



OFFICIAL REPORT  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

DRAFT

# Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Thursday 12 September 2024

Session 6



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**Thursday 12 September 2024**

**CONTENTS**

**Col.**

**PRE-BUDGET SCRUTINY 2025-26** ..... 1

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**CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**  
**19<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2024, Session 6**

**CONVENER**

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

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)

\*Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab)

\*Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)

\*Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con)

\*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Leonie Bell (V&A Dundee)

Lucy Casot (Museums Galleries Scotland)

Susan Deighan (Glasgow Life)

Anne Lyden (National Galleries of Scotland)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

James Johnston

**LOCATION**

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)



# Scottish Parliament

## Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Thursday 12 September 2024

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:31]*

### Pre-budget Scrutiny 2025-26

**The Convener (Clare Adamson):** Good morning and welcome the 19th meeting of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee in 2024.

Our first agenda item is to begin taking evidence as part of our pre-budget scrutiny of funding for culture. I am delighted that we are joined today by Lucy Casot, chief executive, Museums Galleries Scotland; Susan Deighan, chief executive, Glasgow Life; Leonie Bell, director, V&A Dundee; and Anne Lyden, director general, National Galleries of Scotland. I welcome you warmly.

I have an opening question before we move to questions from members. In last year's pre-budget scrutiny report, the committee said that there was

"an urgent need for the Scottish Government to restore the confidence of the culture sector".

In your view, has there been any progress? Who wants to jump in first? Perhaps we could start with you, Lucy—I am sorry to put you on the spot.

**Lucy Casot (Museums Galleries Scotland):** Thank you for the invitation to join you today to talk about the issues that the museums and galleries sector faces. You have read through the sobering evidence that sets out those challenges. That urgency has become only more intense in the past year.

We absolutely acknowledge that the issues that are faced by the museums and galleries sector are part of the wider context of the culture sector. The sector is interconnected and the issues that are faced by one part will absolutely affect others. Museums Galleries Scotland is the national development body for 452 museums and galleries across the country. While we are talking about our needs today, it is also important to recognise what an incredible asset those places are to Scotland. They are distributed right across our country and our communities and deliver a huge range of benefits. We should consider them as assets, but those assets are at risk.

We have just conducted a survey across the museum sector. It closed in August and got 108 responses, which showed that 11 per cent of our museums and galleries consider themselves to be

at risk of closure within the next 12 months. That is a frightening figure and is certainly the worst that I have seen in 25 years of working in the sector. Those pressures are intensifying.

We must also recognise that the museums and galleries that are not at risk of closure are also not in any sense thriving. There has been a hollowing out of services. Skills are being lost from the sector and the pressure to keep the doors open means that we are losing some things. Programming is at risk, as are the benefits that museums and galleries bring to communities, their care for collections and their ability to refresh exhibitions to bring in visitors. Those things are being lost right across the piece and we find ourselves in a really difficult position. That has got worse, rather than better, in the past 12 months, so it is great to have an opportunity to discuss that today.

**Susan Deighan (Glasgow Life):** Thank you for inviting me along today.

I would like to talk about what happens beyond the perfect storm that was referred to last year. From a cultural perspective, Glasgow Life's contribution to the city of Glasgow goes across museums and galleries, across culture and, indeed, across libraries, which we have to remember are a significant part of our country's cultural infrastructure. The majority, if not all, of Glasgow Life's funding comes from local government; the squeeze on local government and the continued reduction in local government funding means that local authorities are making difficult choices about teachers, care, homelessness services and other budget pressures, and there is, therefore, a real vulnerability to local authority funding for culture.

I know that Community Leisure UK and Creative Scotland have done some work on that. I have not seen the report, and I would be interested to look at what it says, but I understand from the evidence that the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have provided to the committee that there has been a 20 per cent reduction in local authority funding for culture and leisure from 2010-11 to 2022-23, and their submission expresses significant concerns about the sector's sustainability. In addition, I understand that, in a recent letter to local authorities, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland has estimated that there has been a 30 per cent reduction in funding for libraries since 2010.

Like Lucy Casot, I am keen to take an asset-based approach and to take a wide-ranging look at cultural assets at a national level, but it is important not to lose sight of local culture and local

cultural assets and how much they contribute to our cities and communities across the country. I just want to draw attention to the risk arising from a reduction in local authority funding for cultural provision across Scotland.

**Leonie Bell (V&A Dundee):** Thank you for having me here today.

On your question about the cultural sector's confidence in the Scottish Government, perhaps I can turn that around and say that we would all want to feel the benefit of the Scottish Government's confidence in the cultural sector and the behaviours, strategies and approaches that would enable that. Everybody recognises the perfect storm and all the external factors that have created volatility and precarity across all areas of society, but the cultural sector is perhaps feeling that very keenly—and then there is everything that has happened in more recent weeks and months.

The question goes deeper than that, because the fact is that the sector does not feel confident. If the sector felt confident, it could, from that position, provide the opportunity for Scotland. At the moment, there is a sense that we are seen as a series of problems to solve and a series of risks to be mitigated so that they do not become even greater. None of us wants to be like that; none of us is running our organisations in that way; and none of the individuals who form part of the vital freelance community is a problem. They are all some of the most dynamic, creative, skilled and talented assets that we have as a country.

If we are to flip from being seen as the problem to being seen as the opportunity, we need to understand what the Scottish Government is doing. Actually, I do not think that this is all about the Scottish Government; there are other major funders and stakeholders in culture. I am thinking of local government and Creative Scotland as well as, of course, the Scottish Government. Their overview becomes connected and links funding to strategy, and if we had a sense of what that amalgamation of state wanted from culture—with that being followed through with tactics, decisions, priorities and a release of funding appropriate to the scale of delivery and impact—it would give the sector its confidence back. That is probably what we all want to happen; indeed, I think that we are all here to try to find ways of getting to that point.

**Anne Lyden (National Galleries of Scotland):** I thank the committee for allowing us the opportunity to come here this morning and have a museum and galleries-focused conversation. It is very much appreciated.

I echo what my colleagues have shared with you this morning. There is still a great deal of precarity in the sector, which does not breed confidence as we look to the future. That is exactly

what we are all charged with—future proofing our organisations and ensuring that art and culture are available for the people of Scotland in perpetuity. That is a major foundational element of the National Galleries of Scotland.

Given the uncertainty in which we are operating, we find that things are continuing to back up. For example, there are estate backlogs for our ageing infrastructure. Again, we will not be alone in that position; the same will be the case for many institutions up and down the country. Proper investment is needed in that, and that is linked to the capital budget, because the uncertainty around capital and its allocation is proving to be a real challenge in taking any projects forward, even when those projects are proven to be solutions in terms of best value, carbon reduction and greater accessibility. I am talking about our art works project in Granton in north Edinburgh, for example. We can secure external funding for that, but we cannot do that without first receiving anchor funding from the Government. In a way, we find that situation right across the sector.

We need confidence in, and a commitment to, funding what we offer—this asset that we have all spoken about. With that, we can unlock other investment and support, but it has to come from the Government first, in order to give it that validation and to signal to the people of Scotland that this matters.

Our public offer is not funded through our grant in aid. As we noted in our submission, 93 per cent of our grant in aid goes towards salary costs, and the remaining 7 per cent goes towards our buildings. Again, that is not enough for our operations and to deal with our backlog. Therefore, everything that we do—we do a tremendous amount locally, nationally and internationally—is done through self-generated income and support from external funders.

That is not sustainable for the future, so we are keen on looking at what we can do to help the entire ecosystem. Part of our national remit is being able to share the collection with the people of Scotland. I spoke about that at the committee meeting that we attended in January. In order for us to share the collection, we rely on our partners around the country to take the collection to share with their local audiences. We cannot do that if 11 per cent of those partners are threatening to close. Therefore, we are all interconnected, we are all facing this situation, and I think that we are all pretty much united on our asks of the Government.

**The Convener:** We will move to questions. Meghan Gallacher joins us online today, as you can see. I invite Mr Bibby to ask the first question.

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** In the programme for government, the Scottish Government announced a review of Creative Scotland, which has potential impacts on budgets and the way in which culture is funded. What should the review include? For example, should it be independent of Government, as opposed to a Government review? Should it look at more than just Creative Scotland as an organisation, and should we look at how we support the creative industries and the culture sector more generally? What impact could the review have on funding?

