



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 13 September 2011

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EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
4th Meeting 2011, Session 4

CONVENER

*Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)

*Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab)

*Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP)

*Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)

*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Andrew Dixon (Creative Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Terry Shevlin

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Education and Culture Committee

Tuesday 13 September 2011

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Creative Scotland

The Convener (Stewart Maxwell): Good morning and welcome to the fourth meeting of the Education and Culture Committee in session 4. As usual, I remind everyone to switch off any mobile phones and other electronic devices as they will interfere with the sound system. Please keep them off throughout the meeting.

We have one item on the agenda today, but it is an important one. We are taking evidence from Andrew Dixon, the chief executive of Creative Scotland, whom I welcome to the committee. We have invited him to the meeting not just because we have a new committee but because this is the first anniversary of the creation of Creative Scotland. I believe that he has an opening statement that he would like to give.

Andrew Dixon (Creative Scotland): Yes. I have a few words to say, and the committee has had some information from us in advance. Creative Scotland is a year old. We have produced our first corporate plan. We have taken out a roadshow and done 12 events across Scotland, which were attended by more than 1,000 people. We also did a live webcast. The reaction to the corporate plan has been fantastic.

We have launched our 15 new investment programmes, which replace the more than 100 budgets that we had previously. Within those, we have started to have some real success. Our film equity fund is already leveraging in more than £4.5 million of new investment.

We have moved to Waverley Gate, which is very much a resource space. The BBC has filmed documentaries there and we had international visitors during the festival. It is where we launched our made in Scotland programme, which we support through the expo fund and which has won a number of awards.

Since Creative Scotland came into being, we have done a lot of preparatory work in setting up new partnerships. We have partnerships with each of the broadcasters—BBC, STV, MG Alba, Channel 4, Sky Arts—and with some external partners that are bringing new money into Scotland, such as the Baring Foundation and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. We have also secured a

good programme for the cultural olympiad through support from the Legacy Trust UK.

One of the things that the committee will want to focus on is what we have been doing internally. Creative Scotland's job is to look out of the window and talk about the creative sector in Scotland, shining a light on cultural success. However, we have had to get our house in order. We have now saved more than £2 million through our restructure, which provides an on-going efficiency saving of £1.5 million. So far, that has enabled us to reinvest in the cultural sector.

We have delivered many new things. We are delighted to have a new national poet, Liz Lochhead, in partnership with the Scottish Poetry Library. Some very interesting new partnerships are starting to develop around the year of creative Scotland, which will be in 2012, and our support for a national cultural programme for the 2014 Commonwealth games. Given the committee's role in education, I am delighted that our work with Education Scotland on the creativity and cultural action plan is starting to bear fruit. More than 100 organisations are now providing cultural content for the glow network. Some spectacularly high-quality work is going on there.

Creative Scotland has also done a lot of repackaging. Our "Guide to Scottish Festivals 2011" is the first time that the story has been told of the 280 cultural festivals in Scotland—150 music festivals, 40 literature festivals, and 75 festivals in the winter when we are not supposed to have tourism. We have packaged together our residencies programme called creative futures, and we have identified 17 new residency partners to promote artists in residence across Scotland. We are also working on new partnerships with the press and media to get the message across that everyone is part of the cheering section for supporting a creative Scotland.

We sent members copies of our corporate plan in advance of this meeting. It is very much about being aspirational. It has a 10-year vision of Scotland's cultural strengths and asks what we can do during the next three years. However, we cannot do it on our own. We absolutely have to do it with many other partners, and it is pleasing to see how many of those partners have come to the table and want to work with us.

I also very much see all of you as partners in helping us to achieve that. We need to give you the stories and statistics and to get across the messages about successes throughout Scotland. Obviously, we need you to scrutinise what we are doing and ensure that we are tackling the new agendas that are on our table such as support for the creative industries in Scotland, our international position and cultural exports.

I look forward to working with all committee members, new and old, and am happy to answer any questions that you might have.

The Convener: Thank you very much. Speaking as one of the older members, I very much welcome the engagement that you have described and certainly look forward to the committee having a very productive and fruitful engagement with Creative Scotland over the next few years.

In the organisational briefing that you sent us, you list some impressive successes in your first year, including, as you have said, the very interesting £2 million reduction in overheads, which I am sure we will come on to. However, those are what you believe to be your achievements. What feedback have you had from your stakeholders and how do they feel you have performed over the first year?

Andrew Dixon: We regularly take stock of what our cultural organisations are thinking. In an online survey that we carried out of our foundation and flexibly funded organisations, which amount to more than 100, we had 87 per cent satisfaction ratings. The cultural sector has welcomed the new vision, the sense of leadership and the sense that, instead of someone taking a bureaucratic look at how their achievements are being delivered, they are being celebrated. Not everyone will be happy with the changes, some of which are significant. For example, you mentioned the savings that we have made. At its peak, Scottish Screen and the Scottish Arts Council had 155 staff; we now have 95. That changes the amount of personal engagement that we can have, so we are having to be cleverer in our use of web-based information and an even more positive consequence is that we are getting out, going to people's patches and having many more surgeries about investment opportunities. I think that that has been welcomed. Inevitably, one or two people will say, "I liked the old way. I knew exactly who to go to and who would have £20,000 in their drawer for literature touring." Our new investment programmes are much more flexible, which I think has also been welcomed, and we will survey our client base very regularly.

Our investment programmes were launched only four months ago; we intend to review them and get feedback on them after six months and go through a continuous improvement process. We are learning lessons all the time. We have had 550 applications to those programmes and, inevitably, as a result of that process, we are learning lessons about the things that fit and the things that do not.

The Convener: How extensive will that six-month review be? You also mentioned online feedback. How structured will that engagement be

and how easy will it be for organisations to feed back their opinions and thoughts, good or bad?

Andrew Dixon: One of the interesting things about new technology is that people are feeding back all the time. Indeed, with the online surveys that we carry out after any of our major events, we get instant feedback.

