



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee

**Thursday 26 April 2018**

**Session 5**



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



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**Thursday 26 April 2018**

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**CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**11<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2018, Session 5**

**CONVENER**

\*Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

\*Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con)

Mairi Gougeon (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)

\*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)

\*Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)

\*Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP)

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)

\*Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Philip Donnelly (Scottish Film Ltd)

Allison Gardner (Glasgow Film Festival)

Ken Hay (Edinburgh International Film Festival)

Robert Livingston (Regional Screen Scotland)

James Mackenzie-Blackman (Eden Court)

Jaki McDougall (Film Hub Scotland)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Katy Orr

**LOCATION**

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)



# Scottish Parliament

## Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee

Thursday 26 April 2018

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:01]*

### Screen Sector

**The Convener (Joan McAlpine):** Good morning, and welcome to the 11th meeting in 2018 of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee. I remind members and the public to turn off their mobile phones. Any members who are using electronic devices to access committee papers should ensure that they are turned to silent. Apologies have been received from Stuart McMillan and Mairi Gougeon.

Before we start, I want to put on record our thanks to Dr Katy Orr, the senior clerk to the committee. This is her last day with the committee, as she is moving on within the Parliament. I thank her for her expertise and all her hard work on behalf of the committee over the years. I am sure that other members support that.

Our first item of business is the sixth evidence session of our inquiry into Scotland's screen sector. Today, we will focus on distribution, exhibition and audience development. With us we have Philip Donnelly, the head of education at Scottish Film Ltd; Ken Hay, the chief executive of the Edinburgh International Film Festival; Jaki McDougall, the chief executive of Glasgow Film and film hub Scotland; Robert Livingston, the director of Regional Screen Scotland; James Mackenzie-Blackman, the chief executive of Eden Court; and Allison Gardner, programme director and co-director of the Glasgow film festival.

I will start with a general question about the screen unit that is being set up. What should the screen unit be doing to support exhibition and distribution in the areas that you represent? I know that the screen unit proposal includes a commitment to invest £570,000 in addition to the £2.58 million that is already provided by Creative Scotland for distribution, exhibition and audience development. Where should that investment be targeted? Do you have any other observations about the screen unit and how it should support the various areas?

Does Ken Hay want to start?

**Ken Hay (Edinburgh International Film Festival):** I suppose that you are spoiled for choice.

I sat on the screen sector leadership group, representing the broader exhibition, distribution and audience development sector. A sub-group was set up, which I convened and chaired; it also included Jaki McDougall, Sambrooke Scott from film hub Scotland and Ian Brown from Film Mobile Scotland, which is now the Indy Cinema Group. In December 2017, we produced a report to feed into the broader screen sector leadership group discussion.

The SSLG report incorporated some of the sub-group report's recommendations, but it did not incorporate the report in full, partly because we went into so much detail, not only on ambitions and opportunities but on interventions that might be suitable for developing the exhibition sector in Scotland. We identified as a key point the fact that Scotland punches below its weight in terms of the number of cinema screens per head of population in comparison with countries such as France or New Zealand. We highlighted the opportunity to increase the number of screens—in particular, we looked at large parts of the country, especially peri-urban and rural areas, that are not served by regular cinema at all. There may be film clubs or societies, or the screen machine or other activities may go there, but there is no permanent cinema provision.

The nature of digital distribution and exhibition means that setting up a cinema is now a lot cheaper and much more feasible than it was 10 or 20 years ago. Our report set out a number of recommendations, the core of which was the need for an overarching strategy for the whole screen sector. One bit of that is incorporated in the screen unit proposal, as it talks about how the public sector can respond to the needs and opportunities, but it does not look at how the whole sector can work together. The inclusion of that aspect would be a welcome additional step. Secondly, our report recognised that, in order to develop cinema provision in Scotland, key infrastructure issues need to be considered. I know that the committee has been looking at the need for superfast broadband across the whole country, and I reiterate that we see that as a key priority, because it would facilitate cinema exhibition and domestic access to film and television content at home as well as in communal spaces.

That leads on to my final point, which is about the notion of cinema being important in its own right. People can now access film and TV in all kinds of ways, but the communal experience of sitting in a cinema, whether it holds 30, 300 or 3,000 people, is unique, and it is something that people want in parallel to the ability to access content through Netflix, BBC iPlayer or whatever. How do we ensure that people have access to that communal experience?

As the background report states, going to the cinema is the most popular form of cultural consumption in Scotland, and yet large parts of the country do not have basic access to it.

**Robert Livingston (Regional Screen Scotland):** I emphasise very much what Ken Hay has said. Although the commercial sector plans to build new cinemas in Scotland in the next five years, the indications are that they will be built entirely in towns and cities that already have cinema provision. The plugging of gaps in the past 10 or 15 years—through the Tower Digital Arts Centre in Helensburgh, the reopening of Campbeltown Picture House, Mareel in Shetland and so on—has come about through activity by a combination of the public and the voluntary sectors. Although one thinks of cinema as a commercial industry, we cannot leave it purely to the market to plug gaps in provision. As Ken Hay said, some of those gaps are quite flagrant; we are talking about perhaps one in 10 people in Scotland who have little or no access to our most popular cultural form of expression.

**Jaki McDougall (Film Hub Scotland):** While we are on the subject of the amount of funding that is available for film exhibition, I point out that the SSLG looked at the additional amount of funding that has been set aside, although I do not recognise the figure of £570,000 that the convener mentioned in her question. In the paper that Creative Scotland published last December, the figures for 2016-17 showed a spend of just over £3 million on film exhibition, so there is not really an increase. The funding that we looked at included significant amounts of money for the replacement of digital cinema equipment, which is now coming to the end of its life, plus money for training specifically for the exhibition sector and for audience development and film education. There was a bit of a shopping list—we identified eight or nine different areas in which investment was required.