**The Convener:** Do you want to direct that question to a particular witness, Neil?

**Neil Bibby:** I think that the V&A has received Creative Scotland funding. Is that correct?

**Leonie Bell:** I am happy to take the question. The V&A Dundee is directly supported by the Scottish Government—

**Neil Bibby:** The Scottish Government—my apologies.

**Leonie Bell:** Our capital project that built the V&A Dundee received capital support via Creative Scotland. Therefore, I cannot speak as an individual applicant for multiyear funding, but we probably all feel that we can speak as part of that sector.

09:45

First, no one wants the review to detract from the urgent issue that organisations and individuals across the sector do not know whether they will be funded from next spring, or even sooner. The review has to happen while we carry on delivering what we hope is a good public service by administering the funds to keep people running viable, thriving businesses and keep others in employment, as well as all the other benefits that we are aware of.

My second point underlines the comments of my colleagues on the panel and the views that we all represent just by being here. Creative Scotland plays a unique role in the museums and galleries sector in Scotland today, but that role needs to be examined and rearticulated. People regard the screen model as successful. It is time for the arts to have its day alongside Creative Scotland's support for screen and policy work on the creative industries. We would welcome such a development.

One of the impacts and disturbances that we see in the current funding environment, if that is a good way to describe it, is that all of us—the country and the sector—benefit if Creative Scotland is in a strong position. We all benefit when the strategic partnership across the Scottish Government, Creative Scotland and the other

major funded local government bodies works together to set out the state view of such investment.

As other colleagues have mentioned, regardless of its source, the injection of public funding is not like any other form of investment. It is the multiplier and the unlocker. It is also the validation that we are doing something that our country or our place believes is part of what that country wants to be, and what it says both to its own people and to the wider world. Therefore to have Creative Scotland functioning at a high level is in everyone's interests.

As I said, I hope that the review has a momentum that does not detract from the current issues but can have an expanded view. First, it has to reconcile what Creative Scotland's unique purpose is and work out the level of resource that it needs to enable it to perform its public service duties on funding and its other roles.

However, we cannot look at stability and sustainability, and the thriving cultural sector that we all want to see, without having an expanded view beyond Creative Scotland and deeply understanding how it interacts with other strategies and policies. Perhaps sport and leisure could make a good argument for doing so, but, other than culture, not many areas of society interact so easily with all other areas of Government interest. If we consider the priorities that have been included in the programme for government, culture lies within them all. The review therefore has to have an expanded view but then really home in on Creative Scotland's remit and function.

**Neil Bibby:** Does anyone else have other thoughts?

**Susan Deighan:** I have what might be a different question. The Scottish Government has produced a cultural strategy and an action plan for it. Is the review also about where the leadership sits for the delivery of that action plan? Creative Scotland is part of that, but so are many other organisations.

In our submission, one of our questions was how funding could flow from the national strategy through an action plan. My contribution is that it would be helpful for the wider cultural sector to understand how to deliver the ambition set out in a national cultural strategy, the actions identified in the action plan and how the funding flows through that to deliver the outcomes that are set out. That would be my suggestion.

**Lucy Casot:** It is important to recognise that museums and galleries are funded differently from other parts of the culture sector. They are not part of the remit of Creative Scotland. As the national development body, we support museums and

galleries, but in different ways. A small number of museums and galleries can access Creative Scotland funding because they also do contemporary work, but for the most part they are funded differently.

One of the key differences is that there is no core funding for the museums and galleries sector. They have no ability to apply for regular funding to achieve security over three years. About a third of the sector, which is about 30 per cent, are civic museums that are funded through local government, but the great majority are run by independent charities that try to fund themselves through income-generated activity, which has become increasingly difficult.

There is a project-to-project funding model at the moment, but the core functions that support those projects—projects want new staff and new activity—is at risk. That is the case for a number of museums. The two areas that are most at risk are civic museums and large independent museums, which are charities that have nothing to fall back on.

We need to think strategically about how we invest in museums and galleries. Museums and galleries have slightly distinct issues, but they are part of the wider conversation. How we look strategically at those different pieces needs to be considered together, as do the distinct issues that different parts of our culture sector face.

**Anne Lyden:** I echo what colleagues have said. Although we are very separate and we receive no funding from Creative Scotland, we are part of the support system and ecosystem that we have talked about so much.

We rely on artists; our entire collection is the creative outputs of artists over the years. Creative Scotland is very important in supporting that part of the equation for us, but clarification around the funding models is definitely needed.

As Lucy Casot said, we do not receive direct funding from Creative Scotland, whereas down in England there is Arts Council England, which funds across the museum and gallery portfolio. It funds things to different degrees, obviously, but it is still there. That creates confusion in Scotland about who is funded and from where, and how it all works. There is an opportunity with the review to clarify that and be clear in the communication as to what the systems are. There is also an opportunity, whether or not that stretches to support in other areas of museums and galleries from Creative Scotland, to amplify and talk about what the funding model is for the rest of the sector.

Creative Scotland is vital to culture here, but oftentimes you would think that it is the only source of culture in the country, but of course that is not the case. I reiterate that we appreciate

having the time to represent our sector in a way that perhaps has not been offered before.

**Neil Bibby:** I want to ask about Glasgow specifically. We have fantastic cultural assets in Scotland. It was fantastic to visit the V&A in Dundee over the summer, and we have many great museums and galleries across the country.

We are talking about the squeeze on cultural funding nationally, and it is clear that it affects everybody. There is also a squeeze on local authority budgets, which everyone feels. Is Glasgow, with the Kelvingrove museum and other assets that are in many ways national assets but not regarded as national assets, particularly struggling? I accept that every local authority is struggling at the moment, but are there extra additional pressures in Glasgow because of that potential double whammy?

**Susan Deighan:** I am happy to answer that question. There is no direct national funding for Glasgow Life's museums at all. All the funding comes from Glasgow City Council despite our being a major contributor to the city's and, I would suggest, Scotland's economy. The contribution of the national organisations, whether it is the V&A, the National Galleries of Scotland or National Museums Scotland, is well documented.

I would like to draw your attention to the contribution that Glasgow makes in terms of the £135 million gross value added and the nearly 4 million visits in 2022-23—we are back at pre-Covid visitor levels. We have an innovative approach to how we talk about the collections, and we are a world leader in looking at issues of repatriation. We have been innovative in looking at how we address issues of the legacy of slavery and empire in our museums. What you get with Glasgow is real innovation.

However, we have our real challenges and the committee will probably be well aware that we had industrial action last year, which was absolutely a result of looking to reduce our budgets. Glasgow Life's overall budget has been reduced by £17 million over the past five years. Over the past 10 years, it has been reduced by £30 million. That is a fact. We try our best to mitigate that through income generation, and the overall model that Glasgow Life presents allows us sometimes to raise income in one part of the organisation that can offset costs across the wider organisation. However, that can only go so far, so the answer is yes, we are very vulnerable, as all local authority services are. Our libraries are equally vulnerable, because all the funding comes from the local authority.

To echo Anne Lyden's point, elsewhere in the UK, Arts Council England would fund museums. With regard to status, I would suggest that



Riverside museum is Scotland's national transport museum, but we do not receive any national funding. All of Glasgow's collections are recognised as having national significance, so we are national in all but the funding arrangements.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** Good morning, everyone. I will come on to some of the longer-term issues that have been raised in the discussion so far, but first I will focus on the coming financial year, because we are looking forward to the Scottish Government producing a budget for 2025-26, in the context of the commitment to increase funding so that it is at least £100 million more a year by 2028-29.

Obviously, we do not want to have to wait until 2028-29 for that extra funding to come along, but we would not expect all of that £100 million more a year to come right at the start. When we see the budget, what should we be looking for as being a credible step in that direction, in terms of either consistency or scale of funding? You have all mentioned the precarity and the different sources of funding—the Scottish Government's funding is only one stream; there is your own income generation, other institutions and local government, as Susan Deighan was saying very clearly. However, in terms of the specific £100 million commitment, what is a credible path towards achieving that by 2028-29? What should we be looking for in the budget when we see it?

**Anne Lyden:** We have to consider how we can step away from firefighting and create some space within the sector to allow for plans to develop and to come to fruition. In a way, it is about investing to save, because we are trying to ingest money where it is needed, which will ultimately support the sustainability of the sector and enable it to thrive.

It will be down to the committee to advise and it is for the ministers and the cabinet secretary to determine the priorities for funding. We all have viable projects, initiatives and capital plans that can help to achieve all the priorities, whether that is looking towards carbon net zero or the health and wellbeing economy. However, we need just a bit more; we cannot be clinging on to what is just enough to keep us going. It comes back to the point that we need to be thriving, not just surviving. Therefore, I would basically advise allocating according to where you can see those moments for kick-starting the thriving of the sector.

