OFFICIAL REPORT
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Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee

Thursday 25 May 2017

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CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
14th Meeting 2017, Session 5

CONVENER

*Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con)
*Mairi Evans (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)
*Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP)
*Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
*Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Tim Ellis (National Records of Scotland)
Sir John Leighton (National Galleries Scotland)
Joanne Orr (Museums Galleries Scotland)
Dr Gordon Rintoul (National Museums Scotland)
Dr John Scally (National Library of Scotland)
Pamela Tulloch (Scottish Library and Information Council)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Katy Orr

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee

Thursday 25 May 2017

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:34]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Joan McAlpine): Good morning and welcome to the 14th meeting in 2017 of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee. I remind members and the public to turn off their mobile phones, and any members using electronic devices to access committee papers during the meeting should ensure that they are switched to silent.

Everyone will be aware of the tragic events that occurred in Manchester earlier this week. As a mark of respect, the Parliament will hold a minute's silence at 11 am. If we are still in public session, I will suspend the meeting shortly before 11 o'clock and resume proceedings after the minute's silence.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on whether to take agenda item 3 in private. Are members content to do so?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Scottish Collections

09:35

The Convener: Agenda item 2 is an overview session on Scottish collections, in which we will hear from representatives from Scotland's four national collections as well as from two supporting bodies.

I welcome our witnesses to the meeting. Perhaps it would be best if we went round the table and introduced ourselves. I am the committee's convener.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): I am a North East Scotland MSP and the committee's deputy convener.

Joanne Orr (Museums Galleries Scotland): I am the chief executive of Museums Galleries Scotland.

Mairi Evans (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I am the MSP for Angus North and Mearns.

Pamela Tulloch (Scottish Library and Information Council): I am the chief executive of the Scottish Library and Information Council.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): I am the MSP for Moray.

Tim Ellis (National Records of Scotland): I am the chief executive of the National Records of Scotland.

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): I am the MSP for Eastwood.

Dr John Scally (National Library of Scotland): I am the national librarian and chief executive of the National Library of Scotland.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I am the MSP for Shetland Islands—and I spend far too much time in most of your organisations.

Dr Gordon Rintoul (National Museums Scotland): That is good to hear. I am the director of National Museums Scotland.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I am a West Scotland MSP.

Sir John Leighton (National Galleries Scotland): I am the director general of National Galleries Scotland.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I am the MSP for Greenock and Inverclyde.

The Convener: Thank you. I now invite our witnesses to make brief opening statements of, say, two minutes. I will start to my left with Sir John Leighton.

Sir John Leighton: Thank you, convener, and I also thank the committee for the invitation to be here this morning.

I would like to make three points very briefly, if I may. First, like the other organisations represented this morning, National Galleries Scotland plays a very successful part in Scotland's cultural life; it is also a powerful international brand. We are fortunate to look after one of the finest collections of art that you will find anywhere in the world, including the world's most important collection of Scottish art, which we show in an international context.

We share the collection with a growing audience locally, nationally and internationally. Last year, there were 2.4 million visits to National Galleries Scotland's sites in Edinburgh, which is a 10 per cent increase on the year before.

We work increasingly with organisations around Scotland to share ownership of the collection and to make it as widely available as possible across the country through our loans, displays and outreach activities, and we lend—and indeed borrow—objects from all over the world. Last year, we had a highly successful exhibition in America and Australia and, as we speak, an exhibition that we and Historic Environment Scotland are holding in Nanjing, China is attracting many thousands of visitors.

Digital engagement has become an increasingly important part of the way in which we operate. There are some 2 million visits each year to our website, and we have plans in place to digitise the entire collection and make it available online by 2020.

The second point that I would like to make is that, although we are committed to cultural excellence, we feel that our contribution extends into many areas of life in Scotland. We are proud of our contribution to the economy, with the economic impact of the galleries estimated to be in excess of £121 million a year. We are proud of our contribution to education and learning, with more than 30,000 visits from schools and higher education every year and as many participants in a range of adult programmes. We are proud of our contribution to health and wellbeing with, for example, innovative programmes for people with special needs. I could also go on about the work that we do to help young people into employment, but I think that you get the point that art and culture seep into many areas of life.

My third and final point is that the galleries form an ambitious and forward-looking organisation, and we have great plans for further investment in the infrastructure for the collections, including, for example, the refurbishment plans for the Scottish national gallery in the centre of Edinburgh or the plans to create in Granton in north Edinburgh a new facility for the intellectual and physical distribution of the collections, which represents a regeneration project in a deprived community. We also invest in partners, and we are working with various partner organisations to develop local cultural development plans across the country. Of course, we also invest in people and creativity, and a very important strand of our work is providing the conditions for allowing an artistic community and the creative industries to thrive in Scotland.

In summing up, I would say that as far as our ambition is concerned art and culture are an essential part of Scotland's present and future. We do not claim that art can solve the challenges that we face as a society, but we can be part of the solutions. Art can enhance and transform lives, and in this increasingly dislocated world, art and culture can help people find their way.

The Convener: Thank you very much, Sir John. I now invite Sir Gordon Rintoul to make a statement.

Dr Rintoul: I could echo many of the points that Sir John made about the importance of the national collections to Scotland, in an international context and to all sections of society, but instead of repeating many of those very good points, I will just say a few specific things about my organisation.

National Museums Scotland's collection contains more than 12 million items ranging from tiny insects to aircraft such as the Comet airliner and Concorde out at the museum of flight, and it is a huge challenge to manage, look after, research and conserve such an enormous and very varied collection. The past decade at the organisation has been a period of enormous change. In that time, we have more than doubled our visitor numbers; last year, we had 2.7 million visitors and since the opening of 10 new galleries last July, visitor numbers at the national museum of Scotland have gone up 20 per cent. There is clearly a great appetite for this in the public.

There is also a great appetite in visitors to the country, no matter whether they come from the rest of the United Kingdom or are international. For the past six years, the national museum of Scotland has been the most visited museum outside London, as demonstrated by the fact that 35 per cent of its visitors come from outside the UK. We are a key part of Scotland's tourism infrastructure and, of course, alongside that come economic impact and employment.

However, like National Galleries Scotland, we are not just about what we do at our sites. One of our key roles is working with communities and other museums across Scotland through, for

example, lending material to other museums, working with community groups and providing specialised advice. One good example is the recently opened Lews castle museum; I am not sure whether many members have been to it, but I can certainly recommend it—it is a terrific place. We were involved pretty much from the beginning in providing advice, and something like a third of the items on display are from the national collections. Moreover, it is a key venue for the new touring "Fossil Hunters" exhibition programme that we launched just last year and which opened quite recently there. Lews castle museum is, I think, a good example of how a national institution can work very well with local organisations to the benefit of everyone, particularly the community, and can do something for tourism up in the Western Isles.

As I said, we have a huge number of items in our collections, but it is worth mentioning that we do not keep them for display purposes only. If that were the case, you might well ask, "How on earth can you display 12.4 million items?" Our collections form an enormous research resource—for example, our natural science collection is among the largest in Europe and is the second largest in the UK after the Natural History Museum—and they are used actively by researchers from across the world, with many partnerships with higher education institutions here and elsewhere. In many ways, they are a record of environmental change and they provide a lot of evidence on how our environment has changed as a result of human and other impacts. Scientific research is probably not something that people normally associate with a museum, but it is a key part of our activities.

Sir John Leighton mentioned National Galleries Scotland's plans to create a new collections centre at Granton; we have had a 10-acre site down there since the mid-1990s, and we have been doing a lot of development there. We have started welcoming pre-booked tours to come and see behind the scenes and look at what goes on, and later this year, we are opening a new facility that will be an internationally important centre for collection science. We will use our facilities and resources to investigate some of the collections and, I hope, give advice to others.

In short, we play a very wide-ranging role, both in Scotland and internationally.

The Convener: Thank you very much. I inadvertently elevated you to the peerage, Dr Rintoul. I apologise for that, although I do not know whether apologies are due.

We will move quickly on to Mr John Scally.

09:45

Dr Scally: It is Dr John Scally, but that is a mere triviality. [*Laughter*.] I am a librarian as well. My job is to be national librarian and chief executive. There are two jobs—one relates to the library and the other is to make sure that the organisation works very well in terms of its financial accountability and everything else.

