

Built Environment Forum Scotland Submission to Inquiry into Budget Scrutiny 2024:25: Funding or Culture

Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) is the umbrella body for organisations working in the built environment in Scotland. Drawing on extensive expertise in a Membership-led forum, BEFS informs, debates and advocates on the strategic issues, opportunities and challenges facing Scotland's existing built environment. BEFS is a supporting member of the [Climate Heritage Network](#).

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Other relevant consultation responses from BEFS can be seen below, as many issues overlap and demand associative consideration:

BUDGET SCRUTINY 2023-24: FUNDING FOR CULTURE CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE (22/08/2022)

As well as:

- <https://www.befs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BEFS-Culture-Funding.pdf>
- <https://www.befs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/BEFS-AGER-Response.pdf>

BEFS was also involved in the National Partnership for Culture workshops which took place in 2021. The reports from these are commended to the committee as extremely relevant for informing future actions, and meeting challenges, as outlined by the cultural-heritage sector.

- <https://www.gov.scot/groups/national-partnership-for-culture/> - and especially
- <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-partnership-for-culture-workshop-4-measuring-change-workshop-report/>

BEFS worked with Creative Edinburgh, Creative Lives, Go Industrial, Museums Association, Regional Screen Scotland, Scottish Contemporary Art Network, Scottish Council on Archives, and West of Scotland Regional Equality Council on a project led by Museums Galleries Scotland to form a Cultural Manifesto for the Local Government Elections. The manifesto demonstrates both the value of Culture & Heritage, but also sets out the asks needed to support cultural-heritage from a Local Government perspective.

- <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/media/2698/culture-and-heritage-a-manifesto-for-local-government.pdf>

Questions - numbers as relating to the online process:

8. In our pre-budget report last year, the Committee described the operating environment of the culture sector as facing a “perfect storm” of long-term budget pressures, reduced income generation, and increased operating costs. How has this evolved over the last 12 months? What impact has the Budget for 2023-24 had on the culture sector?

The cuts across the cultural heritage sector brought continued uncertainty in times when the cost-of-living crises drove organisational (and personal) costs.

As we stated in our [blog](#) assessing the budget more widely:

the modest increases for HES sit within a wider portfolio facing at best economic stasis (and real-terms cuts), and at worst a raft of significant budget reductions – from Creative Scotland, across Cultural Collections, to the National Records of Scotland. These cuts come in the context of the Government response to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee scrutiny, “the Budget maintains funding for the culture sector into 2023-24. The Government will consider

setting multi-year planning figures for cultural organisations within the increased fiscal challenges presented by the UK Government's Autumn Statement. (p29)

The statement above that this budget “*maintains funding for the cultural sector into 2023-2024*” will be seen by many as stretching reality to breaking point. A significant uplift within the portfolio for Migration Services, and some Major Events in the coming year (sporting), as well as HES' increase are the only potential positives in a portfolio which ultimately sees an overall reduction of more than 6%. (Sitting within the Finance & Economy portfolio we note that Tourism spending plans reduce slightly; perhaps reflecting both the level of current uncertainty, and the need for uplift in other areas.)”

The note from the government that there will be “consideration” for setting multi-year figures could be seen as too little, too late. When failing to provide multi-year funding for agencies and NDPB's there is a trickle-down failure to provide security for the plethora of smaller organisations providing cultural-heritage services, experiences, and events – across the whole of Scotland.

The importance of examining the budget is not just to look at what is within the cultural portfolio - but to understand how our cultural heritage can be eroded through a lack of investment in data, in planning, and in regeneration; many of the aspects that help to support genuine place-based approaches.

From BEFS blog assessing the budget:

The Planning Budget's decrease on 2022-2023 figures seems exceptionally disappointing in the face of the continued and sustained activity in this area, particularly the forthcoming delivery of the National Planning Framework 4. This decrease can be meaningfully put within the context given by RTPi Scotland's research briefing, [Resourcing the Planning Service](#) (updated December 2022).

A significant increase in the Registers of Scotland budget is positive, but all uplift appears to be Capital specific to the Moveable Transactions Bill and developing the two registers that underpin that work. This does not suggest that further (necessary) development of access to building data (such as through ScotLIS) will progress in the timeframes many of us would advocate. Without access to data about our existing housing stock, delivering net zero will be an almost impossible task.

