

Cross-Party Group on Music

13 December, 2023, 6pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Michelle Thomson (Convenor), Claire Baker, Liam Kerr, Clare Adamson

Non-MSP Group Members

Matt Brennan (Glasgow University), Adam Behr (Newcastle University), John Wallace (MEPG), Anne Keenan (EIS), Kate Aitken (St Mary's Music School), Kirsteen Kelly (NYOS), Oliver Melling (Music Venues Trust), Alan Midwinter (Forget Me Notes), Carol Main (Live Music Now Scotland), Jen O'Brien (Music Broth), Alistair Mackie (RSNO), Ailsa Macintosh (BBC), Mae Murray (MEPG), Iona Fyfe, Alan Morrison (Creative Scotland), James Cunningham (HITS), Robert Kilpatrick (SMIA)

In attendance: Laura Murtagh, Diane McIntyre, Music was provided by Alena Bulatetskaya (classical accordion) and Moteh Parrott (vox/guitar), both musicians representing Live Music Now Scotland

Apologies

David Francis (Traditional Music Forum), Pauline McNeill MSP, Paul Sullivan (Sistema Scotland), Stuart Fleming (PRS for Music), Matthew Whiteside (The Night With), Trish Strain (EIS), Jenna Main (ABRSM), Paul MacAlindin (Glasgow Barons)

1. AGM

Liam Kerr took the chair

a) Election of Office Bearers

Convenor: Michelle Thomson

Vice-Convenor: Claire Baker

Vice-Convenor: Liam Kerr

Secretariat: David Francis (Traditional Music Forum)

2. BBC Update

Ailsa Macintosh: The BBC has announced a new Audio Hub for Scotland and Northern Ireland, a new multi-million pound radio network which will mean more network radio produced in Scotland and NI. The programmes will be from across genres, with Scotland making The World Book Club for the World Service, episodes of Radio 4's Front Row and Loose Ends, and is commissioned to produce Radio 3's jazz record requests programme, bringing more jazz content back to Radio Scotland. The first Radio Scotland Young Jazz Musician of the Year was won by Ben Shankland. Entries for the Young Classical Musician are open until January 17.

More details will appear soon about the level of investment, which will open up job opportunities.

Michelle Thomson: Any reflections on outreach?

AM: Despite the recent announcement of a licence fee rise there will still have to be cuts which will impact on content and content budgets. That should be set in the context of digital, the drive to go to where audiences are, particularly young audiences. However, the hub announcement means that Scotland will get the benefit of the cross-UK investment policy.

3. Music Broth

Jen O'Brien: Music Broth is a music instrument and equipment library, a social enterprise based in Govanhill founded in 2017. It restores and repairs every kind of musical instrument and makes them available to anyone who requests them. Parts are extensively recycled and upcycled. The space is used as a community hub, providing a sociable setting. The library is complemented by a workshop programme. Projects include an access one for girls, Girls Rock Glasgow, the Jam Project, a short-term music making project focused on the Roma community, Mishwar, a percussion project in a refugee camp in Lebanon, New Scots, working with the Scottish Refugee Council to provide musical instruments. Support for musicians includes rehearsal space and equipment for gigs. Music Broth aims to have a real social impact, giving opportunities to volunteers, and people recovering from various issues.

Clare Adamson: Is Music Broth an SQA-accredited provider? If not happy to support that.

4. A Just and Green Future for Music Cities

Matt Brennan: Looking at two identities of Glasgow, Unesco City of Music, and as host of COP26 which brought an aspiration to become a net zero city, two aspirations which are not generally found in other Unesco Cities of Music. Although the two identities are similar in that they both lack resource, there is a possibility for them to influence each other (as we have seen with Music Broth).