However, our website is providing us with invaluable feedback, both positive and negative, about what we are doing. Indeed, certain things that we have set up on it are intended to generate a conversation with the external world. We have not yet launched our proper website. Because we have had to go through a procurement process, we are still on the temporary site that we launched last July when Creative Scotland came into being, but it is already getting 88,000 visits a month, or nearly a million this year, and it is enabling us to have a much more regular dialogue with people and to get and react to feedback.

I have been very visible in Scotland: I have travelled from Dumfries to Shetland and from Stornoway to Aberdeenshire, and I have taken a lot of time to listen to artists and cultural organisations. Our roadshow, which a number of MSPs attended, was an exercise to listen and take questions and comments as well as to present our plans. We are committed to listening to people.

We are also committed to transparency. Transparency brings with it pitfalls but, as we develop our communications plan—I am delighted that our director of communications and external relations, Kenneth Fowler, is now with us—much more information about what we are doing will be available and on the website.

The Convener: Could you confirm again how many visits your website gets a month?

Andrew Dixon: We had 88,000 visits in August, which will equate to around a million this year.

The Convener: Thank you. I will throw open questioning to the committee, beginning with Marco Biagi.

Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP): Thank you for coming, Mr Dixon. As one of the new faces, I am pleased to see you here.

I am interested in the process that you have gone through in the past year. We should perhaps have a birthday cake for you, but instead we will give you some questions. The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 had Creative Scotland as the centrepiece—it was the highest profile organisation that the legislation affected. The act brought together two organisations that were in similar fields, but the potential effect was that small differences would be exaggerated and there would be rivalries. There was also a change to the remit. In the current context, with organisations

having to work together more closely if not merge entirely, I am curious about how the process has worked internally at Creative Scotland. It seems to me that that would have been quite a challenge.

Andrew Dixon: I have been involved in two other mergers in the past, and I must say that this one went far more smoothly than I might have anticipated.

The point to remember is that Scottish Screen and the Scottish Arts Council were not broken: they were doing really good work. In particular, some of the programmes that the Scottish Arts Council was delivering, such as the inspiring change programme and its lottery support for community-based activity, were exceptional. Scottish Screen, albeit with reduced budgets—it was heavily reliant on lottery funding—had always been a bit of a model as a film investment agency. The trouble was that they did not have the critical mass on their own to deliver, and they lacked confidence as agencies to take a leadership role or to let other people take a leadership role in Scotland.

In bringing the two bodies together, we have been able to keep the strengths and start to chip away at the weaknesses. We have inherited some extremely good staff and some great expertise, but we have also had the opportunity to bring in some new expertise and new energy. The creative industries are a new area for us. We did not necessarily carry the expertise in them, so we brought in our director of creative development, Caroline Parkinson, and our creative industries portfolio manager, Helena Ward. They have brought a new energy and expertise into the organisation.

The process has been longer than one might have liked, partly because of the Scottish Government decision to have no compulsory redundancies. We have had to go through a process, quite slowly, of matching people with posts, taking voluntary redundancies where they come and trying to work with the team that we have. I am very pleased with the team that we have.

The move to Waverley Gate has been transformational. The Scottish Arts Council was based in three terraced houses in Haymarket, which are beautiful to live in and completely awful to work in. They had 50 separate rooms and were compartmentalised, hidden away and secretive, with a lack of internal communication. We have blown that apart by moving to Waverley Gate, which is beyond transparent. I invite you all to come and visit—it really is a model in opening up oneself. We have a reception area that opens up into a public area. We invite our clients to use hot-desk space and meet in spaces within the offices.

The move has changed the culture. I am very grateful to the Scottish Parliament, the City of Edinburgh Council and the interim chair, Ewan Brown, who delivered for us the deal to move into Waverley Gate, which has not only been an efficiency saving but has transformed the culture of the organisation.

10:15

Marco Biagi: You mentioned eyebrow-raising figures for staffing changes, which have been made without any compulsory redundancies. How has the shape of staffing changed? Where have those numbers come from?

Andrew Dixon: When organisations merge, it is like Noah's ark; people come in twos. There are two finance directors, two marketing directors, two designers, two information technology directors and so on, and the structure has to be shaken down to get to the right number and the right model.

Before I arrived, Ewan Brown and his committee had done a lot of what I think was sensible work on mapping out a very different business model for staffing. We have not radically changed that, although we have reduced things further. Our target figure was 111, and we have taken that further. However, we will have to build it back because I think that we will need expertise in one or two areas.

That said, in taking our time over the matter, we have been able to analyse where we need additional strengths or expertise. Indeed, sometimes it might be better not to carry such specialist expertise in-house and have a full-time salary on the books but to contract it in. We are still learning. After all, we are a year into running the organisation. Our senior team is very busy and we are conscious of the workload on them. Nevertheless, we are flying at a particular pace and I feel that the structure is starting to bed down and the rest of the organisation is catching up.

Marco Biagi: Given that Creative Scotland is greater than the sum of its two original parts, have there been any structural challenges in trying to accommodate the broader remit?

Andrew Dixon: The two significant new areas are co-ordination of the leadership of the creative industries and cultural export, which is more of an advocacy role. On creative industries, when the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Bill was introduced, it was agreed that Creative Scotland would not be the primary funding mechanism for the creative industries, which would continue to go through Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, skills agencies and so on. Instead, we would play a co-ordinating role and try to pull people together through the Scottish creative

industries partnership. We were slightly underpowered until we were able to recruit specialist staff in that area. However, we are now starting to see the fruits of that and certain specific partnerships are coming into play including, in film and media, a partnership with TRC media and the broadcasters on industry training. We are also working very closely with Scottish Enterprise on getting a new film studio in place in Glasgow. There is no doubt that a lot of work has still to be done on the creative industries and, in our work through SCIP, we have been trying to identify different people's roles and contributions in an environment where public sector cuts are starting to affect priorities.

