

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 20 September 2000
(*Morning*)

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CONTENTS

Wednesday 20 September 2000

	Col.
NEW MEMBERS	1381
DEPUTY CONVENER	1382
NATIONAL CULTURAL STRATEGY	1383
PETITIONS	1400
SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION	1403
COMMITTEE BUSINESS	1403

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

26th Meeting 2000, Session 1

CONVENER

*Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)

*Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD)

*Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)

*Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)

*Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP)

*Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP)

*Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

*Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP)

*attended

WITNESSES

Rhona Brankin (Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport)

Bob Irvine (Scottish Executive Education Department)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

David McLaren

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 3

Scottish Parliament

Education, Culture and Sport Committee

Wednesday 20 September 2000

(Morning)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 09:33*]

New Members

The Convener (Mrs Mary Mulligan): Good morning. Members will be aware that Karen Gillon and Lewis Macdonald have resigned from the committee. Karen has done so for pleasant reasons, and Lewis for ones that are perhaps not so pleasant. We wish both of them well and thank them for their efforts on the committee.

I am pleased to say that the two vacancies have now been filled, by Cathy Jamieson and Johann Lamont, both of whom I welcome to the committee this morning. I hope that they will enjoy their time with us—I said that with a straight face. I ask them to say whether they have any declarable interests, as members are requested to do at their first committee meeting.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): I declare everything that is listed under my name in the register of interests. I am a member of, and am supported by, the Co-operative Party, and I am a member of the Transport and General Workers Union. I have no additional interests to declare that would affect my work on the committee.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): I, too, am a member of the T & G and am supported by the Co-operative Party—I do not know whether this is a takeover bid. I understood that this was a non-controversial committee.

I am also a member of the Educational Institute of Scotland and have been a teacher for more than 20 years. I am married to a councillor on Glasgow City Council—there may be a connection at some level between that and the work of the committee, as education is a local authority matter.

The Convener: I cannot comment on where you received your information, but time will tell whether this is a non-controversial committee.

Deputy Convener

The Convener: As Karen Gillon is one of those who have resigned, we have also lost our deputy convener. The committee must now nominate a replacement.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I nominate Cathy Peattie.

The Convener: Apparently, we do not need seconds. Are there any other nominations?

Members: No.

The Convener: Is it agreed that Cathy Peattie should be deputy convener?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: That is agreed. Well done, Cathy. I am sure that you will enjoy your role.

National Cultural Strategy

The Convener: The third item on the agenda is the national cultural strategy, which the Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport, Rhona Brankin, is here to discuss.

I thank you, minister, for coming to the committee at such short notice. This matter has been on our agenda for some time and I am sorry that we have reached it only now. It is important that we examine a document as strategic as the one that was launched in the summer recess. We will be able to consider it only briefly this morning, but I am sure that the committee will return to it time and again. Do you wish to make a brief statement before I open up the discussion to questions and comments from members?

The Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport (Rhona Brankin): Okay. Thank you for inviting me to give evidence to the committee on the publication of Scotland's first ever national cultural strategy. I look forward to discussing how we can advance the strategy and provide people with a range of opportunities to enjoy and contribute to the cultural life of Scotland. As you know, we launched "Creating our Future: Minding our Past" during the Edinburgh festival, thus fulfilling the commitment that we had made in the programme for government.

It is important to regard the development of the national cultural strategy as a continuing process, rather than a single event. However, consulting and publishing the strategy marked an important first phase in that process. The aims that underpin the strategy are clear and are firmly focused on inclusion. We aim to make Scotland's rich and diverse traditions widely available and to increase everybody's opportunities to participate in and benefit from our unique cultural heritage.

When the Scottish Executive reviews the strategy in four years' time, we will be in a much better position to understand the range and health of our arts culture and heritage and the opportunities for people to participate in it.

The strategy is intended to widen opportunities and access. It promotes excellence for all and aims to ensure that creativity and innovation are celebrated and stimulated in all walks of life and for all age groups. It does not prescribe cultural expression, but recognises Scotland's diversity of tradition and the impossibility of representing that tradition through one or two symbols. It exemplifies many of Scotland's expressions of culture, but does not and cannot provide an exhaustive list.

Culture lies at the heart of education, so the strategy gives education a special place. Naturally,

we want our children to learn about Scotland's culture and the cultures of the rest of the world. We also want them to benefit from active participation and from the potential of culture to develop self-esteem and promote educational attainment across the curriculum.

Linked to that intention is the strategy's recognition that culture can make an important contribution to wider Scottish Executive priorities such as social justice, regeneration and equality. The First Minister recognised that in his foreword by saying that he wanted to

"ensure that we reflect the potential of the cultural dimension in all our policy development."

It is important that, as its title suggests, our strategy looks forward as well as back. Cultural development contributes to the image of Scotland as a modern, dynamic and forward-looking society. We aim to promote the development of lively and forward-looking creative industries, including not only the relatively recent digital industries, but the more traditional creative industries in which Scotland has a well-established reputation, such as publishing.

The national cultural strategy sets out to create the conditions that will ensure that Scotland's culture can flourish. It bears testament to Scotland's diversity of talent in many cultural fields. I look forward to developing it. The next steps involve working in partnership with a range of groups and individuals to implement the action it sets out.

I am more than happy to answer questions.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): I promise that I will not ask all the questions that I would like to ask. The document is exceedingly big and I could probably ask a question for every page.

I am interested in the role of school co-ordinators in promoting traditional culture. That sounds like a good idea, but I am still a bit concerned about how we ensure that the work of people such as Nancy Nicolson in Glasgow or Sheena Wellington in Fife is not lost. We could go down the road that I went down; my experience of learning Scots music was of singers such as Moira Anderson. How do we ensure that kids come out of school with a full flavour of traditional music and other traditional arts?