**Lucy Casot:** Clearly, there are no easy answers to that question. I absolutely agree with Anne Lyden about investing more in the sector. We have a national strategy for culture and we have a national strategy for museums and galleries. We need to try to back up those strategies and the organisations that are able to take forward those objectives. That might require a strategic look

across the piece at what is being delivered where, where those assets are and where that skill still is.

We know that there is precarity in some areas of expertise. We need to look at who still has the potential to take the sector forward in a way that goes beyond simply plugging the gaps, although there are some gaps that need to be filled. Five years ago, we argued for a strategic approach, because we could see the trajectory of change. We need to look at how we manage that change, because it is inevitable. We can manage that change in a more innovative way if we look at it strategically. Sometimes, we need a bit of investment up front to enable us to look at how we can do that. It is not a case of resisting change or trying to do everything the way that we used to do it. We want to do things better and to serve really well those communities that have not had as much access to culture.

10:00

The sector is ready to do that work, but it is really hard to do it if we are cycling from crisis to crisis. The sooner we get more money for that, the more able we will be to use that investment to make sure that we are able to do that work. We have reached a point at which so many organisations are in crisis that they are struggling to do the really good work that we know can be done.

**Patrick Harvie:** An amount of money will be allocated in the coming budget, but you are also looking for a plan for the five years ahead. You want to have a sense of what the longer-term plan is for the course of increased funding. Is that right?

**Lucy Casot:** It would be incredibly valuable to have that. Given the number of requests that there are, we totally appreciate that it will not be possible to fulfil all of those with the sums of money that are available, but we want to make sure that the issues that the museums and galleries sector faces are heard alongside the issues that the rest of the culture sector faces. As I have said, we have a lot of shared plans and ideas about how to do that work if we had the resources to do it.

**Susan Deighan:** The funding must be used to incentivise as well. We need to move away from what is a very competitive environment—the phrase that is used is that it is a nil-sum game. Everybody is competing and nobody is collaborating, because everybody is trying to survive. What is the incentive to collaborate?

In a health context, people talk about moving upstream. We need to do that to understand what change is required and what a sustainable culture sector looks like. That is a really difficult question to ask the sector. We need to create a stable

platform to enable that discourse to take place and to allow people to understand what change needs to happen.

We must use some of the money for change, because, as Lucy Casot said, if we simply plug the gaps, we might survive, but we will not necessarily grow and thrive.

**Patrick Harvie:** I want to build on that. The culture sector is very diverse. You all represent fairly substantial institutions and organisations within the culture landscape. Does the Scottish Government engage with you directly? Do you have access to the thinking that is being done within Government about what the increased funding that has been committed to will look like? It seems to me that there is a worry about whether it will end up being spent on culture activity or on the other costs that culture organisations have. A few minutes ago, someone—it might have been Anne Lyden—mentioned net zero. Whatever proportion of the £100 million goes to museums and galleries could very easily be swallowed up by decarbonising your buildings. To what extent do you have a sense that the Government is thinking about how that funding should represent an addition to your culture activity, rather than be used for other costs?

**Leonie Bell:** I would like to answer your first question before addressing your second one, if that would be okay.

I will not repeat what colleagues have said, because I think that we are all cohering around the same concept with regard to how the funding relates to the strategic priorities that span the major stakeholders. We also recognise that the Scottish Government has a strategy with objectives, as does local government, and that those strategies vary according to the context of their place. There is also the role of organisations, which varies according to the context of their place and whether their remit spans from national to local level, as mine does. There is the coming together of all of that.

However, it is also important to think about the agency that we give to organisations and local government through the national funding, because agencies of Government and public bodies represent significant resources that can carry a lot of work if they are funded well.

The other issue is the need for multiyear funding. In the past few years, we have all experienced turbulence in year. Not knowing whether your current funding make-up will see you through the year is obviously a disturbance for any business or organisation, and the cultural sector feels that sharply and keenly; it has an immediate effect.

There was a time when it felt important—and it should still be a reasonable ask—that we do not lose sight of the 1 per cent aim, as well as the political and policy commitment that has gone to getting to £100 million. Many of us would still like to see a discussion about how we all work to ensure that 1 per cent of the Scottish Government budget goes to the culture sector in its broadest terms.

It is about the funding and how it is profiled. To answer Mr Harvie's question directly, in the shortest term, we are looking for clarity in December that the funding is coming, when it is coming and what its profile is—as much as anybody can give that over a number of years. There is also the Scottish Government commitment to get the whole sector to a position where we can plan one, two, three, four or five years in advance.

That is how V&A Dundee works. We have international markets and we plan major shows that can take three to five years to develop, due to their scale and complexity, but we get the impact from that. It is through that that we are more efficient with the funding. We are all public servants, so we want to do right by the public money that we get. To do the best by it, we need the longest view of how regular it will be. I think that that is probably true of all organisations.

With regard to Mr Harvie's question about where the money goes, I will counter that gently, if I may. Without the cultural estate, we do not have the places that many people recognise as traditional Scotland, innovative Scotland and contemporary Scotland. The places where we go and where we work, the places where people convene and gather to have cultural experiences—whether that is an organisation like mine, a national institution, a small civic museum, a festival on an island or a major festival—all have an infrastructure around them that requires investment to keep it up to date. Obviously, in addition, everybody wants to address climate change.

The question of where the money goes is really interesting. We have to pay our workers and maintain our estates, which are cultural assets. Speaking on behalf of V&A Dundee, I can say that our building has quickly become an icon not just of Dundee but of contemporary Scotland. Maintaining that building requires investment, but that investment has significant impact.

I would not look for a separation of activity from what the workforce and the estate and its infrastructure require. We need an understanding of the interaction between all the funding—private, philanthropic and public—and long-term investment. That understanding of how we cohere strategic objectives means that we do the best by that money. At the moment, too many

disturbances are occurring. We all want a bit of calm for a wee while.

**The Convener:** Lucy Casot wants to come in, but we will hear from Anne Lyden first.

**Anne Lyden:** I was going to say that we are all collaborative but, ironically, we are trying to speak at the same time.

I would look for the Government to think about the challenge that it could easily spend £100 million five times over because of the asks that are out there. We need strategic thinking about where collaboration is happening—and there is evidence of it across the board—because that collaboration does not only impact one institution or organisation but benefits a wider community or sector. I would expect a review of what those projects are and where the overlaps and interactions take place. We are all in agreement and we are all working towards the same national outcomes. Waiting for the crumbs at the table will not sustain us going forward—it has to be much more collaborative.

Public sector reform is taking place, and there are various clusters around that. There is a culture cluster, and the National Galleries of Scotland participates in that, alongside the other two national collecting bodies—the National Library of Scotland and National Museums Scotland—as well as the National Records of Scotland and Creative Scotland. We have been talking about the need to open that up and include more voices from the sector, because we cannot do that alone. We also need to open it up beyond the culture sector, because a lot of what we do is in health and wellbeing—it is in all areas of Scottish life.

There has to be an awareness that we are not working in isolation—it is not just a matter of needing to fill black holes with resource. We service the entire country through various programmes and initiatives and, as Leonie Bell said, through our buildings, which become part of the fabric of what it means to be Scottish. Funding should be provided with that mentality in mind. At the outset, we should think about what a future Scotland would look like if at least 1 per cent of Government funding was spent on culture. I would like the discussion to go in that direction and for us to think about the issue in that way.

**Lucy Casot:** I agree with what my colleagues have said. There is broad agreement that culture delivers across a number of portfolios—in fact, culture has a connection with most Scottish Government portfolios. When we talk about funding for culture, we should be aware that the culture sector shares with the Scottish Government the aspiration that our sector should provide and unlock benefits across other portfolios. However, our organisations cannot

unlock those benefits ourselves, so there needs to be partnership with the Scottish Government to see whether we can unlock some of the potential.

For example, we will need to think about our estate if, collectively, we are to reach net zero. Many of our museums are old listed buildings, and there has been a lack of maintenance for many years. Investing in such buildings will have a double benefit: it will reduce running costs as well as having other benefits. We did that over the past two years with some Scottish Government money, but that money is no longer available this year following the cut in funding.

There are cross-portfolio opportunities, but we need the Scottish Government to help us to unlock them, because our organisations do not have the access to do that ourselves.

