Screen Facilities Scotland welcomes the opportunity to submit a response to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

Screen Facilities Scotland is the trade association for service and facility companies in Scotland. From camera and broadcast equipment hire, post-production facilities, props, edit suites, casting agencies, special effects, sound recording and music services, health & safety expertise to animal wranglers, SFS member companies provide an array of specialist services that is the bedrock to successful film and television production. It is essential for any country wanting a vibrant indigenous production landscape and also to attract inward investment productions that a wide range of well-resourced, expertly-staffed facility and service companies are available locally and affordably.

Particular challenges face such companies and, within recent public sector research and scoping exercises for the Scottish Film and Broadcast industry, these challenges were in danger of being overlooked. Establishing Screen Facilities Scotland provided a solution, a unified voice for member companies, even those in direct competition with each other, and SFS affords a central point of contact for potential clients, public agencies and government bodies. SFS is affiliated to UK Screen Association, the London-based trade association representing companies providing services to the screen industries.

For facility and service companies to thrive, expand, and for the range of services on offer locally to be as comprehensive as possible, there needs to be a pipeline full of projects, of all genres and budgets. This is the lifeblood of the industry. As it is the writers and producers who, with proper finance and support, develop scripts and get projects into production, SFS supports the views and endeavours of our IPS colleagues.

When projects are appropriately and robustly financed and in production, high spec equipment and top end facilities and services can be provided to create the best product for screens, small or large. Where production finance is shaky, unpredictable or inconsistent as has been the case in Scotland for many years, facility companies as a direct result, cannot grow their businesses, invest in their infrastructure, cover overheads, create jobs or train staff. Completing this vicious cycle, if productions believe the equipment and services are not available locally, these will be brought in from other areas which in turn further affects the fortunes of local facility and service companies.

Whilst SFS understands market forces and that not just Scottish companies may be used on productions in Scotland, we do believe that more must be done to promote, protect and develop Scottish-based facility and service companies and the production infrastructure in Scotland. The current picture here of ‘feast or famine’ is not sustainable for crew and facilities companies.

Addressing the specific points on which views are sought:
The role of public sector agencies and the effectiveness of the support they provide.

Creative Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, SDI and Co-Operative Development Scotland have supported SFS in different and tangible ways. These agencies recognised that the facility and service companies were trying to take constructive steps to ensure the future growth of production in Scotland. Positive outcomes have been achieved through collaborative efforts between SFS and separate public agencies using existing support mechanisms. The way the respective agencies work with each other, however, is somewhat disjointed with a lack of clarity about respective roles and responsibilities. Any such weaknesses across public agency relationships should be tackled and strengthened. Expanding and reinforcing these relationships to maximise the value of these agencies to the creative sector, especially with regards to development and production finance, business development and helping the sector engage with the international marketplace, is vital to the growth of the Scottish production sector and infrastructure.

The role of private sector investment in supporting the video games and the TV and film sectors

Every facility and service company invests directly and significantly in the production infrastructure in Scotland as it takes substantial finance to keep high-tech equipment maintained, up-to-date and available; full-time staff employed and trained and the rising costs of overheads covered. Where there are few or no productions in the pipeline because development and production finance has stalled or inward investment productions are attracted to other countries, the strain on the companies to keep investing through lean times can be enormous and can lead to facilities and services scaling down or even disappearing from the local infrastructure. It is especially frustrating and damaging for private company investment to be wasted, equipment to remain on shelves and local knowledge and expertise ignored at times when projects are shooting in Scotland but production teams bring equipment and services into the country from elsewhere.

How the issues that hinder the growth of creative industries can be overcome and how to capitalise on opportunities

Narrowing the focus to the issues that hinder growth of the facility and service companies, the key issue is that, where it is recognised that productions shooting in Scotland should use local crew, so too should local facility and service companies be used wherever possible. But for these companies to grow and be the best available resource for indigenous and international productions in Scotland, they need investment and support:

- to develop relevant skills and training required for the workforce of the future which is vital to company success and growth;
- to invest in and maintain a comprehensive range of the most up-to-date equipment and resources;
• to work collaboratively to fill gaps in the production infrastructure in Scotland, most notably the lack of a studio in Scotland;

• to promote, locally and internationally, the range, experience and value of the facilities companies already established in Scotland;

• to create a forum where sector-wide issues facing the companies can be identified and rectified;

• to establish a common voice that is recognised and respected and that can lobby on behalf of companies at the highest levels; and

• to connect as widely and effectively as possible with colleagues in other parts of the creative industries, nationally and internationally.

• **How to retain in Scotland those with the necessary creative skills**

At the risk of sounding like a stuck record, long-term strategy and support for the production infrastructure and for those who contribute towards a full pipeline of projects, indigenous and inward investment, film, television and games, of all genres and budget levels, creates the “food chain” that will retain, in Scotland, those with the necessary creative skills. Thriving production also supports training and career development of those involved.

• **How to support those in the TV and film and video games industries to develop business skills**

SFS supports and defers to existing agencies Creative Skillset, Skills Development Scotland, Cultural Enterprise Office and the Trade Network for Screen and Broadcast through ScreenHI in the H&I to understand best what is required and to provide the appropriate means by which to develop relevant business skills in the creative sectors, working collaboratively with those representing TV, film and the games industries to identify needs.

• **Examples of successful international strategies for growing these sectors**

In particular, the sustained, holistic and long-term approach taken by Northern Ireland over the past decade to achieve the level of success it has reached today is an example of a small country’s successful international strategy for growing these sectors. [http://www.northernirelandscreen.co.uk/sections/19/production.aspx](http://www.northernirelandscreen.co.uk/sections/19/production.aspx)


Also, 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. Of particular relevance to
SFS, 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.

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