As for cultural export, one of the challenges that we face is that it is an area of huge potential growth. As I travelled around Scotland, I was amazed at the amount of work that was travelling internationally, how much theatre we were exporting and how many of our visual artists and writers were working abroad. However, investing in that is more challenging. We have struggled to use lottery money on international work and have therefore had to use the Government's money, which means that, at the moment, we have relatively little flexibility to manoeuvre and realise the full potential of international export

Having said that, I point to one Glasgow theatre company, Visible Fictions, which works out of a fourth-floor office in a Glasgow office block and has five staff. This year, it has 160 tour dates in the United States and has more than doubled its turnover through cultural export. That shows the potential in this area and Creative Scotland is starting to prepare the ground with a mapping exercise that it has carried out with Government colleagues here and the British Council to understand where the potential lies. We will then have to find some new resource. I am not necessarily talking about financial resources, but we might need some agency to help us fully realise all this.

Does that answer your question, Marco?

Marco Biagi: Yes.

The first objective that is set out in the act is to ensure quality, and it is first for a reason. How has that focus developed in the past year, and how do you see it developing in the future? Export is an important aspect of the situation, but there should be a focus on ensuring that we have good art and culture here in Scotland, regardless of its commercial value.

Andrew Dixon: One of the good things that the Scottish Arts Council did was to develop something called the quality framework, which was well received by the cultural sector. At first, people were suspicious of it because they saw it as

monitoring what they do. However, it is actually a self-assessment mechanism that encourages people to be self-aware and consider the quality of their work and their engagement with audiences.

In the past, however, there has perhaps been too much emphasis on monitoring quality rather than on celebrating it. The new emphasis in Creative Scotland is on finding things of quality and shining a light on them in a way that promotes them. The made in Scotland programme is an example of that. It is supported through the expo fund and is a partnership between Creative Scotland, the Federation of Scottish Theatre and the festivals. It features 17 companies from across Scotland that were selected because of the quality of their work. It includes a youth theatre, a theatre company made up of people with learning disabilities, well-known celebrities such as Marc Almond and some of our well-known theatre and dance companies. Everything in the 2011 brochure for the made in Scotland programme was selected either because it was already deemed to be of quality or because the quality of the ideas was strong. Six productions out of the 17 in the brochure won the top awards in the Edinburgh Fringe—"Ten Plagues" won a Fringe first award, "I Hope My Heart Goes First" won a *Herald* angel award, "May I Have the Pleasure", from the Arches in Glasgow, won an innovation and experimentation award, and so on. We are pleased with the programme.

Shining a light on that quality and promoting it makes us able to export it. Last year, the Catherine Wheels Theatre Company took a wonderful work called "White" to Hong Kong, Australia and elsewhere—it is in constant demand. We are already seeing demand for some of the shows from this year's festivals.

The made in Scotland programme is an example of taking quality, packaging it in some way and realising the benefit from it. Other people can learn from that and aspire to be in the programme.

Another example is the Scotland and Venice programme, which was started by the Scottish Arts Council as a way of promoting individual Scottish artists in the Venice international biennale. This year, the choice was made collectively by Creative Scotland and the curators of the Fruitmarket Gallery to feature Karla Black, who is one of the four artists—two of whom are Scottish—who have been nominated for the Turner prize, which will be awarded in December. It is a world-class show. It is quite challenging, but it is also very accessible. As we exhibited the work in Venice, we received attention from around the world—*The New York Times* featured a huge picture of Karla Black on its third page, along with a write-up about the work. In turn, that shines a

light on the quality of our education system, on Glasgow School of Art and on the artists who have come through it.

Our approach to quality will be partly to monitor it and ensure that good work is being produced, but it will also involve shouting about work of real quality and finding ways of selling Scotland's cultural production.

Marco Biagi: It is fine to identify and celebrate quality, but what about supporting and developing it? There are a lot of organisations that have not generated a Fringe first winner entirely by themselves. How do you undertake work on that aspect? Also, we should remember that quality can sometimes make it seem as if there is a sword of Damocles hanging over the organisations that have been funded.

Andrew Dixon: When I appeared before the committee previously, I talked about a map—I did not have it with me then, but I will show it to you now. It is a London underground map that was produced for a Fringe show last year by a dance company from the Highlands called Plan B. Instead of listing their CVs in the programme, the actors had mapped out their career paths on an underground map that showed where their careers crossed. When I saw it, I thought that it was a very visual way of describing where quality is developed and how talent is spotted.

Our role as a national culture organisation is to steer people through a quality framework. We have used that very publicly, and people understand it. It is about taking a young person who has some talent in theatre, music or whatever, finding the cultural agency that can add to that talent and then putting them either on to a career path—where they will find other stations or platforms on the route that can add value—on to a life path in which they want to participate in the future.

Our job is to find those talent hubs: the stations and platforms that can bring on new companies, such as the Traverse theatre or the Playwrights Studio, which bring on talented new writers. Some of our local arts centres and organisations, such as Eden Court, do fantastic outreach work. They spot talent and bring it in.

A key part of Creative Scotland's role involves working with the cultural sector as a whole and putting more emphasis on its development of talent. Colleges and universities are key to that, of course, but we have also set up a new initiative called talent hubs. We are inviting a number of cultural organisations to play an enhanced role in bringing on new talent, including Dance Base in Edinburgh and the Traverse, which brings a lot of new companies through.

However, we have not yet found hubs for all the sectors. Film is a particular challenge: how do we bring on up-and-coming film? There is a big gap between the first-time film maker and someone who makes a successful feature film, so we need to find the talent hubs. It would be good to have a national youth company for film, like those that we have for music, choirs and dance. We need to get the ladder of opportunity right.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I will move on to cultural attendance and participation in the arts. The recent Scottish household survey showed that 26 per cent of adults did not attend any cultural events or visit any cultural places. Of those who did, 52 per cent said that their main cultural activity was going to the cinema. How do you view Creative Scotland's role in broadening access and increasing audiences? We talked earlier about how to measure the success of Creative Scotland. Will measurements of participation be part of that?

Andrew Dixon: My glass is always half full, so I say that 74 per cent of adults access culture rather than that 26 per cent do not. However, you are right to note that a significant section of the population does not access culture, and Creative Scotland must identify the barriers.

