SCOTTISH ARTS & HUMANITIES ALLIANCE

Promoting the value of Arts and Humanities in Scotland

SAHA Contribution to Scottish Parliament Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee's Consultation - Funding for Culture

SAHA has submitted the following response:

What should be the Scottish Government's immediate priorities in supporting the culture sector's recovery through Budget 2022-23?

Scotland can proudly say that it has a vibrant cultural life. A 2019 survey from the Scottish Government showed that 90% of people in Scotland were culturally engaged, pre-pandemic, with almost half of those surveyed agreeing with the statement that 'culture and the arts make a positive difference to my life'. Of these… '44 per cent said that culture and the arts improve their mental health and wellbeing'[1]. Financially, for every £1 GVA generated by the arts and culture, a further £1.14 is generated in the wider economy[2].

As the Scottish Government notes, the arts and culture sector has been one of the hardest hit areas over the pandemic[3]. In November 2020, this sector had the second-largest proportion of businesses temporarily closed (11% across arts, entertainment and recreation); the largest proportion of employees furloughed (40%); and the largest proportion of organisations reporting that turnover had substantially decreased compared to 2019.

The direct impact on cultural organisations (larger or smaller) has rightly taken centre-stage in this period. However, the link between arts and culture practice and academia can be easily overlooked. Education institutions not only shape the professionals that will ensure the future of the industry, but also provide opportunities for cultural content producers and managers to gain new skills. Moreover, an often-forgotten aspect is the important contribution of excellent Scottish research to government and other institutions' policy development process. The UNESCO report cited in the consultation outlines that any measures taken need to be backed by comprehensive needs assessment and evaluated to ensure that existing inequalities widely recognised to plague arts and culture worldwide are not perpetuated. Education institutions (especially Higher Education Institutions), with their research skills, are needed to support such iterative processes.

As the Scottish Arts and Humanities Alliance (a joint initiative of ten Scottish Higher Education institutions, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities), we understand that a vibrant, world-class creative sector needs skilled and knowledgeable members, be they self-employed artists or managers of large national companies. Educational institutions should not be overlooked as difficult decisions are made on competing priorities.

We thus recommend immediate priorities should include:

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[1] Scottish Government, 2020. Scotland's People Annual Report 2019
https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2020/09/scottish-household-survey-2019-annual-report/documents/scotlands-people-annual-report-2019/scotlands-people-annual-report-2019/govscot%3Adocument/scotlands-people-annual-report-2019.pdf.

[2] Creative Industries Federation, 2019. Public Investment, Public Gain: How public investments in the arts generates economic value across the creative industries and beyond
https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/publications/public-investment-public-gain.

[3] Scottish Government, 2020. Scotland's Wellbeing: The Impact of COVID-19
https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/scotlands-wellbeing-impact-covid-19.

1) maintaining a strong 'pipeline' to aid the creation of future culture professionals, from nursery through school and on to further education/higher education
2) supporting later-career reskilling and upskilling to take full advantage of emerging hybrid / digital models and other novel cultural outputs.
3) firmly opposing any cuts to cultural education (music, drama, creative writing, visual art, etc.) and supporting the development of new programmes that embed creative activities in schools' curricula.
4) actively supporting the move to Open Access publishing for the academic study of the Arts and Humanities, ensuring the sustainability and vibrancy of cultural debate and public understanding.
5) further investment in digital infrastructure provision necessary to support, amongst others, online teaching thus contributing to close attainment gaps and address digital poverty in certain areas of Scotland.

Do you agree with UNESCO that "a degree of restructuring is inevitable" [1] as the sector recovers from COVID? If so, what approach should the Scottish Government adopt?

While it seems that some changes, including negative changes, are inevitable as we emerge into the post-pandemic landscape for the arts and culture in Scotland, the Covid crisis presents an occasion for the sector to evolve. One opportunity that we see, based on evidence from developments in the educational sector, that will most likely become even stronger as we move forward, is related to the incorporation of digital technologies at all levels of activity.

