



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Thursday 8 June 2023

Session 6



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CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
19th 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)

*Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (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:

Karen Dick (Creative Scotland)

Alastair Evans (Creative Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

James Johnston

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Thursday 8 June 2023

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Clare Adamson): Good morning, and welcome to the 19th meeting in 2023 of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee.

Our first agenda item is a decision on whether to take business in private. Are members content to take agenda item 3 in private?

Members: *indicated agreement.*

Culture in Communities

09:00

The Convener: Agenda item 2 is evidence for our inquiry into culture in communities, which has focused on a place-based approach to culture. We are joined by Alastair Evans, interim director of strategy and planning, and Karen Dick, head of place, partnership and communities, both from Creative Scotland. They will not be making opening statements, because they have both submitted written evidence, for which I thank them.

The Scottish Government's culture strategy committed to working with Creative Scotland to

"map local authority support for culture and to explore future models of collaboration between national and local bodies".

Please give us an update on how that work is progressing.

Alastair Evans (Creative Scotland): I can start. Before the pandemic, we began work to map the structures and financial channels in the sector and to look at how national bodies work with public bodies. We made some progress on that, but we had other priorities during the pandemic and are returning to that work this year. I can say more about our plans for that.

I want to be clear about that piece of work. It is not spatial planning or a register of all the cultural assets across Scotland. We do that kind of mapping in a lot of our work at a local level, but this piece of work is not intended to map everything in Scotland.

The Convener: Some members of the committee visited a couple of cultural settings in Edinburgh, one of which was Wester Hailes Arts for Leisure and Education. You say that you are not working on an asset register, but the WHALE arts centre is obviously very much at the heart of its community. We heard that it is working with partner organisations to open up empty shop units in the area.

How can we get a picture of what is happening across Scotland if all the different strands of culture that are happening in communities are not being fed in to local authorities or Creative Scotland? Does Creative Scotland have enough awareness of community initiatives like that one?

Karen Dick (Creative Scotland): Our colleagues who work at Creative Scotland and Screen Scotland make connections through funding, development and advocacy work. One of the ways in which we understand what is happening in local authority areas or in communities is through the local authority and area briefings that are created by my team. Those

briefings contain information not only about what Creative Scotland funds but about how much local authority funding goes in, about major assets and festivals, about areas that have been used as filming locations and about capital investment that has gone in from the national Lottery through the Scottish Arts Council since the lottery began, in 1994. All of that information is contained in the briefings.

However, there is no substitute for the work that we do in talking to people, going out into communities, attending things such as funding fairs and generally responding to people who apply to us for funding. As you mentioned, WHALE is part of the culture collective programme, which is 26 lead organisations and their partners across communities in Scotland working together in those communities.

Alastair Evans: Specifically on the Edinburgh example, we would not look to have an asset register because of the scale of resources required for its creation and upkeep—which, you will appreciate, would be an almost daily task for the team that would be required. However, when we work locally, such exercises can be hugely helpful in having all the partners around the table and mapping not only the assets that we know about but those that the local community feels could be brought back into use—exactly as in your example of vacant shopping centre lots.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Building on that, I am interested in where creative community hubs sit within your strategies and organisation and how you will consider funding them through the new funding model that you are developing.

Last week, we were quite struck by some of the work that has been happening across Edinburgh to, in effect, reset the relationship between creative community hubs and agencies. In particular, there is the report “Working Better Together”. There is perhaps a sense that many community hubs feel that cultural opportunities are being offered to them but they are not being developed from the ground up—that a community development approach is not happening right now.

There has been other evidence—for example, from the University of Stirling, looking at Creative Stirling—about how creative hubs pivoted during Covid to take a much more inclusive and community development approach. Does that fit the funds that you have, or does it start to stray into other, siloed, boxes such as regeneration? How are you incorporating something that is much more holistic and about place making into your central funding, which is about culture but is also about much more than that?

Alastair Evans: There are many examples of that in our funding mix. We are approaching a period during which we will reset our relationships with a group of multiyear-funded organisations. Some of those are larger organisations that we all know very well, but others are community organisations that work in exactly the settings that you have talked about.

Beyond that, our open funding picks up many such community hubs and we fund networks such as Creative Edinburgh, Creative Dundee and CHARTS—Culture, Heritage and Arts Assembly, Argyll and the Isles.

Awards for all, too, is much more of a small grants scheme. Typically, choirs, local halls and other settings are funded within that. We have a range of devolved funds that work in that way, such as the culture collective fund, which the committee has heard quite a lot about, and our place partnerships. Such targeted work brings a lot of organisations and settings of that scale into our funding mix.