More than 50 per cent of Scotland's population will be over the age of 50, or 60 in some areas of Scotland, in the next two years, and age is definitely a barrier—there is lower attendance among our elderly population. Other factors include rural isolation, inability to get to cultural facilities and urban disadvantage, and we want to focus on some of those issues through our access and education programmes.

10:30

For example, the Sistema Scotland project in Raploch in Stirling is a very intensive programme focusing on one housing estate and a new generation of young people. In the long term, it could have a massive impact on attendances and participation rates in that Stirling community, but how do you take that and replicate it across Scotland? How do we replicate some of our work with offenders and communities that are affected by crime, where there are also very low attendance levels, and develop projects that can be exemplars to be rolled out further afield?

As for the final question, we will absolutely measure attendance levels. The two key measures for me are Scotland's cultural economy, which we are measuring at the moment—indeed, we are just about to commission a study on that—and levels of participation and engagement. We have higher levels of participation and engagement than some other parts of the UK and,

as I have gone around Scotland, I have had fantastic briefings on these matters. The situation is very different in different parts of Scotland. We have high levels of reading in many parts of Scotland and, although the cinema-attendance statistic that Claire Baker quoted is high, the level is obviously not high in places where there are no cinemas. We have to try to tackle such issues.

Another aspect of Creative Scotland's work is its new capital plan. We do not have a very significant capital budget—it is lottery money—but we are currently researching capital needs, filling in gaps and improving cultural facilities. As we look at those issues, we need to understand where such facilities can make a difference to audiences. For example, a new arts centre that is being built in Greenock with £2.5 million of lottery investment from the Scottish Arts Council has a real chance of transforming levels of opportunity in that area. Likewise, in Shetland, which has pretty high levels of participation in the arts, there is—as Jean Urquhart knows—a brilliant new facility called Mareel opening next year. It can also add to and boost attendance levels.

For 20 years, I was involved in the arts in Newcastle Gateshead, which had the lowest attendance levels in the UK for everything in the arts from visual arts and music to dance and drama. When we analysed the situation, we discovered that that was because of a fundamental lack of opportunity; the cultural facilities were simply not available. As a result, we embarked on a fairly major capital programme that focused not on buildings but on cultural organisations, education programmes, folk music summer schools and other means of trying to engage people. However, we needed places for that to happen.

Claire Baker: That was really helpful.

You have outlined some reasons for non-participation in particular communities or age groups. The culture counts initiative has raised with us the issue of regional disadvantage, which takes us into local authority funding. One of my colleagues will ask about that, but that group has questioned whether cultural activities should be tied to national outcomes and whether the national performance framework should be revised, as a result. You said earlier that cuts are starting to affect priorities, but is there a concern that, at a time of restrictive funding and tight resources, cultural activity will always be a vulnerable area?

Andrew Dixon: The first thing to say is that local authorities are our most significant partners in delivering cultural activity in Scotland. They spend more than Creative Scotland will ever spend and are central to delivery, whether directly or through support for cultural organisations via grants and trusts.

Inevitably, some local authorities have stronger cultural investment programmes than others. Scotland has a number of absolute exemplars. We have only to look at what Glasgow has achieved; I have just been looking at its figures for growth since 1990, when it was capital of culture, and in the past decade alone there has been a 48 per cent growth in cultural organisations in the city. We have seen growth in venues, in audiences and in local authority investment. Commensurate with that, we have seen growth in the culture economy and its benefits and in levels of participation and engagement. Other parts of Scotland are not so strong.

I will highlight a couple of strengths. There is a fantastic arts trust in South Lanarkshire, through which there is engagement between the arts and sport in a constructive programme, and there is a lot of support for voluntary arts. In the north-east, there is the fèisean movement—it is not so much the local authority that has made things happen as it is local engagement, which is far greater in some parts of Scotland than in others.

We face challenges. Aberdeenshire has strong culture organisations, such as Deveron Arts in Huntly, which is doing inspiring work, the Scottish Sculpture Workshop and the arts centre in Banchory. There are high levels of participation and engagement. However, last year Aberdeenshire Council announced cuts of 40 per cent in its culture budget. Creative Scotland must try to work to protect the investment of local authorities in the culture sector, because if that does not happen there will be a reduction in attendance rates and opportunities.

Claire Baker: When the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Bill was going through Parliament, some stakeholders expressed concern that there would be an overemphasis on activities that bring commercial benefit, as opposed to art for art's sake. I realise that Creative Scotland was established only a year ago, but what assurances or examples can you give that address such concerns and show that the organisation is striking the right balance?

Andrew Dixon: The concern was unfounded, because the reality is that Creative Scotland works to social as well as to economic objectives. Our five objectives are: to invest in talent, to invest in quality artistic production, to invest in audiences, access and participation, to invest in the cultural economy and to invest in places. Only one of the five is primarily about the cultural economy return.

If we invest in film or the creative industries we expect there to be some commercial benefit. We have had some success with our equity investment in film. For example, a grant of £500,000 to the McKendrick fund generated £4.5 million of leverage, which is good by any

standards. However, the majority of our investment is about people, talent and access.

There was much debate about the use of the word “investment” and I went round checking what people felt about it. If we consider the definition of “invest”, we can see that it is about putting not just money but time and energy into something when that is worth while. We invest human time and energy in promoting things, as well as putting finance into projects. To me, “return” does not always mean financial return; it is about the human return, such as the level of participation and opportunity.

We need to get smarter about showing where we are doing something for economic reasons and where we are doing something for social reasons. Sometimes that might be the same place. Some of the work that is happening in Glasgow and a lot of socially based activities have an economic as well as a social benefit. There is certainly no overemphasis on the economic aspect.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): In a time of economic difficulty in particular, what criteria do you use to prioritise sectors for specific help? How do you balance out the economic and social aspects?

Andrew Dixon: First, let me say a little about the basics of what we inherited. Creative Scotland inherited a lot of commitments from the Scottish Arts Council. In particular, there are 50 foundation organisations and 50 flexibly-funded organisations. Such organisations are the bedrock of culture production and venues.