The continued increase in Cities & Investment Strategy is a positive sign if applied meaningfully across Scotland's places. An increase is also seen in this budget for City Region and Growth Deals in Local Authority budgets, rising from £7.2M last year to £12.7M for the coming year. These increases may be balanced by a substantial reduction in the Regeneration Budget from £96.4M for 2022 to £59.2M, the description provided of “Reduction due to changing spend profiles of programmes/projects” sounds euphemistic at best.

An area not previously examined within BEFS brief budget analysis statements has been the position of the Scottish Funding Council and the Skills & Training budgets. Attention has been focused here recently, not just due to the needs in relation to skills necessary to maintain our existing buildings (and make them stronger contributors to net-zero); but also from the ‘culture wars’ in England putting pressure on courses (of all kinds) which are not perceived to be as beneficial in terms of either their cost/entry numbers, or graduate employment prospects (often judged by salary). Both budget lines don't necessarily paint a positive picture. Scottish Funding Council receives only a 2% increase, and the total Skills & Training budget reduces by 3.6%, with Skills Development Scotland (within that total) facing a 4.3% cut.

Additionally, the dangling sword of the rationalisation of Local Authority estates will impact many of our places, affecting buildings and services which provide both heritage (in and of themselves) and spaces for cultural activities. If lost it seems unlikely these can be resourced again.

Lack of certainty around funding, and increased costs for organisations also mean that hiring becomes ever more difficult. If major retailers can offer better income potential for staff, then why would short term contracts, in precarious organisations be appealing when personal costs are rising?

The SPICe Briefing on [Trends in Funding for Culture](#) clearly lays out the

long-term trend of reducing real terms spend on culture in some areas of Scottish Government funding and local government.

BEFS previously noted that:

the Resource Spending Review has raised many concerns as to what future support (and financial resource) may be available to the cultural-heritage sector.

Reconsideration of the public body landscape, and the resultant potential impact on all our places, raises further concerns for the future.

The multi-year estates programme, to make use of property and assets has the potential for benefits, but as heritage is not reflected within net-zero budgets, this programme could fail to harness skilled, long-term, employment opportunities, as well as failing to take into account the embodied energy (and potential) in our existing estate sites.

BEFS 2021 response to the committee (linked above) remains relevant. We then stated:

There needs to be a greater understanding across Scottish Government directorates of what cultural heritage can deliver; exploring a cultural capital approach. Supporting early years cultural heritage interventions makes future champions for cultural heritage - and supports a more sustainable future; as well as greater wellbeing, and skills development for those involved. BEFS will continue to highlight that the traditional skills are as essential to delivering net zero as they are to maintaining our cultural heritage.

BEFS concludes that the state of uncertainty for our cultural-heritage continues year-on-year because of the uncertainty of how our places can be supported through planning, tourism, culture, regeneration, and the very data we need, to plan for the future.

9. Our report also concluded that that this crisis provides an opportunity to accelerate innovative solutions to the budgetary pressures within the sector. What progress has been made on this in the last 12 months? And at a time of limited resources, what other innovative approaches could the Scottish Government take forward to support the culture sector?

At a time of limited resource may of the aspects the sector has been calling for could be supported to provide greater stability, ensuring skills stay within the sector and services are maintained for the future.

This could include:

Further supporting the priorities for the new [Strategy for the Historic Environment – Our Past, Our Future](#):

- Promoting the integration of the historic environment in key government policy initiatives across the national performance framework as part of a holistic national response to national priorities
- Supporting innovation, including in business operating models, and helping the sector to support itself better by enabling partnering, including dedicated practical support that provides expertise to smaller organisations.
- Increasing funding aimed at repair and retrofit of historic buildings and corresponding investment in skills pipeline to enable delivery

As well as

- Recognising/promoting the ongoing need for capital maintenance of traditionally built stock across all sectors over the coming decades that is likely to expand rather than shrink

Further work on the data known about our places could well support both heritage interests and the warmer homes so desperately needed across Scotland. For more information about what could be possible please see: [ScotLIS 3: A Critical Tool for Scotland](#).