**The Convener:** Okay. You dispute the figures in that document.

What is your view on the kind of expertise that the screen unit should have in distribution, exhibition and audience development?

**James Mackenzie-Blackman (Eden Court):** There is an opportunity within the screen unit. In our view at Eden Court, a priority is audience development and the unique opportunities for collaborations across art forms. We are Scotland's largest independent arts centre and we have two independent cinemas in our building, which serve the people of the Highlands. When we look across the art forms that we deliver at Eden Court, we see cinema generating young audiences in a way that we do not see through our live performance programme. For the screen unit, working

collaboratively with other art forms within Creative Scotland will be critical to successfully building audiences for the future.

**The Convener:** I have a question about content. The screen sector leadership group called for a strengthening of the connection between audiences and Scotland's screen heritage. How can that be achieved?

**Robert Livingston:** An example of the excellent things that are already happening is the work of curators such as Shona Thomson, who is working with the team at the moving image archive. That follows on from the schemes that the British Film Institute has been funding, with the focus over three years on town, country and coast. It is about taking those very good examples and ensuring that there is a structure and there are resources to spread those things and develop them. We know that that attracts audiences. People are really enthralled to see that material. Curators such as Shona Thomson are putting that work together, rather as James Mackenzie-Blackman suggested, with contemporary expressions—with beatboxers and new musicians. We are actually creating a new cultural form out of that material.

**Jaki McDougall:** It is important to recognise that the archive also holds work that was created last year. It is a collection of all the work from Scotland that the archive has the rights to hold.

**The Convener:** Is there a challenge in that the moving image archive in Glasgow is, as you say, a fantastic resource but it is more difficult for people in rural areas to get access to the exciting material that is being revived?

**Allison Gardner (Glasgow Film Festival):** If it is curated properly and taken out and marketed properly, that seems to work very well. In the work that we are doing with film hub Scotland, we are looking at how we create the hunger, create the audiences and get that material to audiences that do not have direct access. When we do that, the audiences will come, but there needs to be a proper structure, a proper strategy and proper funding to support that.

**The Convener:** You have talked about creating audiences. For the people out there who are not experts like you, will you explain how you go about creating and developing audiences? What does that entail?

**Jaki McDougall:** It is about talking to the audience and to people who are not coming along. In everything that drives the work that we do, there is that whole point about "nothing about us without us". There is no point in us putting something in front of people that they do not want, do not understand and cannot afford, so those are the things that drive a lot of our work. It is about speaking to people first, knowing the audience or

the non-audience and finding out what might excite them. Film can do anything.

**Robert Livingston:** I do not want to be trite, but if we build it, they will come. The biggest way to build audiences is to give people access. We see that with the screen machine, but we have also seen it with each of the new cinemas that have opened in the past few years. The Tower Digital Arts Centre in Helensburgh, which is a voluntary sector initiative that involved restoring a church, has had 48,000 admissions in its first year in quite a small community. The single most important thing is to create the physical access.

**Ken Hay:** So much of the archive is not available because it has not been digitised. Part of the strategy is to ensure that it is digitised, but that brings me back to the point about superfast broadband. If material is digitised, that is fine, but if it is available only to people who have superfast broadband, it sort of defeats the purpose. It is important to enthuse people and inspire them to access the material, but if they cannot access it, that defeats the purpose.

**The Convener:** Is the pace of digitisation fast enough?

09:15

**Ken Hay:** In 2007, the National Film Board of Canada developed a strategy that said that it would digitise its entire collection by 2013 and it did so. It had the resources to do that but, critically, it also had the strategy and the backing of Government. It saw that as a priority.

**The Convener:** Do you know how much of Scotland's collection is digitised?

**Ken Hay:** I honestly do not know the percentage. The last time that we looked, it was something like 15 per cent but I defer to somebody else to give the detail.

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I have some further questions about audience development. The national performance framework includes a target for increasing cultural engagement. We know from the household survey that there is a cultural gap, particularly between the poorest and more affluent communities. What is the role of cinema and film in trying to address that? Affordability and access have been mentioned. Do you have examples of successes in engaging areas of the audience that are more difficult to reach?

**Allison Gardner:** We work on that with all our colleagues. In Glasgow, we have a particular set of issues about engaging people, because we have a large percentage of people who are on lower incomes. We go out into the community and host film screenings for free, so we raise funding

to do that. It is important to ensure that we show the right films, so we talk first to people, including young people, about what they would like. Many young people will not come into town in Glasgow so we have to go to them.

There are many different challenges, but we have to consider each of them differently. There is not one answer. We have to break each challenge down into its components and determine what bits we can do. At Glasgow film festival, access is our mantra, so we have a free screening in the morning every day for everybody. Then, in the evening, we have a behind-the-scenes event that is aimed at young people getting into the industry. Again, that is free to everybody and it is, for example, British Sign Language interpreted.

There are many different ways in which we can break down issues, see what communities need and find out how we get to the audiences that do not attend or participate in culture.

**Claire Baker:** The Government's performance targets include cultural engagement. Is film recognised as playing a part in that?

**Allison Gardner:** All film is culture, even though I would not include, say, "Avengers: Infinity War" in the top films that we would show in our cinemas. However, cinema audiences are engaging in a cultural activity. For us, it is about moving them on to see films from across the world and from Scotland. That is how we get people interested. We cannot start by asking them to watch a five-hour, Filipino goat-herding black-and-white movie, although there are people who will come and see such films. We have to give people ways into those, so it is about the journey. For example, we have a free screening every Saturday morning for children and their parents and carers. That way, they get used to our cinema. We include subtitled films as a way of getting them used to that sort of thing and making them feel as if they own it.

**Robert Livingston:** There is a difficulty with saying whether cinema is an art form. If you look at the culture pages for several local authorities, you will see that film screenings are often listed under entertainment rather than under arts. We have a case to make.