We have been reviewing the foundation organisations to make sure that we are building on strong foundations for the future. You will have heard that we have increased resources to 13 of those organisations. We have decreased resources to one—the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland—and I am happy to answer questions on that. We have also withdrawn resources from two because we do not think that they will need to be foundation organisations in the future. That is one area in which we have been reviewing good value for the Government’s investment.

Next, we will embark on a series of sectoral reviews. We are going to take a look at the whole map of the ecology of theatre in Scotland. What are the training routes? What is the cultural production? Do we have the right cultural production for the venues and the population? What is happening with international exports? What is happening with audiences? Where are the areas for growth? Where are our real strengths? We will use that review to inform our future priorities.

We cannot be strong in everything, so one of the things that we say in the plan is that we should

find the things at which we are really strong and grow them. We should also identify real weaknesses and tackle them. Historically, which theatre companies received support has been a little bit random. They are all very good, but we have not been strategic; we have not looked at the map or the geography. We have not asked ourselves whether we want a Scots language theatre company or a Gaelic theatre company. Have we got enough children’s theatre? It is a real strength. Do we have enough large-scale and medium-scale theatre to fit some of our bigger local authority venues?

Our sectoral reviews will start to inform the prioritisation for after 2013 when we start to free up a little bit more flexibility in our budgets.

Liz Smith: How do you feel about support for the independent broadcasting sector and how it will be developed?

Andrew Dixon: One of the first things that we did is our film investment strand. Historically, Scottish Screen had a film investment budget of £2 million, which had been reducing because lottery funding was reducing. We have increased that by 50 per cent, so our film investment fund will be £3 million this year and it will grow to £3.75 million by the third year of our plan.

The other significant thing that we have done is to call the fund a film and television investment fund. We are particularly keen to grow independent TV production capacity in Scotland. Our partnership with TRC Media is about helping to build capacity in that area, helping people to understand what producers are looking for, and bringing young talent through. Critically, our partnerships with the broadcasters are about getting on side with them and looking at opportunities to grow the independent sector.

There was some controversy about us going into a partnership with STV and, for the life of me, I cannot understand why. Do we want STV to produce more drama? Yes. Do we want to encourage STV to work closely with a national agency for film and TV? Yes. Do we want to be joined up? Yes, and that is what we have done. We have joined up in a partnership.

Equally, we are joining with the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television, which is the agency that promotes the independent sector, and we are going down to London with a showreel of our best independent producers to show some of the commissioning editors—sadly, it is true that a lot of them are still in London—just what quality exists in Scotland. There are some capacity issues and barriers to growing the sector, not the least of which is the availability of studios, but we have started to move in the right direction.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):

Thank you for coming along today, Mr Dixon, and congratulations on Creative Scotland's first birthday.

I want to follow on naturally from Liz Smith's question and talk about film, given that it is as popular as the statistics show. One of this year's great successes was in attracting "World War Z" to Glasgow, and I understand that another big Hollywood movie is coming soon. Is that success in attracting those big companies a result of your restructuring? Do you anticipate any more Hollywood money coming into Scotland?

10:45

Andrew Dixon: If I am honest, I do not think that that was the result of our restructuring, as it was done by the same three people who were there before it. "World War Z" is an interesting example. Our location service is the first point of contact for film makers and people who make adverts who come to Scotland looking for a location. We can look for everything from a burned-down warehouse to an oil rig platform. The "World War Z" production team came to us looking for an oil rig platform and some rural locations with lochs, but when they came to Glasgow and started the conversation with us, the producer remembered a particular square in Glasgow. We worked with Glasgow City Council, which has a fantastic film team, and we managed to do the deal for Glasgow to be Philadelphia. So, it was Creative Scotland that closed Glasgow for a month. The economic benefits of that have been huge: the film is responsible for about £4.5 million of spending in Scotland.

We could do a lot more. We have a very modest fund that we spend to help film makers to come and look at locations around Scotland. We have a small team with connections to different film agencies in Tayside, Glasgow, Edinburgh and the Highlands. Part of it is about riding on confidence.

MSPs will be aware that, next year, Disney will produce a film entitled "Brave", which is set in Scotland. That could be an enormous opportunity for promoting Scotland as a film location, although it is an animation and will not use real locations. It is very useful to have films such as "World War Z" and "Brave" choosing Scotland, and we have others, a number of which will be filming in the near future, including "Cloud Atlas" and "Under the Skin". A film called "Shell" is being filmed up in the Highlands where, ironically, a petrol station is having to be rebuilt because the production team could not find the right location. A number of television dramas are also being filmed here. Most recently, you will have read about "Waterloo Road"; Shed Productions will move the production of "Waterloo Road" from England to Scotland, and

our locations team is advising Shed Productions, through the Scottish property network, on potential locations for that significant series. There is a lot of potential.

Joan McAlpine: Thanks very much. That is very encouraging. Let us turn to the other end of the production spectrum. I was interested when you mentioned a national youth company for film. Can you tell us where you are with it?

Andrew Dixon: I am deliberately floating out an idea here, which is how I like to operate. We are incredibly fortunate to have the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland, the national youth choirs, the National Youth Jazz Orchestra of Scotland, Scottish Youth Dance and the Scottish Youth Theatre; however, there is no equivalent for film, although there are some fantastic bits of community-based film work going on. I went to a terrific piece of work in the Dumfries film festival by a young film maker called Naysun Alae-Carew. He had made a film about zombies—everybody seems to make films about zombies in Dumfries. It was a terrific 15-minute film that was made with the community and won a British Academy of Film and Television Arts award. Fortunately, as a result of that event, Naysun hooked up with a senior production company and it is now being developed as a full-length film. How does somebody such as Naysun get the break to go to the next stage? If we had a national film school attached to a college, a university or the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland—formerly the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama—it could be a real powerhouse for enabling young people to put something on their curriculum vitae, linking them to professional producers and directors who are willing to share their expertise.

From a capital point of view, we would like to produce a national centre for youth arts. We hope that some new money will come from the Forth road bridge savings in your budgets. If we were able to develop a centre and create a new entity that provided a national centre for youth film, that could serve the industry well for the next decade.