Rhona Brankin: It is important that we continue the kind of work that is being done by Sheena Wellington in Fife, which is co-funded by the Scottish Arts Council; we are both committed to continuing it. We must consider how we extend that. I share Cathy Peattie's interest in Scottish traditional music. We must examine how we get that into schools.

The school culture champions, or cultural co-

ordinators—whatever we finally decide to call them—will have an important role to play. They can make links with local artists and musicians and bring them into schools. Music teachers or teachers with a passion for some area of arts culture and heritage are already doing lots of excellent work in schools. We recognise the terrific work going on and want to allow such people to spend time—which is often the difficulty in schools—on further developing culture in school. I envisage school culture champions making links with traditional musicians in their areas. The aim is to build up a picture of the culture of the local and wider community and to ensure that as many pupils as possible have access.

09:45

Cathy Peattie: The point about the wider community takes me to my next question. Work is being done in communities—some of it under social inclusion—that includes promotion of the arts, work on language and work on identity. Sometimes that is difficult for local authorities to fund, especially as it is often seen as arty-farty or irrelevant to communities. How can the Scottish Arts Council support such work?

Rhona Brankin: The Scottish Arts Council works with local authorities in developing local cultural strategies. That work is important and we want to develop it. Among our major partners in implementing the cultural strategy are the local authorities, which are the major funders of culture in Scotland. It is currently estimated that local authorities are putting £240 million into culture, leisure and sport. We want to investigate further with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities how best to deliver culture locally. We see local authorities fitting in as part of the jigsaw of provision across Scotland.

Cathy Peattie: As you will be aware, minister, we spent some time earlier this year investigating the national companies. One of the committee's conclusions, following the very good presentations that we had, was that a national theatre was a good idea that we wanted to develop. What role will the Scottish Arts Council have in developing a national theatre company?

Rhona Brankin: We have asked the SAC to conduct a feasibility study, which will include close consideration of the proposals put forward by the Federation of Scottish Theatres. We will be in discussion with the SAC about the feasibility of setting up a national theatre. We recognise the value of the Federation of Scottish Theatres submission, but we are also committed to having an independent feasibility study.

Mr Stone: I want to ask a more detailed question. There is a perception among museums

and similar institutions that, if something incredibly valuable is found by a ploughman, it whistles off to Edinburgh and is never seen again. The same is often said of some of our collections of pictures. One is told that the Scottish National Portrait Gallery has in its basements an enormous number of pictures, which the public do not get to see.

What are your thoughts on encouraging some of those centrally based collections to be moved back out to other areas. For instance, could a Pictish stone be returned to and exhibited in the area where it was found? Having served on museum committees over the years, I know that such matters are a perennial gripe. People ask why they cannot get back a piece of jewellery that now resides in a strongbox in Edinburgh, unseen by the public. The document is commendable and the Executive could make a good move by encouraging agencies to shift things out of centrally located museums, particularly if they are not being exhibited.

Rhona Brankin: There is a lot in what Mr Stone says. National Museums of Scotland has a stated intention to develop a loan scheme; I understand that a lottery application may have been submitted for that. Mark Jones, the director of National Museums of Scotland, is keen to play a wider role, and we will be considering that when we examine the whole museum sector.

There is a commitment in the document to develop a national strategy for the museum sector. We are keen to do that, given that one of the main thrusts underpinning the document is access and participation. We have to consider how the outstations of the National Galleries of Scotland work. Are they developing access? How could we do that better? The Playfair extension to the Royal Scottish Academy will create new gallery space in Edinburgh, which will at least enable us to show pictures and paintings that have not previously been exhibited. We are keen to ensure that people throughout Scotland have access to museums and galleries and we will be considering how to extend that access. We will seek to develop tools to evaluate how successfully we do that over the next few years.

Mr Stone: Where there are little local museums, the situation, due to the vagaries of local government finance, tends to be quite wobbly from year to year. Do you have any thoughts on how one could at least put them on a more stable footing? Such museums, in the Borders, the Highlands or wherever, often lurch from crisis to crisis financially, because their grants might be cut. That is no one's fault—sometimes the council simply does not have the money.

Rhona Brankin: Over the past few years, several museums have found themselves in difficulty. As members know, there are three types

of museum: independent, local authority and national. One reason for developing a strategic approach to the whole museum sector is that we recognise the fact that there are difficulties and tensions. One example is the Scottish Mining Museum in Midlothian, the second smallest council in Scotland. Since local government reorganisation, it is the only local authority to contribute to the running of that museum, despite the fact that the museum is used more widely, by schools from other local authority areas, for example.

There are key issues for us to discuss—for example, with COSLA. We have instituted an audit of the museum sector and we will start by considering the collections in the industrial museums. We recognise that there are particular problems in that sector. That work is happening under the auspices of the Scottish Museums Council. We will report back to the committee on the outcomes of that work.

Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP): What is the expected completion date of the audit?

Rhona Brankin: The audit will take about a year to complete. It is a big project, but it has already started.

Fiona McLeod: Does that mean that it will be done by next summer, by next autumn or by next spring?

Rhona Brankin: By next autumn, I would think.

Bob Irvine (Scottish Executive Education Department): It should be completed by next autumn. Some details have to be confirmed about how the audit is to be conducted; we are discussing that with the Scottish Museums Council. An approach is being developed between COSLA and other partners on the Scottish Museums Council. The exact detail of how the report is produced and the timetable for producing it are being worked out. The time scale will not be any shorter than a year, because a significant amount of detailed work requires to be done to identify and evaluate various collections and museum activities and services.

