1. Introduction

While it is important that the Scottish Parliament continues to investigate and monitor the state of the creative and screen industries in Scotland, the time has surely come for action rather than continued deliberation(s).

The time has surely come when we need to stop having endless working parties and spending money on consultants trying to work out what to do.

*Remember the ‘Yes Minister’ Law of Inverse Relevance ‘

‘The less you intend to do about something, the more you have to keep talking about it ‘ ‘Yes Minister’ Episode 1: Open Government

Therefore, please note that we already know what to do.

That is:

1.1 - Appoint the right people with the vision leadership and energy to succeed.
1.2 - Provide a positive legislative stratégic/policy framework for support.
1.3 - Provide better budgets and funding for investment and/or leverage for the same.

(You already have access to the data on existing funding for projects and programmes of all kinds. If the Scottish Government wishes to help to improve performance in the screen sector, there will need to be a step change in investment. There is widespread agreement that more is needed.)

1.4 Give them space to get on with it.

- That is what happened with the National Theatre of Scotland.
- This is what happened with MG Alba.
- Both signal success stories.
- Do likewise with the Screen Industries in Scotland

2. Context

Some ten years ago the Scottish Government established the Scottish Broadcasting Commission. Ably led by Blair Jenkins, it produced the report: ‘Platform for Success’ which was adopted, in full, by the Scottish Parliament.

However the Scottish Government did not implement the main recommendation: Investment in and the establishment of a Scottish Digital Network.
Now we have the report of the Screen Sector Leadership Group ably led by John McCormick. Another good report with sound recommendations.

2.1 - **How about just implementing the recommendations of these reports in their entirety?**

(Of course, with the SBC report, taking into account a number of changes but the broad thrust of the analysis by Blair Jenkins and his colleagues remains true today)

2.2 - It is also the case that we continue to await the creation of the level of studio infrastructure which has allowed and enabled productions such as *Game of Thrones* and the excellent *37 Days* to be made in Northern Ireland.

Similarly, *Dr Who, Torchwood and Sherlock are based in* and came out of Wales—as it were.

What is apparent from these examples, is that they are international, high quality and transcend their locations. Sustainable success is possible.

But it takes investment in production and Scotland needs to learn from the success of Northern Ireland and Wales. We can and will do better.

The British Film Industry/High End Television has, in recent years, been on one of upward rather than downward slopes of—especially for the former—its roller coaster existence and the reasons for this are not difficult to discern:

- a) Studio infrastructure – Pinewood, Shepperton, Ealing
- b) Successful track record of production
- c) Excellence in craft and technological skills
- d) A positive regime of tax incentives.

However, should the Scottish Government wish to move in this direction, which it could, then it needs to avoid the danger of *‘scams for scumbags’*.1

That is, we need to find ways of funding or leveraging investment in the Scottish screen sector without encouraging tax avoidance.

**Specific Questions**

3. **How can the industry successfully implement the recommendations outlined in the Screen Sector Leadership Group report?**

3.1 - Work with the SG and Parliament to provide funding and policy/legislative underpinnings.

It is not so much for the industry as the SG to now ensure public funding to stimulate investment

3.2 - Establish a Scottish Media Development Agency (on the model provided by the Singapore InfoComm Media Development Authority within or alongside Creative Scotland.

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1 Hodge M (2017) ‘Called To Account’ London Abacus  P135
4. What is your view of the current leadership of the screen sector through Creative Scotland and other supporting bodies?

4.1 - The demise of Scottish Screen and also the UK Film Council led to concerns amongst the screen sector that their needs were not being met and their voices not heard.

However, it may be that the politics of organisational change might dissipate or at least be ameliorated if the funds and budgets were increased. This is not just throwing money at a problem but investing, and using this term.

What may be needed is a figure with substance: Some one like an Alexander Korda; Peter Hall; Jeremy Isaacs or David Puttnam.

5. How can we ensure that the Screen Unit has the remit and responsibility for providing the strategic vision and leadership across the sector?

What changes to the current arrangements are necessary to achieve this?

That this question should be asked does, in itself, provide evidence that the Screen Unit does not currently provide the strategic vision and leadership required.

Changes are needed.

Short of resurrecting Scottish Screen, it should be about appointing a leader and giving her or him a good budget and then the powers will follow.

See 4.1 above

6. What are your views on the availability of funding and support for all content development?

Insufficient

Had the Scottish Digital Network been established with 75 million GBP a year of which one would have hoped some 55-65 million in content production/development, who can doubt that so much more would have been achieved in scale, scope, quality and ambition

The creation of a 10 Million GBP production fund is welcome but is a first step. What is important is that this fund is really used for production and not siphoned off into ancillary areas or administration

Also very welcome is the extra investment by the BBC of c19 million GBP in the new BBC Scotland channel.

If you look at what can be achieved by MG Alba on small increases in investment it will be apparent that greater investment of any kind will produce economic, cultural and creative benefits.

The question therefore is why not greater investment?
7. Do you consider the support provided by Scottish Enterprise to be adequate? How might they or other bodies work to provide appropriate support for the industry?