As Allison Gardner said, it is a much broader spectrum, particularly when we start to move into the kind of digital access that is possible through event cinema, which is proving to be a way of introducing audiences in their own localities at an affordable price to theatre, dance, opera and music. The big problem that we have with that is that, at the moment, there is no Scottish content in that event cinema. There is a huge opportunity there to increase cultural access because, of course, Scottish Opera cannot tour a full-scale production to a small town such as Lanark.

However, there is a perfect venue in Lanark where people could watch a live performance from the Theatre Royal or the Festival Theatre if the infrastructure was available to make that possible.

**Ken Hay:** To pick up Claire Baker's point about the national performance framework, I think that film, cinema and television have to sit within that because it is about how we as a nation consume and participate in culture of different kinds. Obviously, we think that film and cinema is unique in that mix, but it is also the most popular form of culture for consuming, if you want to describe it in that way, and making. People can easily get involved in making film and TV for YouTube, themselves or their families in a way that was not possible 10, 20 or 30 years ago. The joining up of the production side and the exhibition or consumption side is a huge opportunity, because it breaks down barriers that used to exist. Cinema used to exist over here—other people did it, made things for it or ran them—and the producers used to sit over there. Again, as with the earlier point, we have the opportunity to knit together the whole sector to be much more integrated.

**Jaki McDougall:** I want to briefly point out that education plays a huge role in that, too.

**Claire Baker:** We had evidence from Dr Michael Franklin, whose argument was that we need greater data collection, better understanding of audience demand, project distribution and marketing spend, and more analysis. Do you agree? Does the screen unit have a role to play in that?

**Ken Hay:** Yes, and yes. What we do not have is that central point. We are all trying to do our own stuff and we have responsibility for ensuring that we understand what our organisations are up to. However, we do not have that central point that is not just for gathering data but has a critical overview of the intelligence around it, and develops policy on the back of that.

**James Mackenzie-Blackman:** Many of our organisations have sophisticated ticketing software, yet—this is a frustration with my organisation—we probably know only 70 per cent of the data that the tech could provide us with.

Additionally, with regard to how we report to Creative Scotland and our funders and how we use the data that we collect directly from audiences to evidence demand and see where people have come from, it would be really useful for our funders if we could look at what they are asking for and how they want it. I am pretty sure that we could all, including my organisation, provide richer data about who comes to our organisations, how far they travel and what they come to see. We should be encouraged to interrogate a bit more closely the opportunities for

cultivation across art forms, return attendance and new attendance.

**Jaki McDougall:** We should not forget that we should be collecting information on the impact that our art form has on the communities and audiences that we serve, which is huge. At the moment, we all have lovely collections of information on the difference that taking part in film screenings, events and activities has on people's lives, and how it genuinely transforms the way in which they think about the world. However, we do not have the collective information to make our argument to you.

**Robert Livingston:** Two years ago, in collaboration with the Social Value Lab in Glasgow, we did a survey that looked at the screen machine and 11 other kinds of community cinema, from a small film club in Orkney to a four-screen family-run cinema in Galashiels. We looked at the audience's attitudes to those cinemas and the results were overwhelmingly positive—there was a 95 per cent level of satisfaction across the board. The report is still available on our website. It was the first really in-depth indication of how important local cinema is to audiences and how they see it in the bigger picture of their community, and of how much their community is supported and, to some extent, defined by having that kind of facility.

**James Mackenzie-Blackman:** In response to that, I would say that the important message to get across this morning is that, although there needs to be a huge focus on young people in the education system—that is critical—one of the moments through the week when our building most comes alive is when we provide film screenings for older people, including those who are experiencing loneliness in their community and those who are living with the issues of rural poverty. Cinema can do extraordinary things to bring people together: it allows them to network, to share experiences and to talk. We must not get too bogged down in thinking about young people; although they are critical, cinema does many things for people of all different ages.

**Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con):** Good morning. We have had a fascinating and extensive inquiry. We have identified the burgeoning opportunity for film making, whether for the screen or the streaming opportunities that exist. We have heard about the shortage of studio capacity in Scotland, which there are plans to seek to address. At times, there has been talk about the big international productions that we can bring here, but a silver thread running through the inquiry is the creative talent that exists on the ground in Scotland and for the making of small, low-budget films. Such films are an art form and



entity in their own right, but they are often a platform and an opportunity for future success.

I am interested in the role of film festivals in that dynamic. Do film festivals see themselves as a platform to promote low-budget films and new, exciting creative talent, or are film festivals themed around a narrative idea for which content is selected to fit, irrespective of whether it supports the new creative opportunities that are being developed? What is film festivals' responsibility in that equation?

**Allison Gardner:** I will not speak for the Edinburgh International Film Festival, but I will speak for the Glasgow film festival and the other festivals—there are another 69 film festivals that take place across Scotland as a result of the burgeoning interest in film. We support a lot of local young film makers. For example, our closing gala film at this year's Glasgow film festival was "Nae Pasaran", which is the story of the East Kilbride workers who stood up against Pinochet. That hugely affecting film was well attended. It was our first documentary feature.

Our job is to give films a platform and a lift. We had the world premiere of Karen Gillan's film, too. She chose to premiere it with us even though she was going on to do a succession of other film festivals. The film was shot in Glasgow and had a Glasgow crew.

Our job is to give a focus on such films; we also focus on first and second-time directors from across the world, who can win our audience award.

We have to be careful with film festivals. They have to be curated. Part of our job is to appeal to a broad church. There are films such as "Die Hard" that are shown on the top of an abandoned building, which offers a cultural experience; there are also those films from first and second-time directors. We have to make sure that we give a view of what is happening in world cinema, as well as give a platform to local film makers. I think that most film festivals do that; I know that the Edinburgh International Film Festival is keen on first and second-time directors, too.