Karen Dick: As Alastair Evans said, it is a mix. Many of the community-focused organisations that you might have visited or heard from are funded by Creative Scotland through many different routes. We have supported Creative Stirling to develop its work through targeted routes such as our place partnership and through our creative industries team. In particular, we have done that through looking at how it supports makers—people who create things to sell or who develop creative businesses—in Stirling as well as through the work that it does directly with communities.

All those types of activity fit within some of our funding streams at some point, or with other funding programmes that are not necessarily funded by Creative Scotland. Lottery funders such as the National Lottery Community Fund and the National Lottery Heritage Fund support cultural activity. The National Lottery Community Fund, especially, has a specific community focus rather than Creative Scotland’s creative focus.

09:10

Mark Ruskell: Do you think that there might be a tension when large cultural organisations and festivals, such as the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, want to invest in communities but their investment can feel very top-down? For example, they might say, “Here are 60 tickets for something that we are producing.” One view that was quoted from the Edinburgh creative hubs is:

“If you want the margins to engage, then invest in the margins. It’s quite straightforward.”

Is the balance right? Is culture something that is being offered to people—I would not quite say “being done to people”—or can it emerge from

communities? Is that partnership right at the moment? The view that we have heard is that sometimes it is not, and culture is seen as a type of philanthropy—“Would you like to come and see our show?” instead of, “What are you creating in your community and how can we invest in and develop that?”

Karen Dick: There are multiple ways that it manifests itself throughout Scotland. The work that is developed through the culture collective fund is created by communities with the artists, with the organisation supporting them all. That is one reason why we developed the fund. That approach is intended, if not to redress the balance in some areas, to give a voice where there might not have been a voice before. There are cases of what might be felt as, “We are doing good to communities—we are offering you something, so come and see it,” without understanding what it can mean to the people and what the unmet need is in that community.

There are multiple ways of doing things. Sometimes, tickets to a show are exactly what people need, but that does not mean that they do not need something else alongside that to enable them to develop what they want or to have control over what they need in their place.

Mark Ruskell: If you recognise that, what role can Creative Scotland play in helping to reset, or at least question, the relationship in that partnership and whether it is working in certain areas?

Alastair Evans: That is a really good question, which gets to the heart of how we try to work and embed place-based cultural strategy into everything that we do. Part of that is through our funding, and part of it is through development programmes through place partnerships and other programmes.

In everything that we see, whether funding applications or work that we do from a development perspective, we try to see exactly what you described: the organic needs and opportunities that are described by communities for projects that we are going to co-create with them. We are very vigilant in regard to projects and applications that we parachute into areas or where that relationship is imbalanced—when it is about an organisation coming into a community and saying, “Here is an offer for you,” instead of saying, “What does your community want or need, and how can we work together to deliver that?” That issue is at the heart of it.

You mentioned Covid. I think that Covid and the response to it from the cultural sector has really focused minds. It was extraordinary, in some places, how cultural organisations pivoted to offer cultural activity to their communities but also to

provide a wider civic service. We are doing some work with the University of Manchester on what a researcher there has called “the civic turn” in cultural policy—that is their term, not ours, because I think that, in Scotland, culture has very much had a civic role for a very long time.

We can see changes—for example, through the evaluation of the place programme in Edinburgh, which involves all the Edinburgh festivals, in part, in community activity. We can see that change in how they approach community groups or in how they let community groups approach them and co-create with them.

Mark Ruskell: Thank you.

The Convener: We do not really want our discussion today to be about funding, but inevitably it comes up.

On the back of Mr Ruskell’s line of questioning, I will ask about the pivot by organisations that you talked about. We have heard lots of evidence that organisations felt that Covid reset their relationship with the funders for that time. They became trusted organisations when, all of a sudden, the restrictions on how the money could be used and which projects they could spend it on eased off, which gave the organisations an opportunity to use their own creativity to deliver, as you said, not only a cultural but a civic and wellbeing service to many communities.

09:15

The organisations are saying that they would like to continue to feel like that, but they are back to the funding cycle and what they would call a tick-box exercise. Has Creative Scotland reflected on that in relation to how it is asking people to bid for funding now and how it is assessing projects? Is there any opportunity for multiyear funding for some of the organisations that are trusted partners?

Alastair Evans: Culture collective is a good example of a programme without set objectives. Karen Dick can speak in much more detail about that approach. On the broader point, there were significant emergency funds through that period and we needed to disburse them at speed, so our approach was to ensure that we had accountability for those funds but to prioritise getting them to those organisations.

We are now back in a position where our funds are highly competitive. In over 10 years at Creative Scotland, I do not think that I have seen our open fund so competitive, and the committee will know the position of our regularly funded organisations within our overall funding picture. It is an extremely competitive environment, and, in order for us to make fine-tuned decisions about

what we fund, we require the organisations to show how they are helping us to meet our shared objectives for the sector.