The doughnut economy model proposes the idea that between the constraints of a minimum social foundation and the limits of what the planet can provide which we cannot exceed without damage, there is a safe and just space for all. What would a music doughnut look like? It would be a 'sustainable system for musical life that contributes to a social foundation of well being that no one should fall below, while respecting the ecological ceiling of planetary pressure that we should not go beyond. Between the two lies a safe and just musical space for all.' What does just and green mean in the context of music? It could mean the music industry as a fairer place to work with more emphasis on co-operation and collaboration in facing its challenges; and it could mean that the music sector as a whole could be of use in positively influencing discourse around public behaviour and policy, while finding ways to reduce its own carbon footprint in a way that allows musical activity to flourish as a form of meaningful work promoting resilience and non-carbon dependence.

Practical work in Glasgow has included a website launched in 2022, a mapping project of sustainability and arguing for the role of music in the city's net-zero transition strategy.

Although culture funding is scarce there are funds available for areas like well-being and sustainability, and music needs to be represented in these areas making the case for how it can help to meet their goals.

Alan Midwinter: Any mapping in relation to health and life expectancy where people have access to music?

MB: Not as such, but we know that we can. Some of the other mapping done also stands as a proof of concept.

CA: What impact could this thinking have on musicians touring to Glasgow? What kind of step-change would make a difference?

MB: Musicians need to move around, and there has to be cultural exchange, but do we need to move as much equipment around when it can be hired here (as Music Broth does)? Such a move would require a consensus from venues and a cohort of musicians.

Oliver Melling: MVT was recently invited to a meeting on the topic of the safety of women on public transport. Rather than going into the kind of cross-cutting situations described and looking for money we should first be looking at how we can co-operate on finding solutions – something that the CPG can model.

MT: Is there a role for AI in using the data being collected in bringing new insights?

MB: It'll make the data easier to collect and organise.

5. Music Education

John Wallace: The Music Education Policy Group Symposium was held this year in Scotland and met the Convenor.

We Make Schools and Libraries continue to expand and flourish.

Continue to work with Scottish Government on their music education agenda post the numerous recent reports.

Free instrumental tuition and GTCS registration for music instructors are somewhat stuck at the moment due to the pressure of other events.

School concert season – school halls throughout the country are filled with music-making and audiences enjoying it in these dark months.

James Cunningham: The Improvement Service report for 22-23 shows record numbers of young people making music in local authority schools. Numbers have rebounded strongly post-pandemic. Despite that not everyone who wants to learn can – two out of three in primary schools are not getting the opportunity. Staff numbers are not keeping up with the demand that is there, and the cost of delivering services is steadily rising, largely due to inflation and teachers' pay settlements.

Anne Keenan: Would echo the comments about the stalling of manifesto commitments which is affecting confidence in the security of employment among instructors and confidence among young people that their chosen path in learning an instrument will be able to continue. Any Parliamentary support in helping to ensure these manifesto commitments are realised would be very helpful.

MT: Unfortunately the UK Treasury since 2008 doesn't allow for anything other than annual budgets, which has a knock-on to Scotland and then to local authorities. The Scottish Government works on a fixed budget so is limited on what it can do.

AK: An important issue though is the mainstreaming of instrumental music tuition, a core element of the curriculum. If that were to happen it wouldn't be seen as an add-on and subject to these annual constraints.

AM: The case for the educational advantages of participation in music has been made many times.

JW: The coming educational reforms present an opportunity to put music education at the centre of the curriculum, especially at senior level where personal pathways and project learning will come into play.

7. Other Business

- a) Carol Main: Holyrood Insight conferences often seem to neglect the arts and culture as a factor in their policy discussions, e.g. recently on mental health, and on dementia. Is there a way of addressing this?

MT: Action Point: Will write to the people responsible

- b) Congratulations to Iona Fyfe on winning Scots Singer of the Year at the recent Scots Trad Music Awards
- c) Lower Brass – Kate Aitken: Every year St Mary’s holds the Nigel Murray Masterclass, a day of talks and workshops specifically for St Mary’s pupils. The plan is to open out the Nigel Murray day on lower brass instruments to young musicians anywhere in Scotland free of charge. There will be one day in Edinburgh and one in Elgin on 24 and 25 February.