

Those organisations are doing something strategic. We see our role as providing the framework to help that happen.

**The Convener:** I see that Donald Cameron wants back in. I will bring him in and then we will come to Billy Garrett.

**Donald Cameron:** I had a separate comment or observation to make, but I will make it now for the sake of time.

Creative Scotland told us that there are certain cultural practices that do not necessarily take place in theatres or music venues. In that respect, it highlighted Gaelic culture and traditional music, but I am sure that we can think of others. Do the witnesses have any views on that, in addition to the point that I made earlier?

I appreciate that that question slightly segues into the question of what cultural need is. I have been struck by your responses on co-production and determining cultural need organically through what people say, so you might like to address that, too.

I am sorry—I have asked quite a lot.

**Katie Nicoll:** As you know, Paisley has incredible cultural venues, but they are all under refurbishment. While we wait for all of those buildings—the town hall, the arts centre, the museum and the new central library—to come online, we are investing across the whole of Renfrewshire to build the cultural ecology. As a result, we are not in venues at the moment. There are venues such as Johnstone town hall, but we are working in a much more fluid way.

There is a rather brilliant old co-operative building in Paisley; it is enormous—it has three floors—and it is now the home of Outspoken Arts Scotland and PACE Theatre Company. It is a space in a shopping mall, but you can get access to high-quality cultural experiences there.

The future Paisley exhibition that we did was in a shopping mall, too. It was a bespoke offer. People would come in, comment on the ideas and say what the needs of their community were, but it

was all addressed in spaces that anybody could occupy. It was an egalitarian space. That is not to say that theatres and other venues are not egalitarian, but because those spaces were there, we were able to have different ways of approaching people. It is about breaking barriers in terms of expectations of culture.

10:00

**Billy Garrett:** It is important not to give the impression that there is some slick answer to the question of the barriers to culture. We live with these challenges and the answer is to ensure that we permanently weave into our practice a set of values and principles that lie behind how we approach what we do. Those values and principles have already been mentioned. Co-production, for example, is key. Instead of our forming a view of what people want, where they want it and how they want to access it, we discover that sort of thing in partnership with citizens and communities.

There is also diversity of programme, space and presentation. Inclusivity is slightly different, because it is about building values and principles such as locality working and place-based and person-centred approaches into everything that we do across our sector.

I mentioned diversity. Some of Glasgow's cultural output comes from the Royal Scottish National Orchestra at the national concert hall, but at the same time, some of that output also comes from people who have been signposted to cultural activity through our community referral programme, which, as it says, happens in their community. It is completely free and is built on the 20-minute neighbourhood principle.

In those different ways, we are trying to ensure that there is something for everyone. Our overall content is barrier free as far as we can make it.

The issue of where cultural activity takes place is important. We have to be clear that cultural activity can take place absolutely anywhere—in a pub, in a park, on a street corner, at the Tramway or at the national concert hall. That is how everyone around the table approaches culture.

We are very fortunate in Glasgow to stage what is now the world's largest winter roots music festival, Celtic Connections, a significant part of which is produced in partnership with Glasgow's significant Gaelic community. When people think about Celtic Connections, they probably think about the concert hall and its exciting programme, but the festival also takes place in around 30 to 40 venues all over Glasgow, including church halls, pubs and a range of other facilities. For example, in its most recent iteration, we did completely free concerts on the cruise ship down at Govan that was housing Ukrainian refugees.

There has to be a multiplicity of approaches, content and venues, and those principles and values have to be woven throughout. It is an ongoing process, because barriers change. As Katie Nicoll said, you can always be surprised at what the barriers are—it is threshold anxiety. It is important that we evolve our practice around this issue.

**The Convener:** Kim Slater, I know that you dropped out for a little while there. Do you want to add anything?

**Kim Slater:** I noticed that one of the barriers that has been mentioned is transport. Moray Council is a rural local authority, and the lack of public transport in relation to cultural activities has been commented on by residents and tourists. We do not necessarily see that as a barrier, but how can we improve on and challenge that situation? That is where our local communities come in; they can provide that support mechanism, because the public transport resource is either not there or not sufficient enough to cope with the demand.