I would like to say that it will be easier to secure funds from us in the wake of Covid, but that is not always the case. However, for targeted funds such as the culture collective fund, we have been able to be less prescriptive about the outcomes that we are looking for in communities.

Karen Dick: When we were designing the culture collective, the key point for us was that we did not want to see predetermined outcomes, because the outcomes should be determined through working with the communities. As Kathryn Welch, our programme lead, mentioned, the only metric that we have for the culture collective that involves numbers is about the number of freelancers or creative practitioners who are employed by the culture collective.

The reporting that we have is fairly extensive. The organisations and the co-ordinators want to tell us the story of what the funding is doing, how it is supporting artists and communities, how they are learning from each other, how they are changing as organisations or as individuals and how they are developing what they will be doing in the future.

Through the culture collective programme and the place partnership programme, we are particularly flexible about how we define things, how we report and what we expect, because partnership working is very much about that long-term approach. It is about understanding and flexing in response to where the need is, which is what we can do when we have that kind of targeted fund model.

When there is extreme pressure on budgets—when budgets are at a standstill and there are a lot of applications and very hard decisions to make—it is not quite as easy as it is when you have those open, flexible ways of working.

However, I would say that, for any applications or awards that we make, if people need to make changes to budgets—for example, if they need to change what they are doing halfway through a project—they can always come and talk to us. They will have a named contact they can get in touch with. We are very open to them changing things to suit what they need to do for that project as long as they are not completely changing what it was funded for, because that would be a bigger issue.

Alastair Evans: On the point about eligibility for multiyear funding, which I realise I did not answer fully, organisations whose work might be described as more community focused are absolutely eligible. The processes will be built to

ensure that there is no bias towards any organisational type.

As the committee will know, the work of many organisations in the current regularly funded organisations portfolio is focused in that way. For example, organisations such as the Stove Network, Timespan and Wigtown are completely embedded in their communities and are doing exactly that work.

Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Building on what Mark Ruskell asked about, I want to ask about responsiveness to local communities' needs, and specifically the fact that not all culture takes place in a theatre or traditional cultural venue. I am thinking about traditional culture, but that could apply to all sorts of local culture. How do you recognise that fact in how you approach things nationally?

Alastair Evans: We absolutely recognise that fact. A useful illustration of it is the Scottish household survey, which asks the population about how they engage with cultural assets, be that a theatre or a gallery. That is very useful data for us. We also run our own population survey in which we ask people about how they conceive of their cultural lives, and they consistently tell us not only about going to theatres and art galleries but about the gardening, baking and DIY that they do. There is a very strong sense of everyday participation.

The committee took evidence from Professor Andrew Miles. We part funded the project that he led looking at everyday participation. Its conclusion—which we agree with—is that people engage culturally in their homes and on their doorstep. We are mindful of that in everything that we fund and we make sure that people can engage at a local level.

Karen Dick: When we became involved in that everyday participation study, it looked at Culter in Aberdeen and Stornoway, because we were keen to put forward into that United Kingdom-wide study examples that included different languages, different ways of taking part in culture, an island location and places that were not in the centre of an urban environment. That was a wider look at how people take part in cultural and creative activities in different places with different approaches.

Through work that we do in the place, partnership and communities team—which covers Gaelic arts, Scots and traditional arts as well as partnerships with local authorities and things like that—we get to see how different organisations and people in different places want to take part in things.

A key point is that we fund and work with not only organisations that would typically be

described as cultural organisations but community organisations that support cultural activity, because they see it as a core thing that they want to do for their community. Especially in rural and smaller parts of the country, a lot of the organisations that deliver things for communities also deliver leisure activities or community-focused support. They might have a bakery, for example. There are lots of different things.

How we understand cultural opportunity and how people take part in culture in different communities across Scotland is as wide and as varied as the different opportunities across Scotland.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): During our inquiry, we have heard a lot about the importance of local cultural venues. As the convener said, the committee undertook visits in Edinburgh last week. This week and in following weeks, we will also visit Dumfries and Orkney.

We have heard that many venues are under threat, which I am sure is no surprise to you. There are lots of reasons for that, from local authority closures to funding issues. Rationalisation of the Church of Scotland estate has also been mentioned. There are lots of pressures. We have also heard that many community groups feel under pressure to rescue their local venue, whatever it might be, and that there is subsequently huge responsibility on them in running such venues as assets. What work is Creative Scotland doing to help communities in that endeavour?

Karen Dick: It is not Creative Scotland's role to provide support and advice on community asset transfer. There are other people who are much better qualified and more experienced than us to do things like that. However, when we talk to people or they approach us for advice, it is often because there is a church or a well-loved building at the end of their street that is likely to be sold off to developers but that they think should be a cultural space.