**Ken Hay:** In Edinburgh, we try to knit together a wide range of things. We, too, have a commitment to new and emerging talent and voices from across the world, but we have particular responsibility to those from Scotland and the United Kingdom. Each year, with the support from the Scottish Government expo fund, we run talent lab, which brings in 30 new and emerging writers, producers and directors. About 15 of those will be from Scotland, and they get to mix with their peers from the rest of the UK and internationally.

Talent lab has been running for eight years. We have seen steady progression, with people coming

back with projects that they have completed on the back of their participation in talent lab. They have made the connections and developed their understanding, and then they have brought back their films to Edinburgh in later years.

Our industry events programme attracts about 700 delegates each year from across the UK and internationally, and a critical element of that is the talent development programmes. The new and emerging talent gets exposure and the opportunity to network with the established industry players.

All of that is about the final bit of the equation: the audiences. The beauty of a film festival is that you have an intensive moment in time when you bring together the film makers with the audiences and there is direct dialogue between the two. It happens a lot of the time through the rest of the year, but during the film festival we are cramming in about 120 new features over the course of 11 days. Most of those will have guests from the film participating in question-and-answer sessions and introducing the films, but also providing master classes, seminars and so on with the new and emerging talent. It is very much about knitting together those different facets. Going back to the question about whether it is one or the other, it is probably a mixture of both, and trying to ensure that all the different sides get the best deal.

09:30

**Jackson Carlaw:** You mentioned "Avengers: Infinity War". I imagine that the marketing budget for that is probably equivalent to that for about 50 years' worth of independent film production in Scotland and it is not going to need a helping hand. How vital is film festival access and promotion to film makers in the independent film sector, in terms of marketing spend that they are not directly involved in themselves? In other words, the budget for a lot of those films is so little that it is almost impossible to market them. Is it vital for those film makers to access film festival screening in order to have an opportunity to promote the movie at all?

**Allison Gardner:** It is essential, but it is not just film festivals that are essential; for example, after the festival we toured "Nae Pasaran" around Scotland. The festival is about giving that profile and helping hand, but we then show the film in our types of cinemas and give it a run, as well. Films that Edinburgh and Glasgow festivals premiere will then have a presence in the rest of the UK. Our colleagues at Home in Manchester and the Watershed in Bristol see that we have had faith in those films, and we are a respected organisation, so they will ask, "Do you think that my audience will like it? Can I take it for a week?", and we can build that sort of momentum around particular films. Access to the festival is essential.

**Jackson Carlaw:** Is there a formal relationship between the response that a small independent film gets at festivals and the larger multiscreen opportunities, or is that really an accidental thing that might happen, rather than something that has a process underpinning it?

**Allison Gardner:** We do not have a formal process, and I am sure that Edinburgh does not either, but what we do is to introduce the films to distributors at our industry days, for example, and make sure that the film is put in front of them so that they can see the audience reaction. People may perhaps go and buy the film after that. We talk to our colleagues at film hub Scotland and say things such as, “Your audience will really enjoy this. ‘Nae Pasaran’ is a film for everybody.” That film is a great example of that. It is about getting the right people in the right room at the right time to watch films that otherwise will have no cachet elsewhere. Our business—exhibition and distribution, for example—is very London-centric. After the London film festival, I would say that Edinburgh and Glasgow are the next two biggest film festivals in the UK. In that sense, we are giving a platform to a lot of new work in our country.

**Robert Livingston:** It is very difficult for anybody in Scotland to influence the content of the multinational multiplexes. That is why looking at the pattern of cinemas across Scotland can be deceptive. If the only access that people in large parts of the central belt have is to those multiplexes, they are simply not going to see the kinds of films that we have been talking about. There will not be that interface, because those cinemas are programmed in London, if not in New York, and very few small-scale films of the kind of that we are talking about will achieve that breakthrough.

**Jackson Carlaw:** I have a final theme that I want to explore. Do you think that the public think that film festivals are elitist? Do they see them as accessible? Are the audiences who go to film festivals the same as those who go to see the kind of blockbuster multiplex movies as well? You are nodding your heads. I am relieved, because I did wonder.

**Allison Gardner:** We do an independent economic impact analysis of our audience through interviews. A lot of them go to the multiplexes, for example, or have a Cineworld unlimited card, as well as coming to the film festival. There is a lot of crossover, and I imagine that it is much the same for our colleagues in Edinburgh. There are people who will take those chances. Obviously, it is different for us because we are in the two big cities in Scotland, but audiences will take chances to see interesting and different things at a film festival.

I would say that our film festival is not elitist in any way. We offer free screenings in the mornings for everybody, we have free events in the evening and, for example, our 15-to-25 card holders can get all festival tickets for £5.50. We are looking after those people who perhaps do not have a lot of money to spend.

**Jackson Carlaw:** I was not suggesting that it is elitist, by the way. I was just trying to tackle the point.

**Allison Gardner:** I know, but it is definitely not.

**James Mackenzie-Blackman:** With the films that we programme for the Inverness film festival, if a film has specific themes that resonate with a certain aspect of our community—for example, if we programme cinema that specifically talks to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex community—we know that it will turn up to see the film.

That relates back to the question about whether we feel that we have responsibilities to specific groups. Yes, we do. We see that cinema can provide a voice to parts of the community who would otherwise not be heard and would not see themselves reflected through arts and culture. That is certainly true in parts of the country where diverse voices are perhaps not being heard in other arenas. That is critical, and we take it really seriously, especially as an organisation that is in receipt of public money.

**Robert Livingston:** I should put in a word for local film festivals. By coincidence, we will be celebrating ours in Stirling over the next couple of days. In smaller communities such as that, we absolutely have to appeal to a broad community. Dunoon is an example of a film festival that has very quickly built up a broad local audience for some quite adventurous and challenging programming.

Local film festivals are prime ways of building audiences compared with, say, music or literature festivals, where people who are time poor tend to go and see the things that they know they are going to enjoy, such as Ian Rankin or a band that they like. In film festivals, people take risks. That is their great strength.

