My previous related experience is of running the locations department for Scottish Screen and Creative Scotland, which involved marketing Scottish locations to incoming productions, and facilitating production activity in the country. I am currently a freelance researcher, working on the next Scottish Film Summit (21st February in Glasgow), and working with the Association of Film & Television Practitioners Scotland, an organisation that lobbies to improve and increase production activity in Scotland. I was the AFTPS representative on the Scottish Film Strategy recently published by Creative Scotland. I also served for five years on the board of the Association of Film Commissioners International (www.afci.org), a trade organisation for local, regional and national film commissions around the world.

Based on my experiences, I would like to address the questions on the issues that hinder growth of the creative industries, and give some examples of international strategies for growing these sectors.

PUBLIC SECTOR ISSUES

For fifteen years I worked closely with colleagues from countries around the world, and became very aware of the global nature of the film and television industry. This is a truly international marketplace and one that is extremely competitive. Scotland is competing against countries and regions with far more developed infrastructure and far bigger funding support. It is also competing against countries that have public sector agencies that have already discovered the benefits of long-term investment in film and television production (income, employment, development of home-grown talent and businesses, cultural tourism, etc). Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise have to work together to develop both the cultural and the business sides of the industry. This lack of joined-up strategy has been a major stumbling block in developing meaningful support for an industry that spans both creativity and business.

The current work being done on the ‘Scottish Studio’ is a prime example of how those elements of the public sector who are supposed to support the sector seem to tie themselves in knots over decision-making. Scottish crew members have worked in studios all over the world and can provide very good examples of best practice based on their experiences. The ‘Studio Delivery Group’ has so far failed to deliver a studio, in spite of many meetings, consultations with the industry, talks with existing studio owners and businesses, and repeated calls from leading industry figures to get the studio up and running. It is very likely that Scotland will, once again, miss the boat as other countries rush to attract high-end returning US television series.

The main reason why Scotland needs a studio – or at least fully professional large-scale production facilities – is that currently Scotland probably benefits to the tune of about 1% of the value of total production activity from the UK tax incentives for feature films and high-end TV production (in some years, this total annual figure for UK production activity has been close to £1 billion). There may be some benefits from location shooting, but these are tiny in comparison to attracting productions that may stay for six months or longer. Other countries also have mountains, castles and period streets, and some of these are considerably cheaper and easier to work in
than Scotland. In order to gain the maximum financial benefits from the UK tax incentives, Scotland must have the infrastructure to attract these high-end productions. Currently, it does not. The amount of money that has been spent over the years in housing productions in unsuitable buildings with no facilities would have paid for a large studio complex by now. Talk to any line producer about the costs of this lack of long-term support for production facilities.

Another consideration is that a studio alone will not be enough to attract incoming productions – skilled crew, facilities, and, above all, some kind of incentive funding will be necessary to make the studio viable. All this is possible, but it will require strategic financial support to make it work. In Belfast, Northern Ireland Screen hired the Paint Hall for free for two years in order to build up the reputation of the space. This has now obviously paid off with Game of Thrones.

INWARD INVESTMENT FUNDING

To get a good idea of the current state of global inward investment funding, the Entertainment Partners website [http://www.ep.com/incentives] lists the current funds available to attract inward investment into countries, states and provinces. These are funds designed to bring in big budget feature films and high-end television series, and help production companies off-set some of their costs by recouping some of the taxes spent. These funds are often linked to evidence of using local crew and facilities thus ensuring local employment and business growth, but can also include materials, subsidised use of local accommodation providers, free use of municipal buildings, and travel costs. The benefits of running such funds are that inward investment is closely monitored so that the economic benefits are easily measured, and production activity can be staggered throughout the year. The current picture in Scotland of ‘feast or famine’ is not sustainable for crew and facilities companies.