The Spirit of Speyside whisky festival, which we will have in the coming weeks, includes an extensive array of activities in very rural Speyside, where there is no public transport. Communities will come forward and identify how we can transport local residents and tourists and ensure that they can access those cultural activities.

I completely appreciate that transport is a barrier in our local authority area. However, we have to try to provide a network of support to ensure that anyone and everyone can access any cultural activity or event that is available to them.

**The Convener:** Kirsty Cumming, did you want to add anything?

**Kirsty Cumming:** I will make a couple of points, just to build on Billy Garrett's comments.

I am not going to dwell on the barriers, but as far as addressing them is concerned, there is, as we have touched on, certainly something that can be done through partnership working across different agencies. It is about understanding not only where the barriers are but who is best placed to engage with and actually access those communities to understand needs better and to take more of a partnership approach.

I will make two other points, the first of which is the role of volunteering. How does volunteering help break down some of the barriers? There is an opportunity to engage people through volunteering and to bring different people into services and also to use volunteers as a less formalised way of engaging with different communities, instead of having some organisation reach out and approach the public. There is a role for volunteers in that

respect. The question is: how do we maximise that and our volunteers' skill sets?

My other point is about understanding where the barriers are and who is participating. There is still a piece of work to do on the data and on understanding who is using what services and how they are using them. There is a lot of anecdotal data across the sector, but our members would struggle to give a very concrete picture of what exactly things look like in different services, so there is a bit of work to do to understand that from the inclusivity perspective. There seems to be a lack of really concrete data that we can build on and which will allow us to see and monitor progress in a way that is more than anecdotal or not so much in bits and pieces across different services.

**The Convener:** We have certainly moved into the second theme of unmet cultural need. Katie Nicoll, you mentioned that, with your partnership, you have been able to reach some of the really hard-to-reach areas. Will you say a bit more about how that works?

**Katie Nicoll:** The Promise sits within the national policy context, but we are embedding that cultural possibility across all our services, and we are really starting to see what happens when we put in place a Promise arts engagement programme. Individual social workers are going to the Promise group to say, "Can you come and speak to us? Where can we do more with this group of young people and young carers?". Breaking down barriers and accessing groups that we might not normally get to has been a really insightful aspect across our full programme.

We were talking about co-production, and it feels as though co-production is absolutely everybody's unique selling point, because that is our way in. For example, the Paisley museum has been working with Syrian refugees to look at the Syrian glass collection. Because English is their second language, we are doing English and Arabic translations, which go into the museum. We are finding ways into groups that we do not meet immediately, so that they start to have ownership.

Another amazing programme is coming through co-production: the YMCA in Paisley has a digital programme, as part of which a group of girls, who are interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects, found an old jacquard-weaving loom in the Paisley museum collection. It has a binary formation, which is the same one that is used in computer programming, so that is a whole new level of work that would not have happened if we had not met those young people. That conversation started in 2018, so it has been going on for a long time, and it is about building trust and relationships and getting in there. The whole point is that we are trying not just to come in

and come out—we are trying to get in under the skin.

As well as our big event portfolio, we have projects with the criminal justice programme, in which we work with women who are on community payback orders. They learn skills, such as embroidery, and make products that they can donate or sell and then put the money back into the programme. The idea is that they go off with another skill set, and there is another step to take. This cultural programme has been able to reach groups such as that and get into areas that would not normally have been seen. Young people are our development work.

**The Convener:** My local YMCA in North Lanarkshire has recently been engaging with people through a thing called future Friday when the schools finish early and activities are put on. They have set up an e-sports club, which is a proper league, and it has brought in young people who are isolated from other activities to be part of the community. That is quite an interesting example.

**Katie Nicoll:** On inclusion, Erskine Arts is working with young people who choose not to be in school. They do not see themselves taking another step in their education, so they come to Erskine Arts and learn how to put in a backline for a stage or how to use filming and editing equipment. They are called the crew. It is an amazing opportunity. People are not always fed through one route; they can find different ways.

