OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

DRAFT

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Thursday 18 September 2025

Session 6

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Thursday 18 September 2025

CONTENTS

CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
23rd Meeting 2025, Session 6

CONVENER

*Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)
Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab)
*Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)
*Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Rachael Browning (Art Fund)
Lewis Coenen-Rowe (Culture for Climate Scotland)
Alison Nolan (Scottish Library and Information Council)
Tamara Rogovic (Scottish Artists Union)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

James Johnston

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Thursday 18 September 2025

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:04]

Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2026-27

The Convener (Clare Adamson): Good morning, and a warm welcome to the 23rd meeting of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee in 2025. We have received apologies from Neil Bibby.

Our first agenda item is to continue taking evidence as part of our pre-budget scrutiny for 2026-27. We are joined in the room by Rachael Browning, director of programme and policy at Art Fund; Lewis Coenen-Rowe, culture/SHIFT manager at Culture for Climate Scotland; Alison Nolan, chief executive officer at the Scottish Library and Information Council; and Tamara Rogovic, president of the Scottish Artists Union. A warm welcome to you all.

I will start by asking about the budget scrutiny so far. We have continually been talking about alternative funding approaches to support culture and the heritage sector. Among the themes that have been covered are multiyear funding, cross-portfolio working and the percentage for the arts scheme. Could you give us a view on what progress has been made here? What alternative approaches should the Scottish Government be pursuing to support the sector more effectively, specifically with the climate change challenges that have been placed on the sector?

Rachael Browning (Art Fund): Good morning, and thank you for having us here. From Art Fund's position, the caveat is that any alternative models should not be a substitute for core funding, which we view as critical to the viability and future development of the sector.

Anything under discussion needs to sit alongside a sustained commitment to core funding. When it comes to alternative models, we are interested in the idea of a tourist tax, or visitor levies. In Dundee, for example, the opening of the Victoria and Albert museum has brought a huge amount of additional income into the city through visitors. We are interested in how to expand that, and how Dundee and the cultural organisations there could benefit from that additional tourist income.

Tamara Rogovic (Scottish Artists Union): I thank the committee for the opportunity to speak today. The Scottish Artists Union represents more than 2,000 visual and applied artists who live and work in Scotland. We are a trade union. For a bit of context, I should say that we exist to improve working conditions, to protect members' rights and to highlight the vital contribution that artists make to public life and the economy. Central to our mission is the principle that artists deserve a fair living wage, equal to that of other trained professionals.

Over the years, we have campaigned for fair work in the sector through the development of recommended rates of pay, which have now been adopted sector-wide and are used by Creative Scotland. Our union publishes fair work contract templates and has established a dedicated fair work casework representative team to support members in disputes and employment issues.

In response to the question, our primary concern is to do with the security of work and income for artists. As we have stated in our written contribution, we welcome the recent increase in funding for regularly funded organisations—RFOs—as it is important to ensure that the organisational infrastructure of the sector is robust. We also welcome the news that some of the new RFOs are artist-run initiatives, and we recognise the important contribution of such initiatives to local communities and cultural ecosystems.

The fundamental issue for our members is security of work and income. The majority of our members are self-employed freelancers. They are often engaged or commissioned by organisations, including RFOs, on insecure or non-existent contracts. That illustrates some of the issues that we are dealing with.

Supporting arts organisations alone is not sufficient. It is clear that, for artists, an approach involving the trickle down of funds does not work. Artists need direct investment to create work on their own terms, to develop, to experiment, to fail, and, most importantly, to sustain their practice and profession.

I will talk about the Creative Scotland open fund, which has two parts: one for organisations and one for individuals. It is the single most important direct fund for freelance artists to sustain and develop their practice, and its budget is primarily funded by the national lottery. Aside from occasional injections of grants in aid, which happened last year, the Scottish Government does not directly fund artists, which is something that we want to draw people's attention to. The open fund for individuals is perpetually oversubscribed and only about one-third of applications are actually awarded funds. We have been told by Creative Scotland that it is inevitable that strong applications will continue to be turned

down, which is of great worry to our members who are individual artists.

At the root of these problems is a clear legislative gap. The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 does not explicitly recognise professional artists or cultural workers. Instead, it refers vaguely to

"those engaged in artistic and other creative endeavours".

Artists are not mentioned in the legislation whatsoever. As a result—

The Convener: Sorry, Tamara, I will just stop you there. The question was not meant to be an opening statement, so I will move on. However, if we have not covered some of the areas you wanted to come to, you can either write in or maybe we could come back to them at the end. Thank you—that was very comprehensive. I will bring in Alison Nolan.

Alison Nolan (Scottish Library and Information Council): Thank you for inviting us along to give oral evidence today. As you will all be aware—I know that libraries are close to the hearts of many of you—Scotland's public libraries are already delivering measurable outcomes against Government priorities. However, current funding structures prevent a full mainstreaming of their role.

There is a potential for cross-portfolio impact, which currently remains inadequately realised. For example, libraries play an important role in economic and cultural wellbeing. Investigations by SLIC have shown that, for every £1 that is invested in libraries, local economies stand to gain £6.95 in benefit. Libraries provide free job skills training, low-cost activities for all and warm, welcoming spaces that serve as a lifeline for the one in five adults and one in four children across Scotland who are currently living in poverty.

Research at the University of Strathclyde has shown that public libraries

"by providing a vibrant, inclusive, and trusted community hub for people from all walks of life to come together to access, share, create, appropriate and appreciate cultural resources and materials, can alleviate inequality by enabling wider cultural consumption, participation, and engagement."

The national health service in Scotland saves £3.2 million annually through library-delivered health and wellbeing programmes, including bibliotherapy and digital health access. When my predecessor, Pamela Tulloch, appeared before your committee, she mentioned the collective force for health and wellbeing action plan, which was delivered with Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland. That showed the transformative potential of embedding libraries in national health priorities.

We can further look at that in relation to the goals that were set out in the four key national health policies: the health and social care service renewal framework; Scotland's population health framework; Scotland's public service reform strategy; and the value-based health and care action plan. There are clear elements in which libraries can contribute across those areas.

The impact of libraries being embedded in cross-portfolio work is clear. For example, early literacy programmes lead to improved school readiness and high educational attainment, free access to digital infrastructure and business support lead to enhanced economic participation, and there is also increased public engagement with climate action at a community level. It also reduces pressure on the NHS, as I mentioned earlier, because it results in early intervention through the delivery of trusted health information. We would welcome more funding for such cross-portfolio working.