**Jackson Carlaw:** It is interesting. There is a slight irony in that, if the audiences are the same people, the larger chains might find that confidence in other productions would be vindicated because people do want to see them.

I have a final question. Please do not answer it by saying, “All of those”, because that would be the easy answer. How do you judge the success of a film festival? Is it about attendances? Is it about feeling that you have achieved the right balance of content? Is it about international or

local recognition that it has been a big thing? Is it about attracting masses of international interest because a particular individual attended?

You will say, "All of those", but, ultimately, what is the thing on which a creative board will judge a film festival to have been successful?

**Allison Gardner:** I am not a big fan of numbers or raw data. I do not like the bums-on-seats analysis, because that is nothing to me. The numbers that are important to me are things such as percentages of screen capacity. I would like every screening that we have at the Glasgow film festival to be 75 per cent full, because then both the audience and the film makers have a great experience. There is not much point if we have a film maker visiting and there are only two people there. In that case, we think, "Oh my goodness—what are they going to ask?" It is about the quality of the experience for both the audience and the film makers.

At our festival, the press sit in with the audience, and films may be reviewed marginally better because the press are with a paying audience. If the film is a comedy, they will think it is funnier than they might have thought if they were sitting in a cinema with just two other critics, for example.

**Jackson Carlaw:** We feel like that in the chamber here sometimes.

**Allison Gardner:** There are lots of different measures. We also look at the diversity and breadth of our audience, and at the depth and breadth of our programme. Those are the things by which we judge our festival. For example, at GFF, we had films from 51 countries, 77 UK premieres and 13 world premieres. Those things are really important to us, although they are not essential.

It is also about the quality of the experience. Despite the snow—we were hit by the beast from the east right in the middle of the festival, which was exciting—95 per cent of people said that they were likely to come next year. Those are the most important things to us. It is not just whether 800,000 people attended. That would be interesting, but it would not be productive.

**Ken Hay:** It is about reputation and the relationship with a range of audiences: the public, press and media, the industry, and the film makers. Of course, there is another audience, which is made up of the funders and the other financial stakeholders, and they ask for numbers. Their way of explaining film festivals involves a question of how many bums we can put on seats. The problem with that is that it is quite a reductive approach; it is one that is more interested in numbers than in the quality of the presentation or the experience or in the artistic integrity of the event.

Part of the dialogue that we have been having over a number of recent years with BFI and Creative Scotland has involved trying to raise their heads above the pure accounting aspect of it and getting them to think more about quality and reputation.

**James Mackenzie-Blackman:** I was going to make that point. There has to be a synergy between the way in which we measure success from a qualitative and quantitative perspective and the perspective of our funders.

**Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP):** On Saturday, I am taking my son and 10 of his friends to the cinema in Elgin to see "Avengers: Infinity War". He is unbelievably excited—as you say, film is very popular. I will ask him to look out for the Borders and Edinburgh, of course, but I suspect that that will not be his priority.

The cinema that I go to is in Elgin, as I said. Earlier, there was some conversation about how we can reach out to all parts of Scotland with the various dimensions of screen that you were speaking about. Can you paint a picture for me of what the perfect model would look like? What do the other countries that were mentioned do in relation to cinemas in rural areas? Clearly, in my area, there are film clubs and societies as well as the cinema in Elgin. However, there must be a better model.

**Allison Gardner:** Norway—I love Norway—has a fantastic model of regional cinemas, with local people owning bits of the community cinema. People there are very well served, as they are in most of the Scandic countries, which have good models that give people access to films, including films from their own country. Denmark is very strong in supporting Danish films in its cinemas.

**Robert Livingston:** Through the funding that is provided to Regional Screen Scotland and the screen machine, through the work of the Indy Cinema Group, which has already been mentioned, and through voluntary initiatives such as the Tower Digital Arts Centre in Helensburgh, small and island communities have access to new releases. That simply does not happen in the rest of the UK. Part of my model would involve extending that. Film clubs are wonderful and important, but the general audience wants to see the new releases that they are hearing about in the media and that their children are pestering them about. It would be good to extend that ability. As Ken Hay says, the technology is available and the level of investment that is required is not horrendous. Further, in many cases, there are venues that could become digital cultural hubs that would not just screen films but use the technology for other kinds of opportunities, and could also be used for live performances, to ensure that we still

have an appropriate level of live touring performances in the country.

**Philip Donnelly (Scottish Film Ltd):** Colleagues overseas often ask for a copy of our education policy on film. However, we do not have one and, as far as I am aware, there is none in prospect. The Scandic countries have been mentioned. The title of the Swedish policy for film education is “film for joy and learning”. It was quite illuminating to see that the initial focus is on the joy and the pleasure that come from cinema, and that how it fits into the education system was the follow-up thought. I would dearly love to see Scotland go down that route.

We do not really know what to do with film in the Scottish curriculum at the moment. There are some small inlets for it, but there is nothing structural. Scottish film education is not engaging with local authorities willy-nilly; we are discussing with local authorities whether they would like to introduce our programme of film education. If we get the go-ahead from the local authority, we are then directed to schools. Again, we are doing that in a structured way. We could simply go to Glasgow's 30-odd secondary schools—I cannot remember how many primary schools there are, but there will be something like four or five times that—but, unless you are doing something in a coherent and cohesive way, you are not going to get very far.

09:45

The emphasis on working in the clusters comes up time and again in current education policies. Compared with England, Scotland is blessed in that we know pretty much with surety that all the children in primary schools will feed into the secondary school that they live near. If we ignore that and just deal with random primary schools rather than secondary schools, we will not really achieve anything. We try to work with the clusters. We work with secondary school staff and the associated ring of primary schools, and we have had some notable successes as a result of that.