We have colleagues in Creative Scotland who can give advice and support. We do not have a capital programme ourselves if a building needs refurbishment but we can highlight other funders or organisations that can provide advice. We can also play the connecting role as a national body by pointing to examples of the challenges and opportunities that it has brought when people have taken on assets or pointing to other bodies or people that can help and advise.

Often, if it has come to the point of someone divesting themselves of such assets, that is because they have challenges in managing them. If that challenge is passed on to community groups, particularly if they are volunteer led, it can

be extremely challenging for them to take that on without further funding, advice, support or information on how to manage the building. They need continuing support.

There are instances in which we have supported programmes that run in places that have been taken over by communities or creative groups. However, our support has to be about the programme that they are running rather than just the retention of an asset.

It is unfortunate that, in some places, communities lose key community assets because they are bought up by developers and developed into housing. As Alastair Evans said, there is a civic role. The question is where we find civic space—somewhere that communities can find space to come together and take part in things. A lot of that is being lost due to the changes in the estates that you mentioned. However, it is key to ensure that, when people think about taking on assets and taking control of such buildings, they understand what they are letting themselves in for.

One thing that was developed through our Aberdeen place partnership was a programme for individuals who were thinking about taking on assets. That was very tailored—it took them through what they might need to do, the challenges, their legal responsibilities and how they might form into a community interest company or charity. At the start of that, quite a few people were interested in taking on specific assets in Aberdeen but, at the end, there was only one person, because it is a massive challenge and it will change what those individuals and groups do. It can take them away from what they currently do.

When the Stove Network in Dumfries came together as individual artists because they were concerned about losing the high-street property, it took them away from their individual day-to-day roles as artists and people who were developing their own creative practice. There is only so long that some people can change from being a maker and artist into managing a capital development, when it might not be what they want to do with their lives but they definitely want to ensure that their community does not lose an asset.

Donald Cameron: I entirely take the point that it is not just about taking on a building. It depends on what is going on and what it is being used for. Does Creative Scotland have any criteria that it likes communities that are taking on venues to progress?

Karen Dick: That would be entirely up to the community. Often, we engage with people when they apply to us for funding, although we advise on and support development. Our funding criteria are all on our website and the application would be about the type of work that they put on and how

they understand the demand for it. However, quite often people might want to test different things to see what their audience or participants might want—especially if it is a new space. Instead of coming to us with large programmes of work, they want to test different things to see what sticks, what communities might want and what other people have developed. With our criteria, we would not expect different things from different people who apply for funding from us. It is all down to how applicants express the local context and how they have understood the local need.

09:30

Donald Cameron: I am very glad to hear that answer. Can I move on to a slightly different topic, convener?

The Convener: First, Ben Macpherson has a supplementary question.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): Good morning to the panel. I want to build on some of the very important points about assets.

Do you want to add any more about how we will benefit from urging developers and organisations with space to consider the creative community as new tenants or to consider a different utilisation for properties that they have? I represent the Edinburgh Northern and Leith constituency, and I regularly urge developers and organisations to do that, because we have seen the benefit of such entities in Edinburgh Northern and Leith; there is the Out of the Blue Drill Hall, and there are initiatives that Wasps Studios and Edinburgh Palette have undertaken, for example.

The reason why I emphasise that is because, when Professor David Stevenson gave evidence to the committee, he highlighted that meeting overheads is a key issue. How beneficial to the creative community is sharing those costs, and how can we do more together to urge private sector developers and the public sector to utilise space to provide areas for creative businesses and organisations? They could potentially have somebody else manage the core costs and/or share them.

Karen Dick: That is a perennial problem. Private and public developers want to have an income from their assets through selling them or raising money from them.

You mentioned Wasps Studios. Quite often, it found it challenging to explain to people that, if it had access to an empty space or building, it could take it on and bring in artists, and that doing so would be beneficial. As time has gone on and that model has proven itself, the potential benefits of having the creative community developing and

bringing people together in one place have become a lot clearer.

Edinburgh Palette is a really good example of using a “meanwhile” space; St Margaret’s house was awaiting development, and Edinburgh Palette came in and brought everyone together in one place where there was demand. When there is demand from a creative community to access a building or space, it is a challenge for us, for the creative community and for local authorities and others to negotiate the relationship with the businesses or organisations that own the property and to explain that benefit.

Local authority arts development officers and people in local areas who can be a conduit between businesses, owners, local authority landlords and the creative sector have been helpful in negotiating those relationships because, when the creative community wants to come in and do things, they can help to translate and explain the benefits of doing so. One impact of the loss of arts development officers in many parts of Scotland is that there is no conduit between landlords, owners and the creative community to explain the benefit.

We and many of our place partnerships have explored that, in particular in places such as Inverclyde, where there are large spaces that creative communities want to have ownership of and go into. That has been successful in some of them, but the availability of such spaces is often temporary, so they might be lost when there is another opportunity such as a developer obtaining planning permission.