Joan McAlpine: That is fantastic.

You mentioned sectors. When you outlined your plans for Creative Scotland, people were struck by the idea of linking regions to different sectors. You mentioned Dumfries, and I know that you are thinking about environmental art for the south-west. The idea was fairly well received, but I know that people in the arts are concerned that if, for example, a theatre producer happened to live in the area for which environmental art was the focus, they would get no money. Will you elaborate on that and reassure such people that they will not be cut out?

Andrew Dixon: We talk about investing in place, which involves trying to find the contribution that each part of Scotland makes to Scotland as a creative nation. That is about focusing on strengths. Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders have a strength in environmental art and land art, which is shown by the ambitious and exciting project for the Gretna gateway sculpture, the work that Charles Jencks has done and the fantastic forest pitch project in the Borders for 2012.

However, that does not mean that we do only environmental art in the Borders. We want more touring theatre there. We are discussing with the likes of Pitlochry Festival Theatre, which does absolutely sensational work in its season in Pitlochry, whether it could tour some of its work to parts of Scotland that do not receive that quality of touring.

We are keen on ensuring overall provision and opportunity and on recognising and celebrating strengths. As part of our year of creative Scotland in 2012, we will have the creative places award, through which we will invite villages, towns and islands to celebrate their unique contribution. That does not mean that a community does only music or dance, but the award will showcase something special that a community does.

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I will drill down into what you said about youth involvement in film. You talked about hubs in other areas, such as Plockton high school for traditional music and dance schools of excellence in Glasgow. Have you looked into establishing a film school of excellence? Would that enhance your plans for film?

Andrew Dixon: We have not looked into that. In talking about a national youth film centre, I was flying an idea, although it was not the first time that I have flown it. An important part of looking at the jigsaw is considering the opportunities for media-based education as a whole. Plockton is fantastic, but it is built on the bedrock of the youth music initiative across Scotland and on unparalleled opportunities in music.

If we seriously tried to develop young people in film, we would want film and media opportunities to be available across curriculum for excellence. Interesting work is happening. We might explore whether particular schools could take a focus and be centres of excellence.

The informal sector is important in letting people go out to have a go practically, be part of a film crew for the summer, deliver a project that they can put on their curriculum vitae and have that life experience. That applies to the youth music initiative. The bedrock of tuition in schools is fantastic, but some of the energy is in the informal music sector—in the fèisean movement, summer

schools and opportunities to get young bands together. Such activity does not happen in film. We need to look at that, explore what is right and find ways of taking that forward.

Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I enjoyed your presentation, which was a good bounce through many interesting and exciting parts of Scotland and its creative industries, in every sense of the term.

Budgets are going to concentrate everybody's minds very severely. Your corporate plan mentions that the financial position of a standstill budget for a couple of years is good by comparison with what has happened in other areas. What is your thinking about your funding for the future? I realise that there is some mystery about that. It makes impressive reading to see that you are looking for efficiency savings—if we can call them that—of £2 million, but there will come an end to that in keeping the show on the road, as it were.

Andrew Dixon: We inherited a difficult situation. There was no new money. Creative Scotland was born of the Scottish Arts Council, which had been on standstill funding for several years, and Scottish Screen, which had been on reducing lottery funding for a number of years. The cultural sector has been fragile because many of its main organisations, such as our producing theatres and galleries, have been on standstill funding for a number of years. In the context of last year's spending cuts, we were pleased to maintain our level of resource from the Scottish Government. Because we have made our efficiency savings, we have been able to protect and in some cases enhance the cultural sector.

Looking to the future and the inevitability of further erosion, the board will have to make choices. It is important that we do not treat everything equally and that we ensure that growth continues. We must ensure that our fantastically successful cultural organisations continue to be successful. We will have to build new ways of making cultural organisations more sustainable, financially and environmentally. As part of our lottery programme, we have our cultural economy investment strand, through which we are considering ways to target philanthropy, endowment, new sources of finance and new ways of making cultural organisations more stable.

Ultimately, once we know our settlement for the next three years, we will have to make choices. The key is that we build on those strong foundations and that we do not chip away at them. We need to ensure that the strong things that have been built up are still there. One of our challenges is the lack of flexibility, particularly in the next year, in Scottish Government support. We do not have Scottish Government support for film production,

so that is dealt with through the lottery. Our limited resources from the Treasury for talent and international work could be further eroded if we have significant cuts.

Jean Urquhart: I want to ask about partnership working. In most cases in Scotland, local authorities are still responsible for the delivery of arts provision in various forms. Other local authorities have devolved that responsibility to arm's-length organisations, which is a different financial picture. Will you explain the relationship financially with some of those organisations? The benefit of arm's-length organisations, which drove some councils to set them up, was that they could reinvest money that otherwise would have been paid in rates—in some cases, it was more than £1 million—into arts and leisure.

11:00

Andrew Dixon: First of all, let me say a little about our relationship with local government, which, as I said earlier, is really important to us. Those relationships are multilayered. For example, we are working with authorities on location services; the creative industries, in some cases; aspects of economic development; shared clients—indeed, in the case of Edinburgh or Glasgow, a lot of shared clients; and arts development education through the glow portal and our youth music initiative.

Obviously the picture in Scotland is getting more complex, with more than half of the local authorities now in or exploring arts and leisure trusts. Nevertheless, there are some really good models in that respect. For example, we are developing a place partnership with Fife and, through that interesting model, we have been able to resolve an issue that we have had in the past with the funding of the Byre theatre. There is now much closer collaboration between that arts trust and the independent sector.

I mentioned South Lanarkshire, which had a very strong leisure trust. It has added in an arts trust and now has 70 venues, a really strong arts development programme and so on. We need to find a way of promoting through the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and Vocal Scotland—both of which I am meeting this week—the kind of good practice being carried out in South Lanarkshire and Fife.