**Billy Garrett:** There are two parts to the question that you asked, convener. I suspect that we would all say the same thing. One part of it is about what success in whatever we do looks like and how we know when we have got there. The answer to that is evidence, data and evaluation. We are all engaged in various processes of gathering evidence and data and running surveys, and I am sure that that runs throughout all our submissions.

However, I feel quite strongly that, although there is empirical data, the stories and testimony of the people who are engaged in those programmes are so powerful and important. Quite often, whether it comes from funders or partners, there is a real emphasis on hard data and number-crunching, and that is legitimate and understandable, but we should not ignore the stories of people who are engaged in those programmes, how they have made them feel and the impact that they have had on them. Their words and feelings are really important.

That is one part of the answer to your question. We are all engaged in that process.

The other part of your question is about how we go about getting to the people who are furthest



from engagement and participation. That is one of the areas in which there is a bit of a positive picture. Collectively, the sector is becoming quite good at that. You have probably seen in the submissions a number of examples of programmes and projects that are doing that. I have given the example of our community referral programme, the pilot of which is based in Calton, which is one of the most challenging communities in Glasgow, and possibly in Scotland. We are working with other agencies in education and social work to identify communities, individuals and families.

That is another area in which we are becoming quite good at opening ourselves up and working with other agencies and partners as part of our wider commitment to the sector. One of the challenges around that, however, is that, as Rebecca Coggins said earlier, it is a little bit fragile and precarious because of the financial landscape. It is all a little bit project by project.

It is perhaps part of the question that Mr Macpherson asked. It is very difficult, and it is the kind of thing that people such as me always ask for. Constructing a much longer-term strategic funding framework around some of that incredibly impactful and positive work would make a big difference to shifting the dial nationally.

10:15

**The Convener:** I am sure that you are aware that one of the recommendations from our budget inquiry was about multiyear funding and more sustainable funding for the arts, so we have covered that.

Does anyone else want to come in on unmet need?

**Rebecca Coggins:** I emphasise, as Billy Garrett said, that it would be good to be able to move beyond having to keep gathering evidence and spending such a lot of capacity and time on making the case, but the long-term view is important. There are so many examples of making connections and getting communities involved. However, I think back to Kirkcudbright Galleries, which ran a health and wellbeing project for a summer, but it stopped because the funding stopped. The people who were involved did not stop coming into the gallery to look for the creative writing group. People were asking staff, "Can you help me?". They wanted that connection; they had built a community through their experience of those sessions, but the sessions were suddenly removed. That is almost worse than not having had them at all. Funding must be long term. There is a lot of evidence of the positive impact that such projects can have.

**Katie Nicoll:** Just to finish up on the unmet needs piece, I note that Billy Garrett and other witnesses talked about social prescribing being an essential part of it. We have invested in a cultural social prescribing role in OneRen, which is the arm's-length charity that delivers services on behalf of Renfrewshire Council. That role is instrumental in our culture, arts, health and social care department. There is a really joined-up piece of work there, and it links to the ALISS—a local information system for Scotland—database. You can find services and groups and refer to cultural activity as part of your health and wellbeing rather than waiting for other interventions.

**The Convener:** I move on to our final area of interest, which is place-based cultural policy. Mark Ruskell has some questions on that area.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** It has been an interesting evidence session. I go back to the points that were made about community planning partnerships. I am interested in exploring their role in other forms of partnership and in strategically organising and delivering place-based approaches. I was struck by what Kirsty Cumming said about there being a disparity in Scotland in the way that CPPs incorporate culture and cultural organisations in their planning and articulate cultural outcomes. I was interested in what Billy Garrett said about the value of social prescribing and how partnership working is perhaps spreading into health and social care partnerships, and I was also interested in Rebecca Coggins's point about how we have to work sideways and then up to access the more strategic CPPs.