I would be interested in further discussion about that. Parts of our organisation have done work on the spaces that artists need, especially in the visual arts. It would be interesting to see what we can do together.

Alastair Evans: There is a more general point here, which is about the profile of culture in the local planning landscape. As the committee will know, the definition of local authority requirement for adequate cultural provision sometimes means that the culture sector does not have the profile that we would like it to have. Creative Scotland is not a statutory consultee in community planning partnerships. It sometimes feels as though we need to knock on the door from the outside just to get into conversations at local level. Promoting economic development has been part of our approach to ensuring that we are included in those conversations. Members of our creative industries team are adept at getting themselves into them where they can. However, that wider point is salient here, too.

The Convener: I will take a supplementary question from Mr Bibby and then come back to Mr Cameron.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Good morning to the panel. Ms Dick, in response to Mr Cameron, you said that you do not have a capital programme. I hear what you say about other funding sources being available for capital funds but, given the scale of the existing challenges for cultural venues, which Mr Cameron outlined, should Creative Scotland not have a cultural capital programme? Has that been considered? Is it being considered now—or will it be?

Karen Dick: I will pass that to Alastair Evans to answer.

Alastair Evans: Since the advent of lottery funding in the 1990s, our capital investment has been significant; it stands at more than £150 million. However, it has leveraged in more than double that amount. We have evaluated our investment and reviewed its extent. It includes in the region of 140 projects around Scotland, which is significant.

As Karen Dick said, we do not currently have a capital programme, so the options for bodies that are looking for capital support here are Scottish Government or heritage lottery funding. The UK Government's levelling-up programme includes capital funding. There are routes to such funding, but the eligibility criteria for some schemes and their competitive nature mean that it is extremely difficult to get. Our current funding mix does not allow for that. We do not have restricted capital funds from the Scottish Government. Our national lottery funding is now focused very much on our open project funds for individuals and organisations, which are heavily oversubscribed.

We have concerns on a few levels. One is about the fabric of buildings in the asset base around Scotland—not just the Victorian theatres, but much newer buildings as well. There is a need for repair and renovation to be covered by small capital and equipment funds. We are doing further work to quantify the cost of that; it will not be a small number, as I am sure the committee will appreciate.

Our current focus is on net zero targets. Not only does our estate require investment; it also needs to adapt to meet net zero targets for Glasgow and Edinburgh for 2045 and 2030. We are beginning work on that. For example, we have appointed an officer who is exploring climate emergency matters and working with our partner organisations to understand more about what building adaptation needs to take place.

Donald Cameron: I want to move on to the issues of mapping and collaboration. You have

touched on mapping already, but one of the actions in "A Culture Strategy for Scotland" is:

"Work with Creative Scotland to map local authority support for culture and to explore future models of collaboration between national and local bodies".

I do not think that you mentioned that in your written submission, so would you like to take the opportunity to make any observations on that particular sentence in the strategy?

Karen Dick: Alastair Evans mentioned at the beginning that we had been working on the research for the report before the pandemic. By March 2020, we had received a completed report from the consultants, who had discussed with local authorities the issue that you raise. We had in the diary a meeting with local authorities to discuss the findings of the report, following which we intended to publish it. However, we wanted to publish it alongside an action plan that said what we would do in the future, alongside the Scottish Government.

Unfortunately, that was in March 2020. We then became fully focused on delivering the emergency funding support through Creative Scotland. There has been significant pressure on local authorities and the arm's-length external organisations—the cultural trusts—which has meant that there has not been a gap for us to meet our local authority partners to map out how they want to work with us. In addition, the financial context has changed considerably. The report covers the finances of local authorities and staffing. Importantly, we asked local authorities and ALEOs how they wanted to work with us in future and what they wanted us to do, but things have now changed.

Part of our work plan for this year will involve us revisiting that work and looking at what the next steps should be. We hope to do that with our colleagues in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, VOCAL, Community Leisure UK and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers, as well as the Scottish Government. The task is one that had to be put aside because of the pandemic. We recognise that the context in local authorities has significantly changed, so a lot of the data that we have in that area might no longer be relevant.

Alastair Evans: At the point at which we had a draft report, we were looking at a decrease of around £16 million in local authority culture budgets over a five-year period. The figures are difficult to get at. Substantial forensic accounting needs to be undertaken in order to understand the situation. Unfortunately, we would expect that position to be even more challenging at this point. We need to return to that in order to understand the situation.

It is worth mentioning that we are waiting for the Scottish Government's culture team to produce a revised culture strategy action plan, which we hope will set out the responsibilities, the delivery mechanisms and the monitoring in relation to the culture strategy. We believe that that will be published shortly. That is important, because it will set out the context in which the mapping work will progress.