As we mentioned in response to the first question, we already know that the sector has registered losses. A recent AHRC/DCMS report, recommends 'effective interventions to reverse the labour market scarring and to bring back talent recently lost'[4]. The report also recommends that different institutions work in a consolidated way to 'reshape the policy environment to invigorate creative R&D', and digital skills are particularly highlighted as a priority area. In each case, Higher Education offers opportunities to work with and for the cultural sector to achieve these aims.

Digital / hybrid delivery models in the performing arts allow culture to be enjoyed nationwide, moving beyond the Central Belt where most companies and venues are located. Digital engagement has not only allowed greater numbers of people to engage with culture during the pandemic, but also radically improved access to culture, especially for disabled people. There is a significant risk that the return to traditional models will also be a return to inaccessible and unaffordable art, reinstating and exacerbating systemic inequalities.

The Creative and Cultural Industries report has already highlighted in 2018 that culture and creative industries were slow to adapt to technological advancement. The report repeatedly mentions gaps in technological attainment, together with 'a lack of digital literacy and confidence among many senior leaders'[5]. As the UNESCO report outlines, the picture has not changed much since then and the sector still struggles with the uptake of digital technologies. In the wake of successive lockdowns there is now a sense of urgency to rethink the uptake of digital skills and adapt cultural provision by incorporating digital channels. The need to reskill or upskill workers was recently highlighted in Skills Development Scotland's Sectoral Skills

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[4] Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2021. Boundless Creativity report
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005410/Boundless_Creativity_v1.pdf

[5] Creative and Cultural Industries, 2018. Building a Creative Nation: Current and future skills needs
https://www.ccskills.org.uk/articles/building-a-creative-nation-current-and-future-skills-needs-2

Assessment for the creative industries (June 2021)[6] which also noted that digital outputs (games, apps, live/on demand streaming) have recorded significant growth during the pandemic.

To make full use of these opportunities there needs to be enhanced governmental support. Existing funding mechanisms do not suffice, as the Scottish Contemporary Arts Network, Culture Counts[7], and other networks and cultural organisations have argued. The priorities outlined for the Scottish Government in May included giving every pupil a digital device as well as a Young Person's Guarantee that should see all young people in Scotland in education or work. The Scottish Council Funding's recent review of tertiary education has made recommendations for 'a more systematic approach to the way we collectively plan coherent tertiary education and skills provision and investment, so that it responds better to current and future needs'[8]. There is an opportunity now for such recommendations and commitments to be brought together to ensure policy coherence across different sectors of the budget and to mainstream culture, creativity and technology integration at all levels of education.

A crisis can also trigger new ways of thinking – should the Scottish Government rethink how it supports the culture sector?

While immediate priorities of the government might be, in line with other states (as outlined in the UNESCO report) in saving culture and creative industries' businesses and jobs, as we've outlined in response to the previous question we believe that this crisis has presented some opportunities for further changes also. One such opportunity is to re-evaluate the relationship between higher education and the cultural sector which has received insufficient attention to date. Here we have in view several avenues.

Evaluation by researchers can inform evidence-based policy and future strategy. The Royal Conservatoire's research into Scottish Ballet's Dance for Parkinson's programme[9] is a useful example to consider. Evaluation of cultural activities/events tends to be funded privately or by United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI), rather than viewed as an essential part of culture. Creative Scotland could engage more deeply with universities to ensure that post-pandemic culture is rigorously and systematically evaluated.

With the sustained support of the Scottish Government, Higher Education can enhance public understanding of the culture being produced. This is being achieved through the transition to Open Access publishing of Arts and Humanities research. This support for OA publishing can be enhanced and deepened as the sector moves from OA journal publication through to the OA production of monographs, enabling the public to engage directly with the full suite of university research without paywalls.