Fiona McLeod: I accept that the task is a massive one and that, to get it right, we must do it right. I am sure that you appreciate that some museums in the industrial museum sector are threatened with closure by the end of this season. It must be very worrying for them to hear that only the preparatory work has begun and that the audit will not be completed until next year, by which time they might have been out of business for a year. What criteria are you using to fund such museums? For example, the Scottish Mining Museum in Midlothian will get money, whereas the Museum of Lead Mining at Wanlockhead will have to close in October because it lacks £10,000.

Rhona Brankin: When we announced the emergency funding for the Scottish Mining Museum, we said that we regarded it as a special case. I understand that other museums face financial difficulties. We are constantly in discussion with bodies such as the Scottish Museums Council and with directors of museums. However, as the committee knows, the Scottish Executive is not the only player. Those museums are not national museums by statute; they are either independent museums, local authority museums or a combination of the two. We were specific about the fact that the Scottish Mining Museum was a special case because we recognised the national value of the collection.

We have to be able to make decisions based on objective criteria. It is important not to rush into this but to develop a strategy that can take us into the future and will mean that the museum sector is not staggering from crisis to crisis. That is what we intend to do.

Fiona McLeod: I am pleased to hear that. I agree that we need established criteria to stop the sector going from crisis to crisis. I am also pleased to hear that museums can plead their special cases to the Executive.

I will declare an interest at this point, as I used to be a librarian. The fifth bullet point of part 2.2 of the document says that library legislation will be reviewed. Should alarm bells be ringing in my head? What prompted the Executive to believe that the legislation needed to be reviewed?

Rhona Brankin: We want to examine the statutory framework in which libraries operate. We have not made a decision yet; we are still discussing when that review will take place. I do not know what the time scale will be. I do not think that it is down for this year in the implementation plan, but it will be undertaken in the four-year span of the cultural strategy.

Bob Irvine: We have to address that point when we discuss the implementation of the parts of the strategy that affect local authorities. We will discuss that with COSLA. However, as the minister said, there is no firm timetable. The general point is that, while libraries have changed in nature and in the service that they can and should provide, the statutory framework for libraries is of some antiquity. It seems appropriate to have a look at whether everything in statute continues to be relevant and likely to deliver the best range of services.

Fiona McLeod: I am sure that no one will be surprised that I want to labour this point. The Public Libraries Act 1850 covered England and Wales. I think that legislation was introduced in Scotland 13 years after that. The legislation established a free public library service with

access for all. I hope that, in any review of what you call antiquated legislation, that founding principle will be maintained.

Rhona Brankin: With the development of information and communications technology and the national grid for learning, we believe that the development of libraries as centres for lifelong learning is increasingly important. You can rest assured that the future of libraries is secure. We want to be able to secure their future and ensure that as many people as possible use libraries and have access to the technology that is available in them.

Fiona McLeod: I have two more points on libraries. Now that Nicola Sturgeon is here, she can take care of the rest.

The sixth bullet point of part 2.2 talks about wanting to help the National Library of Scotland to move into the modern era and to use technology. However, when we examined the budget with the minister, I remember noticing that the funding for the library would remain static. Digitising records is an expensive business; I hope that the Executive will not say that it expects the library to digitise as a priority while its funding is being reduced, which would make the project almost impossible.

Rhona Brankin: I take that point on board. The National Library of Scotland has told us that it badly needs to get into the 21st century. A large amount of money has been spent on the building in recent years and clearly the next step is to develop ICT. We recognise that that cannot be done on fresh air.

Fiona McLeod: On ICT, I go back to my hobby horse. The fifth bullet point under part 3.2 talks about the public library network and the minister has mentioned the national grid for learning. Libraries use lots of different technologies relating to the provision of information and I have grave concerns that the systems do not join up. We have to examine the public library network as part of the ICT infrastructure of the country and look towards an integrated information strategy that will not place the public library network at the bottom of the hill and the national grid for learning at the top of the hill without allowing them to meet. We should not have a situation in which different groups have access to different parts of the network. I strongly push the need for an integrated information strategy.

10:00

Rhona Brankin: That is an important point, which I take on board.

Johann Lamont: I do not pretend to be a great authority on this matter, having come to the committee late, but I was interested in what you

had to say about the importance of local authority support for museums. That should be commended. Have you made a distinction between museums and other cultural initiatives that are supported locally but play a national role? I am not sure whether there are any national museums or galleries outside Edinburgh. I come from Glasgow and represent a part of it and I think that Glasgow has a good record of supporting important initiatives in arts and culture. In the context of local government finance, there are difficulties and the provision of support becomes difficult. Will the Executive consider the role of some of the arts and culture work that obviously provides a service beyond the centre of Glasgow and makes an important national contribution? What kind of support can be offered to such work? Even at the level of generating tourist interest in Scotland, it is clear that what Glasgow has—the Burrell collection and so on—plays a part. Will work be done to consider the national role of such cultural work in Glasgow and other areas?

Rhona Brankin: One of the reasons for undertaking the audit of the museum sector is to determine what collections are of national importance so that we can make objective decisions about what to do. We recognise that Glasgow has a particular problem, given the scale of its collections and buildings. We have been in discussions with Glasgow and will continue those discussions with regard to the completion of the best-value work that is being done there.

Johann Lamont: Do you acknowledge the frustration at the fact that a provision that is of national importance is the responsibility of the city alone when it is located in Glasgow but would be supported in a different way if it were located in Edinburgh? That issue relates to local government finance but it is also to do with our perception of where national culture is located. An argument could be made that it is located beyond the cities.

Rhona Brankin: Edinburgh has galleries and museums in addition to the national galleries and museums—it is not as if Edinburgh does not spend anything. The local authority in Glasgow experienced difficulties as a result of local government reorganisation. Many people travel into Glasgow to visit the galleries and museums. We recognise the particular difficulties that Glasgow faces.