**Patrick Harvie:** Rather than going round the table again, I will direct this question, which is about broadening or diversifying local sources of funding, to Susan Deighan, who has spoken the most about the local level. The Parliament has legislated to give local authorities the power to generate revenue through the introduction of a visitor levy—the City of Edinburgh Council has been the first mover on that, but I hope that it will not be the last. That might be particularly relevant for parts of the culture sector that do not have core funding. Some music venues are making the case for something similar through a stadium levy. How much further could we go? Are there opportunities not only to create a different way of using central Government funding but to introduce more local powers, so that revenue can be generated and put to use according to local priorities?

**Susan Deighan:** I am happy to answer that question, but why should the responsibility be only on local authorities? The burden would, once again, be on local authorities to collect local taxation to fund what I would suggest are core national assets—in this case, Glasgow's museums.

**Patrick Harvie:** I am saying that only because all local taxation is devolved and we do not have that constraint on national tax.

**Susan Deighan:** I totally understand that. I have had a look at what is happening in Edinburgh, which is quite interesting. All local authorities will be looking at a visitor levy—you will be aware that there have been recent Glasgow City Council motions on it. If the levy is based on a percentage of the average room rate, I suggest that Edinburgh's ability to generate income from the levy will be far greater than that of Glasgow, so Glasgow would probably have less funding at its disposal, which would further skew the balance of funding between Edinburgh and Glasgow, as the majority of cultural institutions in Edinburgh are

funded by the Scottish Government. I anticipate that, as all the modelling suggests, there would be less funding available to Glasgow from a visitor levy.

It is important to remember that the introduction of a visitor levy must be discussed and agreed with the tourism visitor sector, which must have input into how the money is disbursed. In Edinburgh, some of the money will go to housing, some will go to filling potholes, some will go to infrastructure and some will go to culture. We would, of course, welcome any funding from a visitor levy, but I do not think that it will fill the big gap that exists.

I do not have all the details, but the wider cultural sector in Glasgow disburses grants to cultural organisations on the basis of how they deliver against Glasgow City Council's strategic plan.

10:15

I keep coming back to the point about the understanding of the value of culture. In May, I gave a presentation at the culture value summit about the role of culture and wider culture. However, you asked what engagement we had with Government, and I do not necessarily see any output of that summit. I would have hoped that, as part of the pre-budget discussion, some of the evidence and recommendations from that summit might have come forward. That might include some new ideas and radical thinking. I would welcome that, and I have always wanted to participate in that space.

One of the challenges at the local level is the understanding that culture should be seen as something that we need to have rather than something that is just nice to have. For example, although it should not be the case, if you are facing issues with teacher numbers, it becomes a binary issue of whether you fund teacher numbers or culture. That is the stark reality of where local authority cultural funding sits.

**The Convener:** I want to dig a bit deeper into what you have all referred to as the ecosystem in which you work. You have described some of that as competition, rather than describing working together and collaboration. I am thinking about the impact that the decisions that Creative Scotland makes on culture funding nationally have on the wider ecosystem. Thankfully, it did not happen, but there was a possibility that the Aye Write festival would not go ahead. Is there a boost from festivals to other cultural organisations? Do you see visitor numbers increase during festivals? Is there an on-going impact of, for example, a decision not to fund a festival that is perhaps not fully appreciated at the time?

**Susan Deighan:** We were delighted that a philanthropist plugged the funding gap for the Aye Write festival. The interesting thing about that festival is that it does a number of things. It diversifies the identity of authorship in terms of female representation and more diverse authors. However, the real issue for us—I have the evidence on this somewhere—is that someone who comes along to an Aye Write event is more likely to attend another cultural event. There is a habit-forming aspect of attending cultural activity, so we see Aye Write as an important part of reader development. Everybody knows that reading is the most participated-in cultural activity in Scotland, and young people reading at an early age is more supportive of their academic outcomes at school than their parents' socioeconomic backgrounds. Therefore, anything that can encourage people to love literature and to read but also to participate more widely in cultural activity is welcome. We were delighted that we were able to restage that event.

You referred to the ecosystem. Glasgow has a wide range of festivals, events, cultural buildings and three receiving houses, so that is what we see as the ecosystem. We recently launched a new culture strategy in Glasgow, which was developed with the sector. Part of the actions that are coming out of that is collaborative advocacy, which is an opportunity to work together to create the space to collaborate rather than compete, and it is about the power of culture and its role in health, education and the economy and in identity. I think that we would all agree on the importance of culture in the identity of our places, locally and nationally. That is how we are trying to bring Glasgow's ecosystem together, but we will be advocating for the role of culture and the importance of Glasgow's culture to Scotland.

**Lucy Casot:** I am thinking about how you expand the local ecosystem, which Glasgow has, into a national ecosystem. Anne Lyden talked about the fact that, in order for the national collections to be shared across the nation, we need museums and galleries across Scotland to be in a position to work with the national museums and galleries, to curate locally and respond to those collections. The same applies to many of the smaller museums, which might not have any professional staff or curators and which have depended largely on local authority staff to provide expertise and mentoring. That, as well as grant funding, in some cases, has been eroded.

We need to value museums and galleries of all sizes. In terms of that sense of place, a museum might have the only cafe on an island, and it might provide other services as well as being the only cultural place. A museum might be the only indoor attraction for tourists in an area for the rainy days that we occasionally have in Scotland. We need to

value the small museums as we value the large ones, because those interdependencies are critical.

The sector is mutually supportive, and the desire to work collaboratively is strong. However, collaboration and, certainly, partnership working take capacity, because you have to give to others. The ability to maximise what we know we can do has therefore been eroded. The whole ecosystem across the country, from small to large, is vital.

**Leonie Bell:** I will pick up on the point about competition. I think that Susan Deighan was talking about the current environment in which we find ourselves and was not saying that that is what we are striving to be. Frontiers are being established that are exposing quite bumpy topographical inequality across the sector, which goes from pay to access to pensions and all those sorts of things. However, we all want to be able to work together with the assets that the different organisations have at their disposal. Everybody has set out all the interconnections—if one bit goes down, other bits go down. On Aye Write, festivals are also good providers of fees and payment for artists. If you take that away, that prevents another bit of work from being created and all those sorts of things.

My bigger point is twofold. First, beyond the difficulty of funding going, there are Scotland-wide consequences. The accumulation of the disturbances that we are talking about and the current challenges that funders are experiencing, including potentially in their relationships, have an impact on those who work in the sector and audiences, and probably on those who at times have looked to Scotland as a cultural leader, because we are seen as having a series of assets that are locally relevant and very much locally enriching and alive but which also speak to the rest of the world and bring the rest of the world to Scotland. Those bumps have an impact on all of our reputations, as well as on direct funding. It is about the ecology, but there is also a wider and more intangible consequence.

Secondly, I have had the privilege of working in a number of the organisations that we are talking about. I have worked in the Scottish Government and in Creative Scotland, and I worked for a shortish time in a local authority. When you are in those organisations, there is a tendency to see the world through their funding programmes but, actually, that is not how any of us works. We work across funding programmes and in a mutually symbiotic production to create the cultural life of Scotland. It goes from volunteers, to the amateur community and sector right through to public bodies and agencies.

One of our tasks is to stop seeing and defining things through funding routes and to look at the

bigger picture, and then look at what overall funding we need to keep that bigger thing going. I hope that that makes sense in response to your question.

**The Convener:** I move on to Mr Stewart, who has been waiting patiently.

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Thank you, convener.

You have all talked about how funding unlocks the potential in your organisations. That funding is crucial to the success, sustainability and survival of your sector. The £100 million that we know is coming down the line is vital to make sure that the situation is sustainable for each and every one of you. Probably the biggest issues for your organisations are the staffing costs that you have to incur and attracting people into your organisations. If you are managing decline—most of you have indicated that you seem to be in that way of coping at present—how do you attract the next generation and the next leaders of your organisations to build on the success that you have all achieved so far, with the limited resources and the budgetary constraints that you have had to contend with, not just this year but in years past?

As you have said, the future is challenging. However, it will be the people you invest in who make a success of culture in future. If you are not able to backfill jobs, your current staff have to do more, and you are not able to attract people with potential, what funding and support could the Government give you? Are there areas in which you should invest in staff and personnel? I cannot see any way through the dilemmas that you face unless there is a commitment to give you resource that can bring in people, push your organisations and inspire them for the future. If you are not given that opportunity, where do you go? What can you cut or close in order to maintain some part of your cultural activity? It would be good to get a flavour of your views on what I see as one of the main obstacles here—or, alternatively, one of the main stepping stones if you are all to thrive and survive. As Susan Deighan said, if you cannot attract people to lead your organisations into the future, they will not survive.