Donald Cameron: Thank you for those answers.

The Convener: Given what you have just said, perhaps we could look at the example of sportscotland, which has a statutory role on community planning partnerships. Its role is quite similar to yours, in that it has responsibility not just for elite sport, which could be seen as equivalent to the work that you do with the national performing companies, but grass-roots sport. Are you a wee bit jealous of sportscotland's position as it relates to local authorities? Would it help if Creative Scotland were on the same footing with regard to how we want to move forward on the wellbeing society?

Alastair Evans: We are on record as saying that we would be positive about being a statutory partner in community planning. Bodies such as sportscotland and Historic Environment Scotland are more engaged on that level. Not being a statutory partner does not stop us working effectively with all local authorities and helping them to develop their strategies and plans, but our concern is that it gives rise to the potential for an uneven strategic locus across the country.

The briefing that the Scottish Parliament information centre provided to you for this meeting highlighted that local outcome improvement plans do not always mention culture. Councils might have cultural strategies sitting to the side of those plans but we want to see them in the centre—the more central we can be to local planning protocols, the better.

09:45

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): I would like to explore two separate questions. First, in your submission, you mention as an example of a place-based partnership the development of the Angus cultural strategy. Just this week, however, the degree to which Creative Scotland is funding Scotland's cities over smaller, rural areas was revealed when it was highlighted that Creative Scotland was spending £50.85 per resident on projects in Edinburgh while spending only £4.09 per resident in Angus. Does Creative Scotland recognise that as a major issue? How would you propose to adopt a place-based

approach to culture when funding is so skewed away from rural areas such as Angus?

Alastair Evans: We both have perspectives on the issue and we appreciate that it is often raised with us. Part of that relates to the data that is available and how we publish it, so we can talk a bit about that; it is also worth picking up that some assumptions are made about how we fund and the landscape that we fund into. We recognise that we do not fund by formula—whether that is per head, or through an equitable amount to the 32 local authorities or any other formula. We fund against the ask of us from across the country, but there are structural barriers. A lot of our development work is about improving the numbers and rates of people who feel comfortable applying into our funds, from small grants to our RFOs.

I will pick up on the point about data. We do not feel that our investment is skewed across the country. We recognise that Glasgow and Edinburgh have high levels of funding from us, but a lot of national and touring organisations have their bases there—they are places where artists congregate, and networks from those areas will come to us. There are organisations such as Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland—TRACS—which is based in Edinburgh but works in traditional arts across Scotland.

There are also quirks in the data: Aberdeenshire appears within Aberdeen post codes; a lot of grants into island communities appear as Inverness. We are in the process of digitising a lot of our operational systems. We recognise that we can be better at explaining where the areas of benefit are instead of showing the post code location of where the grant is made—the analysis that you mentioned about Fife and Angus is drawn from our website and relates to the applicants' post codes.

There is quite a lot in there and we can improve it, but there are some assumptions, too—effectively, about the landscape that we are funding into.

Karen Dick: It is important to note that Creative Scotland is not the only funder or supporter of culture or cultural activity. The local authority, the third sector, businesses and other funders, such as Museums Galleries Scotland, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund, all bring together what happens in a place and the types of cultural activity and opportunities for people in a place.

I will use Angus as an example, because one of the reasons why we developed the place partnership there was as an opportunity; that is often a route into place partnerships but it also recognises that that is a place from which we might have fewer applications and where there

might no longer be an arts development function in the local authority. Those are some of the criteria for our place partnership targeted programme. There is an opportunity for us to be part of something to help to bring people together across an area to look at the challenges and how they can address them.

For Angus, it was the celebration of the declaration of Arbroath. That was a route in, so that we could support with our funding, alongside other partners, the raising of the visibility of culture in that place and the delivery of a small grants scheme, which can often give people their first opportunity to apply for funding. Often, people might look at Creative Scotland and think, "That's not for me. That's for somebody else. I would never have a chance at that" or "It wouldn't support my type of project." By having small grants in those areas that are focused on that first step, encouraging people and having that development wraparound that often only happens when people are able to connect locally, we can build capacity and support more applications to come from that area.

In Angus, we have also been working with Angus Alive, the cultural trust, which has brought in people who are focused on developing culture and is continuing to deliver and support the delivery of the culture and heritage strategy.

There are differences across the country—we would never say that there are not. We do not fund on a per capita basis and we do not analyse our funding on a per capita basis. I much prefer to look at success rates, because they tell me how people are applying and about any interventions—whether that is going out to funding fairs or being in Saltcoats to answer questions, along with other funders, from anyone who comes into the building. Have we helped to change things? Are we getting more applications from an area? Are we getting more successful applications from an area? In that way, we can see things change and develop.