In rethinking the support offered to the cultural and creative arts sector the Scottish Government can also recognise the role creative practice has in the health and wellbeing of the population. From arts therapy to creative writing courses, the Higher Education sector is

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[6] Skills Development Scotland, 2021, Sectoral Skills Assessments Creative Industries
https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/46048/ssa-creative-industries.pdf

[7] See for instance Culture Counts' Letter to Angus Robertson MSP and Jenny Gilruth MSP
https://culturecounts.scot/news/2021/6/3/our-letter-to-angus-robertson-msp-jenny-gilruth-msp

[8] Scottish Funding Council, 2021. Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research
Summary http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Review/coherence-and-sustainability_summary.pdf

[9] Bethany Whiteside, 2017. Dance for Parkinson's Scotland: a partnership between Dance Base and Scottish
Ballet https://www.dancebase.co.uk/about-dance-for-parkinsons-scotland/dance-for-parkinsons-scotland-
evaluation-by-dr-bethany-whiteside-975.

integral to the mental health and physical resilience of the communities it serves. In rethinking its support, the Scottish Government can look to enhance its provision for both interdisciplinary research grounded on creative practice and the training needs of artists, musicians and other creative practitioners.

Specifically, are there opportunities to develop a more strategic approach through, for example, the medium-term financial strategy, a multi-year spending review and the National Performance Framework?

SAHA proposes that the 'pipeline' to employment must be strategically developed and firmly embedded across education and higher education, from the early years onwards. For example, Theatre in Schools Scotland (TiSS) offers a year-round programme of live theatre and dance from nursery to P7. Standard Grades and Highers in Drama, Music or Art allow pupils to make and learn about the arts before moving on to further education or university settings, where students can train as culture professionals. We find the recent announcement of removal of core curriculum charges for arts courses for the 2021-22 year a welcome step in this direction also.

A recent review of education provision by Culture Counts calls for a review of arts provision, building on the recent OECD review of the Curriculum for Excellence. Their assessment outlines the disparities in provision across Scotland, as well as difficulties in accessing funding at local level and calls for coherent cross-sector action and streamlined funding to support local action.[10]

In line with Culture Counts' recommendations for bringing together culture and technology in school provision, we find this to be an area that needs particular attention and support in the future. The Scottish Government's recently commissioned Logan Review[11] discusses an 'education funnel' with recommendations for enhancing technical education provision from school level so that future skills shortages are mitigated.

Additionally, there is already anecdotal evidence of the need for culture professionals to gain new skills throughout their careers, especially in relation to digital delivery (theatre companies are already beginning to advertise for so-called 'digital stage managers' who are knowledgeable about live performance over Zoom, for example). Upskilling and reskilling at any age is both possible and desirable. Offering opportunities for existing CCIs' workers to gain new skills was one of the measures recommended in the cited UNESCO report, which outlined several international examples of case studies where artists and cultural professionals were provided opportunities for training. Coherent action is then recommended, in partnership with educational institutions which often have the resources and know-how to develop such training.

In line with other actors from the cultural field, some of these mentioned in our reply, we would encourage the Government to consider longer funding mechanisms that allow multi-year development (including projects that encourage collaborations with the EU).[12] Similar medium to long term provision might equally be considered in allocating budgetary support for funding streams within the Higher Education sector that support the creative arts, ensuring the ability to plan and sustain offerings and seedcorn vital initiatives.

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[10] Culture Counts, 2021. Creative Education in Scotland Review
https://culturecounts.scot/news/2021/1/14/creative-education-in-scotland-review-2021

[11] Scottish Government, 2020. Scottish technology ecosystem: review
https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-technology-ecosystem-review/

[12] Scottish Contemporary Arts Network, 2020. Document for CTEEA Debate on Arts Funding https://sca-net.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/SCAN_Visual-Arts-Update-for-CTEEA-Arts-Funding-Debate_-2-Nov.pdf