Can you distil anything from all that in terms of your experiences, what works well with community planning partnerships and how the cultural sector gets its value and its voice into those objectives? Do we need to consider other parts of the architecture of local strategic planning beyond that? It is a big picture, and I am aware through what you have said this morning that culture touches on many different things from community regeneration to social care to everything else. Are CPPs the best vehicle to do that, or should we consider other ways?

**Kirsty Cumming:** I am happy to come in on that. As I said, there are different approaches, and community planning partnerships were all set up slightly differently. It is not about being uniform but about how we get a consistent cultural voice across community planning partnerships.

We have had a lot of discussions with our members, some of whom sit on community planning partnerships and are very much involved. They can understand the discussions about community and they have opportunities to be involved: for example, if there is a discussion

about health and wellbeing, they can offer a service. Such a connection is made much more fluidly than it would be if they were sitting outside the community planning partnership and trying to understand what was happening within it.

Other members are on sub-committees of community planning partnerships. Again, they are involved at some level and are able to engage in and shape conversations.

In other areas, there is no engagement at all and it is very much about trying to understand what is happening, then coming in after the party to try to influence, to offer services and to say that there is potential for partnership.

From my perspective, it is not about our members being on community planning partnerships per se but about a mechanism for a cultural voice locally. That could involve somebody from a library, which is a statutory service. That is not necessarily what we would recommend; it is just an example of a statutory service, a representative through which people could feed a cultural voice. For me, it is about having somebody who can give a representative opinion on behalf of the community, as the voice of culture—not necessarily one organisation or one service, but a mechanism through which people can feed into and take things back from those opportunities.

Similarly, when it comes to health and social care partnerships, we see from our membership that, where there is direct engagement, opportunities happen. There are some interesting approaches, and things are being shaped and delivered. However, to come back to Billy Garrett's point about partnership and wellbeing, where there is no such engagement, it is much harder, as people have to come in from the outside to the decisions that have been made.

Understanding the role of CPPs across Scotland is key to understanding whether there should be a statutory need for a cultural voice. Such a voice might be determined locally, depending on the local organisations and on how culture is delivered locally.

To add to that slightly tangentially, it is also about understanding what culture is. We have already touched on that a little. For some people, the word "culture" is almost a barrier: is it highbrow—theatre or opera—or is it for the public? That involves the perception of what we mean when we talk about "culture". There is a bit of a move towards the term "everyday creativity" to capture a lot of local activities. Again, it is just about understanding where the barriers are and how things fit together when it comes to the cultural voice.

**Mark Ruskell:** That was very insightful.

**Kim Slater:** I certainly agree with Kirsty Cumming's comments. There are opportunities to improve the connection of culture with our community planning partnership. Culture is definitely embedded in all four of our local outcome improvement plan priorities. However, at this time, the detail of the four priorities connects to economic development. A lot of the focusing and channelling is around the economic development aspect, which might be to the detriment of how culture contributes to the overall wellbeing of our population.

I am glad to note that, in Moray, culture is connected to our community planning partnership and our LOIP, but more explicit information and connections could certainly be developed to showcase the impact of culture on our overall community and not just on the economic development of the area.

**Rebecca Coggins:** Things will probably change as we develop our cultural partnership. We are looking at how that partnership will work with others in our region—not to cause any duplication but to dovetail. We are about to start talking to the community planning partnership about how we can do that, but at the moment we are very much in and around it, and there are a lot of things happening.

I am just thinking of a few examples. A creative wellbeing project has developed from one of our creative organisations in Langholm through a project during lockdown on creative art journals. It has been successful in getting funding from the national health service endowment fund and the community wellbeing fund to run a two-year project that will set up a wellbeing network to make creative interventions in clinical and community-based healthcare systems. That is a grass-roots project that will, ultimately, deliver on what the community planning partnership is trying to do.

We also have the Stove Network and its creative placemaking. It is on the place planning partnership—not the community planning partnership—so it has influence and a voice in that area.

I sit on the community learning and development partnership. When we were developing the cultural strategy we had two reference groups; one group was from the cultural sector and another was from the non-cultural sector. In the event, the community learning and development partnership became our non-cultural sector lead reference group, so we have a good connection there, but as yet we are not in the community planning partnership. We hope that that will come; the right mechanism just needs to be found.