**Anne Lyden:** I welcome that question. We are very much trying to face those issues.

The museums and galleries sector includes various cohorts of staff and colleagues. It can be difficult to attract people into, say, the estates sections of our organisations because of the more competitive salaries that are available outside them. The same comparison does not apply to curatorial colleagues, for example, where we are competing against the salaries and benefits that are offered by other museums and galleries. We

find that we have workload issues because we cannot attract people into careers in the vital service departments that are needed to keep our museums and galleries buildings going. The National Galleries of Scotland has seen numerous examples of its positions staying open for several months—perhaps for almost a year—while we try to fill them with the right people, just because we are not sufficiently competitive on the salaries and benefits offered. Managing our workload is then a challenge as we are so stretched. We are at bare bones with our staffing profile. What we achieve with it is quite remarkable, but that is not sustainable in the long term.

We have been doing a number of internal exercises, in which we have explored the concept of how to be a good ancestor. We have been asking ourselves what decisions we can make now, in 2024, that future generations will look back on and thank us for. We are encouraging colleagues to consider what our institution could look like in 2030 or 2050, and what changes we will need to make in order to get there.

There are various constraints on that, of which pay is one. In the past five years, we have had two voluntary exit schemes, which are a blunt tool. Using them means that we lose vital expertise, resource and numbers of people, the impact of which can take years to recover from. When coupled with the fact that we do not have the ability to draw people in to take up such roles, that creates a problem that will have a ripple effect right into the future. It is absolutely a challenge.

One way to approach that is to ask ourselves how we are measuring success. What does success look like? What should our workforce look like if we are to deliver on outcomes to the point where we are thriving rather than just surviving? We cannot do that alone. We can do internal exercises and arrive at what our desired future organisation might look like and what future generations will thank us for, but the solution always comes back to our having anchor funding from the Government that will allow us to make partnerships with others.

10:30

**Lucy Casot:** Like Anne Lyden, I welcome the question. I thank Alexander Stewart for the recognition of the serious issues that we have and the implications that they have for the future and for our ability to work our way out of the situation that we are in.

I have a real concern about independent and small museums, which struggle even more than others do to provide attractive salaries. There is a huge toll on staff wellbeing, part of which comes from the uncertainty with which people are

working. One thing that would really help with that would be having a long-term sense of stability that allows people to make the changes that need to be made or to invest in the futures of organisations. There is a constant feeling of being on the edge of a precipice—precipice fatigue is real, and staff wellbeing is a concern throughout the levels.

It is difficult to attract people or to encourage people to stay and want to be in more senior positions and take on that load if you are in a really precarious charity that every year faces questions about whether it will remain a going concern, whether it can make a pay award or whether it can invest in pensions that will actually look after the staff in future. Those are difficult questions. It is also difficult to find people who want to be trustees and take on responsibility for organisations that are in such a precarious situation. Any sense of stability or possibility of looking at the slightly longer term allows that investment.

A lot of work is going on to invest in bringing new people into the sector and in bringing in different sorts of people and creating a more diverse workforce. We are seeking to invest in programmes such as the modern apprenticeship programme and in different routes into the sector, and those are really successful. However, what is the future for that? We are trying to bring in people and sell the career to them. We go into schools to talk to pupils, before they make their subject choices, about cultural careers. However, you only need to look in the news to hear about the challenges facing the culture sector, so people think, “Is it where I want to work?” That is definitely a whole-system issue.

On fair work, we are a low-wage sector. The sector absolutely recognises that fair work practices are the right thing to do, but some organisations are now excluded from applying for any funding because they are unable to follow those practices. Some organisations pay the real living wage to all the staff at the bottom but cannot make the progression payments to those in the next tiers up. Retention in the sector is a real issue. That situation is not because of any resistance to fair work—we all want to work in a sector where people are paid fairly for the work that they do—but the issue is creating additional pressures. Some organisations that have not been able to do that are now not able to apply for any funding. I just wanted to pass on that point from the sector.

**Susan Deighan:** We employ just over 300 staff across eight museums in Glasgow, so it is a substantial workforce. We have been lucky to hold on to some really experienced staff. Our biggest challenge—it is also maybe an opportunity—is

succession planning and how we grow our own, so to speak. It is about how we invest in internal learning and bring people up through the organisation.

We have invested in diversifying our workforce and modern apprentices, which Lucy Casot mentioned. In our written submission, there is a wee bit about not losing the opportunities presented by fair work and modern apprentices. Modern apprenticeships are a way to bring in people who might otherwise regard working in the sector as something that you do only if you have a particular education or background. The role of modern apprenticeships in diversifying the workplace is important, and we should not lose sight of it.

I draw the committee's attention to an EKOS report that was produced with the involvement of Museums Galleries Scotland and VOCAL, which is the Voice of Chief Officers of Cultural and Leisure Services in Scotland. The report talked about the impact of reduced funding in the civic museum sector and the erosion of a national skills base. One challenge that was mentioned was keeping the doors open. The amazing assets that we all have are anchor organisations and they are visual representations of our culture, our cities and our places. Nobody wants to close a museum, so instead there is maybe a reduction in the workforce that sits behind the scenes, whether that is education, conservation or curatorial staff. That is the unseen bit at the moment, because everybody is trying to keep the buildings open.

I like to think of myself as a solutions-based person, so what is the solution to that? Lucy Casot talked about the role of local authorities in supporting the wider independent and voluntary sector museums, so perhaps there should be investment in creating hubs of excellence. I think that we referred to hubs in our submission. For example, should Glasgow become a hub for the west of Scotland, and should that be invested in, in order to support the range of skills that are essential to providing a legacy? Therefore, those are some reflections and a suggestion.

**Leonie Bell:** From a Dundee and a V&A Dundee perspective, I have been lucky enough to be at a couple of cultural events in Dundee and Glasgow in the evenings this week, and I was struck by the number of conversations that I was having with people who—I think they will not mind my saying it—were under 35 and are leaving Dundee. Sometimes, that is okay because they pursue other international or national opportunities, but there is a growing sense that, unless we think about a dynamic range of opportunities for people within and outwith organisations, we are going to lose talent across the generations.

I probably speak for some of us on the witness panel when I say that I come from a generation that was lucky enough to get a really good state education. I had significant opportunities and mentoring through organisations that received public funding. I do not know whether people from all backgrounds would have the same chances now. Therefore, I would quite like to correlate and connect this answer to what we also do with and for audiences in our programme, so it is about how we inspire and develop talent in our organisations and treat people as fairly and as well as we can.

However, it is also about how we reach out with what we do, because everything that we do acts as a role model and advocate in society, through our buildings and programmes, and we have to be really relevant. The world is changing at a significant pace, and we must also keep our programmes and access to, and retelling of, our collections very up to date, or we will not attract the people into the sector who will make our sector relevant to the future.

I see myself as the generation at the crossroads in that I received significant benefit, but I can also see the energy of new generations, and we have to let them lead us now. Leadership exists across organisations—it is not necessarily hierarchical—and we have to support that as it comes.

The other challenge that we all face is that we are employers. We employ just over 100 people in Dundee. That is a significant thing in the city. That creative employment did not exist in the city to that degree before V&A Dundee opened, but we do that alongside many other organisations. Everybody else is talking about the fact that the sort of workforces that we have in our teams are, yes, creative and cultural, but they are also maintenance, information technology, human resources and finance. We are all probably experiencing significant strain in maintaining staff in the jobs for which there are highly competitive market salaries, across finance and HR, and IT especially, where graduates are commanding almost the equivalent of culture sector final salaries.

Therefore, in order for us to keep up to date, we also have to find exciting opportunities for people of all backgrounds, degree educated and otherwise, to work in our organisations. Pay is one route to attracting those people, but another is the fact that it is great to work in the culture sector, because we hope that we represent progressive and creative values.

That goes back to creative education and the state and the ambitions for that from nursery onwards. People who are creatively educated do not thrive only in creative organisations. People are creatively educated where we support curiosity, creative skills and the imagination from

the earliest years, when creativity is inherent in us. We seem to educate that out. Creatively educated people thrive in any organisation, and the committee might be interested in thinking about that broader point.

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** Good morning. I agree about the importance of culture in society, full stop. Many of the Scottish Government's ambitions tick the box. I also respect the iconic institutions that you represent. Like Susan Deighan, I like to say that I am a solutions-based person. I will follow up a question that Patrick Harvie asked, so it is the two guys who were just recently in Government who are asking this question. What is the mechanism for engagement with the Scottish Government and the cabinet secretary, in order for you to say the things that you have said to us today? What has that on-going engagement been like?