The National Library of Scotland has a long history—it goes back about 325 years—but, as the committee probably knows, it was formally established as such in 1925 under an act of Parliament. At the root of what the National Library does is legal deposit. Just about every country around the world has a legal deposit library—an organisation that has a right to claim a copy of everything that is published in that country. The version of that arrangement that applies in Scotland is that, since 1710, the National Library and its predecessor institution, the advocates library, have had the right to claim a copy of every item that has been published in the United Kingdom. That right has been unevenly taken up over the years, but more recently—certainly since 1925—it has been exercised much more systematically.

That has resulted in the accumulation of a massive corpus of information, which, in 1925, consisted of about 760,000 items; now, the National Library has about 26 million items, and the figure is growing every day—sometimes, the collection grows by 700 items a day. There is a sense that the National Library is a massive organisation that is grounded in its collections.

An important part of the National Library's collections-based approach is the digital shift, in which committee members will be involved in many different ways. Legal deposit is shifting over to electronic legal deposit—we now receive e-books rather than physical books. Our management of that transition has been a major feature of the past two or three years. When we look at how that will play through in terms of availability of content, research support and other things, the possibilities become endless.

However, I should say that, because we are the legal deposit library, there are considerable restrictions on that content and how we can license it and make it available. The principal restriction is that the National Library of Scotland has to make that content available for reference in a building that it owns—that is the agreement with the publishers. There is an obvious logic in that, but it is important that everyone understands that limitation. That speaks to the idea of the National Library being a physical destination and a digital destination, which will continue for many years to come. The buildings that we have are just as

important as the digital estate that we will develop over the coming years.

The impact of all that is vital. As colleagues have said, what is important is how much the content that we hold is used by the academic community and the public, and what we can do to reframe that content for schools, for the various groups that come to visit the library and for those who make research visits, of which more than 100,000 a year are made. That is dwarfed by the number of digital visits to the National Library of Scotland. I will give the committee just two statistics. In 2010-11, 1.5 million visits were made to the National Library's website to download content or to use it for various means. In 2016-17—we have just closed the numbers—more than 4 million visits were made, so there has been a significant acceleration.

What we are trying to do—this comes through in our strategy for 2015 to 2020, which was published in 2015—is to seize that opportunity and to take it forward in how we develop the physical and the digital estate. The new library that we opened in Glasgow in September of last year—the national library of Scotland at Kelvin hall—is directly relevant to that. That development is grounded firmly in our responsibility for the national documentary archive and the moving image archive, which we have sited in Glasgow.

We have also moved over all our work and activity on sound collections. The National Library increasingly takes responsibility for co-ordinating such collections across Scotland, and partnerships are very important in that area. The British Library and a number of partners, including NLS as a northern spoke, will be involved in a major project that has received funding of around £10 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund in London.

A number of things will be coming together regarding what we do with the strategy, how we deliver it, and how the National Library can become a central point for culture and research for schools and others to use as Scotland develops.

I will close by making a point around partnerships, which I think are very important. The National Library is part of an ecosystem of libraries in Scotland, with public libraries in the communities, with higher education libraries and—as I hope and am determined to see happen—with it taking a much more inclusive role in what it does as Scotland's national library to support and to generate activity around those different areas.

I will quickly give the committee a couple of examples. About 18 months ago, we bought the Sweetheart breviary, which is a beautiful medieval document that cost a lot of money. It will go down to Dumfries and Galloway, where it will be on display. That is just a tiny window on the way in which we view the world now. The National Library is not only accumulating material but pushing it out to other parts of Scotland, as my colleagues have said. Over the next couple of weeks, we will also launch an exhibition in Aberdeen that will then travel around.

The strategy is all about the National Library of Scotland becoming a much more porous organisation, which is what the strategy document speaks to.

The Convener: Thank you very much, Dr Scally. I invite Tim Ellis to comment.

Tim Ellis: Thank you, convener, for the opportunity to speak—and I am just Mr Ellis.

The National Records of Scotland has many things in common with the other cultural institutions that are represented here today, but we are slightly different. NRS is a non-ministerial department in the Scottish Administration. As chief executive, I hold two roles: one as keeper of the records of Scotland—that is particularly germane to our conversation today—and another as Registrar General for Scotland.

NRS covers a wide range of activities. Not only do we look after Scotland's national archives, which contain documents going back to the reign of King David and the declaration of Arbroath and coming right through to the modern records of this Parliament and other public bodies, but, as Registrar General, I am responsible for the registration of births, marriages and deaths and for taking the census. That gives us a unique and different approach, and it makes our focus very much about information in its totality, rather than just in the cultural space. It also makes us an institution that is very interested in questions of identity. ScotlandsPeople is probably our best-known brand. It is very well used by genealogists and local historians and it plays very well in the heritage sector; we are very keen to do more of that.

As ours is a non-ministerial department, we work very closely with the Scottish Council on Archives on engagement with archives across the country. A huge amount of work is being done on that at a very local and community level. Traditionally, archives has been the junior partner in such work, but the digital revolution has given it the opportunity to step up and to make its mark in a way that it was perhaps less capable of doing in the past. There are some real challenges on that—both for us, as an institution, and for local and community archives—but there are also opportunities that have not been there in the past. I am quite excited about that opportunity, as well as about the challenge that comes with it.

Among other things, I am also responsible for the Scottish register of tartans, which plays a

significant part in the heritage and culture of Scotland. Of course, tartan is an iconic material and it plays into some very interesting issues of culture, engagement and identity.

I do not want to say any more on that. I am more interested in answering any questions that the committee would like to ask.

The Convener: Thank you very much, Mr Ellis. I now invite Pamela Tulloch to speak.

Pamela Tulloch: I thank the committee for inviting me along today. I am the chief executive of the Scottish Library and Information Council, which is the independent advisory body to the Scottish Government on all things relating to libraries. Ours is a membership organisation that was established in 1991. Our members are from all sectors of librarianship, including public, academic, school and special interest. SLIC has a new vision statement—enriching lives through libraries—that we see applying to all sectors of our membership. The five strategic aims for that strategy are advocacy, innovation, partnership, standards and funding.

Probably one element that brings everything together under that umbrella is the work that we have been most involved in, which is the development—and now the implementation—of Scotland's first strategy for public libraries, "Ambition and Opportunity: A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland 2015-2020". The strategy has six strategic aims. The aims have probably always been applicable to public libraries, but setting them out helps to convey a message to people outwith the public library sector about what public libraries deliver. The aims of that strategy are reading and literacy, digital inclusion, economic wellbeing, social health and wellbeing, culture and creativity, and delivering public sector excellence.

To bring the situation to life for the committee, I would like to share some key facts about public libraries in Scotland. Public libraries are the most popular service that local government provides. Last year in Scotland, there were more than 42 million visits to Scotland's public libraries: more people visited public libraries than attended Scottish Professional Football League football matches or visited the cinema. More than 20 million items were issued from Scotland's public libraries and more than 6 million books were issued to children, which is important because we know that there are issues around literacy and attainment. There were more than 3.2 million hours of internet access in Scotland's public libraries and 55,000 hours of support were provided by local volunteers to deliver added value within public libraries.

For this morning's conversation, I would like the committee to remember that that is the context in which we are speaking about public libraries today.

The Convener: Thank you very much. I invite Joanne Orr to make a contribution.

Joanne Orr: I work for Museums Galleries Scotland, which is the national development body for all museums and galleries in Scotland. We are a small non-governmental organisation and have quite a broad remit.

In our family of museums, we have more than 400 organisations all over the country, from our largest institutions, which are represented around the table today, to very tiny organisations that are totally volunteer-run. All our museums are rooted in their communities, be it a small island community or the community of the nation, as for the national institutions. We can look at community in quite a dynamic way. More than half our workforce are volunteers, which is a demonstration of the passion for heritage that exists in this nation.

We have a national strategy that was developed in collaboration with those organisations. At the heart of the strategy is the creation of public value. Collections are obviously a high priority within the strategy. We work to ensure that collections are developed and that communities are enabled to explore the collections and to collect, but also to think about sharing those collections. As Gordon Rintoul pointed out, the nationals have a strong remit in relation to facilitating that sharing. We will be working in partnership very shortly—in June—on a collections symposium, which is about upskilling and developing skills in the sector. That is just one example.

We work on connecting with communities and ensuring that museums can be seen as dynamic spaces. We have met many of you around the table through our advocacy work through the museum messages campaign. That was about really pushing home and raising awareness that museums deliver on placemaking, on raising economic impact, and on tackling inequality.

Working with other sectors, museums are starting to raise the profile of the impact that they can bring to communities beyond what people anticipate that they will find within a museum. We have an estimated annual economic impact of £891 million: we are a significant part of the culture and tourism sector.