The Convener: Johann Lamont mentioned the relationship between culture and development of the tourism industry, which is mentioned in the document. Can you expand on that?

Rhona Brankin: We recognise in the document the tremendous contribution that arts, culture, heritage and sport make to the tourism industry in Scotland. The estimates vary. Historic Scotland has found that 86 per cent of visitors to Scotland

come because of its built heritage. We have a tourism industry that can benefit from developing niche markets.

In the tourism document that was launched earlier this year, Henry McLeish identified three niche markets for development: cultural tourism, golf tourism and genealogy. I am going to lead a ministerial working group on cultural tourism. In that context, we will consider festivals—the value of the Edinburgh festival and the extent to which it could be developed to benefit other areas of Scotland. A major events task force will be set up to examine cultural and sporting events. There is a lot of work to be done on that.

The Convener: Your portfolio does not include the tourist boards. How do you set about ensuring that there is a joint working relationship? I represent Linlithgow. One of the problems in my area is that the Edinburgh and Lothians Tourist Board focuses on Edinburgh, and the outlying areas tend to suffer. I am sure that there are similar problems in other tourist board areas. How do you influence the area tourist boards and persuade them to consider structures and local activities that are not being promoted to tourists and incomers?

Rhona Brankin: The group that I am heading is a cross-government body. The major partners will be the Scottish Executive—civil servants from the education and the enterprise and lifelong learning departments—the Scottish Tourist Board, Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Arts Council, sportscotland and Historic Scotland. Local authorities will also be involved. We want to ensure that cultural tourism is maximised for all areas of Scotland. We will work closely with Henry McLeish and Alasdair Morrison on the development of the strategy.

We need to consider how to develop tourism and local economies holistically. That is why it is important that the partners that I have mentioned work together at a local level, too. One example, from the Highlands, is the Hi-art organisation, which involves the Arts Council, the tourist board, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the local authority and various other organisations. We are interested in such models of joint working. Consideration of the enterprise structure and the tourist board structure is under way and we want to feed into that to ensure a joined-up approach.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The document talks about a national theatre but does not mention a national theatre company. Given the evidence that the committee took and the general debate on the matter, particularly the Federation of Scottish Theatres' proposals, I assumed that there was consensus and that we had moved beyond a static concept of a national theatre towards general support for a

national theatre company. Are we talking about trying to establish a company, rather than a building with a company? Will the feasibility study that you have commissioned consider a national theatre company, or will it still consider the possibility of a theatre building as well?

Rhona Brankin: We are not considering building a new theatre. We recognise that there are many examples of excellent theatre in Scotland and the last thing we want to do is take away from that. We want to build on the current excellence in Scottish theatre. The proposals from the Federation of Scottish Theatres will make an important contribution, although we have to carry out an independent feasibility study. However, we are not thinking in terms of a new building, but are considering some sort of commissioning body.

Mr Monteith: Can you give the committee some idea of the time scale of the feasibility study? If that study concluded that a theatre company should be established—regardless of whether it supports the proposals from the Federation of Scottish Theatres—what would the next step be? I am rather concerned that one feasibility study might lead to yet another. I hope that you can tell the committee that things will happen quickly, as soon as the feasibility study is concluded.

Rhona Brankin: We have set a time scale for the feasibility study to conclude in May 2001. The possibilities after that depend on the outcome of the study and future spending decisions.

Mr Monteith: Page 2 of the document talks about recognising the central role of education in cultural development. Elsewhere in the document there is reference to cultural co-ordinators. Could cultural co-ordinators be particularly useful in promoting Scottish history in schools? It strikes me that if children are to appreciate our indigenous culture and its relationship to other cultures, they must have some basis on which to form their understanding of developments and new creativity. You intend to run a pilot scheme for cultural co-ordinators. Could that include Scottish history as well as arts and music?

Rhona Brankin: The cultural co-ordinators will consider the gamut of arts, culture and heritage. Speaking as someone who has been a history teacher, one of the challenges facing teachers, particularly those who are dealing with younger pupils, is to develop an understanding and interest in local heritage.

As members will know, to develop a youngster's historical conceptual framework, we start with the children, their families and finding out about local communities. One of the difficulties for history teachers is finding ways of getting kids out and about and making links with local history organisations and the education service in

museums, which we are expanding. School co-ordinators can make a big difference in that area.

Mr Monteith: I have a final question on Scottish Screen. The document mentions support for Scottish Screen and the fact that consideration is being given to the location of a film studio. Is the Executive committed to investing taxpayers' money in a film studio? Would it take a step back if private developers were to come forward with a project that would bring a film studio to Scotland and did not require public funding? Is the Executive thrilled to the idea of a studio in, for example, Glasgow, because that is where Scottish Screen wants one, even though that might require public funding and there are a number of sites in Scotland that could be developed privately? Are you still committed to public funding?

10:15

Rhona Brankin: At the moment we are committed to a feasibility study. Scottish Screen is developing a business plan and we are in discussion with Scottish Screen and Scottish Enterprise about the possibility of setting up a film studio that would be located in Glasgow. Glasgow is Scottish Screen's stated preferred site for a film studio because Scottish Enterprise is intending to cluster-develop a creative digital industry at Pacific quay. Glasgow would, therefore, seem to be the logical site. However, we have not closed our mind to other options. Until we have had further discussions on the business case that Scottish Screen has made, no hard-and-fast decisions will be made.

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): Do you think that there is a danger that the cultural champions in schools will ghettoise culture? The burden of some teachers will be added to, while teachers who at the moment are doing a great deal of work in cultural areas may stop doing that if they are not selected as cultural champions. Are we not perhaps moving in the wrong direction?