**Leonie Bell:** We are directly funded by the Scottish Government. We work with its sponsor team on a regular basis and, at times, we have access to ministers, cabinet secretaries and civil servants in different positions. We are in quite regular and vivid communication with the Government. I think that I know where it is at, and I can see its challenges and struggles. I hope that it can see where we are at, too, and what we require to thrive and to sustain ourselves in the way that it expects of us.

As we are directly funded, we have access that others do not. In saying that, I know that other conversations are taking place to get that expanded view that Anne Lyden has mentioned. It would be good to bring in broader perspectives from across the sector.

At the moment, I think that the Government is listening to what organisations are saying. On what we are all looking for—this takes us back to where we started the session—that is about what comes next.

**Susan Deighan:** We are not funded by the Scottish Government. We have to work hard, and we make an effort to engage. We reach out and participate where there are opportunities to do so. Earlier, I referred to participating in a cultural value summit and setting out the importance of local culture and cultural participation across a wide range of areas. Engagement has to go beyond just the Scottish Government's culture team. Our ask is whether we can engage more with the Government's health team, education team, net zero team and economy team, because that is where there are wider impacts in relation to the priorities of poverty and reducing child poverty.

We can talk about how culture in Glasgow can contribute to that, so we would welcome having a wider conversation not just with the culture team

but across the directorates-general about how we can contribute through culture to achieving wider Scottish Government priorities.

To give you a very short answer, from a non-Government funded perspective, we have to work hard, but we reach out, write and send letters. We make the effort and try to meet people as much as we can.

**George Adam:** My daughter and her partner had their first date at the Riverside museum, and we are now four grandchildren later. It is clearly a national iconic building.

**Susan Deighan:** That is a different contribution to Scotland's population. [*Laughter.*]

**George Adam:** Visiting the museum does not cost anything, which brings us back to what we were discussing.

You said earlier—I am quite excited about some of the things that you are saying—that you would be willing to work together on making changes to the sector. How do you see that working, and what would be needed to do that?

**Leonie Bell:** Is that question for me?

**George Adam:** It is for anyone—but go for it.

**Leonie Bell:** There needs to be partnership with the funders and the stakeholders, too. It feels like there is a bit of a layer between us—I do not mean specifically but across the sector.

We all recognise that the three investors in culture in Scotland are the Government, Creative Scotland and local government. Even getting that working really well would be a great start. A strong partnership across the three of those stakeholders would be great, and then we as a sector come in alongside that.

The volatility that we are experiencing is not really giving us the chance to do that. Colleagues have articulated well that, when we are experiencing that level of turbulence, we are trying to keep everything steady and not flying away. Once we get that level of stability and it feels like we are getting there with that, we can then cohere around what we want from state-supported culture, what it uniquely does and what we want to achieve across all Scotland and all the different types of culture. I think that everyone has given a really good summary of the specific role that museums and galleries play in that.

As I said, that all starts with having an excellent partnership across the three major stakeholders.

**Lucy Casot:** I will broaden that out a bit. Not all the culture sector is funded by Creative Scotland, although I know that it plays a really important role. In that case, we are talking about Scottish Government money that is directed through



Creative Scotland. We also have Historic Environment Scotland and the historic environment sector, as well as museums and galleries. We are each funded by the Scottish Government to support different parts of the culture sector.

10:45

MGS is in a different position, in that we are an independent charity that is charged with supporting the sector. We receive money from the Scottish Government to pass on to museums and galleries, but our grant budget this year is £1 million for 452 museums, so there is no parity with the resources that are available to Historic Environment Scotland and Creative Scotland.

The map is slightly uneven, so we need to think about culture as a whole and the different elements of how the system works. How things work with museums and galleries is not necessarily the same as how things work in the arts sector. We should recognise that the picture is quite complicated.

We absolutely have to work in partnership with local government. We have not cracked how the partnership should work in bringing together national Government, local government and the different agencies and national development bodies that support the culture sector. There is a willingness to work together, but we have not quite cracked what the mechanism should be.

**George Adam:** In summary, we are talking about possibly having a national conversation about the importance of culture and how it affects every part of life, so that we have confidence in the sector and understand what it gives back. Have I got that right?

**Susan Deighan:** That is a really important point. In relation to the value of culture and cracking the issue with local government, it goes back to what I said earlier about thinking about culture as something that we need to have rather than something that is nice to have. Given the challenges in public sector and local authority funding, it is not necessarily seen as something that we need to have. That is a reductionist view, so we need to be clear about the wider helpful impacts that culture can have in society, so that, at its heart, it is valued in itself and seen as making a contribution. That needs to happen in order for local authorities to understand why they should also invest in culture.

**Leonie Bell:** I hope that we can move quickly from understanding the importance and value of culture to considering how we can support the sector. In its broadest sense, the sector needs to be funded at a level that enables it to generate deep and long-lasting impacts. From a certain

position, culture can have such impacts on health and social care, poverty, education and tourism, and it can unlock innovation and business models. All those outcomes can be achieved from a certain base point—we are not quite at that point yet, but we are getting there.

There have been some national conversations about the development of the culture strategy—albeit that it could have gone further to address some of the issues that Lucy Casot set out—but we need to quite quickly move from a national discussion about the value and importance of culture to one about the mechanisms by which we can support the sector to enable those outcomes to be achieved.

**Anne Lyden:** I will pick up on what Leonie Bell has said. It is critical that we invite people in other portfolios to have those conversations, because we are delivering in those areas, although they are not aware of it. There are budgetary implications. We could make better use of limited resources by having those conversations directly, so that we understand where we can aggregate and work together to achieve those outcomes and make an impact. There are the three key funding models, but we also need to open up and include other areas, or else there will be duplication or we will be working at cross-purposes, which is not a good use of resources.

**George Adam:** In my case, you are preaching to the converted, because Paisley's bid to be the 2021 UK city of culture was all about that. I thank God that we did not win, because we were in lockdown in 2021—it was a shame for Coventry. The bid was made because we wanted to say that culture could make a difference to the challenges that the town faces, so I understand what has been said.

**The Convener:** Thank you. *[Interruption.]* Sorry—I am losing my voice. I will bring in Meghan Gallacher.

**Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con):** I think that we are both in the same boat, convener.

Good morning. My question relates to local government. We have spoken a lot about collaborative working and partnership between various levels of government. That will, of course, be really important in relation to what happens over the next few years, particularly given the difficult financial challenges that all sectors are experiencing as a result of the levels of funding that are available.

I have always been struck by the different funding streams, or the different ways in which local authorities operate, in relation to their leisure facilities and cultural assets. Some councils use arm's-length external organisations, while others keep things more in house, if I can use that

phrase. Is it difficult for the sector to navigate that as a whole, given that councils are doing different things in different places? Do we need a further review of ALEOs and of how councils are operating their leisure and cultural assets to try to protect them as much as possible? After all, another difficulty that local authorities are having just now concerns the use of ring fencing, which, of course, exposes our leisure and cultural assets, as they are not included within the protected brackets as other sectors are.

I do not know who wants to kick off on that.

**Susan Deighan:** There are two parts to that question. Glasgow Life, which is a very large ALEO, has a very positive working relationship with Glasgow City Council—we work hand in hand. The council charges us with delivering on its culture policy areas; indeed, we recently spent a lot of time consulting on a new culture strategy for the city. That work has been done with the sector, as I have said, but ultimately it gets adopted as a Glasgow City Council policy document. We have done the same with the vision for Glasgow libraries, which we refreshed last year, and are doing the same with physical activity and sport, events and tourism.

That trusted relationship exists, and we work hand in glove with the council. I feel strongly that, through that relationship, we are able to deliver on the city's priorities—and, indeed, are able to align our support for the city's citizens with the council's strategic plan and still deliver. As I said earlier, with the model that we are developing, if we generate income in one area, we can help create an ecology—we are using that word a lot today—within the organisation. It will also support work across the organisation; for example, our museums team is working with our libraries team on the city archives. That brings me back to the point that was made about skills and experience, because we are using our conservation and collections management skills to look at how we manage the city's archives. I can talk only from my perspective, but that is just a wee nugget of how things are working.