As was said, the way that things are set up means that the lead for cultural development is within the council, but they are in a different section and lower down, so culture does not feature in the community planning partnership at the moment. We hope that that will change.

**Billy Garrett:** That is a really good question. We have to recognise a couple of things for context. One is that there is a complicated landscape—as Rebecca Coggins summarised very effectively. There are community learning and development partnerships, CPPs, and health and social care partnerships. There are various forums. Understanding that and how all of them can be made complementary is an ongoing challenge.

The other contextual issue is that there are always competing priorities for the public pound, and culture always has to make its case. That is true at every level, including at community partnership level, which is also part of the context.

However, the inclusion of culture is, frankly, a bit of a no-brainer. Community planning partnerships—I am obviously talking from a Glasgow perspective, principally—are an important part of the landscape. They are important for presenting an opportunity for culture to build coalitions and consensus and to develop relationships and move things forward.

Glasgow Life is heavily engaged in the community planning partnership process and in all the networks—not only in the culture sector, but in the work that we do overall—which is very positive. We could probably do more, and the priority that community planning partnerships attach to culture could, possibly, be better.

However, we are in there arguing the case for culture and we are building relationships, networks and coalitions around some of the things that I have spoken about. We take our ideas and propositions to community planning partnerships. They are compelling and we win over hearts and minds, then we move on from that and build a platform for developing, implementing and executing. It is really important for the cultural sector that we engage positively with the network.

**Katie Nicoll:** Renfrewshire Council has not had to work as hard to make the case for culture recently, because we coalesced around the UK city of culture bid and the legacy plan that came with it, so we already had a lot of buy-in to keeping that investment on the table for the activity that we are taking forward for 2024, which is a little late due to the hiatus that was caused by Covid.

We see cultural regeneration as a positive driver for economic and social change in Renfrewshire, and the CPP—along with many other organisations—is part of the discussion around how our investment is being spent. It is a

substantial investment, so this comes back to how we are going to tell our story through evaluation and evidencing of how we have made the change.

We are certainly in a position in which the case has not had to be driven home as much, but we are hitting challenging times and things are changing all the time. Future Paisley concludes in April 2024, which is why we are committed to trying to change policy to embed activities such as Paisley TH.CARS2—townscape heritage and conservation area regeneration scheme—and cultural and social prescribing. All partner voices are influential in how we are driving the programme.

10:30

**Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con):** In the context of place-based culture policy, how do you measure success and what metrics do you use? Is there any standardisation in place so that you can compare different sectors or local authority areas? Katie Nicoll can start on that.

**Katie Nicoll:** I will jump in because I have spent the past year finalising a complex evaluation framework. When we talk about sharing best practice, I think that all the work that we are undertaking could be utilised further than just Renfrewshire Council.

Renfrewshire Council formed a partnership with the University of the West of Scotland to create the centre of culture, sport and events. There is dialogue across 80 live projects, which are on every aspect from civic pride to health and social care, because we have to see what our high level and our grass roots are doing, and we need to find the sub-outputs and sub-outcomes because we have three strategic outcomes against each of our five step changes. We can go direct to our project leads, and they can use the framework and locate their project within it; everybody should find their position within that framework. They can then use the sub-outputs and sub-outcomes to determine what qualitative and quantitative data they collect.

We get a report back every quarter. The information is put into Smartsheet and we can then identify exactly how we are hitting protected characteristics and how much external funding is coming in. We can pinpoint all that. When we look at the evaluation and the impact, we are starting to drive strong data.

We are sort of using the Scottish household survey, if “using” is the right word, but what we have is an information tool. Everybody has a user-friendly framework and we have given them the tools so that they can capture some of the information about what they are doing in their particular field.

We therefore have a bespoke bundle of indicators that a lot of programmes can sit under. We launched it in January; the first bout of reporting is just coming in and people are already seeing how useful it is. I am not saying that they were not gathering data previously, but we are trying to find a way of getting a cumulative picture from all the multiple projects that we are running. It has been highly complex, which is why it has taken so long for us to get to that point.