09:15

I mentioned the visitor levy in my submission. That could be investigated further, along with the percentage for the arts and culture. Internationally, colleagues have also looked at establishing endowment funds for literacy learning and digital inclusion. I also mentioned that it might be good to consider health and wellbeing funding and social prescribing funding. We have also seen examples of libraries tapping into planning gain funding to develop services in their libraries, but that is also area-specific.

Lewis Coenen-Rowe (Culture for Climate Scotland): I will pick up on that point about cross-portfolio working. We are focused on climate change, so we are interested in how the cultural sector can help deliver the Government's priorities on climate change and be funded to do so. There is already a public engagement strategy for climate change that references the cultural sector.

We are interested in the diverse ways that the cultural sector can play a key role in the public engagement process. Cultural organisations have trusted audiences and relationships. They reach the hard-to-reach groups and provide welcoming spaces. They provide creative, accessible and restorative ways of having conversations about climate change, which can often be very tough to do.

The Scottish Government's climate change public engagement strategy contains a reference to the role of the cultural sector. There is a climate change public engagement fund that certain organisations in the cultural sector have taken advantage of, but it is a very small fund and it is over-subscribed. The application success rate was

something like 12 or 13 per cent during the last round of funding. Loads of organisations want to do public engagement work on climate change but are not able to access the funds to do it.

I am interested in how funds that are being mobilised to address the environmental emergency can be used by the cultural sector, because we have a lot of the skills that are needed and I do not think that they are being taken advantage of at the moment. It is an important funding stream.

The Convener: Thank you, all. I am going to open to questions from the committee.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): I have four questions—one for everybody. I will start with Art Fund. Rachael Browning, in your submission, you called for better co-ordination between Creative Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland. What does that mean? What would be the expected outcome of that?

Rachael Browning: As I am sure you will be aware, in 2011, Arts Council England subsumed museums across England into its portfolio and took responsibility for funding and supporting the professional development of museums and their staff. That has not been without challenges; it has been tricky. It has taken quite a while for museums to feel that they are embedded in the Arts Council's portfolio.

We are not necessarily advocating for that, and we are not calling for a merger, but we are calling for better connectivity between the organisations in Scotland that support the museum and heritage sector and the organisations in Scotland that support the visual arts sector, because there is so much overlap between the creative programmes that they deliver.

That could look like joined-up funding or better cross-organisational working. We are hearing from colleagues, particularly those in the museum sector, that they are falling between the gaps in funding, support and professional development opportunities.

We are keen to see those organisations, which are doing fantastic work on the ground, being better supported to deliver across the visual arts and the museum and heritage portfolio in Scotland to enable greater ambition and better connectivity. We also want the organisations that are delivering on the ground to be able to serve the public more effectively.

Stephen Kerr: So you are definitely not calling for them to be absorbed.

Rachael Browning: No, not at this stage. We are definitely not doing that.

Stephen Kerr: You said something about the tourist tax, but I will leave that for the moment.

The Scottish Artists Union seems to have the trickle-down approach in its sights. You think that it does not work. However, I am not clear what you are calling for. You seem to be calling for a minimum basic income for independent artists, and I presume that that would be funded by the taxpayer. How would that work?

Tamara Rogovic: A basic income for artists is one of the alternative models that we are proposing. However, I was talking about the Creative Scotland funds that individual artists can access to produce work. I was not talking about a basic income, although that is one of the things that we are campaigning for.

It seems to artists that the Government is funding organisations, which is true, but that funding is not reaching artists appropriately. Artists should have access to an open fund—

Stephen Kerr: How do you envisage that working?

Tamara Rogovic: There is an open fund for individuals, but there is not enough in it.

Stephen Kerr: So it is about more money. Is that the bottom line?

Tamara Rogovic: It is part of the issue for individual artists.

Stephen Kerr: Alison Nolan, you were talking about something of a crossover subject because some of the museums that Rachael Browning referred to are funded by local authorities. Public libraries are also generally funded by local authorities. In your submission, you talk about the economics of the issue and say that there is a £6.95 return on every £1 that is invested in libraries. I was going to ask you how you rationalise that, but we will not get into that. I am, however, keen to know how libraries can be better funded in the budget settlement. Are you suggesting that libraries should be directly funded by the Scottish Government? You are asking for more money—that is the bottom line—and that money would have to go to Scottish local authorities. Are you saying that it should be ring fenced? I am not clear how you can get what you want from this budget round.

Alison Nolan: Local government is definitely the largest funding partner for culture in Scotland. All libraries are funded by local authorities or the local culture and leisure trust. We are also very much aware of the fiscal situation that local authorities are in, but meaningful collaboration between cultural organisations and other public sector agencies will not occur at scale unless the Scottish Government offers leadership and targeted funding for it. That would help. If there

was scope for incentivising such partnerships and making funding contingent on cross-sector collaboration so that we could maximise the impact of that—

Stephen Kerr: It is about more than just giving local authorities more money.

Alison Nolan: Yes. It is about seeing how we can work more efficiently together.

Stephen Kerr: Would that money be ring fenced?

Alison Nolan: Well, I have suggested that it should be ring fenced for libraries, because of the statutory obligation to provide a library service, but I understand the issues around ring fencing. I know that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers are calling for non-ring-fenced budgets so that they can make more community decisions.

Stephen Kerr: They do not like ring fencing.

Alison Nolan: Exactly. I appreciate that our proposal comes with its challenges.

Stephen Kerr: Would there be a central fund that local authorities apply to?

Alison Nolan: Possibly.

Stephen Kerr: It could be any of the above.

Alison Nolan: Yes, it could be any of the above.

Stephen Kerr: Thank you for that.

Lewis Coenen-Rowe, you represent a climate change campaign group. Your organisation already gets about £400,000 from the Scottish Government, is that right?

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Yes, via Creative Scotland.

Stephen Kerr: Your main funder is the Scottish Government.

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Yes.

Stephen Kerr: I am intrigued by your submission. It says that your organisation employs 13 people, but it goes on to say that you "also employ artists". Are the 13 people your organisation employs artists whom you place in different situations? I could not understand the opening paragraph of your submission, so maybe you could explain that.

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Yes, of course. To clarify, we are not really a campaigning organisation; we are an independent charity that tries to support the arts and culture sector to play a full role in addressing climate change. Often, that is about offering advice and support to organisations, training, fundraising, setting up projects and so on. There is an advocacy element to what we do, but it is part of—

Stephen Kerr: I was alluding to that. There is a bit of a thin line between campaigning and advocacy, but anyway—yes.