The ring fencing point is a really interesting one. I have read the CIPFA, SOLACE and COSLA submission, and I think that things become increasingly difficult for local government when there are protected areas and ring-fenced funding. I know that the Verity house agreement has committed to reducing that sort of thing, but my experience of how the council looks at the fee that we get to deliver services is that, on many occasions, we have to deliver a greater percentage of things and greater value than education services. The greater value aspect is perhaps more indicative, if you think about the budget and spend associated with Glasgow City

Council's education services, because we are having to reduce our budget by a greater value than they are being asked to.

It comes back to the value judgment that I talked about earlier when you are faced with making a decision and the money is not ring fenced. I would also note the use of the term “statutory” as it applies to libraries and point out, for the record, that Glasgow still operates 32 public libraries that are well used, well resourced and well loved. However, it is a difficult choice to make when you are faced with it, especially in the context of ring fencing.

I hope that that helped to answer the question.

**Meghan Gallacher:** Thank you very much. I am not sure whether anyone else wants to come in.

**Lucy Casot:** Perhaps I can say something, given our national overview. We convene a group of civic museum, local authority and ALEO heads of service to share some of these issues. Both models can be really successful—that is, there are successful examples of ALEOs and direct services—and I know that some are considering changing their model.

What really lies at the heart of what is successful is an understanding of the potential role that culture can play; indeed, Glasgow is an exemplar of the role that culture can play in a city, and Paisley, too, has been mentioned in terms of really understanding that potential. Therefore, I am not sure that the model itself is necessarily at the heart of all of this. Both models have their merits, but I think that the issue here is the understanding that I mentioned.

Actually, there are really good examples of the cross-portfolio approach that we have been talking about at a national level working more locally, with, for example, cultural people embedded in health and social care teams and other areas at local authority level. Perhaps there are some things that we can learn nationally from some of the models in local authorities.

I hope that that was helpful.

**Meghan Gallacher:** Thank you. Would anyone else like to comment?

**The Convener:** I do not think that anyone else wishes to respond. Do you have a supplementary?

**Meghan Gallacher:** I do; it is just a short one. We have rightly spoken about the cultural assets of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee and their cultural significance and importance, but, of course, we have local culture and heritage right up and down our country. North Lanarkshire, which is an area that I represent, is well known for its deep-rooted industrial heritage. How do we level things up when it comes to cultural protection? I can

understand why people gravitate to areas such as Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee, but we do not want to lose the deep-rooted cultural pockets that exist in other areas, which are very important to our history, and which have excellent examples of local museums and other cultural buildings. How do we level things up in that regard?

I also want to ask about our rural communities, which are harder to get to. It is harder for people to visit museums in rural areas. How do we protect the cultural assets of those areas as well? We would not want important cultural assets such as libraries and museums to disappear from more rural areas.

**Lucy Casot:** It is worth mentioning industrial collections in particular. Our industrial museums and galleries tend to face really high costs because of the nature of the assets that they care for, which are often very large. The scale of the sites that they care for and the nature of the collections often give rise to substantial issues. There are particular issues with industrial collections, some of which are especially vulnerable at the moment.

It is important to recognise the different costs that fall on different organisations, and there are different governance models for how that is done. In a sense, that plays into the wider conversation that we have been having about the need to provide support across the spectrum of the museums and galleries that we have.

Industrial museums collaborate extremely well. In Industrial Museums Scotland, they come together to share those issues and, in some cases, to share resources.

When it comes to rural museums, most parts of Scotland will have a museum forum in which people from different museums can come together and share ideas and resources. In that sense, those hubs can be really powerful. There are also some examples—although not a lot of them—of museums sharing a member of staff. One example is the sharing of a Gaelic development officer across four different museums. We probably need to look at such models if we want to protect the health of the ecology of the sector as a whole—I keep coming back to the word “ecology”—and to keep it vibrant.

We need to look not only at the particular issues that different kinds of museums face, but at the opportunities—they are opportunities—that exist for them to collaborate and to share resources in order to have a more sustainable future. It is really important that we look strategically at different solutions, given that, under the current model, the situation is so difficult and so strained.

**Leonie Bell:** I am delighted that you mentioned Dundee alongside Edinburgh and Glasgow,

Megan, because I am not sure that Dundee would always have been mentioned alongside Edinburgh and Glasgow. I think that that is credit to the work that was done over many years to envision a different Dundee that was connected to its sense of place and its local heritage and culture. V&A Dundee exists only because it had visionary founding partners and because there were other organisations there, such as Dundee Contemporary Art, Dundee Rep, the McManus art gallery and museum, the Discovery and the Unicorn, and, of course, a phenomenal university and art and design school. I am so excited that you see us as being mainstream now, because it certainly does not always feel like that.

I know that I represent an organisation with the V&A brand, which is world renowned, and rightly so, but our organisation will be successful only if, as well as being genuinely national, international and regional, we are deeply local. Our local audience is our greatest and most powerful stakeholder. That is how we think about V&A Dundee. In the past few years, we have made a lot of changes to make sure that, through the variety of our programme, we are speaking locally, nationally, and internationally. Last year, we brought every school in the city into our museum. That was the first time that we had done that or achieved that rate of school attendance. National institutions still have a deeply local responsibility. Ours certainly does because we are in a city such as Dundee.

11:00

This is perhaps a slightly off-piece point. We are working with North Lanarkshire Council on an exhibition that was in Venice a few years ago. It looks at the post-industrial landscape of Ravenscraig as well as Loch Ness and the Orkney seashores.

We can connect out to those other organisations through what we do. It is not just about what we bring but how we reach out and how national organisations show up across all of Scotland.

Your point about geographic breadth is right. Local culture is so important; it keeps everything living, and it really does connect in. We are all here for that, but you can still get the same sense of barrier and removal in cities. In parts of our bigger cities and towns, there is still a sense that you are 100 miles away from a national institution, when you are actually only a few miles away. I feel that we are working towards mitigating that very deeply in Dundee, and other colleagues have had that experience working in Paisley. We certainly felt the same and have worked really hard to mitigate that.

The breadth is geographic by mileage, but the distance is not always mileage, if that makes sense.

**Anne Lyden:** I would like to pick up on that. “The distance is not always mileage” is a good phrase. We are working in north Edinburgh, which is one of the most deprived areas in Scotland, on plans for our artworks. Some of the area’s residents would not even make it into Edinburgh to Princes Street or any of our three city centre sites.

Our plan for the collection storage facility is that people in that community will have immediate access to it, so that it will have the opportunity to impact their life in a positive way. Of course, they are just as entitled to have access to the national collection as anyone in Scotland—it is their collection, too. We know that it has a positive impact. We have surveyed our visitors and 85 per cent of them said that their wellbeing improved after engaging and connecting with art at our sites.

There is that hyperlocal aspect, but for us as a national institution, there is also a national remit. As has been mentioned this morning, we are dependent on infrastructure throughout the country in order to partner up. We just closed an exhibition at our portrait gallery called “Before and After Coal”, which looked at the coal industry in three distinct areas of Scotland: Ayrshire, Fife and the Lothians. I am very happy to say that that exhibition is now going on tour to Cumnock in Ayrshire and Kirkcaldy in Fife. It was touch and go as to whether that would be possible, because our host partners were not sure whether they would have the funds to invigilate in the space, and our funds were so tight that we were not able to provide any assistance in grant, but through creative working on all parties’ counts, we have been able to make that happen.

It is important that happens, because the exhibition, which opened in Edinburgh earlier this year, came about through a multiyear—more than five years—partnership with those communities. Our outreach officers, curators and various colleagues were consistently meeting and earning the trust and respect of those communities. That did not happen so that we as the National Galleries of Scotland could parachute in and say, “Here it is.” The exhibition is their story. We have been privileged to hear that story, bring it to Edinburgh, show the exhibition alongside the permanent collection and take it back to those areas.

Those are the relationships that we are talking about—it is about the hyperlocal and the national. It is about artist rooms. Vija Celmins was at Dunoon burgh hall. We have various partners up and down the county, from the Highlands and Islands to major cities around Scotland, but we are limited because we have only a certain amount of

the Vija Celmins collection up here in Scotland. We share it in joint ownership with Tate Modern in London. We do not have the storage facilities to have the majority of the collection here, which means that the people of Scotland are missing out on vital parts of our permanent collection simply because we cannot store it here.

It will always come back to the anchor funding that is needed right across the sector for us all to thrive. That is what we mean by the ecosystem—that we are all thriving.

**Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP):** Thank you for giving evidence today. We do not have a lot of time left, so what I am going to do is make a couple of comments, maybe a little bit provocatively, and members of the panel can respond.

