

Written submission to the Scottish Parliament Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee meeting to be held on 24th February 2022

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The Royal Society of Edinburgh welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Committee based on the [RSE advice paper](#) presented to the committee in September 2021 when the committee was gathering evidence for the pre-budget scrutiny report.

We are pleased to see that so many of the points raised by ourselves and others have informed this Committee's action.

Importance of Arts and Culture

The sector has responded to the public health crisis with considerable resilience in many cases, adapting to new circumstances, online delivery and now the gradual return to live audience participation and the attendance of visitors in museums and galleries. Organisations such as the National Theatre for Scotland have seen audiences in the millions, for Scenes for Survival, a series of commissioned theatre pieces offering digital access to high quality original theatre online. Scottish Ballet have developed programmes supporting physical and mental health & wellbeing in partnership with the NHS and are now adapting this to provide corporate partners with solutions for staff wellbeing, and engagement to counter homeworking challenges. Similarly, the Celtic Connections festival held digitally in 2021 and part digital in 2022, has reached far more people than live in-person events with people tuning in to listen live from 60 countries¹. The public appetite for cultural activities has never been greater and the scale of entertainment that was adapted to be streamed into homes during lockdown, or efforts made to provide out of doors performances, such as those delivered by Scottish Opera, demonstrate how important cultural life is to our society.

There is no doubt that the funding from government has gone a long way to safeguard the jobs of those working in the sector, but the effects will not be fully understood for a while. A study by Oxford Economics estimated a UK wide loss of £12 billion in the Creative Industries in 2020 alone, with a loss of 112,700 jobs by the end of 2021. Scotland's creative sector is estimated to have lost £500m GVA (10.9%) due to the pandemic². Estimates for recovery show that, in the short term, there will be fewer jobs than before the pandemic and this effect will be most keenly felt by freelancers that are commissioned to create new work, or who are employed from time to time such as front of house staff, technicians, or those who are needed for seasonal work.

Recovery of Arts and Culture

Emergency Government funding has seen many arts and cultural organisations through the worst of the crisis but there is now the need to invest in the sector recovery. One of the most important elements of this is consistency of funding streams and funding stability e.g.

¹ Celtic Connections (2021) Celtic Connections online a huge success [online] Available at: <https://www.celticconnections.com/news/celtic-connections-online-a-huge-success/>

² Creative UK Group (2021) UK Creative Industries [online] Available at: <https://www.wearecreative.uk/champion/publications/>

providing 3-year funding commitments that will allow long term planning and an element of stability. Such stability affords the opportunity for cultural organisations to continue to develop their mixed funding model by leveraging private funding or grants from Trusts and foundations and operating commercial activities to provide extra income. Arts and Business Scotland has seen an increased uptake in their delivery of training programmes to the sector that help organisations to hone their business acumen and governance capabilities and take up new challenges (472 organisations from 30 of the 32 local authority areas have taken part in the last year).

This financial stability and mixed funding model are the bedrock of community based arts organisations and will allow the important cultural work that engages communities and contributes so much to wellbeing, to restart and resume a consistent and stable service.

The RSE working group suggested several potential avenues that Scottish Government could consider reinforcing such financial stability including:

- relief for business rates in the cultural sector.
- creating mechanisms that generate an additional continuous stream of funding for culture, e.g. a model similar to the National Investment Bank or the National Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Ensuring that existing funding streams work collaboratively.

Economic Recovery

The RSE supports the recommendations in the report of the Scottish Government's Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (The Higgins Report) which emphasises the important role of culture to support Scotland's economic recovery and recommends an increase in both public and private investment in the sector³. The current budget presents an opportunity to put such recommendations in action.

'Culture will play a definitive role in the recovery of our wellbeing, and it must be an intrinsic element of how Scotland is represented at home and abroad. The sector must be cultivated and nourished for the greater good.' (p. 3)

'The arts, culture and creative industries make an important and growing contribution to Scotland's economic and social capital. They create high quality, fulfilling jobs, which can be amplified through specialist apprenticeships, skills development and training. And they play an important role in Scotland's international offering as part of 'Brand Scotland'.' (p.50)

As Arts and Cultural organisations recover, so too is the recovery in local business and entrepreneurship. Creativity in business is more important than it has ever been and engaging with arts and cultural organisations helps businesses to attract and retain staff, to inspire employees leading to 'work with a purpose'. Scottish creativity and culture allow Scottish

³ Scottish Government (2020) Towards a robust, - resilient wellbeing economy for Scotland Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery, [online] Available at: <https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20210819165519/https://www.gov.scot/publications/towards-robust-resilient-wellbeing-economy-scotland-report-advisory-group-economic-recovery/documents/>

businesses to perform with the best in the world and this was the theme explored at the recent Arts and Business conference.

'There is a need for dynamic, open, forward-thinking leaders to steer business and public sector organisations through our collective challenges. The importance of embedding equalities, diversity, and inclusion within the culture of a business, and how innovative leaders should employ cultural engagement to achieve that aim has never been clearer.'

Louise Macdonald, Institute of Directors (IOD) Scotland

The Culture and Business fund (CBFS) provided by Scottish Government and managed by Arts and Business Scotland, encourages match funding for Businesses and the Arts to work together and has levered over £11 million pounds of investment into cultural activities in all 32 local authorities since 2006, providing significant business benefits in the process – from targeted marketing and accessing new clients and customers and building local community links, to supporting staff development, health and wellbeing. The programme has attracted an average of £1.21 of business investment for every £1 of grant funding awarded. The fund is currently oversubscribed as cultural organisations and businesses recognise the value of working together.