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Those members of staff are not operating in the position of artists—

Stephen Kerr: They are not?

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: They might be carbon-management experts or people doing project management to keep the organisation going, running events and training—things like that. Part of my role is to access funding from private trusts and foundations and other alternative sources of project funding. That allows us to set up projects that are targeted specifically at using arts-based methods to address environmental issues in various locations around Scotland. We employ artists with that money.

Stephen Kerr: Thank you for the clarification. I will ask you a specific question, then. You ask for something like universal access to the climate arts for young people. I could not quite understand what you meant by that. Do we not already have universal access for young people? What, specifically, do you mean?

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Are you talking about the point that we make about access to arts for young people?

Stephen Kerr: Yes—it is in your submission.

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: That is something that we support and that other organisations have raised. It is not specifically about climate, which is our own remit; it is about the importance of access to arts and culture at an early stage in people's lives. That is a crucial intervention point for enabling access later in life.

Stephen Kerr: What does that mean? Is it about the teaching of art in schools?

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Yes, primarily schools or after-school clubs—those kinds of initiatives.

Stephen Kerr: You also call for subsidising audience members' travel to performances. How would that work? Can you explain your thinking there?

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Yes. We know from reporting from cultural organisations that the way that audiences travel to and from cultural events and venues is the largest source of emissions associated with the cultural sector. If we want the cultural sector to get to net zero, that is an important area for us to focus on, as it is the area in which the sector can have the most impact. We

think that, in terms of value for money, it is useful to focus on that.

There have been various pilot projects, run primarily by theatres and music venues, to provide bus travel from surrounding areas to the venue. That is a way of improving access—

Stephen Kerr: How does that work? Who would provide that?

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Normally, that is done through working with either private bus companies or community transport groups.

Stephen Kerr: Who pays for it?

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: There are a couple of different models. It can come from the cultural partner itself, which has sometimes been able to work with a private sector partner to get a special deal in return for promoting its services. Alternatively, there is a levy on all ticket sales to increase the cost of all tickets slightly so that that can subsidise travel for the people who need it.

Stephen Kerr: Right. So the prices of all the tickets go up, and the money then goes from the promoter to buses or whatever.

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Yes, that would be one model.

Stephen Kerr: Right—okay. Thank you.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): Good morning. I will start with Alison Nolan first. As we all know, all roads lead to Paisley, and your submission mentions the increased uptake of services at the Paisley central library since it was put right in the middle of the high street, which is an example of culture being used as a regeneration tool for our high streets. More than 115,000 people visited the library in its first year on that site, and they would not otherwise have gone there, which shows that culture can be used to increase footfall in an area.

You talked about this to a certain degree earlier. Is it up to local authorities to have such ideas and commit to pushing them forward? In Paisley, we have the museum at the top end of the high street, the library right smack in the middle, and Paisley town hall—which is now a venue, after money was spent on converting it—at the bottom end. Basically, Renfrewshire Council is using culture as a regeneration tool to make sure that everybody else comes into town. It creates footfall, which gives people a reason to have a shop or whatever in Paisley town centre.

Is that an example of what you were talking about earlier? Perhaps you can give some more detail on how that approach could be used elsewhere, too.

Alison Nolan: Absolutely. Paisley central library is a perfect example of how culture-led regeneration can lead to the high street being invigorated, with people coming back to it. The library is in what was previously an empty unit, and it has had 115,000 visitors in the first year, which is fantastic.

It is not all doom and gloom, as there have been other pockets of investment, but it is important to make that more mainstream. Along with what has been done in Paisley, there have been some other really good refurbishments, such as the ones that Glasgow Life has overseen in Woodside, and Elder park. There is an amazing new co-location model at Parkhead library, which is in an NHS centre. That is a forward-thinking approach.

09:30

I could also mention Ratho library in Edinburgh and Strathblane library in Stirling. There are examples in North Lanarkshire, and Girvan library in South Ayrshire recently moved to a newly renovated, modern town-centre site. We can see how it is possible to have culture-led regeneration through investment in libraries.

On the climate side of things, we are embracing co-location. There are currently 461 libraries in Scotland: 204 of them are standalone and, leaving aside one element, 244 are in shared buildings. You can see how co-location is being used quite a bit across the board, and there are some excellent models of it. That creates efficiencies across the board while breathing life back into the areas where that is focused.

George Adam: My father-in-law is never away from the central library, as it is within walking distance for him.

Turning to the Scottish Artists Union, you were talking about a basic income pilot, Tamara. Could you give me some more detail on that? How would you perceive that working? I am always interested in new ways to look at things.

Tamara Rogovic: That is one of the alternative models that we are interested in. We know that similar models worked in Ireland and Canada. This is where we go back to the legislation—which I did not manage to finish talking about. The basis of the legislation on culture in both Canada and Ireland is the recommendation concerning the status of the artist that was made by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization—UNESCO—in 1980, which clearly defines the roles of artists within society. The idea of basic income for artists was based on that.

The Irish pilot demonstrates the revolutionary potential of that approach to financial security, allowing artists to focus on sustained creative work. That is what I was talking about earlier: the idea of the basic income is not necessarily just

about more money; it is about how we ensure that individual artists can sustain their practices and not give up on their profession because they find it completely unsustainable to continue working.

When artists have secure incomes, they spend locally, they cluster in creative hubs and they strengthen regional cultural ecosystems. Scotland should explore a pilot programme, building on the evidence from Ireland, to evaluate viability, to realise tangible economic, social and artistic benefits and to gather data.

George Adam: My next question is on the visitor levy. Everyone has mentioned getting access to it—we have already spent any potential money from that about three times over today. If, hypothetically, a proportion of visitor levy could be used, how would your organisations invest it, what would you do with it, and what outcomes would fit with what the Scottish Government is looking for?

Rachael Browning: Art Fund would not be a direct recipient of that funding, so we would not be investing that money ourselves. However, we would recommend that a proportion of that visitor levy be ring fenced for the cultural organisations that bring visitors into towns and cities across Scotland. It is a matter of being fair and recognising the contribution that those organisations bring and reflecting that in their annual budgets. That could be delivered through Creative Scotland or Museums Galleries Scotland, or could come directly from the Scottish Government. We are open to a range of models, but we want to see fairness and proportionality in the apportionment.