Quite out of the blue, we were asked to put in an application to be an awarded career-long professional learning institution or organisation by the General Teaching Council for Scotland. There was a submission of around 100 pages—what else would there be? After a short time, we got back the verdict that the GTCS liked what we were doing, but it was not sure what we were doing in detail. We therefore took the CLPL people from the GTCS into one of the big secondary schools outside Glasgow, which put on a presentation for them on what it had achieved and how the learning of children—from bright, high-achieving children down to children who had been disengaged from the curriculum and had suddenly

lit up—was progressing across the board. The briefing questions that we were given included questions about how we encourage children to look at film and how we harness the joy that it gives them. Once teachers—not specialist teachers, but teachers across the curriculum and across all primary school levels—start to use film in the classroom more, that brings out a response from children. The better children and the ones who have been struggling light up to it.

A key point is that the moving image transcends print. As we know, a number of children inherently have problems with deciphering squiggles on a page—print, but it is very inclusive to show them a film. There is an example that we quite often give: if people are given an A4 sheet of paper with a joke three quarters down the page, the quick learners and fast readers will get to the joke first and laugh, the middle ones will then laugh, and then the rest will say, “Ah, hmm, haha,” just to join in. However, if something is on screen, they will all get it instantly. That is a very inclusive way of bringing children in.

We use film not from the point of view of teaching it in schools; we are addressing literacy, because we can discuss moving image texts on screen far easier.

I wanted to get my tuppenceworth in on that.

**Ken Hay:** I want to go back to Mr Lochhead's question about the ideal and what we were trying to do with the sub-group report. We cannot create a network of cinemas, but we can ask how we can best facilitate and support the development of that network. The approach was very much about encouraging, supporting, inspiring and facilitating local communities to take ownership.

Campbeltown, Helensburgh and the Birks Cinema in Aberfeldy provide very good examples of models, but in the north-east, cinemas have vanished over the past 20 to 30 years, although we would expect communities such as Inverurie, Kintore or Kemnay to have access to their own cinema provision. Currently, they do not, and people have to go into Aberdeen or travel to Elgin or Inverness. That means that cinema is hugely inaccessible to a large number of people. Shunting a family 20 to 30 miles across the country to go to the cinema is very expensive and time consuming, and it assumes that they have a car.

Therefore, it is about how we put in place both the necessary hardware, which includes the digital network capability and the kit, and the software, which is the people skills element and who runs it and is responsible for programming and marketing film education activity, event management and so on.

We presented an integrated package that would allow the development of the sector over the next

10 years to increase the number of cinema screens per head of population and, on the audience development side, encourage people to go to the cinema more often. Again, people in other parts of the world go to the cinema more often than they do in the UK. Each year, as a nation, we happily go along to a film such as “Avengers: Infinity War” and a couple of other big blockbusters, but a relatively small number of people go to Eden Court, Glasgow Film Theatre, Edinburgh Filmhouse, Belmont Filmhouse or Dundee Contemporary Arts. The issue is how we encourage people to see more.

**Richard Lochhead:** Hopefully, more kids can have their 10th birthday parties in villages and towns around Scotland to see blockbusters. First, how easy is it to show recently released films? You said that that is quite possible in Scotland. Secondly, where would communities go if they want to have a cinema? Who would they contact?

**Robert Livingston:** Us—Regional Screen Scotland

**Richard Lochhead:** No offence, but how would people know that?

**Robert Livingston:** By us talking to as many of the national agencies as possible that are involved in town centre regeneration and community work and making sure that their members, such as Business Improvement Districts Scotland and development trusts, are aware that we are there to give them support. We have been building that network over the past couple of years.

On the first part of your question, the projection equipment is key, because the distributors insist that new releases must be shown on technology with an electronic lock, so screenings cannot be done using conventional DVD or Blu-ray projection. Those projectors are expensive, but they are coming down in price and using them also means that film makers have their own films shown in the best possible circumstances.

Thanks to Into Film, we have been showing “Dunkirk” to first years in a number of schools around the Highlands and Islands. The impact on those kids of seeing that film as Christopher Nolan intended—in a proper cinema, with fabulous surround sound—is tremendous.

A lot of council and leisure trust-run venues in Scotland are perfectly capable of hosting digital equipment. The Indy Cinema Group physically tours the equipment in the old way that the Highlands and Islands film guild used to into places such as the Nevis centre in Fort William. The issue is having the willpower on the ground, and we have been working with the networks and the agencies to stimulate interest.

**Richard Lochhead:** How much would it cost?

**Robert Livingston:** It would cost £30,000 to £40,000 to get a projector and to set up the equipment. However, if that operates for two or three days a week, the return comes quickly.

**James Mackenzie-Blackman:** It is important to remind ourselves of the role of local authorities and leisure trusts in understanding how arts and culture can help to regenerate villages, towns and cities. Across the country, there is disparate understanding of the important role that that can play in making sure that communities are vibrant.

**Jaki McDougall:** Once Robert Livingston and Regional Screen Scotland have sorted out the infrastructure of how you get your cinema up and running, film hub Scotland is in place to advise on, for example, audience development, marketing and programming. There are support mechanisms in place.

**Robert Livingston:** And they are integrated.

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** Philip Donnelly made an important point about education, which I want to explore. As a committee, we visited Northern Ireland Screen a couple of months ago. We were all struck by how one of its three core objectives is to do with education. It is geared more towards the creation of a workforce for its film and TV sector, but it has a strong ethos and a clear objective on which it is delivering by making sure that it is integrated with the education system, including by working with schools. Its approach seems to be working successfully. What are your thoughts on the role of the new screen unit in delivering such an education strategy for Scotland? What should that be?

**Philip Donnelly:** I looked through the screen unit proposals and searched for terms such as “teaching” and “education”. There is not a lot of there, and a lot of what there is is repeated, so, to be honest, I was disappointed. I have not been part of the discussions about the screen unit; I have been doing my day job and have not been involved in them. However, there are a few things that we have to consider. Do we want simply to create another subject in the curriculum? I do not think so. There are already some units there, but I do not think that that is the imperative.