The impact will be seen much further down the line, once Future Paisley is finished, but we can already evidence the impact that it has had and we will do so in the longer term. For example, if we do something with new qualifications at Castlehead high school, we can see whether we are putting in the stepping stones and whether people are going to go into a creative workforce, but we will only know that in five to 10 years.

If we have a robust foundation, we have great data and metrics to put against it.

**Maurice Golden:** Can you compare your framework with a similar local authority such as Dundee City Council, for example?

**Katie Nicoll:** Forgive me, but I have only been in my role for a year, although in the past a lot of work was done on comparisons. What I have described has been years in the making, so I would have thought that in the past, Renfrewshire Council would have used evidence that could be shaped into the framework.

**Rebecca Coggins:** I am thinking about how difficult it is to do that because we are starting from so many different baselines in different communities. My first reaction is about community response, which means talking to the community about how it feels intervention has gone. We also need to think about place planning more holistically. There is the place planning tool that people can use to assess how they feel; the results are like a spider's web. We want to see the cultural impact embedded within that so that we can see the changes that take place between how a place feels about itself the first time we look at it and how it feels about itself afterwards.

It is sometimes difficult to remove cultural input from other inputs, but it should not be separate; it should all be part of one thing. If we are taking an approach to a place by responding to what that place thinks it needs and giving it the means to build on its assets and to develop, that should be holistic.

We are thinking about that, but we are not there yet. We are just starting to build our cultural partnership and create an action plan for the cultural strategy and the metrics that we will base on it. For us, the Scottish household survey covers so few people in our area and we do not know

what they have accessed to tell us what their reactions are. We need to put something in place to find that out without overloading people.

In Hull, after it was the city of culture there was an evaluation session looking at how that had made a difference. It was interesting to hear that there were short-term measures and long-term measures. A community survey was carried out for Hull citizens on how they felt more generally about themselves, where they live and their role. The various annual surveys showed a change in terms of positive feeling as a result of the city of culture festival.

I do not know whether I am answering the question. I am just throwing ideas into the air, but I think that collection of data has to be more holistic and should not cover only the cultural elements.

**Maurice Golden:** Definitely. Do you think that there is a role in community engagement for standardised questions so that we do not stop adding to the data but there is some way of making comparisons, and we can recognise good practice and try to bring everyone up together?

**Rebecca Coggins:** Absolutely. Frameworks are already being used, but it is about pulling it all together. You are right: it would be good to be able to make comparisons with other areas. However, we have found in the past that, because each local authority's area has a completely different cultural landscape, it can be really difficult to compare them. It is like comparing apples with pears. It would be great to find a simple way to make comparisons—a way that is not too difficult for the arts organisation or community group on the ground.

**Maurice Golden:** It can be quite daunting to develop something from scratch. If everyone is doing that at the same time, perhaps there could be a centralised role in some shape or form.

**Rebecca Coggins:** You are absolutely right. If a cultural organisation gets its funding from various different sources and all those funders ask for different metrics, it can spend a lot of time on that when it should just be doing the stuff.

**Maurice Golden:** That is really helpful.

**The Convener:** Billy Garrett wants to come in; I will then bring in Kirsty Cumming. However, first, I have a quick question for Katie Nicoll. Obviously, the project that you talked about was big, and it involved a considerable amount of time and complexity. What was the driver for putting it in place? Where did the policy driver come from?

**Katie Nicoll:** The driver was the fact that the spending of all public money needs to be properly evidenced and evaluated. In Future Paisley, the framework is the mechanism that will allow for future investment decisions to be made, because

that is where a lot of the evidence will sit that says that we should continue to do this and we should continue to do that. That will be clear evidence.

To pick up on what Rebecca Coggins said, we have five step changes that work across everything. It is about community and wellbeing, and sustainability and resilience, for example. I think that, instead of having everybody working on separate frameworks, there could be a comprehensive piece.