As I said, skills are a major part of our work. We have a small grant programme, through which, on behalf of the Scottish Government, we distribute £1.2 million, which is directed specifically at development. Part of that development is about raising skills.

We also run an accreditation scheme. The scheme is UK wide—we are responsible for it in Scotland, where we have 249 accredited organisations, which is nearly 15 per cent of the entire UK museum total.

10:00

We also administer the Scottish Government's scheme of recognition and have 47 recognised collections, which are collections that have been demonstrated to have national significance. Our national collection is distributed all over the country; even our smallest organisations have extremely fine collections, which is a tremendous resource and asset.

We run events such as the festival of museums, which I hope some of you will have seen in the weekend just past. There were over 149 events all over the country, including exciting family events and some adult events—involving evening cocktail parties in unusual parts of the collection that people would not normally see. So, really exciting things are happening in that regard.

Diversity and equalities are key priorities that we are taking forward, starting with diversifying our own workforce. We are about to run a scheme called skills for the future, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to bring in non-graduate trainees in order to broaden the entry routes into museums so that our workforce is diverse, reflective of our communities and continues to develop. The sustainability of museums is very much on our radar, as is consideration of how we can ensure that leadership and governance skills exist for the future. Finally, going back to equalities, we will be hosting a large conference this year on bridging the gap and tackling inequalities, which will be about museums showing how they can contribute to communities more broadly and how they are doing that.

The Convener: Thank you, Joanne. You touched on an important point about inequality just now. The Scottish Government has a goal of enhancing the role of arts and culture in empowering communities, promoting equality and reducing inequality. A large part of that, as you indicated, is about taking collections out to communities across Scotland and not just those in the central belt. I was interested in your comment that there are 47 collections of national significance around the country. I assume that some of those collections are in very small museums and that you are not saying that there are any difficulties in having collections of national significance in regions furth of the central belt.

Joanne Orr: A museum must demonstrate a commitment to a collection in order to achieve scheme-of-recognition status. Some collections are in very small museums—for example, in Elgin museum, which has a palaeontology collection that is of international significance. Those small organisations are invited and encouraged to participate in order to ensure that the appropriate skills are in place. However, it is about striking a balance.

The Convener: Yes—but you are saying that there is no reason why a collection of national significance cannot be in a community that is far from Edinburgh or Glasgow.

Joanne Orr: It is a fact that they are.

The Convener: Yes. On that point, I turn to Dr Rintoul. As an MSP for South Scotland, I am very aware of the depth of feeling there about the Viking hoard that was recently awarded to National Museums Scotland by the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer. I know that you are having a fundraising campaign for that at the moment. Can you explain to me why that collection cannot be permanently displayed in Dumfries and Galloway?

Dr Rintoul: I am very happy to answer that question, and have a number of points to make. First, the material is clearly of national and international importance. One of our functions is to collect, preserve and make accessible material of that nature. Secondly, the hoard will require considerable expertise and resources to conserve it; in fact, quite a lot of it will need very skilled work over many years. Thirdly, substantial research work needs to be undertaken to reveal the full significance of the hoard. All that will require resources, expertise and facilities that we are, in our view, best placed to provide. However—

The Convener: But why does it have to be in Edinburgh?

Dr Rintoul: What has perhaps not been as widely reported in the media is that, since last summer, we have been in dialogue with Dumfries and Galloway Council. We have consistently said to the council that our proposal is to acquire the hoard, safeguard it, raise the money to secure it and undertake all the conservation and research work, the results of which we would share with the council. We have also consistently proposed to lend a representative proportion of the hoard for the long term to the new Kirkcudbright art gallery. Our plan is not to acquire it and keep it all in Edinburgh; that is not the case.

The Convener: I know that people have asked you and that you have said that you will lend a representative proportion of the hoard. However, you have not detailed what a "representative proportion" is, and which particular items and the percentage of the hoard that will be loaned. There will be items that are of more interest than others.

Dr Rintoul: That is right—because it is impossible to do that right now. As I said, much of the material needs significant conservation work. Some of it is very fragile and it is not known whether any of it can travel or be displayed, or for how long. For example, one of the key items is a very rare pot—a Carolingian pot, for those who are interested in such detail—that, rather uniquely, is wrapped in textiles. I have not seen it, because it has been wrapped up since it was first uncovered and some initial work was done to stabilise it. Can it be displayed at all? It is an unknown quantity, because it is terribly fragile. Can it tour? We have no idea. Until we have gained possession of the hoard, which will not be until we have raised the money, we cannot undertake the survey work or the conservation assessment to determine what can be displayed where, when and for how long.

The Convener: You have said that a representative proportion of the hoard will go to Dumfries and Galloway, but nobody really knows what that means. I understand your point that the hoard needs to be conserved and that you need to have expertise. Why cannot that be done outside Edinburgh?

Dr Rintoul: That is because nobody else has the expertise. Dumfries and Galloway Council's museum service has been reduced in size significantly over the past decade. It does not have a conservation laboratory, it has no conservators and it has no curators with expertise in Viking-age material.

The Convener: Do you currently have all the conservators that you require for that work, or will you recruit people?

Dr Rintoul: We have, by far, the largest conservation facility in the UK outside the British Museum, and we have significant facilities at Granton, but it is an enormous task, so even we must plan to secure funding to employ two more people for two years to support the work. The material needs a lot of work to be done to it, and some of that work is very delicate and very skilled, using scientific equipment to analyse what it is made of in order to determine what treatment is required. Our proposal means using our resources to benefit other museums and other communities. That seems to be a right and proper approach for a national museum to take in a country such as Scotland.

The Convener: Right. When was the last time that a significant piece of your collection was displayed in Dumfries and Galloway? You closed the Shambellie house costume museum and said that you would make a commitment to putting significant parts of your collection in Dumfries and Galloway as a result of that closure.

Dr Rintoul: That was not quite the commitment that we made. We said that we would work with Dumfries and Galloway museum service, lend things, and tour our exhibitions. For example, Dumfries museum has already had our touring exhibition, "Next of Kin", and it will have our "Fossil Hunters" exhibition. After the new Kirkcudbright art gallery opens, it will have one of our new touring exhibitions, "Scotland's Early Silver", which will not even open in the national museum of Scotland until the end of the year. Those exhibitions are all being provided and we have also made a number of significant loans to Dumfries and Galloway museums, so we have a pretty strong track record of working with the team at Dumfries and Galloway museum service.

The Convener: Finally, I know that the cabinet secretary has invited you to a summit to discuss the future of the hoard. Will you accept that invitation?

Dr Rintoul: We are in a dialogue with the cabinet secretary and Dumfries and Galloway museum service. We have been waiting for the new administration to be in place in Dumfries and Galloway Council, which it now is, as you know. We are hoping for a meeting before too long.

The Convener: Will you accept the cabinet secretary's invitation?

Dr Rintoul: Yes. We are in a dialogue about it.

Lewis Macdonald: I will shift the focus a little bit to the National Library of Scotland. I am delighted that we have the national librarian here to give evidence. Dr Scally talked in his opening statement about digitisation and digital access as critical issues. Another issue that a number of people have raised with me is the risk of the digital void, which is about what would happen if the vast resources that we now have in digital form were destroyed in the future. What would the late 20th century and the 21st century look like to future historians, should that happen? Anyone who was unwise enough to say that such a thing could never happen clearly will not have had the advantage of studying historical things that happened unexpectedly.

I was intrigued to hear that you are doing work on future proofing information that is digitally originated, and I would like to hear a bit more about that. However, more widely, and given the obvious temptation to put everything in digital format, what are you doing to ensure that alternative formats are available for all our most precious records, and not just digitally originated material?

Dr Scally: Thank you for that question, which is a really good one and strikes at the heart of one of the things that keeps me awake at night, which is digital preservation. The fact is that we are in not

just a transitional phase; we are in a new world of digital preservation and production of digital materials, including electronic legal-deposit content. The legal-deposit libraries around the United Kingdom have taken the very brave decision that they will cease to take physical items and will take only digital items. How we will preserve that content is a source of possible anxiety for everyone.

What I will say about digital preservation, as a sort of banner headline, is that it is about multiples and partnerships. No institution, even the National Library of Scotland and the scale that we work to, is able to guarantee absolutely that its digital preservation policies will ensure that in 325 years—roughly the length of time that the NLS has been in existence from its embryonic form—that digital content will be available. What we must have, therefore, are our best endeavours and partnerships.