Rhona Brankin: Absolutely not. I recognise that teachers are already doing terrific work in schools—putting on performances, taking kids away on visits and bringing local artists into schools, for example. As Nicola Sturgeon will know, the difficulty is that there is often very little time to do that work because of the pressures of the wider curriculum. This is about recognising the terrific work that is being done, but it is also about creating more time and space for teachers to do that. As a former teacher who has been involved in putting on school productions, taking pupils away on visits and bringing people in, I know that such activities take place on top of all the other work that has to be done.

We want to ensure that as many pupils as

possible have access to wider cultural activities. Some school pupils, through their families, will have a tremendously wide cultural experience. There are social inclusion issues involved here as well. Who, for example, in a school has an overview of young people's wider cultural experiences? Working in partnership with local authorities, schools can begin to explore what exists in their local community. Recently I spoke to the warden of a castle, which shall remain nameless, who said that local primary schools never visit it. There is something odd about that, given the tremendous resources that exist in communities in Scotland.

School cultural champions may be assistant head teachers, but no decision has been made on that yet. We are still working on the proposal with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Arts Council. The people who are appointed will have the job of ensuring that as many young people as possible have access to culture and heritage in the broadest sense. We recognise in the document that culture can have an effect on attainment in a school and that there is an increasing body of evidence to suggest that access to culture and the arts can develop self-confidence, build self-esteem and affect pupils' attainment levels. Cultural champions will have the wider role of examining how culture can filter into the curriculum as a whole.

We are still examining the role that school cultural champions will play. The last thing we want to do is to restrict the opportunities of teachers and pupils to take part. The thrust of the policy is to widen access and to recognise that time is needed if cultural matters are to be prioritised.

Nicola Sturgeon: I do not question the motivation or merit of this plan. However, teachers already do a lot of work in this area. My concern is that when an individual in a school is appointed as a cultural champion, those who are doing such work at the moment will stop doing it because they have not been chosen. The motivation behind this policy is to widen access to culture, but the effect may be to restrict and reduce the amount of cultural work that goes on in schools.

Rhona Brankin: We already have school sport co-ordinators in half of Scotland's secondary schools. I understand that that has not had the sort of impact that Nicola Sturgeon is describing. However, we are conscious of that danger.

Nicola Sturgeon: Brian Monteith has already raised the issue of the film studio. Obviously, a film studio will be a commercial project. Is it not best to let the market decide whether there is a demand for a large film studio, and leave Scottish Executive resources to be invested in other areas that will not attract private finance, such as a

national film school? Would that not be a better use of state resources?

Rhona Brankin: We are examining the business plan at the moment. Scottish Screen has told us that a film studio could be a commercial proposition. The difficulty is that a studio would not recoup its capital costs. The building of a film studio would enable companies to come to Scotland to make films. At the moment, the studio facilities that are being used are in a disused warehouse. Apart from anything else, they are dangerous. They are certainly inappropriate. Scottish Screen has suggested to us that a film studio would benefit the Scottish film industry. It would make a small profit, but it would not recoup its capital costs, which would amount to £5 million to £6 million. We need to take that into account when we examine the business plan. Our mind is not closed to other possibilities.

Nicola Sturgeon: Can you say something about the place of literature in the strategy? It does not seem to feature very prominently in the document. Will there be a full parliamentary debate on the strategy in the near future?

Rhona Brankin: As I said in my opening statement, the cultural strategy was never going to be able to list everything that is being done. The Arts Council invests significant amounts in Scottish literature, and we recognise the value of Scottish literature. At the moment the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Enterprise are investing £120,000 in a project to develop Scottish publishing and recording companies and I have visited the Scottish Poetry Library on several occasions.

We recognise that there are many interesting projects, for example bringing Scottish writers into schools, which we would like to be developed further. Something's not being mentioned does not mean that it will be ignored. We recognise the important place that the book festival now holds in Scotland, for example. It is one of the biggest book festivals in the world.

On the second point, the intention is to have a debate on the cultural strategy. We have pencilled in a debate a couple of times and something has happened so it has had to be put off. I am looking for a debate as soon as possible.

The Convener: We all look forward to that.

Cathy Jamieson: I will keep my comments brief.

I will return to the issue that several members have raised: the funding strategy for national and local museums. Rhona Brankin will not be surprised to hear me raise it as I have an interest in this issue, partly because of a museum and heritage site in my constituency.

Glasgow is not alone in suffering as a result of local authority reorganisation. The break-up of the former Strathclyde Region has meant that East Ayrshire Council, which I am glad got a positive mention for the work it is doing in schools, has become the main funder for a local industrial museum. I am concerned that the time scale for the review and audit will make life difficult for it.

Unlike Fiona McLeod, I do not think that it is helpful for museums to be pleading as special cases. Have any initiatives been taken to get the industrial museums that are under threat to work co-operatively and to examine together their future and how they might access funds, individually or in a group, so that they do not have to fight for funding individually?

Rhona Brankin: Discussions with the Scottish Museums Council continue. Nothing specific has come out of that because what is done must be based on the initial audit. We recognise the specific difficulties of the industrial sector, which is why we have said that we will start the audit examining that sector.

Cathy Jamieson: I will follow up on the notion of permanently or temporarily outpostting some of the national galleries and museums. That was mentioned in relation to the tourism strategy. Does the Executive see that as a way forward, to ensure access for people who cannot get to those institutions? Some kids in my constituency have never been to Edinburgh and are unlikely to get the chance to go in the near future, but they actively participate in events on their own doorsteps.

Rhona Brankin: I am keen for the national bodies to do that. Mark Jones in the National Museums of Scotland is keen to examine how to get the national museums out. Parts of the national museums are spread throughout Scotland, for example the Shambellie House Museum of Costume and the Museum of Flight in East Lothian.