We are concerned that in other areas people are moving to trust status just for financial reasons. Although such a move can have benefits by freeing up new resources and allowing new sponsorship to come in, we are concerned that local authorities do not simply abdicate their responsibilities to those trusts.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I want to follow up Jean Urquhart's question and link back to Claire Baker's question on the disparity in local authority spend on culture and the arts. You mentioned Glasgow; I am fortunate enough to live in and represent Orkney, which does very well with its level of spend and has internationally acclaimed festivals, the Pier arts centre and a phenomenal library and archive service. In a sense, it does what you have been suggesting local authorities should do and plays to its strengths. Is it your view that whatever you do with local authorities there will always be some patchwork; that if something particularly good grows in one area it merely displaces footfall from a neighbouring area; and that, as a result, there is a risk about where you put your investment, no matter whether it is supported by Creative Scotland or individual local authorities?

Andrew Dixon: I think that that is the case. Inevitably, the scale of local authorities makes a difference. South Lanarkshire is one of the larger ones; Glasgow is large; and, for their size, Orkney and Shetland punch way above their weight in their support for arts and culture and have been fantastic partners to work with. Shetland is interesting because of the trust that was established and which is putting back a very significant amount of resource into culture and leisure provision. Given the new resources from renewables, that model might well be explored in other parts of Scotland.

Inevitably some places have a hinterland; you cannot look at Aberdeen, for example, without looking at Aberdeenshire. Some areas have more difficult physical geographies. Although Argyll and Bute has some pockets of real strength—we have, for example, Cove Park, the artists' residential centre, the Mull theatre and An Tobar on Mull and some other really exciting projects—the authority itself has a population with four different bases. How can it sustain its base of halls?

For Creative Scotland, the key is to have conversations that make sense of partnerships with local authorities instead of putting a single model on to all of this. There are certain generic things across local authorities that we will tackle and work together on, but the fact is that each authority is different and our approach has been to pick some of the more difficult areas to begin with and to set up place partnerships. We have had conversations with Fife on its unique contribution, how we build the relationship with the arts trust and how we resolve the Byre's future. We are also having conversations with South Ayrshire, not only in connection with the great opportunity that might exist with the new University of the West of Scotland moving in but on the challenge of reopening the Gaiety theatre in Ayr.

We hope to make the best out of each local authority partnership that we can. To a certain extent, there is a postcode lottery, depending on how much a local authority has invested in the arts. Some local authorities have been historically strong investors; others have not. The list of our investment more or less mirrors the local authority investment. If there are independent cultural organisations in the area and a vibrant cultural sector that is bringing forward interesting ideas, that area will gain better access to Creative Scotland's resources.

Liam McArthur: I appreciate that it is not an either/or situation, but that approach tends to suggest that your interventions are most successful when they can extend and deepen the cultural experience of those who already have some level of contact with culture and the arts, rather than in addressing the 26 per cent of adults to whom Claire Baker referred earlier, who do not attend any cultural event or visit any cultural places.

Andrew Dixon: We are moving towards being much more attuned to geography. I have been very open about our plans and have created a map that shows the level of intensity of our foundation organisations and where they are based. We are saying that the status quo is not acceptable. It is not about robbing Peter to pay Paul, or moving resources about; it is about trying to build the infrastructure in places that do not have it. If we are not doing enough in places that do not have a strong infrastructure—North and South Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders—we need to think about how we can change that. We also need to think about how we can sustain the successes in places like Orkney, which have been tremendous—anywhere in Scotland would wish to have organisations that are as strong as the Pier arts centre and the St Magnus festival.

Part of our process is to show local authorities what can be achieved. There has not been enough sharing of success across Scotland. It would be helpful if people could be helped to understand how a festival such as St Magnus grows, the economic, social and educational benefits that it can bring and the way in which it has developed a long-term engagement with music among the local population. We need to find ways of telling that story to parts of Scotland that have not yet realised that potential.

Jean Urquhart: In days of yore, when the Scottish Arts Council was using the lottery funding, there was a restriction on stimulating interest. At that time, you could look across a map of Scotland and see black holes—areas from which there were never any lottery applications. Has that changed?

Andrew Dixon: I think that it has changed. Our youth music initiative delivers across Scotland. Some of the programmes that we are introducing for the year of creative Scotland are about mass participation and first-time opportunities for people who have not had access and engagement with the arts before. A lot of our development work will target the places that have the lower levels of attendance.

The situation concerns not only Creative Scotland. Over the years, the other lottery distributors, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, have had to tackle issues around the capacity to bring forward projects and develop them.

We are keen to get our cultural organisations thinking in geographic terms and are asking our foundation organisations what more they can do beyond the current geography that they are working in. That is a way of sharing their benefit and skills.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): Thank you for your time this morning. I thought that the Creative Scotland roadshow was successful and I enjoyed the presentation that you gave at the Dundee Contemporary Arts centre during the summer. I know that many local artists and cultural organisations enjoyed the opportunity to engage directly with your strategy and your vision for the next few years, and I congratulate you on that.

I have a couple of questions on music. What progress has there been on the review of the youth music initiative? Has there been a review of the impact of the Sistema Scotland project in the Raploch and, if so, is there is possibility that there will be funding in future to repeat the project, perhaps in another part of Scotland?

Andrew Dixon: I will start with the Sistema Scotland project. I am afraid that I am not fully briefed on what research has been done on that. I know that the project set out with the intention that it would be longitudinal and that research and measurements would be done. We will get information for you about where that is in its life cycle.

I know that the project has been a huge success. I have been to see concerts in Stirling and Glasgow city halls. In the space of a year, the growth in the confidence of those young people was tangible. You could feel it. Their pride in playing alongside the BBC Scottish symphony orchestra was amazing.

I cannot announce the detail just yet, but next year we will have an exciting project as part of our cultural olympiad programme. It involves the Sistema orchestra and it is a real opportunity to look at what it has achieved.

Richard Holloway, who chairs that project, has been actively looking for one or two more locations in Scotland into which the project could develop. He has been having conversations with local authorities about the potential to develop a similar orchestra project.