I will give you a few examples. The British Library is at the centre of electronic legal deposit. A network was set up that has the three nodes: the British Library, the National Library of Scotland and the National Library of Wales. It is not a coincidence that there are three nodes, because we normally work towards triplicates or threes. The National Library of Scotland seeks to have multiple copies of its digital content—one copy on one server and another copy on another server. We are looking at the possibility of doing that in Glasgow and Edinburgh now, because we have opened a new library in Glasgow. We are also considering keeping a third copy, but there is some anxiety around holding that copy in the cloud. However, we will always work towards thirds.

I am pleased to say that we are involved in quite a bit of research on the issue through the European data infrastructure project—EUDAT—in the European Union, which has European Commission horizon 2020 funding. Along with National Galleries Scotland and other partners, we have put about 230 terabytes of information on scientific servers in the European Union. Basically, what we are doing is observing how the information is corrupted or otherwise as a result of that process.

So, it is about multiples, partnerships and making sure that we can, as much as possible, rerender digital content or bring it back up. Mr Macdonald was right to raise that important issue; we need funding and support to ensure that we get it right in terms of international standards.

Lewis Macdonald: I think that what you are describing is, in essence, a digital back-up for a digital store.

Dr Scally: Yes.

Lewis Macdonald: Does Tim Ellis from the National Records of Scotland have a similar strategy or a different take on the issue?

Tim Ellis: I very much agree with what John Scally said. We are investing quite heavily at the moment in trying to create a digital preservation capacity that will enable all digital materials to be preserved in perpetuity. Our interest as an archive is in perpetuity, but it is very difficult to ensure perpetuity for digital material. Mr Macdonald is absolutely right that that is a challenge. It is very important that we work in collaboration on the issue not only with each other but with academics and others internationally, because the problem of how to preserve digital material in perpetuity has not been solved anywhere and work on it is going on across the world where people are interested in this.

I absolutely agree with the principle of thirds; indeed, it is fundamental to where we go with this.

10:15

It is also probably worth recognising that not everything will be preserved for ever. That has always been the case. We have only a handful of charters from the medieval period, and historians 100 or 200 years from now will probably have only a handful of bits of information from the present day. Will they still be readable in the same way? At the moment, we require Latin experts to understand medieval charters, and I suspect that in 200 years' time we will need experts in Microsoft or whatever to understand some of the digital materials that we have now.

These are some of the things that, as John Scally said, are very much at the research stage, and it is critical that we put the investment in now. Finding the skills and resources to do that is very challenging at present; indeed, that is probably one of the most difficult issues for us.

Lewis Macdonald: I hear and am certainly interested in what you have both said but, in a sense, the parallels that you have drawn are precisely the things that worry me. When the men and women of the dark ages told each other the things that were important about their society, they did so in a form that has long since been lost, and what we have are just occasional, fragmentary and accidental survivals. What I am hearing from you is almost an acceptance that this is a new dark age and that what will tell people about the 21st century will be similar occasional, fragmentary and accidental survivals. I would be more interested in having a parallel with the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, for which a huge physical record of what people thought and did exists and might well exist in a form that will last for a very

long time. I have to say that I get worried when the comparison is with medieval Latin.

Tim Ellis: At the moment, archivists will generally appraise and select between 5 and 20 per cent of an organisation's records for long-term posterity. In the digital era, the potential is much greater to safeguard a considerably larger proportion of that much more quickly and cheaply. In other words, there is the potential to save much more of the current culture, heritage, records and information for the longer term. There are some positives to be taken out of the situation, and more of this era might remain into the future than what remains from other past eras, but if we are being honest, the reality is that we do not know at present whether that will be the case.

Dr Scally: I just want to add a couple of riders to that. First, we need to remember that preservation is about accepting loss at some point. The question is how much that loss will be.

No matter whether we are talking about the medieval period or the early modern period, the fact is that the greatest losses are normally intervention losses—in other words, losses as a result of wars or, say, an event such as the Scottish reformation in 1560 which, under one interpretation, was a huge act of vandalism right across culture, with the destruction of stained-glass windows, books and so on. You can put all sorts of measures in place to preserve things, but disruptions in society of the kind that we have seen in the middle east can result in a catastrophic loss of culture. What we want to avoid in the digital age is that kind of catastrophic loss as a result of viruses or various other activities, and that is one of the reasons why we need triplicates. It allows us to store materials in multiples and in different places where we can ensure that any risk of failure as a result of environmental and other hazards is brought to as low a point as possible.

Richard Lochhead: I want to return to the relationship between national collections and local communities around Scotland. With regard to local government budget constraints, we have over the past few years seen headlines—certainly in parts of Scotland, including some that are not too far from where I live—about libraries closing and museums lurching from issue to issue because of a lack of financial sustainability.

Given that the organisations in this room have ownership and take care of Scotland's fantastic cultural assets, what more can we do to ensure that our national collections help and benefit local communities, local libraries and local museums? I know that exhibitions are toured, I know that there are visits and I know that lending takes place, but is there another model that we should be looking at? A range of benefits could be secured from taking the eighth-century Monymusk reliquary to museums around Scotland. If that happened or if, say, famous paintings were shown at local galleries, that would bring in big crowds and help sustain local facilities. Is there a new model that we should be looking at? In the football world, the Scottish Football Association brings in money nationally but local football teams benefit from SFA funds. Should the cultural world be acting in the same way?

Dr Rintoul: I am happy to answer that first, and it is probably relevant to John Leighton as well. You are quite right to raise the issue of resources in local museums. In fact, I encourage the committee to look into the issue further, because one thing that increasingly concerns me and my staff is the increasingly limited resources in many local museums and the loss of expertise over the years, such that many museums have broad collections and no expertise in most of the collection areas. That is an increasing challenge. It is not just a Scottish challenge; it is a challenge across the UK. It has not really come to the fore in Scotland, but it is a real problem.

On our own patch—I know that John Leighton will say the same thing for National Galleries Scotland—we already do a huge amount to support and assist the rest of our sector across Scotland and to share collections. Much more could be done but, at the end of day, it takes resources. Our approach has been to recognise that we are all working in a tightly constrained funding environment and to seek funding from elsewhere that might make some of this possible. For example, the "Fossil Hunters" touring exhibition is funded entirely by grants from the Natural Environment Research Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. There is no charge to the museums that take that exhibition. "Scotland's Early Silver" exhibition is being funded through a long-standing partnership with the Glenmorangie Company, at no cost to local museums. I can give you many other similar examples. We are trying to use our resources to secure additional resources elsewhere so that we can do such things around Scotland. At the end of the day, it is a question of resources and identifying where those resources can come from.

Joanne Orr: I will pick up on two points. To go back to loss and safeguarding and what we keep and what we collect—the big picture—I have described a museum community that is embedded within communities. Communities are making choices about what they collect, what they safeguard and what is there for the future. Those decisions are made at a local level—although they are made at a national level in certain areas; we talked about the Galloway Viking hoard—and that is an empowerment. Loss will happen because people make decisions.

In terms of sustainability, you cannot collect everything, so decisions have to be made. We have talked about not only the physical collections but the intangible knowledge that surrounds those collections and the intangible knowledge that is embedded in communities to do with traditions, festivals and so on. We see a lot of loss there. If you put that alongside the collection side, there is a comparison to be made.

To go back to the question about new models for sustainability, we have a strong museums forum in the Highlands. All the Highlands independent museums work collectively to look at their future sustainability and how they can share resources and use them more effectively. We are funding a small project there. It does not cost a huge amount, but I hope that it will provide new ideas and models. It goes back to Gordon Rintoul's point about sharing skills and expertise and making sure that the resources that we have are used in the best way possible and that there is a future for those museums.

Richard Lochhead: It is important for local museums to work together to become more sustainable, and I appreciate that local museums have a different role from that of national collections. Should there be more of a tie-in between the national institutions and the local institutions? Local institutions are subject to the whims of local government and at the mercy of its decisions and, sometimes, some authorities think that culture and the arts are not priorities. Should we allow that danger to be there?

Sir John Leighton: Your question is a good one. A lot goes on between national and local authority organisations already. We are touching here on a number of issues, one of which is to do with a sense of ownership, participation and belonging. All the organisations that are represented here very much subscribe to the view that the collections that we look after belong to the entire people of Scotland. Your question is about how we create a greater sense of ownership when some communities have better access to the collections than others do. There is no single model to follow; there are many, which will involve long-term loans, touring and different outreach activities.

We have learned a few things over the years about partnership, and I think that colleagues will agree with me on my next points. The first is that "partnership" is a benign word but it is challenging in practice. The point has been made that tackling the issue is not just about sharing collections, because there are fantastic collections across the country; rather, it is about how we unlock the potential of the collections and create extra capacity and resource. It is also important that we, as national organisations, do not adopt a patriarchal approach and that the relationships between the organisations should develop equal respect. Locally, there is different expertise and knowledge, and we can all work together.