We could perhaps examine new roles for the nationals. There could be collaboration between national and local museums. There are many interesting possibilities.

Cathy Jamieson: The document mentions opportunities for training and continued professional development. I have been an arts student and have had an unusual career pattern, so I was interested to read that it is recognised that getting access to professional support is not always straightforward. We are talking about Scottish actors, artists and musicians taking a place on the world stage, but I am concerned that it is difficult for people to get funding to enable them to continue their development. I could quote several examples from my constituency;

presumably there are many others. Has there been discussion of support packages to enable people to access courses that necessitate travel outwith Scotland, or to ensure that such facilities are available in Scotland?

Rhona Brankin: We will discuss those matters with local authorities. The burden falls on local authority bursaries if a student does not qualify for awards under the Student Awards Agency for Scotland.

Cathy Peattie: The same could be said of performing arts such as folk music, traditional music and jazz—it is difficult to get support with business development, training, marketing and recording. It is difficult for new, up and coming artists with real talent to get support. What role will the Scottish Arts Council and other bodies have in promoting our performing arts, especially among young people?

10:30

Rhona Brankin: There are a few initiatives. We are setting up an internationalisation fund. That sounds complex, but in essence it gives people an opportunity to visit other countries to find out what is being done there and to examine opportunities for developing their work abroad. That need has come through to us from artists.

As I have said, the Arts Council is collaborating with Scottish Enterprise to set up a fund to allow medium-scale record companies to develop business plans and give further opportunities for those companies to carry on their work. Record companies in the traditional music sector will want to take advantage of that.

We recognise that this issue is important. We are keen to monitor, for example, how the new deal for musicians is working and to consider other possibilities in relation to new deal or modern apprenticeships.

Cathy Peattie: It is important that if there is a new deal for musicians there is somewhere for young jazz musicians, for example, to go afterwards so that they do not have support and training for a year or so and then find that there is nowhere to take their musical skills.

Rhona Brankin: Part of the training for musicians in the new deal is in business skills, to equip them to make use of their musical skills.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): I especially like the mention given to young people learning a musical instrument, but I am disappointed that there is not more on the role of popular music, which is important economically, given the number of people employed in cultural music, and a way of enabling young people to appreciate the culture of Scotland and the wider

world.

The document states that we shall

“Recognise the power of popular music making to engage young people in cultural activities.”

I know work is being done in this area, but could you expand on that comment?

Rhona Brankin: Work is being done between the Arts Council and Scottish Enterprise to examine how we can develop medium-sized recording companies in Scotland. We are responding to the stated need of that sector that that aspect needs to be developed.

We have talked to groups of young people in the consultation process and we recognise the power of popular music. Popular music increasingly forms part of the music curriculum in schools. I am sure that members will have seen that when they have visited schools. Many of the schools performances that I have seen contain a lot of work in rock music and pop music. We know that that connects with young people and recognise its power. The school culture champion could examine how to develop opportunities for more youngsters to take part in that kind of activity.

Mr Macintosh: A problem is the credibility gap between government and popular music. I do not know whether government will ever be able to cross that.

Cathy Jamieson talked about providing avenues for young people when they leave school, especially at further education level. A lot of further education opportunities are available south of the border, but there are not so many in Scotland.

If someone is a classical musician, career paths are available to them in Scotland, but there is not any encouragement that way for a popular musician. I appreciate that some work is being done, but more could be done.

Rhona Brankin: Some developments are in the pipeline. Ayr College is hoping to set up a popular music course; however, that development is dependent on a lottery application. That said, there is a recognition that youngsters should have the opportunity to develop such areas.

The Convener: I know that the minister has to go. However, we started a bit late and I want to fit in two more quick questions.

Fiona McLeod: I have two very quick questions about strategic objective 2, key priority 2.1, on languages. When will the minister guarantee secure status for Gaelic? Furthermore, when will the Government accept that the academics have won the argument over whether Scots is a language or a dialect? Scots is a language and should receive the priority that it deserves.

The Convener: I should remind you that the minister is not the minister with responsibility for Gaelic. However, I will allow her to answer the question.

Rhona Brankin: Alasdair Morrison is the minister with responsibility for Gaelic. However, the language is part of the national cultural strategy. Although we will work towards secure status for Gaelic, we do not see a need for such legislation at this stage. However, we are committed to ensuring the language's future and will continue to support it year on year. Furthermore, we will consider the recently published Macpherson report on Gaelic.

As for Scots, we recognise the contribution of the Scots language to the culture and are considering the feasibility of setting up a centre for Scottish languages that would incorporate both Gaelic and Scots. We must examine both initial teacher education and in-service education, for Scots, Gaelic or languages that are the mother tongues of youngsters when they enter nursery or primary school. It is important that those languages receive recognition.

Mr Monteith: You mentioned that Scottish Enterprise might help music companies with their business plans and then said that there might be additional help. Did you mean that Scottish Enterprise would become involved as a player or would it simply still have a consultancy role?

Rhona Brankin: Initially, up to eight publishing or record companies will receive £3,000 to help them to develop business plans, to expand their businesses. Applications will be evaluated on commercial and artistic potential and the company's management experience. Two companies in each sector—four in all—will then receive up to £25,000 in refundable grants to achieve their business plans. That is the project being proposed by the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Enterprise.

The Convener: I thank the minister for answering our questions so clearly; the committee looks forward to the parliamentary debate. I am sorry that we have delayed you—I know that you have another appointment.

Petitions

The Convener: The fourth item on the agenda is consideration of public petitions. The first petition is PE114 from Mrs Julia Clarke, on after-school care clubs. The committee will remember that we have already considered that petition and sent it to the Executive for a response, which we have now received.

