Local Government and Communities Committee

Planning (Scotland) Bill

Submission from Incorporated Society of Musicians

1. Introduction and background

This is a short response from the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) to the consultation launched by the Scottish Parliament’s Local Government and Communities Committee on Friday 15 December 2017 titled Call for Evidence on the Planning (Scotland) Bill.

The ISM is the professional body for performers, composers, song-writers and music educators. Founded in 1882, we support our growing membership of nearly 8,500 professional musicians with one-to-one legal advice and professional support alongside independent advocacy and policy development.

The ISM supports the introduction of the agent of change principle into planning law in Scotland in order to protect music venues.

2. The music industry matters

Live music venues in the UK are an important part of the UK’s creative industries, which are worth £91.8 billion a year and are growing at twice the rate of the rest of the economy.¹ Music contributes £4.4 billion of this.²

Music venues are vital to the Scottish economy – they’re incubators for future headline acts and generate £334 million to the Scottish tourism economy – up 13% since 2015. Music tourists spent a total of £199 million in Scotland – £126 million on concerts and £73 million on festivals.³

UK Music’s Wish You Were Here 2017 economic study shows an enormous 31% rise in the number of music tourists attending festivals and gigs - with 1.2 million fans attending live music events north of the Border.⁴

3. Live music venues matter but are at risk

Music venues underpin the success of the creative industries; they are a crucial pipeline of talent and make a sizable contribution to our culture and our economy. Venues bring pleasure to millions every day and smaller venues act as a route through which musicians, including those just starting out, gain experience and earn a living.⁵

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¹ Creative industries’ record contribution to UK economy, DCMS, 2017
² UK Music Measuring Music report 2016
³ UK Music, Wish you were here report 2017
⁴ UK Music, Wish you were here report 2017
⁵ The Guardian, Hannah Ellis-Petersen, UK music industry gets boost from 12% rise in audiences at live events Mon 10 Jul 2017
35% of grassroots live music venues have closed in the last decade. Noise complaints are a significant factor behind this decline.

For example, Edinburgh's Studio 24 music venue closed its doors after 22 years, with the club's owners citing noise complaints as the reason behind the closure.

Existing planning laws enable residential developments to be built next to existing music venues without requiring the developer to account for existing businesses; this can lead to noise complaints and to restrictions being placed on venues by local authorities.

The cost of sound proofing can be significant for small venues and restrictions can lead to closure.

4. Conclusion

We support the agent of change proposals which will protect music venues and ensure that the responsibility for accounting for sound generated by existing buildings falls on developers rather than on music venues.

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6 Ministers back law to protect grassroots live music venues from developers, The News, Andrew Sherwin, 18 January 2018
7 The Conversation, Marion Roberts, Agent of Change’ protects music venues from noise complaints, but won’t stop them from closing, 29 January 2018
8 STV News, Chris Foote, Studio 24 music venue to close after 'noise complaints', 19 May 2017