We perhaps also need to be more creative about how we make things happen, because it is easy to say locally that there is not a suitable museum or a venue to take a loan. I was the director of the Van Gogh museum. Van Gogh asked why we do not have art in schools and railway stations. I am not advocating railway stations as a venue—I am not going that far—but, sometimes, the obstacles in our minds are more cultural than real, and being more creative in how we overcome those could be part of the answer to what you are describing.

Mairi Evans: I want to raise the exact point that Richard Lochhead made, because it is a vital one. Cultural activities can be seen as a soft target when it comes to council cuts. For example, in my area we have seen museums resort to opening seasonally rather than all year round, and we have seen library hours cut and public access to them reduced. What are your relationships with local authorities when it comes to those issues? Does there need to be wider change in the importance with which culture, art, history and our libraries are perceived in order to prevent such measures from happening, to prevent councils from making further cuts and to prevent facilities from closing altogether?

In Edzell, which is in my constituency, we have a rare Victorian library collection, which includes one of the only examples of a working Cotgreave indicator—I am sure that the library people around the table will know what that means. The running of the museum is entirely dependent on volunteers, so it is only open one afternoon a week. I think that LEADER funding allowed the conservation process to happen. It is vital that people have access to the collection and that people are made more widely aware of it.

Pamela Tulloch: This morning, a few comments have been made about libraries closing and library opening hours reducing. We know that these are challenging times for local authorities. We have seen staff numbers cut, opening hours reduced and, in some cases, buildings closed. I will put that into context. Over the past five years in Scotland, fewer than 3 per cent of public library buildings have been closed, which is lower than the number in other parts of the United Kingdom. The all-pervasive media sometimes paints a picture that is not always true of Scotland.

On the reduction of opening hours, libraries are changing how they deliver services. I have mentioned digital inclusion being a big part of the national strategy for public libraries. A 24/7 service is provided for people that they did not have

before, with downloadable e-books and audiobooks, e-magazines and newspapers online. The way in which libraries provide services is changing, and what people want to do in the buildings when they are open is also changing. We have to recognise that and perhaps not fall into the trap of defending the status quo, because that does not help us to move forward.

10:30

That said, it is difficult for libraries, especially in small places, to open for the number of hours that the public want. Over time, there needs to be some rightsizing in that regard. I mentioned in my opening statement that, last year, 55,000 volunteer hours were used in public libraries in Scotland and that those volunteers bring added value. That is exactly the case in the situation that Mairi Evans describes in Edzell—without volunteers, that collection would not be there at all. I recognise the point that colleagues have made that services are being delivered from a very tight public purse. When I speak to locally elected members, I do not get the sense that anybody wants to close libraries or reduce opening hours but, actually, they are faced with hard choices and hard choices make hard decisions.

Joanne Orr: Because of the pressure on local authorities and the pressure generally on public sector funding, museums are having to present their services in a cross-cutting way and show their wider impact and value in communities. To reflect what Pamela Tulloch said, we have had some closures but, compared with the situation in the rest of the UK, the number is very small. As a national development body, we keep a watching brief and, where possible, if we start to see the signs, we will visit and, where we can, say where the real value is. Cuts can happen, but usually dialogue is entered into and the situation moves forward.

One issue that I would raise as a positive and as a challenge is community asset transfer. An increasing number of local authorities are looking at that model, sometimes in a positive and proactive way. From a museums perspective, that usually involves the building. Community asset transfer of collections is a concern for us. We are thinking about that for the future, because it comes with a load of issues, such as the skills issue that we have talked about. However, there are positive indications, and there are opportunities for communities to be upskilled and empowered to take forward a heritage asset. That goes back to the point about other models. We would hope that it is always done in a measured way. Where it is done as a reaction and with a snap decision, that can have devastating effects.

As a national development body, those are our concerns. We constantly look at the issues and monitor and, as I said, we try to enter into positive dialogue. To go back to the point about advocacy work, it is about raising the profile of the wider value of museums in communities and how they can reach a much broader audience, such as autistic people, young offenders and people who have been referred from general practitioners. Our museums work at that level in communities daily, but they need to partner with the specialists—our staff are not social workers, police or GPs, but they can work through partnerships and in collaboration to bring public value and wider benefits to communities.

Those are the areas that we are concentrating on, to tackle inequalities. Museums have a vital role in society. I think that Gordon Rintoul welcomes about 72,000 schoolchildren through his doors every year, so his national institution is a phenomenal resource and asset in Scotland. I am sorry that I cannot trip off John Leighton's figures, but I am sure that they are equally impressive and that his institution is equally important to the community.

Dr Scally: I have a couple of points on libraries. There are parallels between local libraries and local museums. It is important for us to understand the various shifts in funding that are happening and which are challenging for everyone, whether you are a national institution or a public library. There is an opportunity for further partnerships and for institutions such as the National Library of Scotland to be much more open to partnerships so that our content can be delivered through public libraries to offer a much more joined-up system across Scotland. For the past 24 months or so, a piece of software has been available in quite a lot of public libraries that allows sharing of information on inquiries, and the Scotland-wide ones are eventually picked up by the National Library of Scotland. A conversation took place—there was no transfer of money, but it saved a lot of libraries the cost of a software licence. The National Library of Scotland now co-ordinates that.

There are a lot of things like that that can be done but, as has been said by other witnesses, we have an opportunity to make more of the assets that we have, whether at a national or a local level, by opening up channels of communication between the local libraries, the national libraries and SLIC, which Pamela Tulloch looks after, and by explaining libraries' role much better through things such as "Ambition & Opportunity", which is the new strategy for the public libraries. However, in the 32 local authorities, it comes down to the decisions that those authorities make about where to allocate their funding. I am not being insensitive, but that is something that they have to discuss at local level.

The Convener: You mentioned what you are doing with the Sweetheart breviary as an example of partnership. I take it that you do not have any concerns about the safeguarding of that breviary while it is outwith Edinburgh.

Dr Scally: No—the discussion about security, the conditions in which the breviary will be displayed and all the environmental issues has already taken place. It is a case of making it happen and making sure that we are as flexible as we can be while ensuring that that important document, which is 700 years old, will be looked after and cared for in the local domain.

As John Leighton said, in the past we have been far too eager to say, "That's not possible," rather than saying, "That's a really great idea." When we bought the Sweetheart breviary 18 months ago, one of the first things that we asked was how we could make sure that it would be seen by the people of Dumfries and Galloway, where it originated from.

Tavish Scott: I want to ask a much wider question about the pursuit of knowledge and understanding more generally. Dr Scally mentioned what has happened in Syria in recent years and the fact that there are things that our children will never see because ISIS has destroyed them.

Given what has happened not just in Manchester but in France and all over the world in the past few years, young people—who live in a world of apps and mobile phones—do not understand the reality of Islam and what is now happening; they do not understand the difference between radicalisation of the Muslim faith and people living their normal lives in whatever faith they are in. Do you think that, individually and collectively, you have a role to play in bringing together your enormous assets and presenting them in a way that will enable not just my children's generation but all our generations to get some sense of what is going on in the world around us? I remember walking into Gordon Rintoul's institutions to look at Islamic art and that allowing me to recognise the importance of other civilisations. I think that that need is greater now than it has ever been. Is any collective work being done across the national collections to present a greater pursuit of understanding of the world that we now live in?

Dr Rintoul: I will answer that, although I am sure that colleagues will want to come in.

Tavish Scott has raised an extremely important point. Museums of all shapes and sizes have an important role to play in bringing about a better understanding between communities. NMS has collections from cultures around the world, including the middle east. In recent years, we have worked with a range of communities. For example, we participate in the Iranian festival that takes place in Edinburgh every year. That involves working with members of the local community and enabling them to share their culture with museum visitors from very different backgrounds.

The key is working with communities to see how we can add value and use the national collections, or themes arising from them, to bring about better dialogue and better understanding.

Sir John Leighton: I echo that. The issue is being discussed by museums not only across Scotland but worldwide. We now have an American president who makes a virtue of the fact that he does not pick up a book; he would certainly not know the inside of a museum or a similar institution. What a signal that sends out across the world and to young people. There is also Brexit, which I know that the committee is probably a little tired of. It, too, suggests the notion of cultural breakage.

We live in a volatile and difficult world, and the role of institutions, including those that are represented around this table and our many partnerships across the country and the world, is to build bridges and promote understanding.