George Adam: I am 100 per cent behind you on that—the organisations create the footfall, so they should get that funding. However, would that not be skewed in some places? How would you do that in areas such as my own constituency of Paisley, or in other places across Scotland? Funding would almost be guaranteed in Edinburgh—boom; all the festivals would get a whole stack of funding. A positive argument could be made for that, but how would it work nationally?

Rachael Browning: There could be a national and cross-Scotland approach that—

George Adam: Of course, it would again be local authorities that would make the decision, so it would be about how they value—

Rachael Browning: Yes, and there would be a need to encourage them to invest where the need is greatest. It would be hard to argue that the need is greater in Edinburgh than in some of the other places that we have talked about. Organisations already have that intelligence and insight on the ground, so it is about enabling decisions to be made and money to be invested in a way that is fair and that will stack up in time to allow individual organisations to grow, prosper and thrive.

George Adam: Does anyone else want to come in?

Alison Nolan: Libraries can also be tourist destinations. That is the case across Europe; where there is investment in libraries, they become a valuable tourist asset. I was recently up in Orkney and visited the amazing Orkney library and archive, where they are embracing that. It is also currently helping to give out digital ferry passes. Because of its incredible social media profile, it is encouraging tourists to come to Orkney and to engage with and visit the library and archives.

It is important to recognise the role that culture has to play in encouraging tourism beyond the festivals. We know that the festivals bring many people into Scotland and into one particular area, but there is huge potential if we think wider and look at rural areas and islands. The work to encourage visitors to those areas would be done by local authorities, so there is a need to ensure that culture is part of the way in which the money is divided up among councils.

George Adam: Okay. You and previous witnesses have all said that cross-portfolio working would be a good idea. I totally buy into that, but the fact is that the Government is data driven. I asked a question about this area last week. If we were to be in a situation in which you believe that your organisations or what you do delivers in those key areas, what would be the quickest and most measurable outcomes that you could deliver—if we said that, from tomorrow, there was a possibility of getting people to work across portfolio?

Does anyone want to answer? Did that make any sense at all?

Alison Nolan: You are talking about using data to back up—

George Adam: Yes, using data to back up what you are saying. You said earlier that the NHS saves £3.2 million through library-delivered health and wellbeing programmes—that is measurable. You are the first person to come here and actually say, “We deliver savings of £3.2 million.” No one else has ever done that. I am interested in things like that, because the Government will look at that and say, “There is a delivery outcome here.”

Alison Nolan: Absolutely. It comes down to doing the research to ensure that those kinds of figures can be presented to the Scottish Government. Unfortunately, there is often limited capacity in the sector to do that. For libraries and for the sector, there is the public library data framework, where we collect data on what we do.

That is currently in its third year, and it will ensure that we deliver against Government priorities.

We also lead on the public library strategy, as set out in the "Forward" document, which is coming to its end this year. That is aligned to the national performance framework and the sustainable development goals. We ensure that the data that we collect is aligned to those so that we can show where we are making a difference across portfolios.

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: I can say a bit about the cross-portfolio work between culture and climate that we are interested in. As the Scottish Government's public engagement strategy on climate change states, it is difficult to measure this stuff. When you work on public engagement, you are not measuring carbon reduction; you are measuring people's participation in and support for climate policy, their ability to participate in decision making and things like that. It is hard to come up with quantitative data to support that; you can only come up with figures that say that a certain number of people have attended so many events and that associated targets have been reached.

We tend to rely on qualitative data for our projects, often by collecting people's perspectives through interviews or surveys in which respondents can say, "This made a difference to me." We get them to speak from their own perspectives rather than us predetermining what kind of impact we expect to have.

If you are looking for numbers, that can be quite difficult. However, as the Scottish Government recognises, that public engagement work is still really important. I would press for a broader way of measuring impact to be considered, because numbers are not going to cover those aspects, even though they are important.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Good morning. I start with a question specifically for Culture for Climate Scotland. It covers two issues, both of which might be of interest to all the witnesses.

First, I will pick up on some of the travel issues that you discussed earlier. The wider agenda around climate and sustainability in the culture sector is huge—for example, looking at buildings and at trying to achieve a circular economy through approaches to materials, reuse and so on. All that is a huge challenge. However, towards the end of your written submission, you mention that some of the figures that are presented do

"not include audience travel data which, based on trial data collection instances, is likely to be around three times higher than all other emissions combined."

That is pretty stark.

Quite a number of years ago, I was on the board of a fairly small arts festival. Something that shocked me, but which was familiar to the other board members, who had been involved for longer, was that a lot of funders were not really testing us against the quality of the work that we were presenting or even against overall audience numbers. They wanted us to show how many hotel beds the festival was going to fill and, in particular, whether it was going to attract audiences from countries such as America, on the basis that those visitors were expected to spend more money in the local economy.

Is that type of pressure still being felt in the culture sector? It is basically about trying to push unsustainable approaches and objectives, rather than thinking about not only how the culture sector might act sustainably itself, but how it might serve a domestic audience more prominently or address some of the wider impacts of audience travel and how that connects to tourism policy.

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Yes; it varies hugely but I think that there is still a pressure, in that cultural organisations, in order to be seen as being in the top flight of what they do, have to be seen to have that international impact. I think that that is changing, however. The recent multiyear funding decisions from Creative Scotland made the international aspect criteria non-compulsory, compared with the situation in previous years. That had an impact, as more of the organisations that ended up getting funding were smaller community arts organisations that do the kind of work that does not have an international impact but has enormous local significance. There is an interesting question of prioritisation there.

That said, it is tricky, in that things like the festivals in Edinburgh are still very much dependent on international visitors and they cannot keep their model going without that element. There are difficult questions in the culture sector about international travel. Part of it involves thinking about how we can do more to serve local audiences and value that kind of work. There are also questions around international touring and how we value that. Is a particular tour necessary and will it bring something that would not otherwise be available in the other country if we were not there? It is about weighing up those decisions.

I was looking at Scottish Ensemble's policy, which is quite strong with regard to how it makes decisions about international touring. There is a question on the added value that comes from Scottish Ensemble being there rather than some local ensemble, and whether the latter could do the same thing or not.

We say in our submission that including carbon emissions in any decision making that pertains to

travel needs to become standard practice in the culture sector. Just as we would think about the financial budget, we need to think about carbon budgets.