I suggest that the committee ask the Executive to reinforce the message to local authorities that they should encourage school boards to make use of school premises and to make them available to the local community during non-school hours. We should also recognise the use of local child care partnerships to consider a variety of ways to provide child care for ages 0 to 14.

Johann Lamont: I appreciate the fact that I was not present at the earlier discussion on the petition. However, I am interested to know whether the blocking of the use of school premises has been monitored. Obviously, that is a matter for local authorities and voluntary organisations; however, the committee should be concerned if people are actively discouraging such use for this or any other purpose.

Another broader issue that I have picked up anecdotally is that although there is a commitment to providing after-school clubs and child care, demand is not always matched by provision. Because that commitment is so important, we should encourage the Executive to keep a close eye on the situation.

Fiona McLeod: Although the legislation says that we should only promote the use of schools, we should remember that the petitioner originally asked for a

"rigorous cost-benefit analysis of converting public-sector primary schools into after-school care clubs".

We must pursue that element of the petition a bit further, because people might be blocking the use of schools on a cost basis without being able to prove that there is a negative cost basis in keeping the school shut and having the after-school club in the local hall.

The Convener: How do you suggest that we proceed with that issue?

Fiona McLeod: Perhaps we could appoint a reporter.

The Convener: That is an option.

Johann Lamont: As this is a local authority matter, I am reluctant for the committee to take on powers that rightly lie with the local authority. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that there are lines of communication with local authorities,

so that we alert them to people's concerns and to the fact that at least one local authority has ensured after-hours access to schools. Local authorities should be considering how they deal with local concerns on the matter.

The Convener: Our information does not make it clear whether there was a definite suggestion that people were being blocked from using schools or whether there was simply a lack of co-operation when schools were approached. Furthermore, we are not clear whether there were specific reasons for such a lack of co-operation or whether people were just reluctant to do it.

Cathy Jamieson: The committee does not necessarily need to undertake a huge inquiry on the issue. However, we could find out which local authorities are using school premises for after-school clubs and whether there are problems in particular areas. I am reluctant to take on a lot of work that might be unnecessary.

Fiona McLeod: The word "audit" has been bandied about. However, we could appoint a reporter to find out how much this practice is happening throughout Scotland and whether there is a problem that the committee should be pursuing further.

Mr Macintosh: Instead of taking the big step of appointing a reporter, why do we not write to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and ask it to tell us which local authorities are running after-school clubs? I would be very surprised if some local authorities did not have such clubs.

The Convener: That is a good suggestion. We will contact COSLA and ask for the information that it has from the local authorities. If that information is not sufficient to answer our concerns, we will decide whether to take the matter further, but the initial approach might provide us with the information that we want. Is everyone agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: The second petition, PE224, is from Mr George Reid, on the exact colour and proportions of the Saltire flag. Are there any questions?

Mr Stone: I thought that the Union flag was our national flag.

The Convener: I suggest that, as stated in the accompanying notes, the matter is not within the remit of the committee and that we should therefore take no action.

Mr Stone: Is the petition from our George Reid?

The Convener: No.

Mr Stone: That is a shame.

The Convener: So, we are agreed that we will take no action.

Members indicated agreement.

Subordinate Legislation

The Convener: The next item on the agenda is a Scottish statutory instrument, the Protection of Wrecks (Designation) (Scotland) Order 2000. Are there any questions? If there are no problems, we do not have to do anything. We can simply note the SSI.

Members *indicated agreement.*

Committee Business

10:45

The Convener: The next item is an update on forthcoming business. There are a number of items relating to the inquiry into school exam results. Towards the end, I will ask that the committee go into private session, because we need to discuss the appointment of an adviser. Are there are other points before we go on to that?

Mr Monteith: Yes. Yesterday, I mentioned to you that the European Committee was taking evidence on football transfers. Have you had an opportunity to discuss the matter with the convener of the European Committee? Can we have some input into its report, or will we at least be able to consider the European Committee's report once it is completed?

The Convener: I know that you attended the meeting yesterday.

Mr Monteith: As did Fiona McLeod.

The Convener: I am sorry—I did not know that Fiona McLeod was there, too. Did you feel that you were able to make a contribution?

Mr Monteith: Having read the *Official Report* of the European Committee's previous meeting, which I sent to you, convener, I was, to be honest, rather surprised that at no point in the discussion did it occur to any member of any party that there was a committee with responsibility for sport. The European Committee proceeded to take evidence from what I felt was a rather restricted number of people—I made that point at yesterday's meeting. It was no surprise to me that there was consensus among the witnesses in the evidence that they gave.

There was an opportunity for Fiona McLeod and me to ask questions, but I had a large number of questions that went unanswered. I am not convinced that the European Committee will take any more oral evidence. It will prepare a report, presumably drafted by the clerks, which will be discussed in private before it is published. It seemed to be the committee's intention to forward

the report directly to the European Commission.

As a matter of courtesy, this committee, as the committee with responsibility for sport in Scotland, should at least be given the opportunity to comment on the draft report, so that our views can be considered. We can obtain the written evidence from the clerk and the oral evidence from the *Official Report*. That would allow us to spend half an hour discussing the matter if we decided to do so.

I am cognisant of the fact that we did not take up the issue ourselves—and did not even consider taking it up—because of our pending reviews of a number of matters, most importantly of the Scottish exam situation. It would probably have been difficult for us to do what the European Committee has done. I am not complaining that the European Committee has done the work—that is fine—but it is important that we, as the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, are involved, so that we can have some say.

Cathy Jamieson: Perhaps I can help. I am deputy convener of the European Committee. I thought that Brian Monteith was complaining that he had not been consulted when he mentioned a lack of courtesy. For the record, the reason why the European Committee moved so quickly on the issue was that we were concerned at the short time scale. Indeed, we scheduled an additional meeting to take the evidence.