However, as with everything, Creative Scotland's budget has not increased, so when we are going out and doing that development work and encouraging people to apply, are we, in essence, setting them up to be unsuccessful because we cannot support everything? When we encourage and support people to raise applications from a particular place, we are very aware that our funding is not increasing and that we face a difficult challenge to provide the support that we want to provide.

The Convener: Three members have supplementary questions.

Alasdair Allan: I agree with your point that some of the funding for the big cities reflects the fact that people come into big cities to access

stuff. However, when you measure success rates, do you also take account of the fact that visiting some parts of the country—I represent the Western Isles—would involve an overnight stay and that those places are therefore out of some people's reach? That is not a case against the centres of excellence in the Burrell collection or the national museum of Scotland, but are we measuring success in terms of enabling people to access national assets that are in places that are so far away that an overnight stay is involved?

Karen Dick: It would be interesting to look at what we think of as success, but I also point to things such as the Travelling Gallery and the things that we fund—because we do not fund the Burrell collection or the museums—

Alasdair Allan: I appreciate that.

Karen Dick: The Travelling Gallery, which we fund, takes amazing art out in the back of a lorry, in the same way that the Screen Machine does for cinema. It is one of my favourite things ever, because it is a cinema in a lorry.

Alasdair Allan: I have been in it. I have seen "Star Wars" in it in Barra.

Karen Dick: I saw "Brave" in Dornie and "The Constant Gardener" when the Screen Machine was covering for the Eden Court redevelopment a very long time ago—ah, Screen Machine 1. Those types of activity are really key in enabling access and recognising that issue for some places.

My response to things such as 20-minute neighbourhoods is often to ask, "What if you are in Thurso and you want to go to the cinema?" Some places in the Highlands have a four or five-hour drive to get to Eden Court and the same to get back, so it means an overnight stay. There is a question to be asked about how we support things in communities that are far away from other places, and how we support island communities. We recognise that there are additional costs in bringing things to the islands and for people in the islands to go touring or take things off island because of the cost of travel and overnight stays. There are also challenges in finding accommodation in some parts of Scotland and in the barriers to travel that the weather can cause.

All those things are taken into account when we consider applications. Also, when we look at where funding goes, one of the reasons why we do not use per capita spend is that it would always skew in favour of the small populations and put them at the top of the list, even though they might get only a small amount compared to other places.

Alasdair Allan: Thank you.

Mark Ruskell: Are there barriers in terms of the scale and capacity of organisations, particularly those in rural areas that might be suited to

applying to a small grant scheme but less suited to applying for funding for a bigger project? I am thinking particularly about core funding. It is easy for organisations to apply for funding for a small project but, if the core funding is not there to invest in their buildings and assets or management or cleaners or paying for heating and all the rest of it, they are never going to reach the point at which they can come to Creative Scotland with a bigger, more transformative application to serve their communities.

Karen Dick: That is a consideration, although many organisations that we fund through our regular funding portfolio are based in more rural areas. I am lead officer for Timespan in Helmsdale in the Highlands. It provides a programme of cutting-edge and challenging contemporary art in the art and heritage centre in which it is based. It can take some time and lots of development for people to get to a stage at which they apply for bigger grants, and the first step is often to get a few small grants through a more open programme and then apply for larger-scale funding. However, if people have really strong plans, aims, programmes and engagement with their community, there should be nothing preventing them from applying for funding as long as they can demonstrate that they can manage it.

Mark Ruskell: Do you recognise that the core funding issue is a big issue and that it is not just about rural arts community hubs? It is also about urban organisations. If the money is not there to employ a manager or core staff, everybody will be running around writing short-term applications for project funding without anybody to run the show.

Alastair Evans: Yes. We recognise that. We are committed to providing multiyear funding, which would include a core element, for as many organisations as we can. This autumn, we will open applications to our multiyear funding programme for the current RFOs and others that will want to reapply. Inevitably, it will be really competitive. Something in the region of 350 organisations are expected to apply for that.

After the most recent exercise in 2018, we undertook a funding review and one of the big messages that came out of that was about the demand for stability and for organisations not to have to move from project to project and make repeated applications to us and other funders. The extent to which we can make good on that and offer multiyear funding to as many organisations as possible will depend completely on our budget envelope, but we absolutely intend to do so.

Geography is a really important lens in that process. We would be making sure, throughout our RFO assessment and the decisions that we have to take on priorities within it, that geography is considered. As Karen Dick says, we recognise

the need for organisations such as North Lands Creative glass and Timespan, which are remote, to access core funding to survive.

The Convener: That is a really strong message that has come through in a lot of our evidence sessions, not least those in Edinburgh last Friday. One of the board members of WHALE arts described “donut funding”: over time, it diminishes the organisation not to have that core element. That is almost exacerbated if there is a building associated with an organisation, but even for organisations that do not have responsibility for a building, that key administration and management strategy element has to be supported.