At National Galleries Scotland, we do not have Islamic art in our collection but we are developing a partnership with the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, which has been prompted partly by that notion of working together and sharing expertise to promote learning about each other's cultures. That is an interesting bridge to build, and it is just one of many that are being developed and sustained as we speak.

Joanne Orr: In Scotland, there is an increasing number of exhibitions tackling exactly what Tavish Scott mentioned. The temporary exhibition by Syrian refugees that is on at Summerhall is one example.

On a global scale, our expertise is being used to build capacity specifically in conflict areas, as culture is now seen as one of the key pillars in tackling terrorism. It is on the table because it is about identity—where people come from—and ISIS brings in a separate identity. In September, I gave a keynote speech in Pakistan, which had its first heritage and museums conference specifically to tackle the rising threat of terrorism. Culture is on the table.

Something called the cultural protection fund has been launched recently, and I am on its advisory group. It is working with 12 conflict countries specifically to deliver museums and heritage projects on the ground, often in partnership with organisations here in the UK. A number of Scottish cultural and heritage organisations are delivering that work. It is

happening, it is active and it is quite high risk, but it puts culture firmly in the middle of global affairs as a positive, forward-looking influence.

Dr Scally: I think that it was last year that the "Oxford English Dictionary" said that the word or phrase of the year was "post-truth". It is a good reminder to us that one of the roles of libraries and museums is to be places where authoritative information—however we may want to categorise that—is available. They can play an even more important role with regard to the issue of the development of the critical faculty and critical tools that enable someone to authoritatively question information that they get from an app or another source. It is important that Scotland takes a leadership role in that, given the history that we have in education and so on.

We are going through a period of disruption when—with no disrespect to anyone around the table—you can cut out politicians, librarians and all sorts of other figures who would traditionally be seen as authority figures who could help you to understand the world in which you are operating or living or another world across the way. That is a real issue and a challenge for everyone. It is a challenge for the National Library of Scotland and everyone around this table.

What do we do about it? It starts with reading in schools. I still think that reading and encountering books is one of the best and most important ways of developing the critical faculty and understanding what people are telling you and how you can evaluate that in a sensible way so that you become truly a world citizen.

That is a really important point. Thank you for the question.

Tim Ellis: I have a similar comment to make.

The Convener: If it is a similar point, perhaps we can move on. Have you finished your line of questioning, Tavish?

Tavish Scott: I have one further question, convener. I get what you are all doing and I applaud it. Is the Government asking you to co-ordinate that activity at the moment? I know that the incident in Manchester happened only on Monday and I do not expect everything to drop into place immediately. However, the challenges that we face in this area are not new—they have, sadly, been around for some considerable time. Is the Government asking for some co-ordinated action or even just an illustration of the fact that you are drawing these things together into a programme? If not, would it be helpful if it were?

Dr Scally: It would be helpful to have a sense of what is being done across the national institutions, and whether there is a joined-up approach that is demonstrating our commitment to doing something about the issue, and it would be good to have a sense of what our role might be. That would be helpful, but it is a very complex area.

Tavish Scott: I understand that.

10:45

Ross Greer: Before I ask about the youth experience fund, I would like to return to digitisation issues—not storage issues, but issues about receiving content in the first place. I will talk about what I know and am comfortable with. Political parties are supposed to provide the National Library of Scotland with a copy of every bit of material that we print and put through doors, but increasingly political parties and campaign groups are producing less printed content and more digital content, such as graphics or videos, which take 10 minutes to put together and put out there.

Are you receiving the same amount of content that you were before, or is the move to producing digital content resulting in less content reaching you?

Dr Scally: That is a good question. I could answer it in great detail, but instead I will try to give you the headlines.

Again, I say that we are in a period of transition. If there is a referendum, election or anything like that, the folks at the National Library of Scotland activate the contacts that they have. The 330 people who work at the National Library of Scotland bring things in for us as well, whether they are leaflets that get handed out or anything else.

We harvest the web in Scotland, along with the British Library. We work with other national institutions to ensure that we archive online material and index it.

When important things are happening, we will normally harvest digital content in much more detail. If something goes on a website or is put out as a PDF, it is likely that it will eventually come to the national institution to be part of the national collection.

Ross Greer: I move on to my broader point. We have touched on young people's access to culture through libraries and museums and so on. Can anyone provide an update on the progress that has been made in relation to the youth experience fund?

As it seems that no one can, I will ask about the work that you are doing more generally to get young people—in particular, primary school-aged children—into your institutions, or to take your institutions to them. With the year of young people coming up, what plans do you have in place?

Dr Rintoul: We do not see school-age children, certainly not those in primary school, as the problem. Schools visit us, we engage with schools and support teachers in the classroom, and many children visit with their parents. A much more challenging task for us all is to keep children engaged when they become older—from the age of about 11 upwards. Over the years, we have found that the best way to do that is to engage with young people themselves and ask them what they want and what they would find interesting. That involves working with youth groups and developing projects with them, rather than presenting something that we have done ourselves. Engaging with young people is key.

Through a host of projects, we have identified how we can help young people who are aged around 15 to 17 to develop skills that could be useful in the workplace or that will give them confidence, and we have found that those projects can bring real benefits.

Dr Scally: It is the same for us with school visits. We are increasingly having school visits, supporting the curriculum for excellence, and are increasingly populating our website's learning zone with content, which is co-created, rather than created solely by the curator in the National Library of Scotland. We are doing all the types of things that Gordon Rintoul mentioned.

We have been working with National Galleries Scotland on skills for the future, and that work has been HLF funded. A number of young people have been coming into both institutions to develop their digital skills—Ross Greer mentioned digitisation. We have been doing a number of things on internships and experience.

At the moment, we are also working with Young Scot. We hope that, this year, we will be able to say that every young person in Scotland who has a Young Scot card will automatically be a member of the NLS, so that, when they pull up their information, there will be a button for the NLS and they will get access to all the digital resources that we are able to make available, given the restrictions that we have.

Ross Greer: I still have my card, so I am happy to hear that.

Dr Scally: That initiative will highlight the major resource that is available to young people and how they can access it. That use of digital technology is the kind of thing that we are looking to do in order to bring young people closer to the NLS, along with local visits.

Pamela Tulloch: I agree with everything that John Scally and Gordon Rintoul have said. I also want to say that public libraries really value the importance of books and of reading with children and young people. There are programmes running across the country, every day and every week, and in every library, that involve young children—so much so that we have a project called every child a library member, which was piloted last year. Robert Gordon University carried out an evaluation of that project that highlighted that one of the most successful ways of engaging children and families was registering children for library cards at birth. We have been working with my colleague Tim Ellis and his team to look at rolling that out across Scotland so that every child in Scotland has the same chance. We know that children who are involved in libraries and their programmes at pre-school stage perform much better once they get to school. The approach is about equality and better chances for children.

There are also various reading programmes. Committee members will be aware of the First Minister's reading challenge, on which schools work with public libraries. The read, write, count programme was rolled out across Scotland, and every public library service now has access to it.

We are also working with Young Scot. Next year sees the national strategy for public libraries, which is outlined in the "Ambition and Opportunity" document, reach the midway point of its five-year term. We are very conscious that we want the voice of the young person to be heard in that strategy, so we are looking at refreshing it next year. We have recently commissioned Young Scot to work with us on a co-design that will see young people from across Scotland working with the strategy and playing back to us what they would like to see in it for the remainder of its term. We very much want to hear the voice of the young person in the strategy in 2018.

Sir John Leighton: I would add one rider to the question, which is that the issue is not about trying to attract young people or schools. There is massive demand. We could all do three, four or five times as much engagement if the resource were available. The challenge is in managing that demand and also in working out where our resource and effort will have the most impact. It is not a numbers game. Sometimes it is about targeting resources, sometimes it is about working in partnership with, for example, schools that have attainment challenges and sometimes it is about getting in the most children in any one year. There is a balance to be struck.

The curriculum for excellence, which John Scally rightly mentioned, is another aspect. With its emphasis on interdisciplinary learning and creativity, it works very well with art education. The challenge that we find is that the definition of "creativity" in CFE is often scoped too narrowly towards skills and making stuff—what we might call "craft"—whereas the whole programme is designed to think about creativity in the broadest

sense—that is, expanding learning and articulation and a whole range of skills. In our experience, teachers struggle with that definition and too readily think of creativity in terms of paint pots and paper. The emphasis on creativity is working for us.