There was no suggestion of cutting out any other committee from dealing with the matter, but it is a matter of European legislation and it was therefore perfectly appropriate for the European Committee to deal with it. I spoke to the convener of the European Committee after the meeting yesterday and there is no difficulty with this committee commenting on the report if it wants to. I am sure that the convener and the rest of the members of the European Committee would be delighted for that to happen.

Fiona McLeod: We must consider the draft report. Yesterday, I asked the convener of the European Committee to ensure that this committee be included in the long list of people to whom he is sending the report. However, when I think about it, it is more important that we see the draft report.

The European Committee was asked by the witnesses to state clearly to the European Commission that Scottish football does not want the end of transfer fees. I have concerns about that. The matter goes beyond Europe and raises issues about football and sport in general in Scotland. We could be positive about what is happening and look forward to a better future which would ensure that funds are channelled into youth development by design rather than by

chance. It is important that this committee examines the draft and comments on it.

The Convener: Following Brian Monteith's representations to me yesterday, I spoke to Hugh Henry, the convener of the European Committee. He gave an undertaking that this committee would be given the opportunity to consider the report. I do not think that there would be a problem with our seeing the draft report. At that stage, we could decide whether we want to make any comments or suggestions from the perspective of our remit for sport.

Brian Monteith alluded to the fact that the time scale will be fairly tight, but there is a recognition that, even during the inquiry into school exam results, there will be a need to deal with other items of business. While I do not want to make football transfers a major item on the committee's agenda, it might be possible for us to examine the draft report and make any comments in a time scale that is feasible.

Mr Monteith: I take Cathy Jamieson's point about the deadline, which originally was set for today. The goal posts have now moved, if only by a matter of just over a month—much speed is needed—but that allows us to co-operate with the European Committee.

The Convener: If the committee is agreeable, we will ask the European Committee to provide us with the draft report. If members want to make any comments, they can let me know and we can put the item on a future agenda.

Are there any other items?

Fiona McLeod: Do we have a new time scale for the Hampden report?

The Convener: We do not. Last week, I met Jim Hastie from Queen's Park FC, who was concerned about our delay in publishing our report on Hampden, because of the difficulties that that might cause. He will put those concerns in writing to me and I will bring the matter back to the committee so that we can address the difficulties that people feel they might have. We do not want anybody to suffer because we have had to delay the process. It is likely that once we have all the information on the schools exam inquiry, we will be able to give a more definite response on when the report will be back on the agenda.

Fiona McLeod: When you put Jim Hastie's concerns on the agenda, will you also suggest a draft timetable, addressing those concerns?

The Convener: Yes. Once all the evidence has come in, we will have an idea of how long the inquiry is likely to take us, and we can then put that back on our agenda. When I get the letter from Jim Hastie, I shall ensure that it is circulated to everybody.

We now move on to the inquiry into school exam results. The written evidence from the Executive, local authorities and agencies that have been directly approached is due on Friday 22 September. Evidence from the Scottish Qualifications Authority is due on Monday 25 September, and evidence from the general public is due on Friday 29 September. The indications are that the evidence is substantial; it is several inches thick at the moment, but very soon we shall be measuring it in feet.

I must therefore decide how to pass on that information to all the members of the committee. I want to ensure that all members have all the information that has been provided, but I need feedback on the most accessible way of doing that. The interval between the clerks receiving the evidence and our beginning to discuss it next Wednesday is very short. We must ensure that people have as much time as possible to read the information, to inform any questions or discussions. Individual members can speak to the clerks about how they would like to receive that information, but I invite members to make any other comments that they may have.

Mr Macintosh: In an ideal situation, all members would have copies of the evidence in their local offices. However, I would be just as happy to access it here if that is more convenient for the clerks. I assume that, once we have appointed an adviser, we will have a summary or index of the evidence that has been submitted. We will need copies of the crucial submissions, but we might not need copies of all the hundreds of individual submissions.

The Convener: Mike Russell suggested colour-coding the evidence, and the clerks are considering that. That might help us to divide evidence into various categories, to make it easier to access.

Mr Macintosh: It is difficult to decide which pieces of evidence are more important than others, but I would certainly like a hard copy of the written submissions from all the people who will be giving oral evidence.

The Convener: Hard copies of everything will be available, but what might be difficult is getting copies to all members.

Martin Verity (Clerk to the Committee): We expect to receive written evidence tomorrow from a variety of organisations. It should not be too difficult to collate that, and we shall put it in folders with file dividers, so that members can see which agencies it is from. We shall also provide an index, and leave gaps for evidence that arrives late.

We are concerned about the quantity of evidence that might come from the Executive. If current estimates are to be believed, it could amount

to several thick lever-arch files, and that would make quite a heavy box to dispatch to members. We could have it sent out by courier on Friday evening, but if it arrives at members' homes on Saturday morning, they will have to bring it back to Parliament themselves. It would help the clerks if members could indicate after the meeting whether they would like the information to be sent by courier to their homes, or whether they would prefer it to be left in their parliamentary offices.

The Convener: Thank you. That is helpful. Does anyone foresee difficulties with that?

Martin Verity: We also expect a memorandum from the Executive, which will refer to all the written evidence. There would be no difficulty in sending that out on Friday. If members had the memorandum, it would lead them into the evidence when they collect it.

The Convener: Last week, we mentioned appointing a computer systems adviser. We have not made much progress on that, and Camilla Kidner does not have additional information at this stage. We wonder whether we should wait until we have appointed our main adviser before appointing a computer systems adviser, or whether we should go ahead with the appointment anyway. Are members content to leave that decision until we have more information?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: As there are no other points on the inquiry, we shall move into private session.

11:01

Meeting continued in private until 11:13.

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