As a nation, we would be missing a trick if we did not follow Northern Ireland’s lead. People there have been doing this for many years. I was out there back in 2005, visiting Bernard McCloskey, who may be who the committee, too, visited—or was it the Nerve Centre? The fact that those people have been on the go for years and are still there makes the point that what they are doing is valued. They are looking not at children learning to make film but at children using film, and the digital technologies that go with it, to learn. I went to

Armagh, which is one of the centres for film in Northern Ireland. There were all sorts of digital technologies going on there, a lot of which involved filming. For example, they were controlling a drone that was flying around buildings, and they were asking how that could be tapped into commercially in areas such as real estate or tourism, or how film could be used in their projects instead of still images on paper. There is a lot that we could do on that.

We would then have to think about who would deliver such skills in Scotland, to allow schools to engage with them. For 13 years, I was head of information and communications technology at the University of Glasgow, and we focused on the use of film and moving images. From the youngest BEd or postgraduate primary or secondary teachers to those coming in for the MEd, MSc and chartered teacher programmes or for general in-service work, there was a tremendous willingness when they saw what could be done. At first, people in teaching were very suspicious about whether it was just trivial or what we might call edutainment. The answer is no. We have seen a lot of evidence coming through of children who have been struggling to have their voices heard in classes in which their peers are more literate, as far as reading print is concerned, being emboldened and emancipated by the use of film so that they are able to come out and make judgments. Day and daily, teachers have reported to us that that is really working and that they would like to see more of it.

We would have to give all teachers, as part of their initial teacher education, access to the basics of film education and the techniques and approaches that could be used. As I have mentioned, we are working with the GTCS in the CLPL forum, in which we are looking at delivering courses for schools not just willy-nilly but in a focused way, and in a cluster. We want people in that cluster then to go ahead and connect with film education as part of their professional updates and, we hope, to do awards at master's level. When I was at Glasgow, I worked with Scott Donaldson in developing modules for the chartered teacher programme that were voted to be the most interesting and relevant modules in that programme—much to my embarrassment, because we had just been called in to do a couple of infill, optional modules. People who have been on that course are still using and developing their use of film.

There is a big job out there, and it will not be undertaken overnight. Perhaps I could give the committee a fuller answer at some other point, but I am looking at the clock.

**The Convener:** I am looking at the clock, too.

**Philip Donnelly:** If you start a lecturer speaking—

**Jaki McDougall:** Creative Scotland was also involved in the drafting of a European framework for film education, which is the model that we have. I have problems with part of it, but it spells out the three Cs—creative, cultural and critical skills—and thereby provides a framework in which we could put the great work that takes place in cinemas and at Discovery film festival at DCA, along with the work on film making through film access network Scotland, such as at GMAC Film, Screen Education Edinburgh and so on, and the work at universities. It provides a framework in which we could look at a matrix of provision, whereby every child could have access to film making and screening.

10:00

**Ken Hay:** It goes back to the earlier point about the danger of looking at all these things independently. One of the key recommendations that we had was about developing an integrated single strategy for the whole of the screen sector, which would allow us to see how the education part sits in with the skills, talent development, exhibition, audience development and production parts. The collaborative proposal is the articulation of how the public sector is responding to some of those things, but it is not the whole strategy. It talks about the extra £10 million as opposed to talking about how the whole sector, including the public sector, can work together. There is a next stage of work beyond that proposal to develop a strategy to lead the future screen unit—whatever it ends up being called—and the sector.

**Ross Greer:** Should the sort of clear education objective that Northern Ireland Screen has be one of the core objectives of the screen unit?

**Jaki McDougall:** Absolutely.

**Ken Hay:** Yes.

**Allison Gardner:** Yes.

**James Mackenzie-Blackman:** Yes. It should be about education in its wider context, not just in schools. In our digital team in my organisation, we have a cohort of young people who are predominantly on the edges of the formal education sector and who have a kinaesthetic approach to learning. In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, they would have been mechanics, but now they are in a digital industry that did not even exist a decade ago. We are helping young people who are passionate about film and screen to become animators, film makers and editors. We need to think about the opportunities in the screen sector across the broad frame of education and training. Once we have trained those people, we also need

to think critically about talent retention. In my organisation, we train young people, who become exceptionally well-skilled, but they then disappear out of the country.

**Philip Donnelly:** Yesterday, I received on my desk an interim report—I have not had a chance to read it fully—by Professor Aline-Wendy Dunlop from the University of Strathclyde, who is a recognised authority on dyslexia and Asperger's. She has been working with a school in Glasgow that caters for children with those disabilities and looking at how film can make a big difference in their education. I agree entirely that that is another really valid course of action. It is not just about mainstream primary and secondary schools. There are children who become disadvantaged or disinterested later, and film can do a lot to bring them back on board, not as a sop to them or a way of coping with them, but by developing some self-esteem and ambition.

**Ross Greer:** Do I have time for one further question, convener?

**The Convener:** We have run slightly over time—we always have that problem—and one more member would like to ask a question. If the panel is okay with this, we will run over for ten minutes. I see that witnesses are fine with that. I ask for answers to be as succinct as possible.

**Ross Greer:** Thanks, convener. The BBC's "The Social" project has been raised with us a number of times, mainly by the BBC, which is very proud of it as an interesting example of bringing folk into the industry who would not otherwise have been given that chance. Ken Hay said that it is now far easier than it has ever been to create content. What is the role for the existing big players in the industry—most obviously, broadcasters such as the BBC—in not only bringing young people into the industry as a workforce but growing audiences and engaging with young people? "The Social" was created to engage with young people who will not watch TV or listen to radio, because that is not how they consume content any more. What is the role of the big traditional players—the broadcasters—in growing the audiences of people who will not engage with traditional mediums?