The SBC advised that Scottish Enterprise should be more flexible in its approach and give a higher priority to this sector.

There is a need for clear lines of responsibility and accountability and therefore having a public figure: a Chief Executive or a Director General is needed.

Think of what John Diamond achieved during his tenure as Director of the Edinburgh International Festival.

Organisational structures can be of consuming interest to some but we need a leader.

At the moment, it feels rather like Kissinger saying “Who do I call when I need to call Europe?” So Scotland needs a public figure who is the ‘go to person’.

8. How can we nurture and maintain funding for production companies?

The hoped for cultural quarter at Pacific Quay has not really developed as originally envisaged. Yet the work of Richard Florida in terms of the creative class remains relevant.

The success of Dundee and Creative Dundee and the Universities there in Dundee’s Digital Success Story demonstrate what can be achieved.

Glasgow and Edinburgh need to learn from Dundee

9. How can Ofcom work to support the sector in its new role as regulator?

OFCOM tends to privilege its role as a ‘light touch regulator’ rather than an upholder of the citizen interest and thus it is not at all clear what OFCOM could do to support the sector in its new role.

Indeed, it could be argued that some of what it is already doing in respect of the BBC is moving from light touch regulation into compromising the independence of the BBC via specific genre and content targets and quotas.

However, OFCOM could and should develop stronger policies in terms of specific Scotland based as opposed to Out of London quotas for commercial psbs and also Channel 4.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Edinburgh and Glasgow do not seem to have featured in the names of cities being considered for the relocation of substantial parts of Channel 4’s work. Why not?

10. What are your views on the state of commissioning for Scottish content?

A Scottish cultural test so that content is directed more towards reflecting the vibrancy and diversity of Scotland helps but the crucial question remains one of funding.
11. How might Brexit impact the Scottish screen industry?

The loss of access to EU funding will be problematic for production but also distribution: What will happen to support for the regional film theatres etc.

Paradoxically, it may be that no longer having to meet EU State Aid criteria might allow for greater flexibility in allowing the Scottish Government to invest in media production but will the Scottish and UK governments replace screen funding at the same level or even increase investment?

This will depend upon political support and prioritizing funding for the sector.

Here, actions and budgets will speak louder than words.

12. How do you view the role of broadcasters in supporting the sector?

This is an apple pie question and answer. Of course, vital is the answer.

However, what is needed is Scottish Stories: not just Scottish Scenery.

They need to develop returning series.

The BBC needs to broadcast ‘River City’ on the UK network, not just on BBC Scotland.

They need to access and use the heritage of Scottish literature and also make more of contemporary Tartan noir.

Too much Jane Austen on TV: not enough McCall Smith or Stevenson or Scott.

13. How might the newly proposed BBC channel help support the industry in Scotland?

See 12 above

Also: BBC Scotland needs to find and develop new talent:

How did the BBC do this in the past? They had the Wednesday Play and Comedy Playhouse. The single act play has almost disappeared from TV yet it acted and can act again as a nursery for writing, production, directing, acting.

Moreover, it could maximise returns on a budget. Have a competition and a 12 episode season filmed on location and one studio with the new cheaper new technology. There would be quality but BBC Scotland would need to manage audience expectations by making it clear that these are pilot programmes and that audience interaction would be crucial in determining success.

Turn the Scotland on Wednesday series into a competition with the audience and a panel of experts voting on which sitcom or drama should be then given a series commission.

Really this is just applying the existing format of Britain’s Got talent etc to the commissioning of writing, programmes and series.
Think for example what came out of the Wednesday Play and Comedy Playhouse. These programmes were, variously, commercial and critical successes and filled the tv schedules for many years.

From Comedy Playhouse:

All Gas and Gaiters; Are You Being Served?; Last of the Summer Wine; Meet The Wife; Not In Front of the Children; Steptoe and Son; Till Death Us Do Part; The Liver Birds; Up Pompeii.

And from the Wednesday Play:

The Blackstuff; Blue Remembered Hills; Edna The Inebriate Woman; Scum; Nuts In May; Abigails Party; Just Another Saturday; Just A Boys Game; Our Day Out; Spend Spend Spend; Rumpole Of The Bailey; The War Game; Up The Junction; The Nigel Barton Plays.

Creative talent involved, discovered, helped included:

Lindsay Anderson; Michael Apted; Alan Clarke; Stephen Frears; Roland Joffe; Mike Leigh; Ken Loach; Mike Newell; Rhys Adrian; Alan Bleasdale; Andrew Davies; David Hare; Arthur Hopcraft; John Hopkins; Mike Leigh; Peter Mcdougall; Ian Mcewan; John Osborne; Alan Pater; Stephen Poliakoff; Dennis Potter; Graham Reid; Willy Russell; David Storey; Alan Bennett.

Of course, these are all male which reflects the time. The criteria for this new series would have to – and rightly -seek to find women writers, directors etc and content which spoke to , reflected, represented and articulated the perspective of women. But how wonderful would it be if this strategy discovered even a fraction of this level and quality of talent!