Maurice Golden: Earlier, Alastair Evans mentioned meeting net zero. Could you outline what that looks like for Creative Scotland, what costs have been configured to date and perhaps elucidate a bit more on your plans?

Alastair Evans: As I said, we have appointed a lead in that area of our work, but it is not entirely new to us. We have worked on it for a significant amount of time. The climate emergency and environmental sustainability is one of our four strategic priorities.

A lot of that work has been done through Creative Carbon Scotland, which is a key organisation to provide support to the sector. It does a range of policy development work and, importantly, it also manages the process of collecting data from creative organisations in the sector. Over time, that has given us the carbon footprint for the sector and other important data around energy.

That is part of our strategy. The “Climate Emergency and Sustainability Plan” was published just over a year ago. It is extremely ambitious. There are about 70 or 80 action points, mostly for us, but there is not really any point in being anything other than hugely ambitious in this space when you look at the timeframes. Some of our ambitions are around mitigation, others are around adaptation and others are around the just transition and ensuring that climate justice is ingrained in everything that we do. I am not saying that the first of those is the easiest, but it is the one that we have more of a handle on and can be quantified.

As I said earlier, we are starting some work to try to understand what building adaptation might look like, the potential of digital and what the travel footprint of the sector is. We are obviously a sector with huge international ambitions and we want Scotland’s diverse culture to be visible all around the world. That has a carbon footprint attached to it, so how can we work smarter in that space, as well?

We are addressing all those issues, but we are not doing it alone. A lot of what we are doing is bringing people together in cohorts from the sector to look for creative responses to those challenges. The sector is uniquely placed to vision what that would be and to bring the public around some of those ideas. It is not just about our buildings; it is about the content on stage, for example, and the issues being raised by the RFOs, many of which are already in that space.

Karen Dick: Some of our culture collective projects and organisations are really focused on that work. Examples are Creative Dundee and its CULTIVATE project, and Open Road in Fittie, in Aberdeen. The project in Fittie looked at a community that is on the edge and might be one of the first to be affected by climate change, not only because it is a coastal community but because of issues in the oil industry and the potential changes to the economic infrastructure of the city that the community is part of. As Alastair Evans said, a lot of creative organisations are already really engaged in looking at that and are trying to envisage what the future might be.

Neil Bibby: As we have just discussed, concerns have been raised with us about the unfairness of funding distribution. I am aware of a specific concern about the disparity between the areas where most national lottery tickets are sold and the areas that receive the most national lottery funding. That concern was reinforced last week by community organisations from areas of multiple deprivation.

Do you recognise that? What analysis has been done of the disparity between the areas where most national lottery tickets are sold and those that get the most national lottery funding? You mentioned a number of factors that you take into account when you allocate funding, including geography. Do you factor that in?

Alastair Evans: I do not know whether we have carried out an exact analysis of the relationship between lottery ticket sales and the provision of culture in general or of the level of investment by Creative Scotland. We probably have not done that in detail. The link that you have described is there, in that lottery ticket sales are highest in areas of multiple deprivation. We absolutely understand the link between the index of multiple deprivation and our funding and we consider need and opportunity in everything that we do. We have been a partner in numerous regeneration projects, which is only the tip of the iceberg, and in many other initiatives that specifically target deprived groups.

Karen Dick: On the point about lottery ticket sales versus lottery funding, the postcode does not always tell the full story. The data that we provide uses the applicant's postcode but does not

necessarily show where activity takes place. The organisations and individuals that we fund might not be in areas that are in the highest 5 or 10 per cent on the Scottish index of multiple deprivation, but they might be on the next street.

We also recognise that the postcodes for some buildings, particularly cultural buildings, are not necessarily factored into the index in a way that is represented in our mapping. For example, the Citizens theatre in Glasgow does not seem to show up as being part of the area around it, but the area around that theatre is fairly high on the index of multiple deprivation.

We recognise that communities need the social capacity to apply for funding. They need support to set aside time to apply for funding. We spoke about assets earlier: communities may need the ability to protect and keep hold of community assets, which can be far more challenging in areas that face many other challenges. We work with colleagues in organisations such as the Corra Foundation. Some of its place-based working involves putting a person into a place to support people to determine what they need for community development.

That is one way in which we can support people in those areas to achieve what they want for their cultural lives and is not just about investing money. There is a lot of focus on funding, but people capacity is important. A person can be a creative spark in a community and can make a difference, which is really important too.

The Convener: I see that none of our members have any final questions. It looks as though we have exhausted them. Thank you for coming.

Alastair Evans: Thank you for the opportunity to come and speak to you.

The Convener: I have no doubt that we will see you again during our deliberations.

10:10

Meeting continued in private until 10:33.

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