Patrick Harvie: There are two elements in what you have suggested. One involves being honest about the data, collecting that data and reporting on it, including the impact of audience travel. Secondly, you say that there has been some loosening up, in the approach to funding decisions, by making the international element discretionary, rather than mandatory. Forgive me—were you talking about Creative Scotland there? Are there other such changes that you think could help to ensure that our culture sector can continue to thrive, but by refocusing on a domestic market rather than the international market?

09:45

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Yes, people are looking at different touring models that are focused more on going around a smaller area in more detail. Those are village hall-type touring models rather than city-based touring models. I am quite interested in that; it can also reduce audience travel because you go to people rather than them coming to you. Other international touring models are being experimented with, such as idea-based touring. Barrowland Ballet worked with an organisation in Turkey to tour one of its shows by touring the concepts of the show, such as the storyline and the set, but working with a local group. People were not having to travel back and forth between Scotland and Turkey, because it was the show itself that was touring. That is an interesting model that can work in some but not all cases.

Patrick Harvie: The second issue that I want to explore is about the more general approaches to funding, which might also have a greater relevance to the wider range of organisations that are with us.

In your submission, you make a point about siloed funding decisions and organisations being asked, for example:

> "Is your project an arts project or an environmental project or a health project or a just transition project?"

The other point, which is at the top of your written submission, is about the indication from Government that it wants the uplift in funding to result in more organisations getting funding rather than existing organisations being more substantially funded, so the uplift in funding would go to more organisations rather than increase the amount of funding for fewer organisations. How strict an application of that indication are you anticipating? Do you expect that application to be quite rigid or do you expect a more balanced approach to emerge? You have said that, if that were the approach, a number of organisations that you need to work with would be severely challenged. You mentioned Creative Scotland. Are there other organisations that have a sector-wide approach for whom it would be a real difficulty to provide a service to a wider range of organisations, if they themselves are not getting an uplift in their individual funding?

Lewis Coenen-Rowe: Yes. A lot more organisations have already received the new multiyear funding, which is great in a lot of ways, but, in order to make that happen, some organisations have received significantly less funding than they applied for. There is a tricky balance to strike—if you fund more organisations with the same amount of money, that funding will go less far for each organisation. As a result, there is a risk that they will have to spend a higher proportion of their money on things such as upkeep and maintenance, rather than on the actual work. It means more work for our organisation because we are looking after the environmental reporting for that whole cohort. It also means more work for Creative Scotland to look after them. Other sector support organisations, such as the Audience Agency, do a lot of work in collecting data, so there are more organisations for them to work with. It means more work for those kinds of organisations across the board to look after that cohort.

Patrick Harvie: Do other witnesses want to comment on whether that approach to the uplift in funding results in the butter being spread too thin, if you like, or whether a more flexible and balanced approach would be more beneficial?

Rachael Browning: This year, Creative Scotland has been able to give us multiyear funding, which is fantastic, but it has become quite clear to us that a lot of organisations, such as museums, galleries, libraries and heritage organisations, cannot benefit from that multiyear funding and are really suffering as a result, because they are not able to plan strategically. It impacts staff retention and morale. Having to apply for project-based funding year on year is time consuming, in relation to the application as well as reporting and how we work with funders. Lewis Coenen-Rowe is right that the funding is being spread more thinly, but we are definitely seeing the real benefit of parcelling it up in chunks and the ability that that gives organisations to plan sustainably for the future. We really want the ability for other types of organisations to apply for multiyear funding to be broadened across the sector.

Alison Nolan: I agree that it definitely limits the library sector's ability to plan strategically, invest in long-term service delivery and retain and develop

skilled staff, which would, of course, lead to reducing job insecurity and skills loss.

We currently deliver the public library improvement fund and the school library improvement fund. We have been oversubscribed by 60 or 70 per cent in many years for the PLIF funding. For the SLIF funding, we were 28 per cent oversubscribed this year. It is also worth stating that many libraries do not even apply or get funded because what they need is considered as core offer. So there are stipulations on the funding and what is needed may not be covered by the funds.

More and more library services need extra funding for the basics, which in schools can include stock and furniture, particularly with book budgets being slashed. Public libraries may need funding for basic digital infrastructure. Sometimes, they do not apply at all, because they do not have capacity because they have lost skilled staff, or they are put off by the pressures of the one-year funding cycle or even innovation fatigue.

Patrick Harvie: From the Artists Union's perspective, if there is too rigid an approach to funding more organisations rather than funding organisations more, will that be a big barrier to addressing the very significant fair work challenges that the sector faces?

Tamara Rogovic: Yes—exactly. We should fund fewer organisations properly, rather than what we have at the moment. The majority of new RFOs received around 70 per cent of the funding that they asked for; the other 30 per cent will come at the cost of artists. That is the trickle-down. It never reaches the artists, who are the workers who deliver and are the producers of culture. That affects fair work compliance and affects artists directly. Funding fewer organisations properly is of interest to everyone.

Patrick Harvie: Is there a systematic approach to measuring or assessing the extent to which fair work principles are being met or failed in the sector?

Tamara Rogovic: Work is being done by the culture fair work task force, and recommendations will be coming soon. Work has been done collectively among the trade unions in the creative sector, co-ordinated by the Scottish Trades Union Congress.

The "Freelance and Forgotten" report that came out this summer highlighted the amount of exploitation, discrimination and harassment that goes on in a sector where freelancers are the predominant arts workers. As part of that report, there is a fair work checklist for artists. There will be future campaigning related to that, but it should be a condition of public funding.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Good morning. As an Orcadian, I strongly agree with Alison Nolan—I do not want to go all George Adam and Paisley on this—that the Orkney library and archive is a fantastic resource; it is brilliant. I am also delighted—perhaps there will be disagreement on this—that Orkney has rejected the visitor levy. I am rather a cynic on it. It would be a huge burden on many local businesses and it has been set up to push tax burdens on to local authorities so that central Government can cut funding.

I agree, though, with a lot that has been said about the importance of culture on high streets. I was on the Economy and Fair Work Committee when it did an investigation of town centres, and one thing that came up from that—I think that it was from a visit to Dumfries—was that we need cultural institutions on our high streets to bring people in, because high streets are entertainment rather than just places of purchase. However, the moving of galleries, museums and libraries involves money from local government.

Alison, in your submission you talked about the "sustained budget pressures" on local Government cultural spend. Will you speak about that a bit more?