Mainstreaming and the Wider Benefits of Arts and Culture

The now 4 years-old Culture Strategy proposed an ambition to embed culture in all areas of government policy making, an aspect of the strategy that the RSE welcomed at the time.⁴ This has yet to become a reality and the current consultation provides an opportunity to reflect how this can be implemented. Connections with different policy projects such as the ongoing National Planning Framework 4 - which sets development plans to 2050 - or Scotland's aspiration to build a wellbeing economy should be more clearly defined as the Government reconsiders its support for culture.

There is now a well-established research base which proves that participation in culture provides several wellbeing and social benefits, at individual, community and national level. Some of this has been reported through the work of the EAIG group which commissioned research on the link between events and wellbeing⁵.

While national institutions and event organisers play an important role in this participation in culture, the essential role of local government in supporting cultural activity across Scotland, as highlighted in the 1990s in the first collaborative cross-industry Charter for the Arts,⁶ and their pivotal role in sustaining cultural life must not be undervalued. Local Authority funding is under severe pressure, but because participation and engagement with culture is delivered locally to so many people, it is important that local funding is maintained for Arts organisations up and down the country. Local community arts groups, in particular, have a

⁴ Royal Society of Edinburgh (2018) RSE Response to Scottish Government's Draft Culture Strategy for Scotland [online] Available at: <https://www.rse.org.uk/advice-papers/culture-strategy/>

⁵Wavehill Social and Economic Research (2021) The Contribution of Events to Scotland's Wellbeing Final Report June 2021 [online] Available at: <https://www.wavehill.com/single-post/building-a-wellbeing-economy>

⁶ Joyce McMillan (1993) The Charter for the Arts in Scotland, Edinburgh: HMSO.

significant and important role to play in delivering programmes on the ground throughout the Scottish local authority areas. They provide people of all backgrounds with equality of opportunity to create, participate and engage through cultural activities. These small charitable organisations are frequently underfunded, and their outcomes for wellbeing and other social benefits overlooked though some have been recognised in the SURF⁷, (Scotland's Regeneration Forum) awards eg. RIG ARTS at Greenock which won the award in 2021 and WHALE Arts in Wester Hailes which won in 2019. Their contribution was also highlighted in a recent report commissioned by Creative Scotland mapping health-focused arts projects across Scotland.⁸

Active support for cultural interventions has shown clear health and wellbeing benefits provided by participating in cultural activities, from reminiscence projects in museums, or tailored cultural activities for certain groups (e.g. dementia, Parkinsons)⁹. It is now the time to take this further and encourage new collaborations with funding incentives between local cultural organisations, youth projects and health interventions etc. which would undoubtedly have significant measurable health and wellbeing outcomes.

The RSE working group suggested several potential avenues that Scottish Government could consider to reinforce such mainstreaming including:

- encouraging third sector and public sector organisations to include a culture/creative industries professional on their boards.
- create a dedicated incentive fund to support collaboration that enable organisations to provide shared services and address common problems.

Digital and Hybrid Working

Many people across Scotland engaged in cultural activities digitally during lockdown and we believe this experience is likely to leave a long-term mark on both cultural providers and consumers. Cultural providers who have experienced unpredicted levels of engagement will want to maintain such high audience numbers as they resume activities. Moreover, such cultural activity has proven successful in attracting people who were unable to engage in cultural activities for different reasons. In this sense, supporting the sector develop its digital provision can successfully address well-known problems related to the accessibility of cultural activities for disabled people, people suffering from mental health issues, as well as for people who are economically disadvantaged. Yet, the reports mentioned here and evidence recorded from the RSE fellowship, shows that the experience of in-person events are highly valued as we can see from returning audiences. We are thus looking at a future for hybrid models of culture.

⁷ Surf Awards (no data) Scotland's Regeneration Forum Awards [online] Available at: www.surf.scot/surf-awards/

⁸ Creative Scotland (2021) Mapping of Arts and Health Provision [online] Available at: https://www.creativescotland.com/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/89986/Creative-Scotland-Arts-and-Health-Mapping-Report.pdf

⁹ A growing body of research often commissioned by charities exists on this, with Scottish examples such as the Scottish Ballet's Dance for Parkinson programme or Unlock and Revive project which brings together several culture and heritage organisations and universities that have provided digital cultural experiences for people with dementia. <https://weebreaks.com/unlock-revive-events-2021/>

In this landscape, it is important that Scottish Government assistance is geared towards both supporting the necessary material infrastructural changes as well as the development of digital channels so that cultural organisations (both public and private) can provide high-quality hybrid experiences.

The RSE working group suggested several potential avenues that Scottish Government could consider to assist with digital delivery including:

- As Skills Development Scotland¹⁰ have reported, there are significant gaps in digital skills uptake across the cultural sector that the Scottish Government could usefully address by linking culture and education agendas further.
- Supporting arts and culture professionals through upskilling and reskilling will be necessary to ensure high quality cultural offers for this new hybrid model of operation in the sector.
- The Scottish Government should also support organisations to address challenges related to intellectual property as well as the availability of digital platforms, as there are not many benign platforms available to host cultural productions.

¹⁰ Skills Development Scotland (2021) Sectoral Skills Assessments – Creative Industries [online] Available at: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/46048/ssa-creative-industries.pdf>