Examples of best practice of countries/states of equivalent size or smaller than Scotland:

New Zealand: http://www.nzfilm.co.nz/funding/feature-films/production-funding/nzspg-international-productions

Northern Ireland: http://www.northernirelandscreen.co.uk/sections/19/production.aspx


Quebec: http://www.qftc.ca/tax-incentives/information/

There are of course many other such examples, and useful websites on film incentives. All can be found by googling ‘film incentives’. I know that there has been a report on global film incentives done for the Scottish Government in 2012: has anyone read it?

SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS SCOTTISH PRODUCTION

There are two important issues at stake here, and attracting high-spending productions to Scotland is only part of the picture. The placing of film as an art-form within Creative Scotland is evidence that the Scottish Government does see film as
an important cultural activity, but have so far failed to support indigenous production in any way that is financially viable. Film is an important cultural activity with a product that can be exploited around the world, but in a country of six million, how many film producers make a full-time living from their work – possibly three people? The lack of real financial support to develop producers who then go on to develop projects – i.e., supporting writers to write feature-length scripts, having access to funds that can attract above-the-line talent, being able to attract other investments at markets – is almost impossible here. Film is important to cultural life, but it is also an expensive activity. To support it as an art-form that is as much a part of Scottish culture as music or literature means investment. And this may be long-term investment that may not see results for a number of years.

There will be submissions from Scottish producers that will be far more articulate and accurate about what they need, and it will be, in the main, about lack of funding. They do need financial support, certainly, but you have a group of people who care passionately about Scottish film-making, and will work tirelessly to bring their projects to fruition. Without good producers driving the industry, you don’t have a Scottish film industry. Independent Producers Scotland (IPS) has been formed in response to the lack of support, other than the chance to apply for funding occasionally, from the public sector. If Scottish producers are not supported in the initial stages when they are looking for investment for their projects at market, then they cannot compete with producers from other countries. Again, this is a highly competitive market.

TELEVISION PRODUCTION

One of the most exciting ideas of the Scottish referendum was the notion of a Scottish Broadcasting Corporation. With the money raised from a Scottish licence fee being spent in Scotland, suddenly it seemed that indigenous television production was a viable option. Whether the figures stacked up or not was a source of endless debate, but it was an exciting fantasy for a while. But it is obvious that for years, the BBC has taken money out of Scotland and spent it elsewhere, in London, and in developing facilities in Cardiff, and at Salford Quays. By comparison, the level and size of television productions here in Scotland – low budget BBC 3 comedies and CBBC programmes – are not enough to sustain any kind of independent television industry in this country.

For truly indigenous television production, a Scottish production company has to be commissioned to produce the series or drama, and should also have the opportunity to exploit its product globally. Relocating a television series to Scotland in order not to fall foul of Ofcom, or setting up a company here by renting a desk, does nothing to support Scottish television production. Both the BBC and Channel 4 have continually reiterated their commitment to hitting their production targets in Scotland, and consistently they have failed to hit their targets. I am not sure who is responsible for policing this, but feel that it has to be addressed at Scottish Government level.

Traditionally, Scottish crew and facilities have relied on television production for regular work (there is certainly no regular work here in feature film production) but with the absence of the traditional mid-budget returning series that Scotland has relied in the past – *Taggart, Monarch of the Glen* – that used local crew and facilities,
there is a lot of reliance on Outlander which, as an incoming high-end TV production, can use UK-based crew or facilities, rather than local ones.

CONCLUSION

There have been a lot of reports, meetings, and endless consultations over the years about the above topics with not much to show for them. The industry – all aspects of it – has to be re-engaged with the public sector in a meaningful way. Supporting the industry means listening to the people who work in it.

In a nutshell, my advice would be:

- Go to the Cannes Film Festival, the biggest market in the world, and see the competition; if there wasn’t money to be made, these countries wouldn’t be there.

- Don’t just talk to producers - talk to line producers, production accountants, first A.D.s, and location managers who deal with practicalities of film production every day.

- You have to spend money to make money. If film and television are to succeed as viable industries, there needs to be more investment from the public sector.

Dr Belle Doyle

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