Alison Nolan: We have seen the impact across the library sector. Since 2013-14, 54 public libraries have closed across Scotland and we have lost 612 full-time equivalent staff. Although we welcome the uplift in cultural funding, local authorities are, as I mentioned, the main funder of our library sector and seven libraries closed in 2024-25. We talk about travel, cultural experiences and giving everyone access, so we must consider how libraries fit into a 20-minute neighbourhood. They are so important and need to be hugely protected.

Scottish local authority spend per head on library resources is becoming unreasonable, because it ranges from 50p to £2.41 per person. By comparison, Ireland invests £3 per capita, the Czech Republic invests £5.18 per capita and Lithuania invests £4.24 per capita. We need to be aware of the decline in library space resources, because the uneven landscape results in significant service quality disparities.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: You talked about closures. Across my region, I do a lot of surgeries in libraries because they are great locations. Often, they are not as full as I want them to be, because they are very important. People tell me that they do not know when their library will be open because of opening hours restrictions. Rather like banks and post offices, they are still there but they are open for only a few hours. Is that a big problem?

Alison Nolan: It has been a problem. After Covid, most library services recovered to their normal opening hours, but there has been a drip-drip decline in library services, because library hours have been cut in order to make efficiencies. When we have researched user engagement, we have come across that issue across the board: people not knowing when the library is open is a real issue.

We were delighted by this round of funding from the culture directorate. SLIC has had an uplift in order to create a single digital platform for Scotland's libraries. There will be a front door for Scotland's libraries, which will link back to local authorities and allow people to see what is on offer. Opening hours will be easily found in one place, whereas they can currently be lost on a council website and so on. It is important that there is one place for people to find that information.

People on the ground are working as best they can to ensure that people know when the library is open, but we understand that that can be really challenging. When many libraries review their services, they often also review their opening hours. They do a time capture of when they are busy and so on to ensure that their hours reflect when the footfall comes. However, we understand that libraries are often not open for people who are coming back from work in the evening, and addressing that is a bit of a struggle.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: I suppose that I have the same question for you, Rachael. Orkney has some fantastic museums, such as the Pier arts centre in Stromness. At the Stromness museum, which is a private museum, you can see my great-great-uncle's Scotland cap. It is definitely worth a visit.

However, there are real pressures. For a number of years, I dealt with the Falconer museum in Forres, which had to close due to the pressures that it faced, although it is about to reopen or become available again. Where do you see the pressures on museums and galleries from the local government funding side?

Rachael Browning: They are manifest. About a third of the museum sector is made up of civic museums, which are supported directly by local authorities. In Scotland, between 2011 and 2022, we saw real-term funding to those museums decline by about 26 to 27 per cent—that is about a quarter. That is further compounded by costs going up across the board for energy, staffing and maintenance of the buildings, which are often in a lot of disrepair.

There are some fantastic success stories. You have just mentioned Orkney. The Scapa Flow museum was a contender for Art Fund museum of the year a couple of years ago. Perth museum was a finalist for museum of the year this year and it has brought a huge amount of footfall to Perth city centre. New businesses are now opening in and around that fantastic venue. The situation is really tough: public and civic institutions are finding it difficult to deliver the core services and programmes that they are so brilliant at delivering.

10:00

We ran a survey with More in Common, a polling agency, across the United Kingdom earlier this year. It told us that, for 78 per cent of people in Scotland, museums and galleries made them proud of where they lived. That was the highest number across all the UK nations. It is important for the people of Scotland that museums and galleries are supported and sustained, especially at a local level, and we need to find ways to continue to do that in the future, as they are under an incredible amount of stress, strain and scrutiny.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: I am glad that you mentioned the Scapa Flow museum. I have been going there since I was a child. It sits across Scapa Flow from my home, and it is a fantastic new venue—perhaps it is not so much a new venue, but there is a new opportunity there.

This is the second part of the question—I will come to you on this, Rachael, and then I will come back to you, Alison, if that is all right. I represent a massive region, with very dispersed communities and huge rurality. How is that a particular issue for some of the organisations that you represent or work with? It is difficult enough to keep funding within a town or a city, but some rural institutions are extraordinarily important, particularly those on islands and so on, but they face difficult challenges with funding.

Rachael Browning: They certainly do. One thing that has already been touched on this morning is the real challenge of access and enabling visitors to come and visit such venues, especially in areas where there is transport poverty or where the transport links are not well maintained or supported. We would be keen to explore the possibility of greater connection between local authorities and cultural venues in rural areas, using sustainable transport links. That relates to Patrick Harvie's earlier point. The aim would be to ensure that visitors are getting the opportunity to make the most of the fantastic organisations that are on their doorstep, even if that doorstep is a bit further away in some instances, and to enable them to visit those places in ways that are sustainable and environmentally responsible. That would be very much welcomed by the museum sector, and certainly by other colleagues here.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: A lot of those places are very niche. I highlight the Orkney wireless museum, which is a very good visit if you are ever in Kirkwall. I am not on the board, and I do not take a cut; I have no tickets.

Alison, could you comment on the same issue around rural and island libraries in particular?

Alison Nolan: Our mobile libraries are so important. They are an absolute lifeline to rural communities. We find that those in rural areas in particular are facing further barriers to digital inclusion, so we are exploring how we can utilise the mobile library for that, as well as for health and wellbeing. There is potential to move our Near Me service outwith the mobile library. We are currently considering whether we can develop that. That is so important for communities that do not have a physical library. As I say, our mobile libraries are so important.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: We have lost a lot of the rural services that came out to communities. It is always great to see the Orkney mobile library's pictures taken from ferries while it visits islands and the like. It is a really important local resource, and it is important that we keep it.

I am conscious of the time, convener, so I will pass back to you now.

The Convener: Alison, could I clarify the figures that you gave for library spend per head? You quoted figures from Ireland and Lithuania, I think. Were you quoting euros, as opposed to pounds?

Alison Nolan: It was £3 per head: it was converted back from euros.

The Convener: Thank you—that is really helpful.

We will move to questions from Keith Brown.

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): I have quite a few questions, mainly for Rachael Browning. First, the notion that the Scottish Government has introduced the possibility of a visitor levy to hide cuts does not seem to fit with a £20 million increase this year and a £100 million increase up until 2028-29. You mention that £4 million is going into the new funding programme for museums: museum futures. You also say:

"We hope that museums will receive a fair share of the funding yet to be allocated".

Would the £4 million come out of the £20 million? If not, do you want that further fair share of funding to come on top of the £20 million?

Rachael Browning: I understand that the £100 million that was pledged has not all been allocated yet. We want to ensure that, as further decisions are made around the £100 million that has been pledged, museums are part of the picture.