I would be really happy to share the framework, because it has been such a long-term thing, and it could be useful for other local authorities to look at. We have project leads dealing with it because, if we give it to individuals to do much smaller pieces of work, we need to consolidate, otherwise, as was said, people will spend time writing different reports for different organisations. A framework should pick on all the objectives for many of us, and the cross-pollination between all of us could be really useful.

**The Convener:** Thank you for that.

**Billy Garrett:** In some ways, what I was going to say has been covered. I was going to echo Rebecca Coggins's phrase. She captured things very elegantly when she said that we are not quite there yet.

The question is a really good one, and I do not think that any of us have the answer. Lots of different agencies ask very different questions. If you are working with a health and social care partnership and it has provided money, it will ask specific questions that require a specific type of evaluation. The health service will ask slightly different questions that are much more clinically focused and which require a very different set of evaluations. Different agencies use different software. We might use a software called Upshot, and someone else will use something else. That is another complicated picture.

Katie Nicoll summarised things perfectly. There is space for a conversation. That is happening across other sectors. In the events sector, there is a similar conversation about how it might be possible to create some kind of national evaluation framework, which would have to be very flexible and modular. There is a space for that conversation, and that might be something that falls out of this process.

That could be really positive, and I think that we would all be really keen to engage in that kind of process, because it would really benefit the sector. Lots of agencies would be required to engage in that—not specifically cultural organisations but agencies outwith the sector, such as health and social care partnerships, community planning partnerships, the national health service and some of the national agencies. If there was a willingness

and a coalition of the willing, that would be a really positive initiative for the sector nationally.

**Kirsty Cumming:** We are doing quite a bit of work in that area. We do not have any answers to the question by any means, but one thing that we are looking at is a common approach to reporting on social value. We are using the Moving Communities platform, which is used across England and which started on the sport and leisure side. It captures a range of data in relation to public sector leisure across all local authorities in England, and it has provided really good data, although it still needs development. We have been looking at that for our members in Scotland. We are currently working with Scottish Government analysts to understand their views on that and whether they see the information that comes from it as credible and whether it would fit from a Scottish Government perspective.

A few of our members have signed up to that. Members can sign up to the data hub platform individually. Some members in Scotland are already using the platform at the local level, and we have piloted pulling together the information from those who are already engaging. That is really powerful.

I wish that I had the stats to hand—I do not know them off the top of my head. Four trusts are looking at the social value of what they provide. There is scope to break down that information for cultural services, so there can be a focus on culture. There is potential, although I do not think that it will solve all the issues that we have. It is not an evaluation framework, which Billy Garrett talked about, but it is a start to consistent data reporting.

We have also been working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities because, if that work were to go ahead, it would go much wider than work for our membership—it would go across the whole country. England is looking to start capturing information on local and community groups and to feed that in, in order to get a place-based picture through the platform. That is in development, but that is the intention.

There is potential, as a starting point, for something that is not onerous. Participation data and some financial information are caught, so there is nothing that our members would not already capture. There is an automatic feed into the platform.

I feel like I sound like a salesperson for the platform, but it is something in development that might have some legs as a starting point for some kind of national data.

**Kim Slater:** I concur completely with Rebecca Coggins's and Billy Garrett's points about the various asks of funders in regard to whatever

project you are doing. They are different and complex, so standardisation would be great, but I am not sure how to achieve that.

From a selfish perspective, we need to improve on the evidence of the social and economic value of culture to strengthen the case in the local area. Therefore, I am happy to receive any information or systems that are being developed. The sharing of best practice is key for us to strengthen the cultural market. Moray Council will happily receive any content.

**The Convener:** As there are no further questions from colleagues and if there are no closing remarks, I thank the witnesses for attending. It has been a really helpful session. It was the first in our inquiry, so we have a few more to have and a few more visits to do. I think that some of my colleagues will visit Dumfries and Galloway as part of that experience. We look forward to continuing the work.

Having decided, under agenda item 2, to hold in private consideration of evidence in this and future meetings, I move the meeting into private.

10:46

*Meeting continued in private until 10:59.*

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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