

Cross-Party Group on Music

10 December, 2024, 6pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Michelle Thomson (Convenor)

Claire Baker

Liz Smith

Clare Adamson

Invited guests

Rolling Hills Choir

Loud and Proud Choir

Non-MSP Group Members

- Paul MacAlinden (Glasgow Barons), Donald MacLeod (Holdfast), Graeme Smillie (MEPG), Alison Reeves (Making Music), Adam Behr (Univ. of Newcastle), Steena Tweeddale (Music Venues Trust), Aja Garrod-Prance (SMIA), Alan Morrison (Creative Scotland), Morag Macdonald (Creative Scotland), Robert Baxter (St Mary's Music School), Lisa Whytock (Active/Showcase Scotland), Jenna Main (ABRSM), James Bajgar (Music Broth), David Francis (Traditional Music Forum)

Apologies

Caroline Farren (EIS), Kirsteen Davidson Kelly (NYOS), Neil Fox (NYOS), Stuart Fleming (PRS), Alan Midwinter (Forget Me Notes), Jenny Jamison (National Music Centre), David Nicholson, Caroline Sewell (MU), Ailsa Macintosh (BBC), Carol Main (Live Music Now Scotland), Iona Fyfe

The Convenor noted Carol Main's changing role within LMNS and thanked her for her contribution to the CPG over the years, and congratulated Iona Fyfe on her recent election as Rector of Aberdeen University.

Annual General Meeting

Election of Office Bearers

Convenor: Michelle Thomson (prop. Liz Smith, sec. Claire Baker)

Vice-Convenor: Claire Baker (prop. Michelle Thomson, sec. Liz Smith)

Michelle Thomson and Claire Baker were duly elected nem.con.

Secretariat: David Francis indicated that he would be standing down. It was proposed and accepted that the Traditional Music Forum would continue as the secretariat to the CPG, the position to be reviewed depending on the appointment of a new TMF Director. Michelle Thomson thanked David Francis for his work as secretary for the CPG since its inception.

Action Points:

1. Michelle Thomson to seek clarity on the rationale for the £51k threshold on business rates relief
2. CPG to write to Angus Robertson and ask him to help clarify questions around the General Product Safety Regulations
3. Invite UK Music and/or Live Music UK to a future CPG
4. Schedule longer session on AI with invited speakers

Performance by the Rolling Hills Choir

Agenda item 1

Scottish Budget Outcomes

DF outlined the main outcomes for Culture in the Scottish Budget (£34m additional for culture, £22m for maintenance projects, uplifts for Screen Scotland, Sistema, YMI, Festivals Expo, and the reinstatement of Culture Collective. The increased funding had been hailed by Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Angus Robertson, as 'a foundational change'. The unfreezing of Council Tax was also welcome as it might release some local authority funding for culture. However, gains had to be set against more negative developments such as the increase in National Insurance. DF expressed concern about the Cab Sec's wish to double the number of RFOs, which would mean that few would receive the funds they had planned for, despite the increase in the Multi-Year Funding pot. The outcome might be constrained ambitions and 'equal misery for all'.

Donald MacLeod said that the Night Time Industries Association and other entertainment and hospitality groups were disappointed that there was to be no rates relief for very many businesses, as rates relief would not apply to premises with a rateable value above £51k. Many grass roots music venues were rated above this threshold despite the fact that their capacity might not be very large. The lack of relief and the NI increase were a double blow, and he predicted that the outcome will be the closure of a number of venues. It had been hoped that this budget would offer more help to those businesses that got no help during Covid.

Steena Tweeddale seconded DMacL's point on rates relief, and cited examples of small venues with rateable values over £100k, despite the fact that their capacity was only 200.

Lisa Whytock thanked Angus Robertson for his efforts in fighting for culture in the current budget round.

MT offered to investigate the rationale for £51k threshold.

Agenda item 2

a) General Product Safety Regulations

LW noted that the introduction of these regulations, which required certifiable safety checks and labels on goods such as CDs, vinyl, T shirts, mugs and other merchandise exported to the EU and Northern Ireland, had not been foreseen by most people in the music business. This development was being seen as another obstacle at a time when the majority of artists are struggling to make live appearances profitable when the vast majority has already seen revenues from recorded music disappear. The regulations come into effect on December 13 which has left very little time to address a number of questions: do the regulations apply to products manufactured or sold before December 13; are artists manufacturers or distributors? Artists are stopping shipping in the meantime and with Christmas a short time away, the timing of this could not have been worse.

What can be done to mitigate the effect of these regulations?

MT The CPG will write to Angus Robertson and ask him to clarify questions with the UK Government.

LW Ideally there would be an exclusion for artists, and perhaps Westminster could be lobbied with this in mind.

MT It would be helpful in cases like these which are reserved to Westminster to have a stronger relationship with UK Music and Live Music UK.

b) CISAC Report on Impact of Generative AI on Music and Audio-Visual Industries

DF summarised the results of a global survey on the effect for musicians of unregulated Generative Artificial Intelligence. Generative AI uses existing content for its machine learning algorithms, which copyright issues as much of the learning is done using unauthorised source material. AI is already having an effect on incomes from streaming platforms and from music libraries, which means that artists are losing out in two areas where revenues had previously been sourced. The report estimates a loss of around 24% of current creators' revenues by 2028, predicting that 'growth will cannibalise the value of traditional human-made works'.

Adam Behr. The problem is that the response of AI today is the worst it will ever be. The trajectory is one of continuous development. In the US efforts are being made through the courts to disclose what AI has been trained on if there are suspicions that copyright has been infringed.

DMacL The other problem is that developments are moving so fast that regulation can neither anticipate nor keep up.

MT The upside is that people will still seek out live music and authentic human experience.

LW We have to acknowledge that AI is here and that what we need to do is to empower artists to understand it better and how to safeguard their intellectual property.

MT This topic almost requires a meeting devoted to it. CPG would invite expert speakers such as Kayla-Megan Burns (RSNO Board) and Dougal Perman (Inner Ear) to lead a more thorough discussion.

Agenda item 3

Music Education

Graeme Smillie reported that the We Make Music schools kitemark is gaining traction with a number of schools recently awarded Gold and Bronze accreditation. The Scottish Young Musicians competition now has participation from almost every local authority. The final will take place as usual in May. Instrument Libraries are expanding. MEPG is currently developing as part of its overall strategy a plan for bringing together formal and non-formal sectors in a more fundamental way. Finally, research is continuing on the impact of the removal by the current Scottish Parliament of fees for instrumental tuition.

Alison Reeves. The work on the non-formal sector is particularly important for developing pathways for young people into lifelong music-making as well as pathways into a career in music.

Agenda item 4

Music Venues Update

Steena Tweeddale reported that the Culture, Media and Sport Committee at Westminster had declared that the much discussed ticket levy was necessary and that it was up to the industry to decide what happens next. The Committee is minded to propose that the levy will become mandatory if it doesn't happen within a reasonable time frame. The Music Venues Trust's preference is that the levy is taken forward at a UK level, that is not within the remit of the devolved administrations. However, having said that MVT would like to see the scheme promoted in Glasgow at an early stage and would want to ensure that Scotland gets a fair share of the distribution.

DMacL The Concert Promoters' Association is proposing the setting up of a charitable trust for receipt of any revenues from the levy.

LW would like to see further discussion of the impact in Scotland. She is not necessarily comfortable that any scheme would be operated as a UK wide initiative. The distinctiveness of the music industry in Scotland might demand a different approach.

DMacL Anything that happens in England should be replicated here. Fairness of distribution is key.

DONM

Date in March to be confirmed.

Performance by the Loud and Proud choir and close.