Further innovative solutions were made previously in the **National Partnership for Culture Workshop 3 – Culture and Education** report, these included:

- *create more long-term cross-portfolio funding opportunities, which will in turn bring better partnership working and more sustainable funding. Consideration should also be given to place-based long term funding models which would increase access to opportunities and improve life chances of individuals in communities.*
- *build and develop better coordination and collaboration between the culture sector, local authorities and communities to provide local authorities with an improved understanding of local cultural initiatives. This would support an enhanced understanding of actions that would be beneficial in the context of local schools and community learning.*
- *create national or regional standardised funding requirements and evaluation to deliver more streamlined sets of data. This could help the sector to identify and share good practice, and work to make the reporting a more efficient process.*
- *ensure that career initiatives, such as the Developing the Young Workforce, are further supporting careers guidance which provides examples concerning careers in culture and the creative industries*

Moreover the report from the **National Partnership for Culture [Workshop 4 - measuring change](#)** – is commended to the committee in full.

Without knowing more about our cultural-heritage – the workforce, the needs, the places themselves - we will not be able to make robust, sustainable plans for the future. The gathering, sharing, and assessing of what we know, what we need to know, and how we use that information will be central to innovative solutions to sustain cultural-heritage for the future.

The main ideas on how to move forward were [but BEFS reiterates that the Measuring Change report in full is of value]:

- *a scaled-up version of the omnibus survey from Creative Scotland that it is multiagency and provides a single source which can be shared*
- *a centralised reporting system that is completed once rather than continuous reporting to multiple organisations*
- *a cultural observatory and who would own this centrally*

Tentative steps have been taken with a [Tourism Observatory](#), but a wider cultural approach would do well to inform both Scotland's needs, and the needs of visitors.

However, with so many competing pressures, and so much uncertainty around cost-of-living, energy prices, inflation, and the continuing war in Ukraine, how the implications of these budget decisions will also enable communities and our existing places to flourish, as well as enable the rich cultural lives and experiences which are often touted as being integral to life *within* Scotland, and an attraction *to* Scotland, will remain to be seen.

The drive for innovation (and revenue raising), appears to fail to take into account the additional resource needed for such innovation; particularly at a time when all budgets seem increasingly squeezed. Innovation may have long term gains, but it comes at a cost; a cost often borne by organisations of all sizes as they attempt to deliver and adapt and innovate all with limited resources and dwindling capacity.

10. The Committee called for the forthcoming refreshed Culture Strategy Action Plan to provide a clear and strategic sense of how the Scottish Government is working to ensure a more sustainable future for the sector. How should the refreshed Culture Strategy Action Plan help to inform future budgetary decisions within the culture sector?

BEFS questions whether another Strategy or Action Plan needs to be formed (or refreshed as it is phrased here), and whether the strategies within the sector could instead be supported to deliver effectively.

The Culture Strategy as it stands speaks to a different time, with different pressures, different benefits, and a different social and economic outlook. What is needed is a mechanism that can leverage action for delivery and collaboration.

Over previous years BEFS have noted that strategies continue to be produced, often without delivery plans and mechanisms, costings, or acknowledged inter-connection (or understanding of hierarchy) between them.

How cultural-heritage can, and does, deliver across the policy spectrum is not fully articulated in Scotland's NPF. From health and wellbeing benefits to our existing built environment. Our heritage assets (of all types and ages) can, and do, contribute positively towards net zero; as do traditional skills which not only enhance our places, but enable the provision of warm homes and long-term, skilled, employment opportunities. These - and many aspects of health and wellbeing - are only some examples which are not yet fully- joined across policy and budgetary areas.

Full list of links within this paper:

- <https://www.befs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Culture-Budget-Scrutiny-BEFS.pdf>
- <https://www.befs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BEFS-Culture-Funding.pdf>
- <https://www.befs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/BEFS-AGER-Response.pdf>
- <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/media/2698/culture-and-heritage-a-manifesto-for-local-government.pdf>
- <https://www.befs.org.uk/latest/news/scottishgovernmentbudget2324/>
- <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/13335/resourcing-the-planning-system-key-trends-and-findings-2022.pdf>
- https://spice-spotlight.scot/2023/06/12/trends-in-funding-for-culture/?mc_cid=56b534aea4
- <https://www.befs.org.uk/resources/publications/scotlis-3-a-critical-tool-for-scotland/>

- <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-partnership-for-culture-workshop-4-measuring-change-workshop-report/>
 - <https://tourismobservatory.scot/>
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