Joanne Orr: Going back to resources, when we listen to the representatives from museums, we hear that one of the key issues is that they are engaging at primary school level. Secondary schools are a major issue for a lot of our museums. It costs a museum a lot of money to deliver a school visit. It will do it—and it will be committed to doing so—but it will have to stop doing something else in order to do that. Our museums—particularly our industrial museums, which are quite heavily staffed—need a lot of people out there in order to cater for a visit.

I have not heard of anybody accessing the youth experience fund at the moment, although we have been flagging it up. That might be something that could be tackled as well. Schools being able to get out of their buildings and travel is also a major issue.

The Convener: If no one else wants to contribute to that line of questioning, I remind the committee that we will have to suspend our meeting in three minutes' time, so that we can observe one minute's silence. Jackson Carlaw has a question on another topic, but I do not want to start another line of questioning when I am about to suspend the meeting, so I suspend the meeting now.

10:55

Meeting suspended.

11:01

On resuming—

The Convener: We can now resume our evidence round table. I invite Jackson Carlaw to speak.

Jackson Carlaw: Thank you, convener. Some of my questions are informed by my parochial engagement with the various bodies present.

I start with an observation that arose out of the Burrell Collection (Lending and Borrowing) (Scotland) Bill Committee, which Joan McAlpine and I sat on in the previous session of Parliament. When that committee explored whether the Burrell collection could be exhibited in a temporary capacity, the issues that seemed to predominate—they touch on something that John Leighton said—were the suitability of venues in the modern world and the associated environmental protections. We can come back to that in a moment.

What is the panel's assessment of the museums and galleries estate across Scotland, particularly those in the communities that we have talked about that are further afield? What challenges do the witnesses anticipate regarding the investment that will need to be made to ensure that those museums and galleries remain sustainable and safe for collections in future?

My next question relates to the surrounding commercial activity. How are decisions made about temporary exhibitions? Should they be crowd-pullers, should they have a cultural aspect to them, or should they be a mixture of both? How important are temporary exhibitions? I have seen some fabulous exhibitions at the national museum: on the Vikings, on Catherine the Great, and on Mary Queen of Scots, where I learned that my former colleague Lord James Douglas-Hamilton had a very good claim to the throne, which I drew to his attention—the lack of pursuit thereof is why the family head has remained on the family shoulders. If a temporary exhibition is not a big crowd-puller, does that have a peripheral impact on the gallery's overall budgeting and on expectations, or is the impact fairly fundamental?

I move on to catering. The national gallery and the national portrait gallery have destination catering. The catering regularly attracts my wife and me, and we go on to visit the collections on display in the galleries—I imagine that others do the same. If I was to be more critical of the national museum, I would say that I find its catering incredibly pedantic and uninteresting, with the exception of the Tower restaurant, although one needs a second mortgage to enter it.

How important, in the modern world, is the social proposition that surrounds a major gallery? There used to be just the retail proposition—the shop—but the social aspect seems to have moved far beyond that in terms of its importance to and the accessibility of galleries.

Sir John Leighton: Those are three good questions. I start with infrastructure. Nations tend to run the infrastructure of museums and galleries rather like I run my car—into the ground. Only when the infrastructure no longer works is there investment in a major project. One of the challenges is the on-going maintenance that is required by grade A and grade B listed buildings—indeed, by all manner of infrastructure—to keep our national and local collections intact.

There is no simple answer. You will find a wide variety of infrastructure across the country, from a state of benign neglect to state-of-the-art infrastructure. The tension between investment that comes on a project basis and the on-going

investment that is required to keep infrastructure going is a real issue.

We should pay tribute to the creativity that attracts great capital investment not just into cities such as Glasgow and Edinburgh but into smaller centres, too. Later this year, I will lend an exhibition to the burgh hall in Dunoon, which is an example of how, with immense creativity and innovation, a local community has brought a facility up to such world-class standards that it can take an exhibition that we are doing with the Tate in London. Others will have more to say about infrastructure.

The majority of visits to the national galleries are to the permanent displays. The temporary exhibition programme has the effect of raising profile, grabbing media attention and attracting all manner of support, including corporate support. However, we regard it very much as a way of activating the permanent collection rather than as a separate thing in its own right.

You asked how those programmes are decided upon. There is no single answer, because we see a need to create a balanced programme across a number of years. Some temporary exhibitions will be of world-renowned artists of blockbuster fame and some will be of obscure names that nobody has heard of. Although the more arcane subjects attract less attention, they are often the most revealing. For example, everybody sees the story of modern art as one of a journey to abstraction, but an exhibition that is coming up in the modern art gallery charts an alternative history of modern painting through realist and figurative painting. It is the first exhibition of that material since the 1920s. It will not necessarily have the blockbuster appeal of, say, an impressionist exhibition, but we see it as making a valuable contribution to our aim of not just throwing out the same diet to the public.

Talking of diet, we move on to catering. The wider point is that, whatever else museums and galleries are, they are visitor attractions. We offer a safe, social space where people can gather, in an era when such spaces are becoming less and less common. They are, if you like, an alternative to shopping malls. People expect shops and catering in museums and galleries. As you mention, alongside aspects such as trading, catering has become an important part of generating income, which keeps the whole show on the road.

Jackson Carlaw's comment about the national museum was slightly unfair, if I may say so. It touches on a tension, in that our cafes and restaurants, which are put out of house, tend to want to attract a certain kind of customer at a certain level of price, but having high-end lunching or dining experiences is perhaps at odds with attempts to broaden the demographic and cater for families and people who are visiting with lots of children. I think that the museum is a model of how we reach out to those audiences through the restaurants. It is a tension that we feel very strongly in our catering, but I am glad that you enjoyed—[*Laughter*.]

Dr Rintoul: I want to make a few points, but I will not repeat those made by John Leighton.

The point about facilities and infrastructure is well made. Joanne Orr and I have spoken about that a few times, and she might want to speak about it again in a moment. We would be delighted to lend material to local authorities and institutions across Scotland, but some of them do not have the right secure display cases, whereas in other areas, the buildings that the material would be displayed in are not alarmed. There are various such issues, some of which would not take a lot of money to fix. If we were to lend anything that was considered important, we would want the facility to meet what are known as Government indemnity standards, in terms of security and so on. There is certainly work to be done to identify how institutions can bring facilities up to standard so that we can all do more than we are doing at the moment in some areas. John Leighton is right to say that the approach in some places is a lot like running your car into the ground before you replace it.

On temporary exhibitions, again, our approach is similar to that of National Galleries Scotland. There is a host of reasons for mounting an exhibition. It is not at all a numbers game; there are different reasons for doing things. However, you would certainly not run a temporary exhibition programme to make lots of money. In fact, generally speaking, we would end up making money—in paper terms, at least—from a temporary exhibition only if we were to take it on tour internationally, so the international tour might, essentially, subsidise a showing here in Edinburgh.

In our case, we might have an exhibition to share the results of the work of our natural scientists or to highlight some potentially less popular or less well-known topics. We could have exhibitions on popular topics day in, day out, but we are not just about that; we want to have a balanced programme.

On catering, I am sorry that Mr Carlaw found our catering "pedantic and uninteresting"—those are the words that I wrote down. I must go back and speak to the team about that. I also find it surprising, because the national museum's brasserie was given a rave review in *The List*'s most recent food and drink guide. Perhaps he was there on an off day.

Of course, there is an element of comparing apples and pears. The national museum has an extremely broad audience and caters to far more families than, say, National Galleries Scotland does. Therefore, we have tried to offer a range of facilities, with a different offer for different visitors. That range is really what people are looking for. Some people, including tourists, want the high-end experience that the Tower restaurant offers—if you try to get a table there in the summer, you will see that it does very well—and we also offer something at the other end, in the balcony cafe, which is more for families who want something for the kids and those who want a sandwich or a coffee and a cake. At that end, the approach is more about dealing with volume while trying to keep up the quality. However, I will certainly pass Mr Carlaw's comments on to my team.

Jackson Carlaw: My comments were made to stimulate a bit of engagement. My children vote with their feet, though.

The Convener: I think that Joanne Orr wants to talk about infrastructure.

Jackson Carlaw: Before she does, I would like to follow up on the point about infrastructure by asking whether there has been a national audit of the museums and galleries infrastructure. That is particularly germane to the points that were being made earlier about facilities other than the major ones in the big cities, and how what is required of them in the years ahead is to be funded.