14. How can Scotland become a key destination for UK and international productions?

Funding: Tax Incentives;

Develop the Edinburgh and Glasgow Film Festivals into must attend events.

15. Why have film and TV producers selected Scotland in the past as a location for production?

Scenery; Stories.

16. What is your view on the current network of regional film offices across the country?

Scotland is a small country: Local knowledge is important. If the the regional film offices are cost effective, then keep them.
17. Are you aware of examples of best practice in Scotland, or elsewhere, which the Committee could draw upon?

Singapore is a success story: so too Canada (Vancouver) and Denmark provide templates for success.

18. Talent Development, Skills and Training

How can Scotland nurture and retain domestic talent?

See work undertaken by the Bauer Academy.

The new National Film and Television School is a good development but much more funding is required.

19. How might the new Screen Unit work across agencies to ensure a coherent approach to the development of talent?

See 4.1 above.

And rename; screen unit does – as a term- fail to signal importance.

20. Are you aware of examples of best practice in Scotland, or elsewhere, which the Committee could draw upon?

17 above.

21. How can development, skills and training keep pace with the ever changing needs of the industry?

Ensure that the film and tv festivals and the Universities, RTS, BAFTA Scotland etc provide opportunities to learn, via master classes, from the best international talent.

22. Are there skills deficiencies or gaps which might impede productions choosing to come to Scotland?

The existing scale and scope of the industry in Scotland.

23. Does Scotland have the requisite level of domestic talent to accommodate an increase in productions coming to the country?

YES but see above and also the ‘brain drain’ of talent to centres of commissioning power.

24. What infrastructure, support and investment is required to ensure continuing development of talent in Scotland?

See above: See SBC report etc.

We need to have a stronger programme of master-classes, education and in service training for the entire sector, sufficiently high level and piggy backing on the film and book festivals as well as the EIF and partnering with Bafta Scotland, RTS etc to make knowledge creation and transfer at the heart of our creative communities.
25. Are there clear pathways from education through training to the workplace that deliver an industry-ready workforce?

Not as yet although the project of selecting a team of twenty Scottish-based trainees for an intensive skills development training programme on Outlander is the way forward.

26. How do we address the problem of inconsistent work for employees in the Scottish screen sector?

Investment in scale of production.

27. Do you feel there is a lack of diversity amongst employees in the screen industry? And if so, why might this be and what can be done to promote diversity?

Yes.

Better Careers Advice and targeted and funded internship programmes.

28. Do you feel enough investment is present for the purposes of training specialist skills?

No.

29. Are there ways in which film and TV productions can be encouraged to utilise Scottish cast and crew where appropriate?

Tax incentives: commissioning powers located in Scotland; Scottish/Scottish based productions achieving critical and commercial success; Effective publicising and marketing of these.

There needs to be increased investment and involvement in the Edinburgh Television Festival. This festival seems to be no longer the world class must attend event it once was and the Scottish Government needs to help to maximise its benefit and place in the conference circuit.

For example, the Australian Documentary Festival is a success. Yet the heritage and history of Scotland's place in and contribution to documentary Grierson et al is insufficiently celebrated and leveraged.

This now needs to be addressed- just as there are reasons why the Edinburgh and Glasgow Film Festivals could be combined to take place at the same time and achieve greater national and international salience and success.

Infrastructure, Intelligence and Maximising Benefit to Scotland

30. What improvements to the current studio infrastructure are needed? How might this be achieved?

Pentland Studios vital.
31. What kinds of facilities are needed and where?
See BBC Scotland at Pacific Quay and more needed in Edinburgh.

32. How might these kind of facilities be funded?
See Pinewood etc.

33. How might the public and private sector collaborate to ensure a sustainable approach to the development of such facilities?
SG funding will attract international investment.

34. How can we ensure the productions leave a positive legacy after filming?
Closer links with the University and training sector: film location tourism etc.

35. The need for more reliable data about the sector and how it might be collected.
How this information could be used to demonstrate the wider value for Scotland at a national and regional level.

See SBC report: need for a body to replicate for the whole sector, independent data on a template rather like OFCOM Scotland’s.

36. Examples where data could be used to foster improved relationships between different sectors and organisations.
The need to make the political and cultural case for better investment in the sector is urgent. Once achieved, more success like Outlander will bring rewards.

37. How can we ensure that the screen sector is seen as one of Scotland’s key economic drivers supporting a wide-range of sustainable creative businesses?
See 4.1 and 36 above.

Distribution, Exhibition and Audience Development

38. How can Scotland maximise the opportunities associated with proposed roll out of superfast broadband nationally?
Use broadband to find and nurture new talent.

Make Scottish cultural website for international audiences, allowing streaming of live events, festivals and downloading of contemporary and heritage Scottish content: via pay per view as well: eg John Gray’s documentary ‘West Highland’.

39. How can we ensure/promote the consumption and production of domestic content in the digital age?
Tell our stories to ourselves and then internationally, including the diaspora and others. Maximise the advantages already present in ‘Scotland the Brand’. Then develop and remake the brand.

40. What measures can be taken grow audiences and encourage participation in the sector more generally?

Make content which resonates with the audience.