Having sat through this last year, it seems to me that the doom loop has continued without much in the way of perceived improvement. I was struck by a comment that Anne Lyden made at the start of the meeting about the sector not being confident. I am not sure how the sector can become confident if the population is not confident. I think that things such as the cost of living and the effects of the pandemic are much more profound and long lasting than we perhaps give them credit for. We also saw riots in the country over the summer, so I am not sure that we have the confident, settled population that would mean that people would be more inclined to visit cultural institutions.

I note the point that Anne Lyden has just made about increased funding for the sector. It would be useful for me, as a member of the committee, to know where the best place is for the committee or individual members to put pressure in relation to that. I am struck by the fact that we have been in austerity for 14 years, which has reduced funding for public services across the board. We are now going into the 15th year, and we are told that this budget is going to be much worse and that there is a massive black hole. The Scottish Government has had a 40 per cent reduction in its capital budget this year.

Is it the case that, in your view, the Scottish Government is not apportioning the proper level of its budget to culture, or is there something else going on? Is it your view that local government is doing the same? Are local authorities not passing on proper proportions? It is simply the case that the scarcity of resources in local government is driving that, so it would be interesting to know where pressure should be applied.

In relation to the local government situation, we have heard a lot from Glasgow and we usually hear quite a bit from Edinburgh, usually in relation to the festivals. I represent an area that has no council-run museum within its entire boundary.

There is a small museum in the village in which I live, but the area has not had a council-run museum for two decades. The cost of going to Edinburgh or Glasgow is prohibitive for people, and we have higher levels of poverty than Glasgow per capita. I would suggest that it is not really high on the list of priorities to see more funding go to Edinburgh or Glasgow if it is going to be at the expense of places where there is currently no funding.

Megan Gallacher made a very good point about the richness of the history that we have in our area. Perhaps the biggest cultural asset that we have in Clackmannanshire is the graveyard in Alloa, where Jameson of Jameson whiskey, Usher, Younger and all those people are buried, along with some incredibly important cultural figures. We have Dollar museum, which is a tiny museum, but we do not have a council-run museum.

In a situation of scarce resources, how relevant is it to discuss more money going to Glasgow and Edinburgh? I agree that it should, and I agree with the point that has been made that people perhaps do not appreciate the knock-on and multiplier effect of spending on culture, before we think about the beneficial, if you like, spiritual or mental benefits of it. However, I guarantee that, if you go to meetings of every committee of this Parliament, you will see people in front of them saying, "If people just realised the impact that this would have, they would spend a bit more on it." The problem is that, as I think has been said, the money is not there in the first place.

Those are just some of my thoughts. It would be interesting to hear any comments from the panel.

**Anne Lyden:** On your question about the Scottish Government not apportioning a proper level of funding, the answer is a resounding yes. We have all been calling for 1 per cent to be spent on funding the culture portfolio. We can compare that figure with the figures for the rest of Europe, where the average is, I think, 1.5 per cent. In some nations, the funding goes well beyond that. Just on those terms and by those measures, there needs to be more funding.

I take your point that, in these times, budgets are stretched right across the portfolios, but it comes back to my point about how joined up things are in relation to where those resources are being spent.

In relation to childhood poverty, during the summer months, we offer free lunches for families who come in. It is a very targeted approach, looking at where children are not receiving their school lunches when the school is out of session. We call it Art Fuel. They can come into our sites and they get a substantial lunch, but Art Fuel is

there to help them engage and participate. Those are areas where we are stepping into other portfolios with what we provide and it is coming out of the culture budget, but it is also having an impact elsewhere. There needs to be a real understanding of how those elements are all connected and how the budget is being used.

It comes back to what Susan Deighan said. This is not a "nice to have". These are necessities. We need culture in our lives for us to survive—for us to have a life that is meaningful, rich, and creative.

On the point about whether the resource should come to the major cities, I hope that I have demonstrated today, or at least given you some insight into, the fact that although we may be physically situated here in Edinburgh, where we have our buildings, our collection is not static. Our collection is out there around the country, as are my colleagues. We have done various programmes over the years in Alloa and we have been doing consistent work in North Ayrshire. We are doing all kinds of activities, but we have very limited resource. There are three outreach officers and I think that only one is full time—that is for serving the whole of Scotland.

To go back to funding, we have two development officers—

**Keith Brown:** Just on that point, would it not be more beneficial for something indigenous to Alloa or Ayrshire to happen, rather than having to rely on somebody else coming in?

I appreciate that it is a question of a national collection—there will be restricted access to that—but surely it would be more sustainable and beneficial if there were things across the country? I have been hearing about your mining exhibition. The first mine in Scotland was up in Brora in the Highlands—it was not in Ayrshire or Lancashire or anywhere else. I just think that we are missing a trick there. Richard Demarco has done some fantastic stuff in Alloa as well, but surely something that is more indigenous to that area would have a beneficial impact?

**Anne Lyden:** Absolutely. Perhaps I can elaborate on my point about the mining exhibition. It is not about us being possessive about the culture, but about us recognising that that culture and heritage exist right across the country and asking how we can support it within our national remit. The issue comes back to the funding that is required right across the sector. Again, it is very much about where we can have those partnerships, to be able to share—it goes in both directions. It is about not just sending it out but having those meaningful conversations and understanding what our national culture is about.

There are ways of doing that. Again, the difficulty is that it can become project based rather

than based on actual foundational funding and support. We can send out an exhibition—we sent out the MacKinnon collection of photographs to Museum nan Eilean in Stornoway a few years ago. With the funding that we had received from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we were then able to say, “Right, you know what your local audiences need and want better than we do sitting here in Edinburgh. Let’s work with you so that you can take these funds and you can discharge them in a way that will have maximum impact, because you know what you’re doing.” It is about those types of partnerships. As Lucy Casot has already testified, 11 per cent of museums are threatened with closure this year. It is not about saying that we will create a museum in this small town or in that village, because we cannot sustain them all. Again, the question is how we can be strategic in using the resource that we have to maximise it to full effect.

**Susan Deighan:** I hope that I have not just talked about Glasgow, but the role of local authorities in funding culture. Glasgow has many villages and many places, and having a culture that reflects the people and the place is very important.

To respond to your observations, I should say that we have championed a programme called artists in communities. Artists embed themselves in a community, whether that is Calton in the east of Glasgow, Blackhill or Pollok, and work with the local heritage and the community, which can respond to the issues that they want to discuss through culture.

11:15

For example, one of our artists on that programme worked in Molendinar in Blackhill on 3D sculptures and graphic design and performance. However, what came out of that was not necessarily an object, but materials and art works for a campaign for clean air. The community used the sessions with the artist to create an advocacy programme with local politicians and campaigners. Part of the evidence that I would like to give today is about the value of culture. Yes, absolutely, culture has value at a national level and at an institutional level, but we really must not lose sight of the importance of cultural experience in communities and the role of culture in helping to discover identity and explore heritage in our communities, whether that is through the library or exploration of the local graveyard. The necropolis in Glasgow is regularly at the top of TripAdvisor visits. Understanding the people and the heritage is important. My evidence is that we must recognise the role of local funding through local authorities for local culture.

**The Convener:** We need to finish the meeting by twenty past 11, so please be concise in your comments. I am sorry, but, because it is a Thursday morning, this committee does not have any flexibility.

**Lucy Casot:** That is understood. I have three quick points. First, I absolutely endorse and share the ambition that 1 per cent of the Scottish Government’s budget go to culture. Given the comparisons across Europe, that is a reasonable ambition.

Secondly, any review of how the sector is funded must be looked at from the point of view of communities. We need to take that place-based approach to access to culture. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the right to access culture, so we need to look at where that provision is, before we look at who is providing it. It can be provided nationally, regionally and locally.

My third point is that we should never underestimate the power of small sums of money in the hands of local people. We should not be looking at this as a case of either/or. During Scotland’s year of stories, we ran a programme through which we put grants of up to £3,000 in the hands of local people. The richness that came from that demonstrates that we need to be investing at that local level, as we need to invest at the national level, because, together, we can do something really powerful.

Looking at access to culture and who has that is fundamental, because our structures and how we provide that are things that we need to sort, but, if you are a member of a community, you do not care whether the museum is run by the council, an independent charity or nationally. You want access to really good, high-quality inspiring culture in your area.

**The Convener:** As everybody has finished their contributions, I thank committee members for their questions. Ms Casot, Ms Deighan, Ms Bell and Ms Lyden, thank you very much for your attendance. I close the meeting.

*Meeting closed at 11:18.*

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