Keith Brown: In addition to the £4 million?

Rachael Browning: Yes. The museums futures fund is fantastic, and the fact that £4 million has been allocated to it is very good news. Our MGS colleagues run that fund, which is oversubscribed. They have had a lot of applications to it, so they know that the need and demand is there. They are calling for further sustained investment in order to enable other museums to take advantage of the funding pot.

Keith Brown: In general terms, you compare Scotland's situation very unfavourably with England and with the rest of Europe, although the European comparison refers more generally to culture rather than only museums. Why is that the case? It is not what we hear from other witnesses.

Rachael Browning: Sorry, which point in the submission are you referring to?

Keith Brown: At one point, you mention that the situation was not as good as in England.

Rachael Browning: That might be specifically about acquisitions and commissions. As a charity and organisation for the past 120-plus years, we have helped museums and galleries across the United Kingdom to acquire works for their collections and to commission artists to make new work. We find that we get fewer applications to those schemes and programmes from museums in Scotland than we do from museums in England. The applications from Scottish museums also tend to be for less money.

Bluntly, we invest more in English institutions when it comes to the development of collections. That is reflected in the number of applications and the amounts that such institutions request. We want to see greater ambition across the Scottish museum sector and for museums to come to us for more money, acquisitions and commissions, which would create a trickle-down effect that would support artists across Scotland.

Keith Brown: I notice that a comparison is not made between Scotland and Wales or Northern Ireland, so is the comparison with England as supplemented by UK expenditure on acquisitions?

Rachael Browning: We are talking about private funding for acquisitions. In England, the V&A purchase grant fund also funds acquisitions. In Scotland, there is some Government funding for acquisitions through the national fund for acquisitions, which is administered through National Museums Scotland. However, the budget for the national fund for acquisitions is far smaller than the budget that the V&A has to administer down south. The money that the Government puts

into acquisitions in Scotland is also far less than that put in by its English counterparts.

Keith Brown: Do you see the V&A in London as an English institution or a UK one?

Rachael Browning: The pot of money for the Arts Council England/V&A purchase grant fund can be spent only on English institutions. It happens to be administered through the V&A, but it is money that comes directly from Arts Council England.

Keith Brown: The comparison with Europe refers more generally to culture. I have heard Scotland compared to Lithuania, Ireland and the Czech Republic. The vital difference between Scotland and those countries is that Scotland is not a sovereign state and does not have access to full powers and so on. Are there any available comparisons with autonomous regions or devolved areas in Europe, or are there only comparisons with independent countries?

Rachael Browning: I am afraid that I do not have those.

Alison Nolan: I can check on that. We also contribute to the open method of co-ordination for European countries—the OMC—but we can look at other forms of data. I can check that and get back to you.

Keith Brown: That would be great.

On the funding for the empire, slavery and Scotland's museums steering group, I know that the project was very dear to the heart of former culture minister Christina McKelvie as well as, I think, Geoff Palmer, who died recently. I am very supportive of the project, but what is your level of confidence that the £5 million funding will come forward? If that funding were to come, would it come from the £20 million?

Rachael Browning: I think that it will come from whatever is left of the £100 million packet. We are very keen for the £5 million to be pledged from that funding in order to implement the steering group's recommendations; other colleagues in the museums, galleries and visual arts sector who responded to the consultation have called for that, too.

Keith Brown: Coming back to the visitor levy, you will know that it is dependent on whether councils want to progress with it. Therefore, I am interested in the fact that it is appearing in what are essentially budget submissions to the Scottish Government. Is the ask that the Scottish Government, which is leaving this entirely to councils, be more forceful in asking councils, first of all, to have such a levy, and, secondly, to direct those proceeds to culture, museums and whatever else? That question is for any of the witnesses, but I think that it is an absolutely legitimate approach, and it should perhaps be the first call on any such revenues. After all, that is how you build investment for the future and bring in future visitors. However, what is the ask here, and of whom is it being made?

Alison Nolan: The ask, I think, would be for a stronger stance to be taken at that, because, currently, we are not getting the distribution of cultural funding from the local authorities that is needed to sustain their vital assets. It might be another way of generating this vital funding, so perhaps what we need is a stronger ask.

Keith Brown: My impression is that the ask would have to be made of local authorities, because the Government is not going to come out and tell them that they have to have a levy or where they should spend that money. However, I think that absolutely solid cases can be made for at least some of it to go towards cultural institutions.

Rachael Browning: It is also whether the Government can put levers and mechanisms in place to make the levy easier for local authorities to implement and, as you have already said, to give them a strong steer towards where that money should end up.

Keith Brown: That is my point—I do not think that the Government is going to tell councils to do that. I do not know how the visitor levy could be made any easier—perhaps it is a systemic thing—but there is no way that the Government will tell councils that they have to do it or where to spend it. I just think that the case itself is self-evident, because cultural institutions, museums and so on are part of the reasons why people visit areas.

On that subject, I noted some of the different ways in which libraries are trying to diversify. You mentioned digital inclusion, but do you think that enough has been made of the huge demand from visitors for genealogical information? There is also the separate issue of financial inclusion. After all, we are seeing banks closing all over the shop. I know that there are now processes for putting banking hubs in place, but are libraries not well placed to try to capitalise on that?

Alison Nolan: Absolutely, and there are such examples in some library services. Indeed, we have also seen, across the UK, post offices working closely with the library service to offer those services, and there is greater potential to do these sorts of things with, say, mobile libraries, too.

With regard to genealogy, the archive might well sit outside the public library service—sometimes it sits with the museum service. Most libraries will have a local studies section, which they try to promote and ensure is used as much as possible. Hopefully, the single digital platform will be able to

showcase that a little bit more and make people aware of such services. A wonderful example from Ireland is EPIC, the emigration museum in Dublin, which has brought together all of these rich genealogical sources and that local history for people to access; indeed, it has become a tourist destination in its own right. However, I think libraries do play on that kind of diversification in what they can offer.

10:15

On digital inclusion, it is important that we note the vital role that libraries play for the 15 per cent of people who are digitally excluded. There is no other place where you can get data, connectivity and skills support in one place. It is part of the bread and butter of what libraries do, so it is important that we encourage and support them to deliver on that.