Going back to youth music, in 2010 we undertook a review of the youth music initiative, to measure its impact so far, and to see how we were delivering against our targets in particular areas. That was done by working closely with the Scottish Government. Youth music has only a one-year commitment at the moment, so we do not have plans for any further major review. Once we know where we stand with the youth music initiative for the next three years, we will want to put a further review point in place.

We have two other reviews going on; I am sorry if this sounds like review overload. We are doing a youth arts strategy. One of the directions that came from the minister when Creative Scotland came into being was that we would lead the process of producing a youth arts strategy. We produced the brief by March, as requested, but because of the election, that strategy has not been commissioned yet, so we are just about to do that. I hope that it will pick up on some of the issues around the broader provision for music as well as looking at issues such as youth film. It will certainly give us a good overview of where the youth music initiative fits into the broader music ecology.

The youth music initiative is a great success. Another project will be announced later this week that will take the youth music initiative into new areas of audience development in partnership with football clubs across Scotland. The youth music initiative is £10 million and £8 million is devolved to local authorities for music tuition. However, a lot of really effective work is done through informal music making in bands, community music, and setting up early years work in youth music. We are keen to look at the balance of the effect of the informal side against the formal side in future.

Jenny Marra: As you know, we in Dundee hope that John Swinney will commit the £15 million capital spend for the Victoria and Albert development in Dundee in the forthcoming spending review and budget. What discussions are you having with Design Dundee Ltd? Where is Creative Scotland involved with the project?

Andrew Dixon: First of all, I think that the project is visionary; I was aware of it almost three years ago when the project team came to look at some of the projects that we had developed at Newcastle Gateshead. The project has made an excellent choice in appointing Philip Long as the director. One of the most pleasing things in the last spending round was that the Government felt confident enough to give the first stage of funding

to that project, because it is all about momentum. The project will need the momentum of other capital funding quite soon.

Creative Scotland is working closely with the project. I am pleased that we are able to have joint conversations with the project, Dundee City Council and the universities. We are also trying to co-ordinate discussions among the lottery distributors, because the project plans to apply to both the Heritage Lottery Fund and Creative Scotland. It is important that we work together. We are keen to help consideration of the longer-term relationship with the design sector in Scotland and to show that it has a particular role to play as well as the Lighthouse in Glasgow, which has a different role around architecture and design.

11:15

We are very close to the project and excited by its potential, and we are already seeing economic regeneration simply as a result of the decision to put in development money. Hotels are now reopening and people are buying properties in Dundee. That is down to the V&A's decision, and we hope to work closely in supporting it. The demands on our capital programme, which is only £20 million, will be huge. We have scoped things, and think that there will be around £50 million-worth of demands on our £20 million programme, but we must see the V&A as an important early project coming into it.

The Convener: Obviously, there will be major events in the United Kingdom over the next couple of years. There is the 2012 Olympics, the cultural olympiad that goes with it and the 2014 Commonwealth games, and next year is the year of creative Scotland. What will Creative Scotland's role be in those events? How can we maximise their benefits to Scotland?

Andrew Dixon: We are absolutely delighted that there will be a themed year of creative Scotland. We had a discussion about whether it should be called that, and agreed that it was a good thing to do.

We have worked for a number of years in the Scottish Arts Council to develop the cultural olympiad programme and the support with the legacy trust. Outside London, Scotland will have the most comprehensive programme in the cultural olympiad. Exceptional projects are being developed, not all of which have yet been announced because of the timings of the London 2012 announcements. We have attracted significant resources for the speed of light project that will be run by NVA, which is a Glasgow-based organisation. Arthur's seat will be lit up by human bodies and cyclists in a spectacular project in August next year. There is the Hogmanay games

project, which is being supported to kick off 2012, and we have done interesting work commissioning disabled dancers in the “Unlimited” programme, which is showcasing some of our best artists. There is the “Private Dancer” commission, and the artist Claire Cunningham is working with the National Theatre of Scotland. We will run the get Scotland dancing programme to try to get mass participation in dancing through 2012 to 2014, and we have announced our investment strands to develop special projects for the year of creative Scotland. I mentioned one of those: the creative place awards. Another is about linking culture to tourism and getting our cultural organisations to think about their tourism potential. The third is about the first opportunity to engage with the arts and do something really special.

We are excited by the potential of 2012. Our role for 2014 is to co-ordinate a national cultural programme for the Commonwealth games. Again, we will put out a call-out for inspirational projects to be part of that programme.

The Convener: That sounds very interesting. I am certainly looking forward to human torches lighting up Arthur’s seat.

Liam McArthur: I will be very brief.

On the events for 2012 and 2014, there has been a lot of publicity this year about the impact of the economic downturn and the proliferation of music festivals, and particularly about a number of festivals going bust and not taking place. You have talked about excellent and exciting events through 2012 and 2014, but what account has been taken of people not necessarily overcommitting where there may not be the audience to sustain all the events?

Andrew Dixon: Our view is that 2012 and 2014 provide opportunities for audience development and tourism. Scotland will be in the spotlight for a three-year period, and it has a big chance with tourism. We are working up an enhanced version of our festivals programme for next year with *The List*, and we are working much more closely with EventScotland and VisitScotland, with which we have a really good partnership. We are trying to explore how we can showcase Scottish cultural work in London next year, as we have high-quality work there, such as the Scottish Ensemble’s performances and those of some of our other music groups. The question is how we can showcase things in London. We are working closely with Festivals Edinburgh, which is keen to maximise the potential of 2012 and 2014 for cultural diplomacy, and with the London end of the cultural olympiad to ensure that Scotland gets its contribution from national projects such as the Shakespeare festival that is being developed. I think that members will see a really strong programme throughout Scotland. Creative

Scotland and EventScotland are working together to ensure that all the places to which the torch goes in the torch relay in 2012 have a cultural element alongside them.

The Convener: Thank you very much for coming to the meeting. I am sure that the session has been informative for all committee members.

I remind members that, at our next meeting, we will take evidence from Education Scotland and on Professor McCormac’s review of teacher employment, which is, I believe, being published this morning.

Meeting closed at 11:21.

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