**Ken Hay:** Obviously, the BBC's iPlayer is an amazing platform, which started as a catch-up service but has the potential to be so much more. The sub-group's conversations have included how far the iPlayer could become a platform for people to access a broader range of content. The BBC was very positive about that, although clearly it has to get its head round the fact that it might not own the content and would have to pay for it—in effect, it would be the Netflix model but on a different scale. We look forward to that conversation, because the iPlayer does the digital

bit in a way that none of us can do easily on our own. It has reach that we do not have, and it is subsidised through the licence fee. The issue is how to utilise the iPlayer so that it is more than reruns of "Eastenders" or "Holby City" and allows people to access a broader range of content.

I understand that the changes to the iPlayer through which people now have to log on mean that it has become geographically sensitive, which means that different programme strands and batches of content can be curated, depending on geography, genre or interest. As the BBC goes further, people could type in, "I am more interested in X, Y or Z," and get that kind of content. That is a big opportunity.

**Jaki McDougall:** Away from the iPlayer, but in relation to the new BBC channel, the BBC has been talking to us and others about having more arthouse films on TV—which we would welcome as a way to grow our audiences—more local content and how to take bigger brands from Edinburgh and Glasgow festivals and make them more accessible. Those discussions are in the early days.

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** We have touched on connectivity. Does the poor connectivity in rural areas hold you back from delivering live-to-digital activity? How are you responding to the rapidly growing digital age? Online streaming seems to be much more popular than live performances with younger audiences.

**Robert Livingston:** The audiences for conventional cinema are increasing, rather than dropping. We have seen our best year ever for the screen machine, with a more diverse age range of audience. Films such as the remake of Stephen King's "It", "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle" and "Black Panther" hit the hardest-to-get age range. The extent to which young people stay away from films is sometimes exaggerated. Curiously, the screen machine has a small advantage as a result of the lack of connectivity, as there is less piracy. If people want to see new releases, they have to come to us, as it is too difficult to download them. Connectivity has pros and cons. However, high-quality connectivity is essential to deliver content to more remote communities, and the sooner it is in place, the better.

**Rachael Hamilton:** Are smaller organisations less likely to be able to deliver cultural content?

**Allison Gardner:** No—definitely not. Through the expertise that is now based in film hub Scotland, we advise on programme. The bigger organisations feed in our knowledge about what is great to show and what audiences might like and film hub Scotland then disseminates that. For example, that might be about what we saw at the

Cannes film festival, which the smaller organisations cannot go to. Knowledge is shared a lot more across Scotland to ensure that everybody—even a one-man band in a smaller organisation—understands the landscape. That is why film hub Scotland was set up, as part of the BFI network. It is about sharing and training and giving people the tools by having at their back the knowledge and experience of the bigger organisations such as the Filmhouse, the DCA, Eden Court or Glasgow Film Theatre.

**Rachael Hamilton:** Is it important for film hub Scotland to feed into the screen unit?

**Allison Gardner:** It is essential—the screen unit would not be doing its job without film hub Scotland, which covers the whole of Scotland. We are a UK player as well, as we have responsibility for training across the UK and we talk to the other network members.

**Robert Livingston:** The Indy Cinema model is helpful in places such as Helensburgh and Campbeltown, as the cinema does all the business of dealing with distributors, booking films and delivery, so that local volunteers can concentrate on the other cultural activities that the buildings are capable of hosting, including outreach, education and live performance. Put together, those elements are quite a good jigsaw of support for smaller organisations.

**Rachael Hamilton:** I am interested in your point about physical access becoming more popular. In the new digital era, how can we protect live performances and touring?

**Robert Livingston:** I come back to my point about getting Scottish content into what is called the event cinema model. The best way to make the most economic impact from a given production is if it can double its audience through places that it cannot get to physically and build the brand and art form interest, as National Theatre live is doing. If I was going to introduce to opera a person who had never seen it, I would take them first not to a live performance but to a relay, which would be really focused—the person would see exactly what is happening and the words are all there. The person would then understand opera as an art form and I would take them to a live performance to see how exciting it can be when the singer is sharing the same space.

**James Mackenzie-Blackman:** Opportunities are essential to connect the people who experience cinema to live performance. The wider cultural sector needs to ensure that that is a fundamental part of the future work of the screen unit.

**Rachael Hamilton:** I am a Galashiels cinema-goer—I love it, as do my children. The cinema there is an asset to the Borders, because there is

no other, other than the odd film at the Hawick hub, but most people tend to have seen those productions way before they are screened there. How do we reach future generations? How do we promote physical access when it is not affordable, particularly for lower-income households? I do not believe the figures that say that physical access is increasing—how is that, if it is not necessarily affordable?

**Robert Livingston:** Access is increasing, in the sense that more venues have opened in Scotland and most of them keep ticket prices at a fairly low level. The screen machine is run by a Creative Scotland regularly funded organisation, and we have given a commitment that ticket prices will not rise over the next three years. Similarly, they did not rise for the previous three years. ONFife has helped film screenings to happen in places such as Lochgelly and Cowdenbeath. The Odeon at Dunfermline is just down the road but, as you said, it is not always possible for a family of four to afford to go there. Screenings in community centres cost £3 or £4 or are sometimes free. As James Mackenzie-Blackman said, there is a bit of a postcode lottery with regard to which local authorities and trusts see that as an opportunity. Perhaps the screen unit can ensure that access is more uniform across Scotland.

**James Mackenzie-Blackman:** Perhaps we can be braver and remind audiences who have subscriptions for Netflix, Disney live and Amazon prime—as my family does, with two children under the age of five—that the sum of those monthly direct debits could probably get a family of four to the cinema at least three times.

**The Convener:** I thank all our witnesses. We will now move into private session.

10:14

*Meeting continued in private until 11:00.*



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