Joanne Orr: The last major audit was in 2002. Things have changed a little bit since then. We are considering the issue, prompted by collaborations with National Museums Scotland. Some 62 per cent of museums and galleries are in listed buildings, which raises investment issues. Over the past 20 or 25 years, the HLF has invested in lots of infrastructure. That investment tends to go to organisations that have the capacity to make applications, and it can be sporadic and project led, but there has undoubtedly been an improvement in infrastructure through that source.

There are still issues that will need to be dealt with—it is a constant process, because, as John Leighton said, a lot of museums and galleries are in listed buildings. We could examine the spaces where we could concentrate potential temporary exhibitions, but, to go back to John Leighton's point about thinking outside the box with regard to taking exhibitions to places that you might not normally think of and places where our audiences might expect to see them in the future, we would not want to narrow down the choices too much.

11:15

On the basic issue of capacity and skills in relation to temporary exhibitions, there are issues about loaning materials not only in terms of the physical space but in terms of people's capacity to be able to take the materials and the skills and ability to look after them for that period of time.

The collection symposium that I referred to is about a skills programme, but it is also about getting the key trust funders—the people who can provide funds specifically for that purpose—in front of the museum audience. There will be a group of about 60 interested people looking at the issues, and I hope that that will mean that a step forward can be taken. That is relevant to the local level, but we also have collections that are of international importance and, if we grow those skills here, we have the potential to take the collections on to an international stage, which is perhaps something that members considered in relation to the Burrell collection. Work is going on, but a lot more could be done. We need to keep the pressure on in that regard.

On catering, some interesting social enterprise models are starting to emerge from museums as they respond to pressured times. Catering is a core service and people are improving their catering. We offered a bundle of training around retailing that sold out straight away. There is an appetite for giving employees skills. We are seeing various models, including post office cafes. Particularly in the islands, coin-operated launderettes are proving to be popular and are generating income for the organisations. That approach has arisen from people being in tune with community need on the ground. People want the service, the museum gets funding and installs the facilities in its premises and people from the community come in, put their washing on and go to the museum.

The Convener: Fascinating.

Stuart McMillan: I have two brief questions. Earlier, Dr Scally and Mr Ellis spoke about European funding and the skills and resources shortage. I am keen to hear some further information from the panel on those points. My second question concerns genealogy, but I will ask that later.

Tim Ellis: As Lewis Macdonald noted, in this digital era, we are increasingly dependent on our information technology systems. However, in the public sector, it is difficult to find people who have the necessary skills and are prepared to work for us at a rate that is affordable. That is one of the key issues. There is also a set of issues around the fact that, in the past, we have been quite siloed in our approaches. For example, the archival sector has tended to take a traditional archival view of the digital world, but, increasingly, we find that we need to work with people such as data scientists, who can make things happen. However, data is the new gold, and prices follow

commensurately. The question is, how can we make the best use of our resources?

As we look ahead to Brexit, we in the conservation world have to take account of the fact that a significant number of our staff members come from Europe. We are already seeing difficulties with folk moving back to Europe or being unwilling to come to work for us. That worries me a little bit with regard to the short to medium term.

I can come back in on your genealogical question, but John Scally might want to come in at this point.

Dr Scally: On the issue of technical skills, recruiting the right people to work in the institution is a challenge—that is an important point. We have recently recruited a new head of digital for the National Library of Scotland, and it was difficult to get the right person with the right skills who was willing to work at the right salary, because, in Edinburgh, Glasgow and other places, recruiters are competing with lots of private companies that can leverage much more funding and offer more opportunities. However, we do our absolute best. As I said, we also use partnerships with other libraries, such as the National Library of Wales, the British Library and higher education libraries in Scotland. I also mentioned the EUDAT project, a horizon 2020 project that we are undertaking with the University of Edinburgh and National Galleries Scotland, which involves developing digital skills.

Was the other part of the question to do with Brexit?

Stuart McMillan: You mentioned European funding in your earlier comments.

Dr Scally: The issue is the collateral impact of Brexit on us, in terms of our partners. Normally, we would be seen as a partner that could bring content, creative thinking and various other things to partnership projects such as those conducted under horizon 2020, which is a £30 billion fund that is available across science, research and culture.

We have serious concerns about that but, at the moment, we are watching how it goes. The phone is not ringing as much as we expected it to with calls from partnerships and people looking to us to be an active partner in some of the projects that might be coming through.

A mood thing has also happened. The mood for working with Scottish and UK partners might be cooling. You probably heard the statistic that the European Commission released recently on the number of European projects that were being led and directed by UK institutions, a good portion of which were Scottish institutions. We get not just the work packages and the outputs but the overheads for managing such projects. The UK was way ahead of everyone else, as it was leading on 834 projects in terms of overheads, whereas Germany was leading on about 400. However, that position is in peril, given what has happened. There is no likelihood that that will happen again, post-Brexit. Although my evidence is anecdotal, I suggest that, in the period running up to Brexit, we will see the figure starting to reduce. The national institutions and many others face major issues in developing an enterprising and creative culture through projects and European partnerships. The national institutions will see themselves partnering with other groups in Scotland, such as libraries and museums. It is a big issue for us.

The Convener: Before Stuart McMillan goes on to his next question, I think that Richard Lochhead has a supplementary to ask before he leaves.

Richard Lochhead: It is not a supplementary; it is on a different point.

Stuart McMillan: The comments from Dr Scally and Mr Ellis were very interesting and will give the committee food for thought and further discussions.

Colleagues have asked questions relating to their own constituencies and I will do likewise. In the Greenock and Inverclyde constituency, it is reported that more than 600,000 people left Greenock's historical custom house building to go elsewhere. There are some genealogy facilities available at the Watt museum, but what more could Registers of Scotland do to promote genealogy through collaboration and joint working?

Greenock now receives more than 100,000 cruise liner passengers every year, a lot of whom spend the day in the Inverclyde area. That could be an untapped market, which could lead to additional resource for the local economy.

Tim Ellis: As well as the ScotlandsPeople website, which is very successful and to which we successfully migrated 1.2 million customers from the previous website, we have seen a significant increase in, for example, the number of sessions and income. Online is certainly one of the key ways of promoting genealogy.

We also make resources available in local family history centres. We have done that successfully in five areas around Scotland, including Kilmarnock, Hawick and Alloa. There is an opportunity to work with local authorities to put together a package to make some of the material available locally. This goes back to our earlier conversation about finding creative ways of working with local areas to make national resources available. Part of the benefit of the digital world is that we can do more of that.

Such things are feasible. As with other things, we would need to look into the particulars but, in principle, we are open to the notion of there being local family history centres that have online access to our materials.

Stuart McMillan: Have you already had a discussion with Inverclyde Council?

Tim Ellis: I am not aware that we have had that discussion, but I can check for you.

Stuart McMillan: Thank you.

The Convener: Tim Ellis mentioned genealogy centres. I say this as an Inverclyde person, but I find it extraordinary that the main exit point for migrants who went around the world does not have a genealogical facility. That is really quite extraordinary.

That gets to the nub of a question that a number of members have asked. We had a session on tourism last week and a number of the tourism stakeholders spoke about the extraordinary growth in Edinburgh, to the extent that it is almost in danger of being overwhelmed by the number of people coming in. Some of the national institutions will have contributed to that and will be benefiting from it. A number of members have asked how that economic success can be felt not just in Edinburgh but in other regions of Scotland.

Does Stuart McMillan want to come back in?

Stuart McMillan: I will host an event in Greenock in a couple of weeks at which VisitScotland's chief executive and two or three individuals from destination management organisations will speak. The subject that we have been discussing is one of the key reasons why I want to have that event.

I absolutely accept that Glasgow and Edinburgh will be huge attractions for many people but, if we are to have economic stability across smaller areas, it is important that they get the opportunity to gain some of the resource that is being generated. I published a paper on that a few months ago.

Tim Ellis: This goes back to the issue of partnerships. Some of the most successful developments in local archives have come about when people have worked in partnership with libraries, museums or galleries. There is a slight danger that we talk about different aspects when working across those organisations in local areas is important.

Archives and family history centres tend to be very small, and I go back to Joanne Orr's point about the need to find a way of building capacity at the local level so that people can access the funds that can help to take that work forward. There is probably a role for us and for organisations such as the Scottish Council on Archives, which has been doing some work with the National Archives on how to work with the Heritage Lottery Fund on building capacity. Capacity building in local skills so that people can access funding is critical, as is working in partnership across the piece.

The Convener: As it is almost half past 11, I will wind up the session. I thank all our witnesses for coming today. If there are any issues that have not been covered but which you would like to draw to the committee's attention, you are perfectly at liberty to submit written evidence, which we can consider at a later date.

11:28

Meeting continued in private until 11:30.

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