I raised the issue of the digital infrastructure across the public library sector becoming quite dated. We need a bit of investment in that. The last investment was through the people's network, which was a UK-wide investment 26 years ago. After that, we had the roll-out of wi-fi in 2016. There are amazing models where there has been digital investment—for example, there is no other place where somebody can come in and try a virtual reality headset for free. People can come in off the street and try different technologies. The best way to include people digitally is when they try something unique.

There are brilliant pockets of investment—for example, Motherwell library has an incredible immersive room, which many different community partners use, including dementia groups and children's groups. You may have seen one of those travelling art exhibitions such as "Tutankhamun: The Immersive Experience". The immersive room can do that—it can be tied to education, arts or whatever it needs to be tied to in order to support the community, but it depends on investment. That investment came from another pot of funding.

Keith Brown: I went to the immersive Van Gogh exhibition, which was an incredible experience, but I forget how that was funded. I do not know whether there was private money behind that.

My final point is on genealogical research, social history and financial inclusion. You mentioned places where some of that is happening. The pressures on museums have also been raised, and I have said the same thing to Historic Environment Scotland, which does not do nearly enough to capitalise on the attractiveness of its assets.

My impression is that Edinburgh has been absolutely bursting at the seams this year, and I also hear that from people in other parts of Scotland. Many Americans have returned. Notwithstanding the climate challenge that that presents, of course, it seems that there is a huge opportunity there. A few years back I took a genealogical trip across to the Grand Central terminal in New York, and it was hugely oversubscribed, and there is Ellis Island, which will tell you about the appetite that is there.

I understand the point about cost, but local museums really need somebody who can answer genealogical queries. For example, if somebody from the States or Australia wanted to find out about their auntie who was from Forres or wherever it was, it would be great if they could go to a museum and talk to somebody who could help with genealogical research and social history. They would be getting a service that they could not get anywhere else.

On the financial inclusion point, it seems that if it is happening, it is happening piecemeal. Is there a case for saying in general to museums and libraries, "We are going to have to do new things to attract more people in?" Measures for financial inclusion could be a source of income.

Alison Nolan: Absolutely, but it is about getting a place at the table to have those conversations with the people who are providing those services, and ensuring that you have buy-in from the local authority to develop them within its library service. It is a good model to look at to see how we can diversify. Local authorities are looking at co-location with health and other organisations and so we can see that it works well when there are several services in one building.

There is definitely potential there, but it is about getting a place at the table to say, "Look at what we can do and what we can provide—we can provide that audience, we are among your community and your service will flourish within the library confines." That would be good.

The Convener: Jamie Halcro Johnston has a quick supplementary question.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: Following up what Keith Brown just said about the genealogy side, libraries across Scotland hold huge amounts of genealogical data and information, family papers and so on. I imagine that quite a lot of that is accessible to some of these big, commercialised genealogy websites, but I do not know whether libraries get paid for that. Do the sites pay them for such access? Might that be another potential revenue or funding source?

Alison Nolan: I am probably not best placed to answer that, but I can find out and let you know.

That said, I can tell you what one authority has done. Subscribing to Ancestry is very expensive, and paying for that sort of electronic resource is often outwith an authority's bounds; however, if it submits its records to Ancestry, it can access the site for free. That is one way in which library users can access the whole of Ancestry, and I know of a particular authority that has uploaded its records in that way. That is one example, but I can look into that a little bit more.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: But that sort of thing is done individually—we are not talking about a group of Scottish libraries and archives holding all of this information that will be of interest to people across the world.

Alison Nolan: No. As far as I know, it is done in individual pockets.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: Thank you.

Keith Brown: Can I come in, convener?

The Convener: Very quickly.

Keith Brown: I just wanted to say that it raises a really interesting point, because I think that this will require a change in attitude when it comes to monetising the assets that you hold. You could make the service free to local people, but the fact is that, if other folk are coming to use it, it puts a burden on the library. We should perhaps have that change in attitude: let us monetise this. That might well be difficult, given that, as Jamie Halcro Johnston has said, there are all these different ancestry organisations, but what I would say is this: these are your assets—try to monetise them.

The Convener: I want to end with a very quick supplementary on the basic income scheme. The committee took evidence on that from the Irish Government when we visited Dublin a few years ago; of course, it is a whole-Ireland scheme, but perhaps I can put that into context by pointing out that, when it was launched, Ireland had a €10 billion surplus, and it now has an estimated surplus of €23.7 billion. We are facing quite different challenges. That said, we have also taken evidence from Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland, which has talked about the French scheme supporting traditional arts and culture, and I am a wee bit interested in the Canadian scheme, too. Is there just a difference in the general attitude to culture and art in those countries that makes putting such schemes in place more acceptable to the population and the taxpayer?

Tamara Rogovic: Thank you for that question, because it brings us back to the fundamental and intrinsic appreciation of the role of artists within society. It is fair enough to consider the economic impact of the arts—that is measurable—but they also have a way more intangible impact on society. A basic income for artists is just one alternative model that can be considered.

I wanted to make a final comment about the mainstreaming of culture, because it intersects with your question. We see artists being embedded in various industries; for example, I work with lots of scientists as an artist, and many artists do the same in public policy, in local government and in the environmental sector as employees or through placement. We would really like the Government to explore that, too, as another model of maximising the societal value of the arts. Some of you might have heard of the artist placement group, which was founded in the late 1960s in the UK and pioneered the placing of artists within industry, government and public institutions with the aim of integrating creative thinking into a non-arts context to influence decision making.

We talk about libraries and all of these different areas in which many artists are interested and have expertise. Artists see connections between the disciplines, and as an artist myself, I just wanted to stress what that means for society. When that sort of thing is appreciated, incorporated into legislation and reflected in funding, it has a positive impact on everyone.

The Convener: That is great—thank you. I am afraid that we are up against time, so I must conclude the session. However, if there is anything that you wanted to say in evidence but which you have not been able to, please feel free to contact the clerks again.

We have had quite a wide-ranging session. George Adam managed to get Paisley in, as always.

George Adam: It was in the submission. I was just following the evidence. [*Laughter*.]

The Convener: I also wanted to say that it was lovely to hear mention of Motherwell, which is part of my constituency. I have been in the immersion room and seen the fantastic work that goes on with the local schoolchildren there. We also managed to get in Booky McBookface, the mobile library, which I think is a tourist attraction itself in Orkney.

Meeting closed at 10:25.

Official Report
Room T2.20
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Email: official.report@parliament.scot
Telephone: 0131 348 5447

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Textphone: 0800 092 7100
Email: sp.info@parliament.scot

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba