# EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Wednesday 20 February 2008

Session 3

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## EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
**4th Meeting 2008, Session 3**

**CONVENER**

*Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

*Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

*Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP)
*Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)
*Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
*Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab)
*Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
*Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

**COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES**

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD)
Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP)

*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:**

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)

**THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:**

Amanda Barry (Edinburgh International Book Festival)
Vicky Featherstone (National Theatre of Scotland)
Robert Livingston (Highlands and Islands Arts)
Roy McEwan (Scottish Chamber Orchestra)
Alex Reedijk (Scottish Opera)
Seona Reid (Glasgow School of Art)
Fiona Rogan (Voluntary Arts Scotland)
Cindy Sughrue (Scottish Ballet)
Simon Woods (Royal Scottish National Orchestra)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Eugene Windsor

**SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK**

Nick Hawthorne

**ASSISTANT CLERK**

Andrew Proudfoot

**LOCATION**

Committee Room 5

# Scottish Parliament

## Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee

*Wednesday 20 February 2008*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:03*]

## Arts and Culture

**The Convener (Karen Whitefield):** Good morning. I welcome everyone to the fourth meeting in 2008 of the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee. The first item on the agenda is evidence on arts and culture, to inform the committee's future consideration of issues relating to the culture part of our remit. We will take evidence from two panels of witnesses.

The first panel is made up of representatives of the five national performing companies in Scotland. I am pleased to welcome Cindy Sughrue, executive producer of Scottish Ballet; Vicky Featherstone, artistic director of the National Theatre of Scotland; Simon Woods, chief executive of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra; Alex Reedijk, general director of Scottish Opera; and Roy McEwan, managing director of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Thank you for joining the committee this morning, and thank you for the written papers that you supplied in advance of the meeting.

I understand that you all wish to make some short introductory comments. I ask Cindy Sughrue to start. We will work our way round the table before we move to questions.

**Cindy Sughrue (Scottish Ballet):** Thank you for giving us this opportunity to meet the committee.

I will articulate a couple of the points that we made in our submission. Since Scottish Ballet relaunched with a new artistic director in 2003, we have enjoyed an unprecedented period of success, with continued critical and popular acclaim and box office hits. Our success is perhaps best evidenced by the awards that we have won at Scotland and United Kingdom level, the most recent of which was the company prize for outstanding classical repertoire at the Critics' Circle national dance awards—the dance Oscars.

Our audiences are growing in size and diversity and demand for our work is increasing at home, throughout the UK and overseas. We are benefiting from increased Government funding. Additional investment for Scottish Ballet in the coming year will enable us to increase our production and touring output—in terms of number of performances—by up to 50 per cent, which is a major step forward for the company.

We are also building our new headquarters at the Tramway arts centre in Glasgow. The move will not only rehouse Scottish Ballet as a national company but—more important—complete the redevelopment of Tramway as an international arts centre by bringing the remaining unused and derelict parts of the building into full use. We will create a gallery space, a visual arts studio and a centre for independent professional dancers in small companies. What we are doing perhaps encapsulates the role of a national company—I think that my colleagues would endorse this—in that we are not just delivering ambitious programmes of work for Scotland but undertaking a leadership role in the cultural sector and the community.

Another example of that approach is our partnership with the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. It is currently not possible to train to professional level as a ballet dancer in Scotland. There are fine private dance schools, we run a career-track training programme for children and young people and there is the Dance School of Scotland at Knightswood secondary school, which is the only specialist state-funded school for dance. All those programmes prepare dancers at foundation level to a high standard, but the final link in the chain is missing, because there is no three-year, professional-standard training course. We are working in partnership with the RSAMD to try to fill that critical gap in provision so that we can nurture talent in Scotland through to professional level and into Scottish Ballet as the national dance company.

**Vicky Featherstone (National Theatre of Scotland):** Thank you for inviting us to give evidence.

The National Theatre of Scotland's creation on 26 February two years ago and its operation since then exemplify what an outward-looking, modern, international country Scotland is. Not just close to home but throughout the world people regularly look to our model, which is revolutionary in that we do not have a building and can respond to the needs of diverse audiences throughout Scotland and further afield, to ascertain how they can emulate and learn from us. The way in which the national companies have come together during the past two years shows that there is a positive future for culture in Scotland.

We have performed in more than 89 locations in Scotland since we started. A particular challenge, which we relish, is to find different kinds of work that will work for audiences throughout Scotland. This year, our audiences will have exceeded 250,000 by April, which is incredibly exciting, and more than 30,000 people will have been involved

in a participatory event through our learn programme. Learning is an important part of our organisation and we try not to differentiate between education and the rest of our programme, so that we can take an holistic approach as much as possible. We look at all areas of society in engaging people with our work.

The two important elements of our organisation are the artists and the audience. Nothing else matters. We believe that if we can create the right environment for the truly brilliant artists who exist and are emerging in Scotland so that they can realise their potential and create work that they cannot yet imagine for audiences, we are on to a winner. We are audience focused, but we are not audience led: we are artist led.

To reiterate what Cindy Sughrue said, for us to be successful it is vital that we are part of a pyramid. We may be close to the top of the pyramid, but the bottom of it is really supported for artists, children in schools, drama teachers and educational establishments such as RSAMD, so that we can continue to develop really strong artists in Scotland in order to be able to achieve what we want to achieve.

**Simon Woods (Royal Scottish National Orchestra):** Thank you, convener, and good morning. I do not propose to amplify too much what I wrote in the paper that I submitted, but I want to make a few comments about the spirit of our organisation, particularly looking back and looking forward. I want to make one comment about the future.

When I accepted the job of running the RSNO three years ago, one of the things that really appealed to me was the esteem and affection with which this organisation, which is now over 100 years old, is regarded in Scotland. The organisation has deep audience loyalties that go back generations. If you come to any of our concerts in any of the major cities in Scotland, you will find literally hundreds of people whose first experience of music came from visits to the Scottish National Orchestra—the SNO, as it was then.

Everybody has their favourite stories. They have stories about their favourite conductors and concerts. Everything we do is scrutinised by that audience. Every change we make, whether it is a change in lighting, programming or concert start time, is scrutinised and dissected, and if we make a slip-up we hear about it immediately. That is a joy because this is a great group of people.

What is interesting for us is looking forward. I think that we are a very forward-looking organisation now because we do not rest on our laurels. We are also very resolved as an organisation around the mission of music being something for everybody and not limited by social background, geography or age. If you look at the range of things that we do, from concerts for nursery school kids, major engagements in rural areas of Scotland and big educational programmes, to engagements in deprived urban environments of Scotland—we think that that is important, too—I think you will find the same theme running through almost everything. We take an inclusive view of what classical music is for. We are very busy and engaged around that.

My comment about the future is about education and music in schools. If you were to stand up in front of one of the RSNO's audiences and say, "Everybody who learned to play an instrument as a child, put your hand up," I think you would be stunned by how many people put their hand up. We know that learning to play an instrument as a child—there is a huge amount of data around this—is the greatest single indicator of the appreciation of music later in life. The concern that I have right now is the number of children who do not have access to instrumental teaching and music in schools to the degree that the previous generation, who are now our audience, did.

If I have to make one comment about the future, it is that I think we need a recalibration of our attitude towards music in schools. Music should be something that every child has the whole way through their school career, as it enables them to gain access to the joy of music as a grown-up, which we now see in our current audiences. That is the little anecdotal point that I wanted to make.

10:15

**Alex Reedijk (Scottish Opera):** I should apologise on behalf of all my colleagues for the complexity of our job titles—there is a reasonable degree of specialisation in the arts. For what it is worth, being general director means that I am both the general manager and the artistic director, so I have terribly complicated conversations with myself—I say what I would like to do, but then wonder how we will pay for it.

I have been in the post of general director of Scottish Opera for slightly more than two years. It gives me great pleasure to report to the committee that Scottish Opera is in a good place—it is stable and solvent and taking real responsibility for itself and its future. We have become much more outward looking than we ever used to be. Members who have spent some time in Parliament or local authorities will be aware of some of our travails in the past. In one sense we must absolutely accept responsibility for those, but in another sense some of the issues were brought upon us by circumstances. However, all that is behind us now. I have spent the past two years going round telling everybody that we are in a

great place and that we are stable and solvent. That is reflected in how the organisation is now seen in Scotland.

I will briefly remind the committee of some points. Particularly in the central belt, Scottish Opera is known for its main stage activity or, in other words, for the large-scale operas that are presented as the composer intended in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Thanks to a small uplift in funding last year, we returned to touring to Aberdeen and Inverness, where we were warmly received. We are committed to performing in those two centres as part of our four-centre main stage touring.

However, perhaps not all members are aware that, for at least 30 years, we have toured to the outlying communities in Scotland with our three smaller-scale tours each year. I will not elaborate but, between them, those three tours play to about 50 communities in any year. In the past few years, approximately 85 per cent of performances on the tours have sold out. One could argue that selling out a 200-seat hall in Stornoway is not all that hard but, on the other hand, that hall is the right one for a community of that size. We are incredibly well received in those communities. In many cases, we are often the only live arts experience that those communities have. From attending our performances, I know how well they are received. I have many anecdotes about that that I could share if there was time.

Our education department, too, operates to a large extent below the radar. It is the oldest established education department of any opera company in Europe and continues not only to do steady work among the under-10s, but to do a lot of work, and thinking about work, with teenagers and young teachers. We also have continuing adult learning or lifelong learning programmes.

When I took up the post with Scottish Opera, it occurred to me that we needed to reflect on what it means to be an opera company in the 21st century. Given that the majority of the work that we present or draw on is at least 200, if not 300, years old, it was right that we started to think about opera in the 21st century. To cut a very long story short, next week, we will premiere five short pieces, each of which is 15 minutes long, with our five:15 initiative of operas made in Scotland.

I will share with the committee why I am so excited about those pieces. First, we have drawn out of the woodwork a range of interesting creative people. Secondly, at least once a week now, I receive an unsolicited script, libretto or piece of music from someone in Scotland who is interested in making a contribution to five:15 in future. About once every two weeks I also receive an e-mail or unsolicited contribution from someone from the rest of the United Kingdom or from Canada or the United States who wishes their piece to be aired as part of Scottish Opera's activities. Obviously, we cannot and will not do all that, but it is interesting how something that started off as a small idea has gained a lot of traction, not only because it signals a commitment to the future of the art form, but because Scottish Opera is saying that we are open for business. As of yesterday, five:15 has attracted three separate invitations to take the idea overseas. That is a great articulation of the new place in which Scottish Opera finds itself.

We continue to develop a relationship with the RSAMD. As a conservatoire, it produces singers and musicians. We also provide behind-the-scenes mentoring for many of its technical students. We are trying to integrate ourselves as much as we can into its opera programme and its music programmes.

On behalf of the five companies, I say that we enjoy a good relationship with the national performing companies unit. That relationship has become much more professional. We can debate and resolve problems and we generally take a positive view of the unit's work and of our relationship with it.

I echo Simon Woods's general concerns about the future of music education. To the best of my knowledge, in general, secondary school students receive only one hour of opera tuition or exposure to opera in their secondary school years. I am flying a particular flag, but more could and should be done to ensure that music remains an integral part of everybody's lives in Scotland.

All five of us are excited that we are stable, solvent and in a great place. As much work has been done through the Parliament and through the offices to get the companies to where we are now, it is important that our funding base remains stable and is not allowed to deteriorate or to be compromised. Now that the companies can act and behave responsibly and produce terrific work that is admired around the world, it would be a shame if that position were allowed to erode.

**The Convener:** Last, but not least, is Mr McEwan.

**Roy McEwan (Scottish Chamber Orchestra):** Good morning. Not that long ago, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra claimed the distinction of being the youngest national company, but since the National Theatre came along, we have been unable to claim that. However, we can still claim the distinction of being the smallest company, with a turnover of about £4 million.

We are a flexible organisation. The orchestra has 37 self-employed members, but that means that we can deploy groups from a small chamber ensemble right up to an orchestra of 50 or 60 occasionally—that depends on the work. The self-

employment of our musicians means that we can be pretty effective in controlling costs—in other words, we take on projects when we can afford them. That has been an important part of the orchestra's stability in the past 20 years, but it also gives us the challenge of generating a sufficient programme of work to attract and retain an outstanding group of musicians who increasingly see all Europe as their potential employment market.

The organisation's flexibility enables us to appear in a variety of ways throughout Scotland. Our submission gives members some information on the range and penetration of our activities over Scotland. An important part of that is the fact that we can take to quite small communities throughout Scotland the same full orchestra and the same distinguished conductors and soloists as may appear at the Edinburgh festival, at the BBC proms or in major concert halls throughout the world. In that respect, we take the best around Scotland, as well as elsewhere.

We are one of the most travelled British orchestras and Scottish arts organisations internationally. Along with our programme of recordings in recent years, we have achieved a high international profile, not just as outstanding performers of western classical music, but as supporters of contemporary music and of outreach and education work.

I have been around long enough to have been part of the discussions on the future of the national companies since the early 1990s, so I have seen quite traumatic and tortuous discussions about the companies' fate and financial stability. That has been a long road but, in the past two or three years, it has been productive. We have reached a position where new funding structures are in place. All the national companies have worked tremendously well with the Scottish Arts Council and the Government to make the shift from funding through the SAC to direct funding. That involved a challenging process of adjustment for us all but, on balance, the experience has been positive.

I echo what Alex Reedijk said about the positive relationship that we have established with the national performing companies unit in a short time. The five national companies are working more closely together than they ever have. There is every indication that that will continue and mature over time. The companies' relationships, the relationship that we now have with Government and, indeed, the realignment of our relationship with the SAC, which remains important, makes for a lot of optimism.

**The Convener:** Thank you all for your brief opening statements. Committee members have several questions for you, and I will kick off.

I was struck by how positive you all are about the outlook and the positions in which you find yourselves. I was struck by Mr McEwan's comments in particular about the changed position in his relationship with the Scottish Arts Council and the Government. Has the creation of the national performing companies unit had a truly positive effect? Is there scope for future development that will allow you to continue with positive progression and growth so that you continue to succeed?

**Roy McEwan:** From the perspective of the five companies, the past year and a half or so has been an extremely positive experience. The way in which we are developing a dialogue with the unit is incredibly positive. It is an open dialogue and a supportive one from the unit's side. The extent to which it and we are working to develop a relationship with wider Government is also extremely important.

It is inevitable that it has been a difficult time for the Scottish Arts Council. It is a matter of adjustment and will lead to something new in the form of creative Scotland. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that we remain an important part of the overall arts community. In that respect, we must have a productive and collaborative relationship with the Scottish Arts Council and other parts of the arts community that are funded by the SAC rather than through Government. It is incredibly important that we do not lose sight of that because the changes in funding stream and relationships do not change the fact that we are all part of the same arts environment and culture. As long as we keep that in sight—in fact, a tripartite meeting of the national companies, the SAC and the national performing companies unit will happen shortly—it will be a positive development.

**Simon Woods:** It is interesting to compare where we are now with the traditional model of a Government funding an arts council and the arts council funding organisations, as applies in Scotland, Wales or England. The dialogue tends to be, "This is the amount of grant available: what can you do for that?" What is interesting about where we are now is that a genuinely creative discussion is going on about what we—the five companies and the national performing companies unit—can achieve together for Scotland and what Scotland wants to achieve as a whole. It is a discussion about ambition and what we think Scotland deserves as part of its performing arts culture and how we deliver that. The discussion is not simply about money and delivery; it is an open discussion about what we all want to achieve together. That is very positive.

**Vicky Featherstone:** Although I support everything that has been said, I offer a word of warning from the National Theatre of Scotland as

part of a theatre community. It is important, while maintaining what is so successful for us, to be clear about what our new connectional role is to creative Scotland as it is set up, so that we are part of whatever that new thinking is and embedded within the new structure so we do not become a separate entity and so that the audiences in Scotland can benefit.

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** The second paragraph of the RSNO submission states:

"Having a renowned symphony orchestra has long been regarded as an important marker of the cultural life of a nation."

Can you suggest other markers of the health of the cultural life of a nation—apart from the five organisations that are represented on the panel?

10:30

**Vicky Featherstone:** I have to be specific. Scotland's living playwrights, of whom there are many—they are healthy and happy—are a great marker of the health of Scotland's cultural life. They have come through the education system and have been inspired in terms of questioning their identity as Scottish people in the rest of the world. Despite the relative size of Scotland, they are seen as absolute leaders in their field around the world. I could name 10 such playwrights. I could be having this conversation in Germany or America and people would recognise the names. That is a really healthy example.

**Simon Woods:** I draw to the committee's attention an interesting article in yesterday's edition of *The Times*, which was about the growing recognition in educational environments of the importance of well-being, which is becoming a topic in itself. We forget about well-being at our peril. Arts contribute to well-being. In England and Scotland we are seeing a slow move away from the instrumentalist view of art for social change and a move towards understanding that music is about music—it is about its effect—and that culture has an incredible effect on well-being, which is closely related to health. We all contribute to the well-being of a civilised society at a high level.

**Rob Gibson:** It is inevitable that you will have a relationship with creative Scotland, which has to develop the roots of that cultural health. Will any of you comment on that in more detail? It did not quite come out in the previous answers.

**Roy McEwan:** Are you asking about our relationship with creative Scotland?

**Rob Gibson:** Yes, and what it is aiming to do.

**Roy McEwan:** I do not want to sound pompous, but, given the funding that we get, companies in our position must provide a sort of moral leadership to the entire arts community, of which we form part. We are in many ways only a small part of that overall community. We should be involved in providing leadership in art form development, practices and the development of training and skills throughout the community. Those are the areas in which we can get involved with creative Scotland. We can have a more constructive relationship with creative Scotland if we do not have a funding relationship with it and have a shared interest in the development of culture across the board, rather than being focused on the resources that we can attract from creative Scotland.

I return to your question about the markers—apart from ourselves—of a civilised, cultured Scotland. At the broadest level, there should be recognition and respect for all art forms and all traditions within them. Whether we are talking about the western, classical tradition that most of us represent or folk, traditional or jazz music, there should not be a hierarchy of perceived importance; we should be part of the overall scene. The difference in resources might come down to the demands for and means of delivery of different art forms. However, we should not be seen as more important than the rest of the arts community, of which we are part.

**Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** The draft culture bill in the previous session of Parliament contained a number of provisions relating to local cultural entitlement and cultural planning, which I understand will not be included in the Scottish Government's creative Scotland bill. What do you understand the term "cultural entitlement" to mean? Do you think that it would be useful to legislate in that area?

**Alex Reedijk:** In the two years that I have been at Scottish Opera, I have done my best to dive into cultural entitlement and to understand it fully, to ensure that Scottish Opera is in a position to deliver, where it is able and where that is required. At the end of two years, I am not entirely sure that I could tell you what cultural entitlement was intended to be. My anecdotal understanding of the term is that it sits alongside and parallel to some of our core aims and ambitions, which are to deliver our art forms, at all levels, in as many sectors of our communities as is humanly possible. About a year ago, I became quite nervous about the fact that cultural entitlement seemed to be attracting a degree of prescriptiveness. I felt that, if we were not careful, we would be caught up in delivering a curious quota system, rather than delivering our art forms within our means and the means of the local authorities that generally partner their delivery. The short answer to your question is that I am still a bit puzzled.

**Simon Woods:** I see cultural entitlement as more of a mindset. One cannot run a national company and not believe that people in Scotland have an entitlement to culture. Every one of us espouses the vision of providing culture, in the richest sense, to the greatest number of people to whom we can provide it. In the way in which cultural entitlement was presented previously, there was a big risk that it would degenerate into a box-ticking exercise. However, we must not lose the concept, as all of us believe in it.

**Vicky Featherstone:** For me, cultural entitlement is about opening out and providing access. We are publicly funded organisations. As Simon Woods said, every person in Scotland should have access to our work. They should be able to participate in it, if that is what they desire, and to watch it. It is brilliant that conversations about cultural entitlement are pushing the access agenda—that is the area in which we should move forward confidently. We should ask how we can make our work as accessible as possible.

**Cindy Sughrue:** I echo what my colleagues have said. The puzzlement about cultural entitlement relates to the fact that it is already integral to what we deliver. Twenty or so years ago, equal opportunities became an important concept in arts and cultural funding. Arts organisations such as ours, which had been leading the way in providing equality of opportunity through employment and engagement with audiences, had to come to terms with a new way of encapsulating something that was inherent in their way of being. Cultural entitlement is part of who we are and is integral to what we want to do in the future.

**Aileen Campbell:** You have made some useful comments, especially about access. We all agree that access should be widened. The fact that there is puzzlement suggests that all of you are already making efforts to widen access. Perhaps you should be left to continue that work, as long as we are all aware that greater access to culture and cultural activities is being achieved. Is it a positive step that provision for cultural entitlement will not be included in the legislation?

**Roy McEwan:** It is difficult to imagine what we would be legislating for and how the delivery of whatever entitlement is set out in legislation would be defined. I suspect that that is why the Government has stepped back from the provision. However, I agree that the impetus should not be lost. Around the country, there are a number of pilot projects with local authorities that seek to articulate the spirit of the aspiration in a different way. No one quite understands what the term "cultural entitlement" means. There must be another way of explaining and delivering the right of everyone to have access to and to be given the opportunity to participate in the arts. Although legislation is not the most obvious way forward at this stage and the term may have to go, we must hold on to the principle to which it relates.

**Alex Reedijk:** Having said all that, Scotland is in a reasonably unique place in that not only does it have a grouping of the five national companies—we have reasonably shared aims and ambitions, which allows the five of us to work along parallel lines in helping to deliver whatever our cultural entitlement might be—but its geography and nature are such that the principles can be embraced and delivered relatively easily. There are a lot of positives in our favour.

**Vicky Featherstone:** One vital element of all this is that anybody whom we invite in or to whom we want to open up access deserves an excellent experience. That can come only when there is a confident cultural sector with artists at their prime. We need to feel confident about the way in which we produce and present our work and how we communicate it to an audience.

For me, the nervousness around legislating on cultural entitlement is that excellence might not always be high on the priority agenda for delivery. When we are confident that the work that we are creating is excellent, we find it relatively easy to open it up; people want to be part of it. The debate is also about aiming for quality.

**Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** All the witnesses are saying that we probably need to move forward with a cultural shift. That is perhaps better than a generation ago in terms of access to music, writing or other art forms. As I understand it, part of the cultural entitlement proposal was that the requirement was not necessarily on you, but on the public sector. All levels of government and the public sector need to understand the requirement if we are to extend provision. The requirement falls not on the national companies, but on the bodies that fund the arts—principally the local authorities. They need to provide a level of access that allows the national companies to continue the excellent work that they do nationally and locally.

I understand that the cultural entitlement proposal has been dropped and that the Government plans to replace it with nothing other than an understanding with local authorities that they will discuss their cultural approaches with central Government. The proposal would at least have provided an opportunity for a debate on the requirement on local and national government to offer additional access to culture, whatever that may be, and to national or local companies. What are your thoughts on that?

**Alex Reedijk:** Again, in my two years of looking around Scotland's cultural landscape, I have noted

with interest that the local authority areas in which Scottish Opera is succeeding in its delivery of cultural entitlement—for want of a better phrase—are those that have local arts champions. A local authority or education authority may not have formally enshrined those people as champions, but the arts champions form direct relationships with the likes of us, nonetheless.

I agree that cultural entitlement is not only up to arts bodies. I can speak only about what I have seen. Clearly, Scottish Opera has deep and meaningful relationships with some of the local authorities that make funding for our visits a priority. With other local authorities it is impossible, no matter what we do, to unlock anything to support our visits to communities in their area.

**Jeremy Purvis:** That is my point. All authorities should have a baseline duty to provide that. We are talking not about dumbing down, but about having a baseline. For example, provision could be made across arts areas by way of the curriculum.

**Alex Reedijk:** Yes.

**Roy McEwan:** Is this not one of many examples of the sticky question regarding the relationship between central and local government? We are talking about how requirements are made on local government and then resourced. I agree that our responsibility is to work in partnership with local authorities and central Government—and anyone else—to deliver what we do. That is what is expected of us.

The question is how to get a consistent picture across the country at local government level. Some authorities have champions who are great to deal with, but others are hard to deal with. I am not sure that articulating the requirement by way of the phrase "cultural entitlement" has yet enabled us to reach sufficient clarity, although if it has, that is great. We seem to be struggling through the dark towards defining a reasonable requirement on local government that can be delivered.

10:45

**Cindy Sughrue:** We have never found any local authority that has not wanted to respond to the opportunity of more engagement with individual artists and companies such as our own. To pick up on Alex Reedijk's point, although to some extent it has been a question of resource and funding, it has often been the individual champion to whom we referred who unlocks opportunities and enables local venues and facilities to be developed in which we can present our work. Often, it is a question of unlocking different opportunities on the ground, which only local intelligence can do.

We need to work in partnership; it is a question of people, and to some extent of funding, at local level. The requirement to tick a cultural entitlement box would not achieve any more, in terms of impacting positively on companies, than personal relationships have done in the past 10 or 15 years.

**The Convener:** Reference was made to consistency throughout the country in having local champions. Was that not envisaged for the cultural co-ordinators? Do the national companies have a view on the Scottish Government's decision to stop funding cultural co-ordinators in the future?

**Vicky Featherstone:** From the theatre forum run by the SAC that I sit on, my understanding is that the cultural co-ordinator programme, which is managed by the SAC, has another two years to run. I do not know how it could have been deemed unsuccessful at this point. The scheme, which is a long-term training programme for the cultural co-ordinators, is ambitious. I understand that some decisions are made because money is scarce, but we have not seen the outcome of the long-term development of cultural co-ordinators and the connections that they can make with the people who can help to deliver culture in local areas.

My feeling is therefore that it was early to make that decision, although I am excited about the next two years, in which we intend to work closely with the people who still have funding in place to see how we can benefit.

**Simon Woods:** I think that one reason why the cultural co-ordinator scheme is being phased out is that it was seen as a layer of bureaucracy in the middle of programmes. Without wanting to pass judgment either way, I say simply that anything that frees up financial resources to deliver programmes is good. It costs money to deliver programmes in schools, to take a symphony orchestra to Aberdeen or an opera company to Stornoway, and to do the other work that is done by us and the companies that will be funded by creative Scotland. If that is the thinking behind the move—to use the money to deliver programmes where they are needed and to inspire people—it is a good thing.

**Cindy Sughrue:** The picture is complex, and the work started years ago. You will hear later from Seona Reid. When she was director of the Scottish Arts Council, it made a huge impact in establishing arts development officers and strategies in local authorities, often with one officer covering a huge area but achieving a phenomenal amount. Education links officer posts were then developed to do more work, particularly in the education sector. Added to that was then another layer of co-ordinators and local officers—another layer of bureaucracy, if Simon Woods wants to call it that.

We still have the original arts development posts, the education links officers, and the cultural co-ordinators on top of them. We have found that in some areas cultural co-ordinators can open opportunities, but in other areas the situation is complex because there is a multitude of officers with different priorities or agendas. That has made the picture somewhat more complex.

There is no easy answer to the question on funding. It would be difficult for me to come down on one side or the other, but I agree with Simon Woods about releasing resources into the delivery of activities and programmes.

**Roy McEwan:** My impression was that the decision to cut the cultural co-ordinator programme was due to a range of other pressing spending priorities, which are difficult for us to comment on.

I chaired the steering group at the SAC on the implementation of the cultural co-ordinator scheme. The scheme was regarded in part as a way of introducing a level of provision of and engagement with the arts in local authorities—that brings us back to what Mr Purvis said about local delivery. It is rather too early to say whether the approach has worked, because in many ways it was about winning hearts and minds rather than just putting in place a structure. Ultimately, such an approach could not have been driven by central Government; it should have been mainstreamed in local authority resourcing. There is a tricky balance to be struck, whereby we try to encourage local authorities to pick up and run with programmes consistently throughout the country. It is perhaps a shame that resources have not been made available to give the approach longer to develop. If there is no long-term impact, something else will have to be done to create the sense of entitlement to which we aspire.

**Alex Reedijk:** We should take a moment to remind ourselves why all this is important. I have been to see many of my organisation's main-stage or touring performances for three-year-olds or five-year-olds. We deliver live performances. We deliver a sweaty, smelly, human experience, which people cannot get from a television screen, a computer monitor or a book. It is something to do with the curiosity of the human condition—for want of a better phrase—in front of an audience, and the joy and excitement that runs through an audience, whether it is made up of little children, adults or the range of ages in between. It is fantastic.

We had an interesting success last year, which has been mirrored in other organisations, when we introduced a £10-ticket campaign for people under 26, to bring younger people into our opera performances. That generated a 700 per cent increase in young people's attendance at our opera performances in Glasgow. That is fantastic, but what is even more exciting is that the kids come back, not because opera is complicated and difficult but because they have encountered a fantastic meeting of forces—music, theatre, drama and scenery on a fantastic scale—in a live, real experience. That is why it is important to me that what all the national companies do, however we do it, is go out and make nuisances of ourselves delivering live arts in the communities of Scotland. That is where the excitement resides and where the opportunity resides for us all.

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** It is encouraging to hear the witnesses' comments. Mr McEwan might remember that Mary Mulligan and I were members of the Parliament's Education, Culture and Sport Committee eight years ago. We took a very different view of the national companies then and it is a delight to find ourselves in the current situation.

Several witnesses talked about the stability and security of funding. The setting up of independent organisations that are centrally funded has been successful, but the budget seems to go up only by inflation over the next few years. Is that right? Is there room for expansion?

**Alex Reedijk:** Not in general terms, to the best of our knowledge.

**Ken Macintosh:** I wanted to ask about cultural co-ordinators, but my questions have been pre-empted. All the national companies do good outreach work; I am particularly familiar with the RSNO's work. Have you noticed the impact of cultural co-ordinators in local authorities, in the context of liaison with you and with small theatre companies, for example? Given that the success of the national companies is based on central funding, are you worried that the removal of central funding for cultural co-ordinators will lead to the difficulties that you experienced in the past?

**Vicky Featherstone:** I share that concern. Part of our success as a new organisation, when we did not have a brand that anyone recognised and before we had put on work that people could talk about, came from our meetings with arts development officers and cultural co-ordinators throughout Scotland. We talked to those people about our ideas and asked them whether they could open up access to their communities and pave the way for us. Part of our success, if I can be so bold as to call it that, is due to those relationships with the champions of arts and cultural co-ordinators, and getting into the schools and the educational establishments. Part of the reach that we have been able to achieve over the two years is due to that.

**Simon Woods:** Roy McEwan mentioned hearts and minds. It is a battle to win over hearts and

minds, particularly in local authorities, to accept the importance of culture. Our experience is that, while the cultural co-ordinators might have done good work, nothing beats winning over the hearts and minds of people at senior levels in councils.

We have just come off an extraordinarily successful week of activities in Angus; we did a week of school concerts, education concerts, community visits, and composition workshops in Montrose, Arbroath and across the region. One reason for its incredible success was that we went in as high as we could and communicated with the council's director of education and director of communities from the beginning. They bought into the event early. They were incredibly welcoming and enthusiastic about what we hoped to achieve in the region, and they passed that down through the organisation. The result was that everybody had a great week. We had a great week; the council felt that it got an enormous amount out of having the RSNO in residence for a week; and the people of Angus had fantastic experiences.

One of the problems with putting in a lot of layers is that it takes away the need for us to win over the hearts and minds of people who are in senior positions of responsibility in councils. Those people need to understand how transformative the experience of what we can provide for the people in their communities can be.

**Ken Macintosh:** If the money was going in locally rather than centrally, that would be fine. How do we guarantee that the progress that we have made in promoting the arts and culture locally will continue? In my local authority area, I can see the difference that the cultural co-ordinators have made. You might be fortunate and have a good champion at a senior level, but there is no shortage of champions throughout the community, who will be frustrated if they do not have access. How do we build in systems that guarantee such access?

**Cindy Sughrue:** To some extent, you may be asking the wrong people. We all come from organisations that are large enough to allow us to go in there and attract the attention of the high heid yins, and we can change those hearts and minds. If you phone up and say that you are from Scottish Ballet, someone listens; however, if you phone up and say, for example, that you are from a little dance company that just formed last year, they put the phone down.

In making that point, I do not shirk our responsibility. We have a leadership role and we are all connected with smaller organisations and can often work in partnership with them and front up some approaches. However, if you want an answer about the real impact of access at the local level, you will need to broaden out the debate to smaller organisations.

**Rob Gibson:** Vicky Featherstone said that it is perhaps too early to decide whether cultural co-ordinators have been successful. Clearly, there is evidence from difference parts of the country about that. However, how do you measure the success of the institution of cultural co-ordinators and the use of the money behind that?

**Vicky Featherstone:** One of the ways of measuring that is to look at the provision that has been created for culture in an area as a result, and to see whether there is more than there was before. The experience of the people who were part of that is important. We can ask them whether it brought about a feeling of well-being, or a transformative experience or a different sense of their environment. It is a two-stage process: first, the amount of provision; then the experience that people have had a result.

**Rob Gibson:** Can that be separated from Mr Wood's point about influencing senior people in a council to create an opening to have the discussion? Is the situation not much more complicated than you make out?

**Vicky Featherstone:** I support what Cindy Sughrue said. As I always say, my job is incredibly easy. I can ring up anybody and say that we want to do something, and people will say that that is fantastic and here is an open door. However, if you were to speak to everybody in the arts community who is not sitting round this table, they would not support that view. They cannot ring the top people because the top people will not answer the phone to them, so they go to the cultural co-ordinators or whoever because it is their job to listen. It is about having access at all levels and viewing culture in Scotland as something that everybody, rather than just an elite, can be part of.

11:00

**Jeremy Purvis:** I should have declared an interest at the beginning of the meeting. My entry in the register of members' interests indicates that I am a member of the board of a small theatre company in the Borders. I add that the company has a good relationship with the local authority.

The point has been made that all the national companies have access to local authorities at a high level, which is important. However, we must change the culture across the board—I will not say below your level—so that access is not just a one-off. Any chief executive or director would say that it is fantastic to have a national company come to their area, but earlier we talked about the danger of access becoming a tick-box exercise. Having RSNO go through an area is a good way of ticking a big box, as it will sustain the local authority for quite a while, especially if the visit can be funded discretely. The point is to provide access across the board, for 365 days a year.

That brings me on to the issue of funding. In your funding profiles, the levels of funding from central Government, commercial sponsorship and ticket sales vary. Do you think that in future the proportion of Government funding, as opposed to funding from ticket sales, will be different? I am interested to find out whether the £10 tickets were subsidised or whether lowering the ticket price has attracted more young people under 26. Have you made money out of the initiative? How do the companies see their funding profiles developing in the future, especially given that we know that, effectively, their funding from central Government is flatlined over the spending review period?

**Alex Reedijk:** The under-26 £10 ticket was supplementary income for us, because it drew in an audience with which we had not had much success in the past and filled up additional seats that were available. It provided us with additional income in the short term. In the longer term, when those people return, they will buy tickets at more conventional prices, which will add to our yield.

The relationship between state funding, for want of a better word, box-office income and all our other sources of earned income is interesting. In the funding agreement between us and the national companies unit, an expectation is articulated that we will work actively to lower the percentage of state funding relative to other earned income. Scottish Opera is enjoying a good deal of success in generating additional funds from the corporate and private sectors, mainly because we have been able to send out the clear message that any additional funding that we receive will help us to deliver more performances. Having a good proposition has helped us to generate additional funds. That trend will increase in the future, certainly for Scottish Opera. I say that with a degree of confidence, because in my travels around the opera world of Europe I see that we are not alone in having to take greater responsibility for broadening our funding base.

**Simon Woods:** Earlier I mentioned the discussion about the nature of ambition. The balance between earned income and public subsidy is complex. On a number of occasions, I have said to the national companies unit that, if the unit wants a symphony orchestra 80 per cent of whose income is earned and only 20 per cent of whose income comes from Government, I can provide one. However, I do not think that that is the symphony orchestra that Scotland wants, because it would play the 1812 overture every Friday night in the Usher hall and every Saturday night in the Glasgow royal concert hall. Such an orchestra would not go to Aberdeen or Dundee and would not do outreach. The discussion about the relationship between public and private income is intimately related to the discussion about ambition and what we as a community expect from our national companies.

**Roy McEwan:** A key aspect of our work is travelling around Scotland to serve the community at the highest level of achievement that we can reach. That inevitably creates a relationship between costs and box-office income that does not work. A fundamental imperative for us is that the only way in which we can tour the north of Scotland and go to the islands and the south of Scotland, for example, is with public investment. As Alex Reedijk said, we are expected, and have an impetus, to maximise private sector income. The incentive is that we can always do more than we are doing at any time. Such activity can have the most effect on generating more income and that incentive is on-going.

**Jeremy Purvis:** I would have thought that the potentially difficult economic environment that we will have in the next five years would make it harder for the national performing companies—like all other companies—to attract corporate support. It is inevitable that some companies will retrench. I do not know whether that feeling is accurate and I am interested in your thoughts.

Am I right in thinking that Scotland does not perform as well—if we want to put it that way—as others do at attracting personal benefactors? Many of your international colleagues or competitors—the term may vary depending on how you view them—from North America or Europe attract quite a large proportion of investment from personal benefactors, but that culture does not seem to have been developed in Scotland. What is your perspective on that?

**Vicky Featherstone:** It is interesting that the arts receive no subsidy in North America, so they exist there only through the personal money that people have provided historically. Our arts culture proves the benefit of having subsidised arts; the state of affairs in North America is not as healthy.

It is interesting that we are all aware of the issue and are all transforming our sponsorship, development and fundraising programmes to consider individual giving. In Britain, that is the beginning of a new wave. We are at the forefront of attracting such funding.

On box-office income, we have a challenge in creating the size of show that a national theatre should have. We all face the same situation of a paucity of venues to which we can attract audiences to justify the subsidy for a show. Touring internationally and in the rest of Britain is important in providing additional income. We cannot get big enough audiences in Scotland because of the limited number of venues at which we can play, so it is important that we look further afield.

**Cindy Sughrue:** If we are doing a bit of crystal-ball gazing, our experience is that obtaining business sponsorship is becoming more difficult. We still have much success, but business sponsorship involves a business relationship, naturally, so we need to work hard to deliver pound for pound what a business expects. We all see the growth area as individual giving, but much of that involves a long-term courtship and much may come from legacies, from which we might not benefit for 10, 15 or 50 years. However, for the future health of all our companies, it is important that we establish those campaigns now. They might not deliver something today or tomorrow, but they are essential for our future stability and growth.

**Simon Woods:** I agree with all the other comments about individual giving. Individual giving, especially of major gifts, represents a growth area for Scotland. An important point is that the second that any potential major benefactor gets a whiff of the fact that their donation might mean a reduction in public subsidy, they will walk away. We had all best keep that dynamic at the back of our minds. Individuals who give money want to fund ambition; they do not want to fund a black hole or stability.

In passing, I will raise a point that we were talking about on the train this morning. The new taxation rules for non-domiciles are a huge threat to charitable funding from private individuals. Our two largest donors are American ex-pats—I will leave you with that thought. It is a very scary prospect for us.

**Alex Reedijk:** A major factor in the increase in funds that Scottish Opera has been able to source from the private sector has been the fact that we can articulate that we are stable, solvent and in a grown-up, long-term relationship with central Government. That has been a real source of comfort to the folk who have written significant cheques in support of our ambitions.

**Jeremy Purvis:** I hope that the two principal sponsors of RSNO are not thinking about changing their support in the context of the consultation and what changes may be introduced in Westminster. Can Mr Woods confirm the position?

What can the Government—north or south of the border, although principally north of the border, because it is the main sponsor—do to give national companies confidence and to say that corporate or individual support is a way not of reducing public backing or retracting public funding but of adding value? Would you be looking for the committee, the Parliament or the Government to provide that strong signal?

**Simon Woods:** To be clear, I do not think that we are hearing that message. I do not want there to be a misunderstanding; I just mentioned it as something to think about for the future. There is a good level of understanding about individual giving.

**Vicky Featherstone:** That funding is a particular element that we spent a lot of time discussing in relation to the new funding agreements that have been created for us to cross over from the SAC to the Government. We all worked hard to understand the terminology, and we feel confident about it.

**Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Good morning. I want to turn your attention to the work that you do with schools, which is obviously critical. Will each of you tell us about the most effective and positive contributions that you have made to schools recently? With that in mind, do you think that we should be doing more in the curriculum? There are obviously opportunities for changing the curriculum. Would you like us to take action to ensure that the performing arts become more entrenched in the Scottish curriculum than they are at present?

**Cindy Sughrue:** Scottish Ballet has been delivering comprehensive programmes in schools at both primary and secondary level for some time. That highlights the fact that dance is not currently a discrete subject in the curriculum—it is delivered as part of physical education. The new curriculum for excellence enables that position to develop, and we welcome the commitment to providing the opportunity for dance to gain a status that is separate from PE.

In considering how that development is rolled out, it is important to look at how we can ensure that there are the skills and commitment necessary to deliver dance at a higher level in the whole of the school curriculum. We can see that, given the timescale for rolling out the new curriculum, there will be a gap. We are working across the dance sector in Scotland and have established a dance working group under the auspices of the Federation of Scottish Theatre. The group's key focus is the development of the curriculum and how we as the national company and other dance providers can help to deliver the continuing professional development that teachers and other programme deliverers will require.

We are also considering how we can establish a more co-ordinated approach to providing a bank of expertise for the education sector to call on. That is our big challenge for the next few years.

**Vicky Featherstone:** Alongside our main programme, we have a continuous programme of workshops in schools, which is taken for granted. We have specifically concentrated on a project

called transform, which is a partnership project with local authorities, the determined to succeed initiative and Scottish Power Learning. We work with schools of ambition at both secondary and primary level.

We do a six-month residency in an area, during which a piece of work is created with community groups, based around the school. There will be a performance of such work on 7 March in Inverclyde, and we have the money to roll out 10 transform events in the next two years. That is an important project, because it is about transforming through drama the way in which people see their community. Young people write the piece and take part in dance and other activities. The project is incredibly important for us and we will continue to pursue it.

11:15

The really exciting thing about drama is that it can run across the curriculum. It does not have to be theatre studies based or play based, but can cover elements of the curriculum such as citizenship. Simon Sharkey, the associate director of NTS learn, is working closely with drama teachers and various organisations to embed drama deeper in the curriculum. It is about giving drama and drama teachers status in schools, so that teachers aspire to be drama teachers in schools in which drama is severely lacking.

Members can tell from my English accent that I am not from Scotland, but I have noticed that the situation is very different here. The number of drama teachers who have been developed in England has led to a massive transformation in the way in which young people see drama. The situation in Scotland has changed already in the two years that I have been here, but it would be really exciting if drama could be embedded in the curriculum here, too.

**Simon Woods:** Before coming to Scotland, I was in the United States for eight years. In the US, music education in schools has largely broken down. As a result, orchestras' education programmes are mostly built around trying to deliver some music in schools in the most basic way, because otherwise schools would not get it. When British music educators look at American orchestras' education programmes, they often criticise them for being very basic. However, the programmes have to be basic, because that is what the environment demands.

Right now, we are able to provide some pretty creative projects, especially in conjunction with our corporate partners, Total and Shell. Many of us run creative programmes around composition—writing music and expressing community and personal issues through music. At the moment, we can still do that, but America provides us with a scary future scenario. In order for us to run creative projects, there must be instruments and music teachers in schools—it is as basic as that. We need more instruments in schools and more music teachers. If that can be achieved, it will free us up to do what we do best—delivering creative and inspirational work. However, the bedrock must be in place if we are to do that.

**Alex Reedijk:** In my submission, I have described in broad terms the educational activity that we cover, but I will make a couple of supplementary points. At primary level, in particular, we get across 30 of the 32 local authorities in Scotland most years, so we have pretty good breadth and reach. I think that we have focused too much on the primary school end, so we are doing a lot of thinking about how we can address a secondary school audience. We think that we need to do more work in that area.

Another back story that has emerged is the pilot programme that we have decided to launch in partnership with North Ayrshire Council, East Ayrshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council and the University of Glasgow, after we stumbled across the fact that many young or new teachers know almost nothing about the performing arts. I apologise for the programme's working title, "Teaching the teachers", which is both cheesy and patronising. We have not yet come up with a better title, but the essence and spirit of the project is that we will seek to catch up with young teachers during their training and the first few years of their professional development in the classroom, to encourage them to think positively about the performing arts and to use the opportunities that exist under the curriculum for excellence to supplement their teaching skills. It is very much a pilot programme, but it has attracted considerable private sector interest, as well as interest from Learning and Teaching Scotland. It is almost pointless for us to work with the kids if the teachers are scared of what we are offering or do not know how to articulate or deal with it.

**Roy McEwan:** Our longest-term relationship with the schools sector is in Edinburgh—we are the only national company that is based here. That relationship has been productive. The biggest single project recently, which has shown the benefits of a long-term relationship, has been the provision for three years of a composer in residence at schools in Edinburgh, who has worked with children at different levels. Over the three years, skills have been expanded and the project has been taken to a bigger scale.

I fully endorse what Simon Woods said. What we bring to a school environment is a set of special skills, one of which is creativity. We must not be a substitute for something that should

already exist. To an extent, we must assume a level of resource in schools. We can bring something that is completely different. Taking teachers and children along with us is fundamental. That includes building experience and skills for teachers as much as for pupils.

The question focused on schools, but for us and for many arts organisations, education is seen in a much wider context. The important agenda is lifelong learning rather than just schools. We should provide experiences to people from primary school until the point when they can no longer enjoy our music.

**Elizabeth Smith:** When you do workshops in schools, do you work with teachers and pupils at the same time? Does any of you run projects for teachers to learn to teach youngsters about the arts?

**Cindy Sughrue:** We do both.

**Simon Woods:** The common model is to have teacher workshops that precede events. Those workshops are important.

**Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab):** Having been outed by Ken Macintosh as a participant in the production of an earlier report, I will repeat what he said. It is pleasing to hear the enthusiasm, confidence and ambition from each witness. That is slightly in contrast to what we heard in previous evidence, so it is welcome.

I welcome the clear recognition in your submissions and answers of your part in achieving social inclusion. My question relates to that. How do your organisations play a part in achieving social inclusion, and how are your programmes influenced by that? How do you ensure that the result is that people from less obvious backgrounds become involved in, rather than just passively receive, your arts?

**Roy McEwan:** I return to what I said about lifelong learning. Any organisation's education and outreach work is often the door to extending the inclusion of people from all parts of society. If we do that correctly and plan that properly, we hope that at least a proportion of the people concerned will become involved in the more traditional, performing side of our work.

Another key social inclusion issue for all of us is the basics of geographical spread. Much of the population is concentrated in the central belt, but other communities are widely spread. Taking work throughout the country must be fundamental to our justifying our existence as national companies. In a way, we justify locally our existence as nationals.

**Simon Woods:** The impact is measured not only by quantity, but by quality. We have a programme in Glasgow called naked classics, which presents classical music to people who have had no contact with it before. We dissect a piece in front of the audience's eyes in layman's terms and in a populist manner. Along with selling tickets for those concerts, we have run a community programme to take our musicians into tough areas of Glasgow. Many of the people whom we have brought to concerts have never heard a symphony orchestra and are blown away by it.

When 10 people from a constituency in the east end of Glasgow come to a concert and are blown away by something that they literally did not know existed, that is an incredible victory. It is hard to capture that in documents that are about how every year we reach this many people and go to that many regions. It is important not to lose sight of the individual impact that we can make on people who then become ambassadors for the experience.

**Alex Reedijk:** I echo everything that my colleagues have said. We had a pilot programme about two and a half years ago of opera unwraps. If we were presenting "Don Giovanni" on stage, for example, we would reduce it to an hour long and, using the understudy singers and orchestra, take an invited audience through the opera for free in the early evening—at about 6 o'clock. We were getting 300 or 400 people via our community education programmes.

We decided to expand the opera unwraps invitation to anyone who is interested. We do 16 unwraps a year, in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness, and we consistently get about 1,000 people at each event. A narrator takes the audience through the opera, and it is a fantastic chance for people to hear some singing, to see perhaps a scene change rehearsal or a special effect and to meet some of the individuals involved in the piece.

The point behind opera unwraps was that not only did we know that opera as an art form was unfamiliar to a lot of people, but we had spotted that a lot of people had become unfamiliar with coming to the theatre. The opera unwraps were a way of encouraging people to feel safe coming into theatres and to experience some opera without, I hope, being frightened away. It is interesting to see the number of people who, having been to an unwrap, form a queue at the box office afterwards. It is also interesting to see how many of the audience who come to the unwraps are the parents of children who have experienced one of our opera schools programmes. It is hard to measure that empirically, but many of my staff tell me that they see many faces at the events that are familiar from other projects.

**Cindy Sughrue:** We run similar programmes to those described by my colleagues, both on an

open access basis, so that anyone can pitch up and have a go, and through strategic partnerships in local communities to identify people who may not have experienced live art before. We have enabled those partnerships to develop.

We also have a long-standing programme of identifying and nurturing young talent through school to a professional level. That remains important to our company at a grass-roots level. Two of our current dancers are from what would now be described as areas of social exclusion. As young people they attended outreach activities run by the company and were then ushered through the Dance School of Scotland training programme. They went on to train to a professional level and then came back to Scotland to join the company.

That is really important to us, and it would not have happened if we had not had exposure to communities that we would not necessarily have considered without the partnerships with local community groups. Those partnerships were key to making careers and life-changing experiences happen for those two young men.

**Vicky Featherstone:** One frustrating aspect of a discussion such as this is timing. The anecdotal stories show where the life lives but people often feel that such stories are not as important as headline figures. I could add to all the stories, and I am sure that there are a lot more. They are important, and it would be good for us to find a way collectively to communicate the narrative of those experiences.

One interesting point for us—it is the opposite of Scottish Opera's view—is that, because the NTS is new and theatre in Scotland is a relatively new tradition, we can create work and make our choices about the majority of our programme based on social inclusion. It is a question of creating work that we believe that all people can have access to. Social inclusion is an important aspect of how we make decisions about what we put on stage.

**Mary Mulligan:** That is helpful. I recognise what Mr McEwan was saying about going out to the various areas in Scotland, but the other side is that there are people who have been excluded within the central belt and our major cities. I acknowledge the comments that have been made about trying to overcome those hurdles.

Given the work that you are already doing, what other challenges exist? Somebody mentioned problems with venues, in relation to which we have only to consider the discussions that are taking place in this city. Ms Sughrue said that trainee dancers cannot reach the higher levels in Scotland. I am aware that young dancers who have had to go away have found financial support difficult because they had to make that move. What other challenges have you encountered, which we might address to ensure that social inclusion is working?

11:30

**Roy McEwan:** One issue is resources. Sometimes, scheduling nightmares arise with the performing programme and with allocating skills in the companies across different areas of work, but we could all probably do more. Some of that goes back to engagement with local authorities, some of which are much better at engaging in partnerships than others are. All such work must be done in partnership; it is not productive if we work on our own.

**Simon Woods:** One other issue is that the general marginalisation of culture on television does not help us. TV is the popular format that goes into the heart of every community in Scotland. It is really hard for all of us to get on TV. Notwithstanding cable channels, the amount of culture on terrestrial TV is smaller than ever. That is a big challenge, because it means that people are not thinking about culture—it is not on their radar screens. We must counter that in other ways. In Glasgow, our naked classics programme worked well because we had a partnership with the *Evening Times*, which took us to a constituency that was different from our normal one. We must work hard to get into the heart of socially excluded communities.

**The Convener:** Several witnesses had hoped to be away by now, so we will have one final question. I ask Ms McKelvie to be brief and I hope that the panellists' answers will be brief, too.

**Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Mary Mulligan pre-empted some of my questions, as I was going to ask about the challenges that you will face in the next five years. On some of the anecdotal stuff, I have found embedded drama really helpful. I started a drama group for people with learning disabilities about 15 years ago. The joy, enthusiasm and confidence that exuded from that group helped them to function in their normal lives.

A particular challenge for the national companies is fusion: working with the folk music and traditional music sectors and trying not to create that elitist thing. I grew up in Easterhouse—a tough east end area of Glasgow—and my father brought me up on traditional music and opera. I could sing the aria from "Madam Butterfly", but I would clear the room. One challenge about working with what is happening in folk music and traditional music is not to assume that nothing is happening there. We all talk about social inclusion areas as if they had a dearth of culture and were cultural voids, which is not the case. I am an

example of that, although I would not say I was that cultured, right enough. Will you briefly give your insight into fusion with traditional music and with what is happening in cultural Scotland, which might not be at a national level?

**Vicky Featherstone:** I can be brief, because the position is straightforward for us. The theatre that we want to create comes from the form of culture that has existed in Scotland. For example, the form of "Black Watch" involves singing and storytelling and is physical. That comes from a tradition that includes traditional music and 7:84's "The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil". We are not starting from day one; we are part of a tradition that we can develop.

**Simon Woods:** Phil Cunningham and Aly Bain, with whom we play a number of concerts every year, are two of the RSNO's greatest friends. We and our audiences love them, and our audiences love hearing them playing with us. However, the marriage between folk music and a symphony orchestra can sometimes be uneasy, and we should not necessarily assume that such a marriage is always a good thing. We have a great symphony orchestra and great folk and traditional music in Scotland, but that does not necessarily mean that those things have to be in the same room at the same time. We can do some such work, but we must be careful that we do not end up doing nothing effectively.

**Alex Reedijk:** Our orchestra plays in some of the more curious commissions in Celtic Connections in Glasgow. More interestingly, a piece of opera that was co-composed by Nigel Osborne and Wajahat Khan, who is an Indian sarod player—he is an extraordinary man—recently emerged in our five:15 project. The piece is about a young Indian woman growing up in Govan, and it is an interesting mix involving western operatic traditions and traditional Indian instruments. We do not know what it will be like, as we are presenting it next week, but we are quietly confident that it will be fascinating and beautiful.

We have also put our toe in the water with respect to Gaelic opera. We played a small mentoring role in the St Kilda project in Stornoway last year. Funnily enough, people came back to see me yesterday to discuss what the next stages of the project might be. The potential for making interesting fusions of Gaelic music traditions and our music traditions is well worth exploring. It is our duty as a national company to consider such work.

**Roy McEwan:** What we discover about one another in the most extraordinary contexts is interesting. We are also working with a sarod player—I did not know that Scottish Opera was, too. The sarod player with whom we are working is Amjad Ali Khan, who is a distinguished classical musician from India. That work has grown out of our education programme. Classical musicians from the orchestra have been learning improvisational skills, which are not fundamental to their way of working. A new work, which will be premiered at the St Magnus Festival in Orkney this year, is coming out of that, and I hope that it will be taken to India next year. That is just one aspect of our work with traditional musicians. Perhaps we have worked more productively with jazz musicians.

Western classical music, which is a particular tradition, presents a challenge. It is more difficult and challenging to evolve it into other traditions. That must be done well, and doing so often involves a lot of resources, as time must be spent on developing it, otherwise we will get great jazz or folk musicians standing in front of an expensive backing band. Perhaps Simon Woods was hinting at that. There must be something more meaningful. We are all trying to feel our way into other musical traditions and the classical boundaries are beginning to break down, but I think that the process will be a long-term one.

**The Convener:** I thank the witnesses. That concludes members' questions. I think that we have all enjoyed the session and our positive engagement with you, and we look forward to your return. I am sure that we could have asked you about many other things.

There will be a suspension for five minutes for a short comfort break and a changeover of witnesses.

11:39

*Meeting suspended.*

11:46

*On resuming—*

**The Convener:** I welcome our second panel of witnesses. Amanda Barry is marketing and public relations manager for the Edinburgh International Book Festival, Seona Reid is director of Glasgow School of Art, Robert Livingston is director of Highlands and Islands Arts and Fiona Rogan is a committee member of Voluntary Arts Scotland. I thank everyone for the written submissions that they have provided in advance of this morning's meeting.

I will give people an opportunity to make brief introductory comments. We will start with Amanda Barry and work our way round the table.

**Amanda Barry (Edinburgh International Book Festival):** First, I want to say that our director, Catherine Lockerbie, is sorry that she cannot be

here this morning. Unfortunately, she had a previous commitment to speak somewhere else.

The Edinburgh international book festival has been running since 1983. It takes place in a specially constructed tented village in Charlotte Square gardens. Last year, we programmed more than 700 events, with more than 800 writers and thinkers who came from 40 different countries from around the world. Visitor numbers have grown steadily in recent years and now exceed 200,000.

Our director for the past eight years, Catherine Lockerbie, has increased the profile, scope and reputation of the book festival by building on a twin emphasis on Scottishness and internationalism. Scottish writing is brimming with energy, insight and confidence: literature defines us to ourselves and to the world. From Robert Burns to Ian Rankin and from Robert Louis Stevenson to J K Rowling, Scottish writers are recognised and read in every country around the world. In 2007, almost 200 of the festival's writers were Scottish. We actively seek to promote both established and emerging Scottish writing and we believe that we are the most important Scottish platform for international writing and the most important international platform for Scottish writing.

However, we do not exist in isolation: we are a fundamental part of Scotland's literary sector and publishing industry. The book festival is not a trade fair such as those in Frankfurt, London and Bologna but a public celebration of the written word. The festival is a setting where writers can meet their public, where publishers can meet their target markets and where the industry can meet informally. Future books are conceived and creativity is engendered. We have carefully created the perfect conditions in which writers can meet their peers from home and around the world. The inspiration that that can generate is truly extraordinary. The creative economy derives enormous benefit from what we do.

We receive annual funding from the Scottish Government and the City of Edinburgh Council, but we also need to raise a huge amount of our own funds. Our independent book-selling operation is a crucial part of that. In Charlotte Square gardens, we run three bookshops that showcase the high quality and variety in publishing today. Through our association with Publishing Scotland, we affirm our commitment to all aspects of the literary industry.

Scotland has around 100 book publishers. Typically, they are small and have fewer than 25 staff. We have potentially global markets, but our output is not ring-fenced by language. Scottish writers can be published in London. Many aspire to that, but they are more likely to be discovered and nurtured by a Scottish press. In other words, there is a need to ensure that independent creative publishing flourishes in Scotland. Literature reaches the public to provide what we might call a cultural experience via the publishing of the work in book form or, increasingly, using new technology. That is seen as an economic activity, but not just for the publisher, because it is also how the writer makes a living. Our writing and publishing community has done well on the world stage, but there is a considerable way to go.

There is a close and mutually beneficial interdependence between the Scottish publishing industry and Edinburgh international book festival. Scottish writers have a showcase through our events and Scottish publishers have an opportunity through our bookshops to highlight Scotland's vast and vibrant literary output at the world's largest public book festival and on the international stage.

In 2007, we sold more than 60,000 books and 25 per cent of them were published in Scotland. Scottish publishers are hugely important to our bookselling operation and many of them are outperforming their counterparts in London. That shows that the festival is increasingly important for Scottish publishing. Through our audiences and our commitment to Scottish writers and writing, we drive forward the readership of the books that are published in Scotland.

The book festival has enjoyed outstanding success in recent years. However, our reach stretches beyond August. Edinburgh is the world's first United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation city of literature. That initiative has greatly increased the amount of year-round grass-roots and high profile activity in Edinburgh. We played a central role in securing the title and now work actively in support of the city of literature initiatives.

Other collaborations and exchanges extend the book festival's reach internationally. We also extend it through online activity, which we plan to develop greatly in the future. There are already 74 recordings of book festival events on our website—audio, video and transcriptions. Access to them is free to everyone, anytime and anywhere in the world. Our passion is not just about bringing writers together in Scotland, but about sending their remarkable words out to the world again.

Taking a leading role in Scottish literary and cultural initiatives outwith the period of the festival itself and working to increase the profile of, and funding for, literature and culture have always been fundamental to us. Literature is arguably one of Scotland's most important and internationally renowned indigenous art forms. We make a vigorous case for the central place of Scottish culture and literature in our country and also internationally.

At the book festival, we straddle the two interconnecting worlds of literature and live festivals. Edinburgh is a year-round festival city, and a study conducted in 2005 put the economic impact of the festivals at £170 million for Edinburgh and £184 million for Scotland. That suggests that, for every pound of public sector support, we generate £61 for Scotland. The festivals regularly deliver events on a scale that is akin to major sporting occasions.

The book festival has an outstanding track record of financial strength and value for money, repeatedly delivering excellent returns on public investment. With our fellow literary organisations, we aim to share knowledge and best practice, raise the profile of literature and the languages of Scotland, and influence agendas and policy. Literature has a fundamental role to play in underpinning much other activity including education: we seek to ensure that that unique role is fully recognised and properly represented.

Public investment in the book festival benefits not just the book festival itself, but Scottish writers, Scottish publishers, children—whether in families or at school—teachers, visitors and citizens alike. Writing places Scots in the world, and public investment in the book festival ensures that we play an essential role in Scotland's profile, confidence and future creative health.

**Seona Reid (Glasgow School of Art):** I am very pleased to be here. I am not flattering the committee by saying that it is one of the most important committees in the Scottish Parliament. Because it covers education, lifelong learning and culture, it is centrally positioned in respect of what I am about to say.

To be honest, I was not quite sure why I was invited today, so I had to decide for myself what my role might be and decided that it is twofold. My first role is as director of Glasgow School of Art, which is obviously a higher education institution that develops architects, designers and fine artists and does so extremely well—I have put some of the signals of our success in my written submission, so I will not go through them just now. However, I thought that I might have a second role as a passionate advocate for the creative industries and culture in Scotland, which is important today as never before.

Higher education and further education are fundamental to the dynamism and health of the cultural sector and the creative industries—school education is too, of course; that goes without saying. In higher education, we fulfil that role in a number of ways. Obviously, we develop the talent. Many artists working in Scotland today come through the conservatoires, our art and design schools, and our faculties of the creative industries. We also support much of the talent. People who do not necessarily have full-time jobs will often have portfolio careers in which teaching plays a major part.

Less well known is that most of our art schools and conservatoires are also concert halls, exhibition spaces, theatre spaces or community arts projects. In a wide range of ways, and not just through education, we engage as cultural providers. We are essential to arts provision in Scotland. We are also absolutely essential to experimentation and innovation in art schools, which provide an environment in which it is possible to experiment and innovate freely.

The Glasgow School of Art is also responsible for a grade A listed building that is considered to be one of the most important buildings in Scotland—the Mackintosh building. We are a visitor destination, which is another important factor in our cultural environment.

Because higher education is funded differently from culture, and because strategies are developed in certain ways for culture and the creative industries, the connections between higher—and further—education and culture are sometimes not made. That is why this committee is absolutely key: it can take an overview of how the relationships build.

That was me wearing my Glasgow School of Art hat; my second hat is that of the passionate advocate. Scotland needs to be much more ambitious about the arts and the creative industries than it is now. You might argue that I would say that, having worked all my life in the field. However, in Glasgow we have one of the international beacons for arts and regeneration, and in Edinburgh we have the wonderful festivals, which stand head and shoulders above other international festivals worldwide. We have also just heard from Amanda Barry about our writers. Our visual artists and our writers in Scotland are absolutely extraordinary in terms of their international standing and in terms of the sheer numbers of them who live and work in what is a relatively small country. We have also heard from our national companies about what incredibly rich provision we have.

We often say such things to ourselves, and we are enormously proud. I am enormously proud of what Scotland has achieved, but the rest of the world is not standing still. The festival in Manchester could rival some of the Edinburgh festivals. Practically every city in the world is now focusing on the creative industries and is investing in creative talent, creative space and creative businesses. Cities see such things as being fundamental not only to building their economies but to making the cities attractive to live in, to study in and to work in. We have to do that in Scotland. Unless we move forward, the rest of the world may move past us.

As a proud Scot, I always hate saying things like this, but I will say it anyway. On Friday, the Westminster Government will publish a green paper that is the result of about four years of work. It is based on an ambition that the United Kingdom should become the world's creative hub. The green paper will outline all the means by which the UK will become that creative hub. It covers what is going on in England and Wales. The British Council has also just published a draft strategy in which creative industries and culture are seen as one of three major strategic strands worldwide.

What is Scotland's ambition in that context? Could it be our ambition to be the UK's creative hub—outside London, of course, with which we could not compete—or to be one of Europe's most important creative hubs? We should aspire to no less, because all the building blocks are there. We have talent pouring out of our universities and colleges, and Scotland is second only to London and the south-east of England in terms of the scale and success of our creative industries.

12:00

The Highlands and Islands region is a model of culturally-led rural regeneration, and our two main cities, Edinburgh and Glasgow, are considered to be international cultural hubs. We have everything to make that ambition realisable. We need a champion within the Scottish Government, a clear sense of a cross-cutting strategy and policy that link together different departments and, above all, a statement of ambition and aspiration. If we had those things, Scotland would be absolutely unstoppable in culture and the creative industries.

**Robert Livingston (Highlands and Islands Arts):** I knew that Seona Reid would be a hard act to follow. I am delighted to have the chance to talk to the committee about the arts in the Highlands and Islands, and about the model that Seona has kindly introduced to you. I will say a bit about my organisation, and then something about the wider state of the arts in the area in which we work. To be clear, I am talking about the area that is covered by Highlands and Islands Enterprise—geographically, it covers half the land mass of Scotland, but contains only eight per cent of the population, so it is one of the most remote and sparsely populated areas in western Europe.

HI-Arts—or Highlands and Islands Arts, to give us our Sunday name—grew out of the fact that Highlands and Islands Enterprise has, unlike its counterpart Scottish Enterprise, a social remit. Even in its early days, in the early 1990s, HIE recognised that the arts, in addition to having intrinsic value, as was rightly stressed by the national companies, contribute to economic growth and to community cohesion and confidence.

One current example is the fact that Stornoway has become an extraordinary centre and generator for contemporary rock music. That is perhaps not one of the things that one would expect to come out of there, but anyone who has been to Stornoway recently will have seen the difference on the streets in the confidence and the attitudes of the young people, who know that they are part of that community and the economic growth that is happening there.

I will say a bit about the structure of HI-Arts, because it is important for its potential as a model in addressing some of the issues around delivery and partnership that have been raised through the whole process of the Cultural Commission and the draft culture bills. HI-Arts is an independent charity with a voluntary board, so we are very closely related to the organisations that Voluntary Arts Scotland is looking after. We are contracted by Highlands and Islands Enterprise to deliver a range of activities and services on its behalf, and we are also a foundation client funded by the Scottish Arts Council. We believe that that status allows us to work effectively in partnership, and above all to be lightweight and flexible and therefore able to respond quickly to changing circumstances.

We work in two ways: through a series of core services, and through a series of time-limited projects. Those main services include a truly enormous website, which includes an internet arts journal, a directory of artists and arts organisations, a comprehensive events guide and a huge amount of resources for people who work in the arts. We offer direct advice and some devolved funding from HIE and from the Scottish Arts Council.

We operate two big programmes—the screen machine mobile cinema, which is the only mobile cinema in the UK; and, more recently, the Booth, our online box office, which permits any promoter, no matter how small, remote or informal, to be able to sell tickets online and take bookings by credit and debit card. Some of those projects are taking on a life of their own, through what we call an archipelago—for example, the Booth is now Booth Scotland Ltd, which is a separate company that is supported by us so that it can offer what the Booth offers to the whole of Scotland, not just the Highlands and Islands.

As I noted in my introductory paper, the arts infrastructure in the Highlands and Islands has grown to an extraordinary degree in the past 10 to 15 years, but it is still very fragile and vulnerable, and it is very open to the effects of collateral damage. I mention in my paper some of the problems that have beset just one area—Skye—such as the closure of An Tuireann, the winding up of the Tosg theatre company and the major music

festival on the island facing liquidation. Since I wrote my submission, Highland Council has in its budget round last week axed five cultural posts that were all involved in delivering on the ground. Two of those people were among the most effective arts workers in Scotland with a history of 16 or 17 years of work. Those resources will be very difficult to replace.

The arts rely on volunteers to an unparalleled degree. Whether it is the promoters arts network, the fèisean movement or the 70 or 80 arts festivals in the area, there is an enormous reliance on volunteers to provide what would in other parts of Scotland, and certainly in urban areas, be professional, paid services. That is in addition to the hugely active amateur community. People give up their time voluntarily to provide access to professional tuition and performances.

I believe strongly that the arts in the Highlands and Islands make a major contribution to Scotland as a whole and its international identity. The recent year of Highland culture did not fully represent what the Highlands and Islands offer to the rest of the nation. It is true that we have an extremely rich heritage of music, language, storytelling and dance, but the culture of the Highlands and Islands is not simply backward looking: it also challenges the urban paradigm that creativity comes out of city cultures. There are extraordinary small-scale energy centres in places such as Tain, the Uists, Orkney, south Skye and Mull. Alasdair McCrone, the director of Mull Theatre, is very eloquent about the incredible range of cultural opportunities available to a population of 3,000 people on Mull. In that respect, I must take issue with the previous occupant of my seat when he said that sometimes, when Scottish Opera comes to an area, it offers the only live performances that people see. That might be true in some parts of Scotland, but it is not true in the Highlands, no matter how welcome Scottish Opera is.

The partnership between Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Scottish Arts Council that created our organisation has been absolutely crucial in supporting the development of that infrastructure and those energy centres. Therefore, I look with great interest and some anxiety at how the two changed and new organisations—a slimmed-down HIE and a very different creative Scotland—will be able to maintain and sustain that partnership into the future.

**Fiona Rogan (Voluntary Arts Scotland):** I am standing in for Fiona Campbell, who is Voluntary Arts Scotland's paid officer; I am at the volunteer end of the organisation. After listening to the national companies this morning, I feel that I am very much a product of their work. I am the child of a Paisley mill lassie with no background of culture, and I grew up on the edge of the most deprived housing scheme in western Europe. The first time I heard the RSNO, when it came to play at my school, I burst into tears because I had never heard anything so beautiful in my life. My passion for theatre grew out of that experience. When I grew up and became a local authority arts officer in the former Strathclyde Region, I was responsible for monitoring the education and outreach programme of every company that was represented on the first panel of witnesses. I berated them on occasion when they were bad and supported them when they were good.

In my current day job as an officer for the Scottish Community Drama Association, I link with all the national companies. Before I speak about the voluntary sector, I want to say that we are all part of one community; if one organisation is cut severely we all bleed. We are not separate—we work together and we work in different ways. I am a professional arts officer for SCDA and I am here as a volunteer in the arts arena. It is not a one or other or a divided picture.

As to the voluntary arts, I submitted the paper that Fiona Campbell prepared for the committee so I will just throw out some thoughts to you. We reckon that about 2 million people perform and participate in voluntary arts and crafts activity throughout the country. Every day, 100 cultural opportunities are offered to people by volunteers in Scotland.

From my day-job perspective, I can tell you that as we speak, 28 festivals of one-act plays are running over an eight-week period, and each of those festivals is run by a committee of volunteers. Some 169 plays will be performed in those eight weeks, 47 of them by children under the age of 18. There will be about 19 brand-new works by professional or amateur writers. In fact, on Friday night, Libby McArthur and the writer Anne Marie Di Mambro left the "River City" set to come to St Serf's church hall in Edinburgh for the amateur premiere of Anne Marie's one-act play "Ae Fond Kiss". Anne Marie was delighted that her play was getting another airing. The fact is that writers would not get their plays performed much after their initial outing if it was not for the amateur and community sector.

The voluntary sector covers a huge range of ages, cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic profiles. On Friday night, for example, we saw the first performance by Scotland's first Indian amateur dramatic society, Holy Cow performing arts group, which seeks to perform in English traditional works from all over India for a diverse audience. Furthermore, a number of years ago, when I was a social work arts officer, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and our social work

department brought Scotland's first gamelan orchestra into the country. That orchestra is now sustained by Gamelan Naga Mas, a volunteer community music group, which shows the incredible impact that volunteers can have.

Volunteers also have an economic impact. The amateur dramatic festivals that are currently being held throughout the country will bring in £100,000, which will be spent in the local areas. Last June, our youth festival filled up every bed and breakfast in Plockton. Interestingly, the Scottish Arts Council criticised our decision to hold the festival there and wondered why, given that it was a national festival, we had decided not to put it on in the central belt. I have to say that we were fairly annoyed by those comments. We will ensure that the festival comes back to Plockton every 16 years, because we believe that remote and rural communities have as much of a right to put on a national festival as Glasgow or Edinburgh. The festival certainly had a strong economic impact in Plockton; in fact, I could not go, because I could not get a bed anywhere in the town.

Much of the work is not, however, very visible. Do local authority arts officers know what is happening in their patches? They know who they fund, but they very rarely go any wider than that. I was disappointed, for example, to find that the City of Edinburgh Council could not provide me with a list of amateur dramatic clubs in the city. I was told, "We tell those clubs to phone you." Although there appeared to be about 15 arts officers of different types in different parts of the local authority, none of them felt that the amateur sector was part of their remit—it was just too hard. There is a great need to map the cultural sector to find out who is out there and what they are doing. Of course, people say that that is simply too difficult because, for example, the personnel on volunteer committees change a great deal, but that is just an excuse. Once the exercise has been carried out the first time, it should be easy enough to update the information.

Our volunteers have great artistic skills and entrepreneurial spirit—after all, many of the activities are almost entirely self-funding. One of the reasons why they are invisible to local authorities is that they do not seek grants, which means that they are not on any database. However, much of the time, they do not engage with the community and cultural planning process. One of the interesting things that I have discovered in my three years with SCDA is that our people do not call themselves volunteers; they think that the term applies, for example, to the people in the Women's Royal Voluntary Service who work in hospital canteens. One of them actually said to me that when they were asked on a form whether they had any volunteers, they had answered that they did not. When I said, "But you are all volunteers", they said, "Oh, are we? We just do it for fun." They simply did not realise that what they were doing was volunteering. People very often do not identify themselves as being part of the voluntary sector.

The problem is that such volunteers cannot attend cultural planning partnership meetings if they take place during the day, and they find it hard to go at night because they are doing the arts. Every year, the groups with which I am involved in my day job give up a fortnight's holiday to run a youth summer camp: it is just too difficult for them to give up more time to attend a cultural planning meeting. As a result, umbrella bodies such as Voluntary Arts Scotland play a vital role. Because this is a huge and diverse sector that is made up largely of unpaid staff, we need a framework that allows those people to be heard and which encourages them to speak out and articulate their needs. It should not be about us sitting around a table, articulating those needs for them. Instead, we must try to give the most inarticulate people a voice by finding out what their needs are and encouraging and enabling them to speak up. They are not unintelligent, but quite often they are politically inarticulate.

12:15

One of our great fears about the future direction of creative Scotland is that we might fall between two stools. Traditionally, we had funding via the Scottish Executive, and then the funding moved to the Scottish Arts Council. The new creative Scotland appears to be putting a great emphasis on support for the artist rather than for the infrastructure bodies. There is a lack of understanding of what those bodies do, and we are scared that we are going to fall between two stools. We are not considered as part of the national companies unit but we are not deliverers of art. One of our greatest worries is whether there will be a funding stream for us in the future.

A lot of the support we give is not arts support but governance support. It can be arts-related—for example, recently I have been writing a briefing paper on the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 and its effect on the use of plastic swords in pantomimes and so on. A lot of scare stories are going about that plastic swords can no longer be used in pantomimes. There is a lot of fear surrounding child protection. Many groups are saying, "We're not doing a pantomime this year because we're scared of the child protection legislation." It is our job to reduce that fear and to tell them that it is all common sense and what they have been doing for years anyway. We work on charity legislation, advising groups on how to show their accounts according to charity formats. It is hard to get a Scottish Arts Council grant for that

because it is not art. There is a real need to support the cultural sector in all its needs, not just its arts needs. That is what Voluntary Arts Scotland has been doing for many years through briefings and one-to-one support, and in having a voice around tables such as this. I thank the committee for the opportunity to articulate that today.

**The Convener:** I thank all the witnesses for their opening comments. You have commented at length, and I fear that the committee will have far more questions than we will have time for today. However, it is important to stress that this is the beginning of a dialogue. All committee members are keen to ensure that although we have a wide committee remit, no part of it is forgotten about. Today's meeting is about contextualisation of the cultural sector in Scotland and looking forward to some work we might do on the creative industries over the next few weeks.

I have a question about the forthcoming culture bill. Some of you have already touched on the creation of creative Scotland as a result of a proposed merger between the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen. Fiona Rogan has mentioned her concerns about that proposal. What concerns do the other witnesses have for their organisations? What positive benefits might creative Scotland bring? What opportunities might the new organisation offer?

**Seona Reid:** If I am being honest, I would not have started from where we are now. There might have been an opportunity some time back to ask what exactly the creative industries sector in Scotland needs to be great, and to have thought about a completely new conception of the kind of infrastructure that might be necessary to achieve that level of ambition and aspiration, but we are where we are.

In a sense, we are looking at how we bring out of the notion of a merger of two organisations something that nonetheless will serve the interests of creative industries and the arts. That is the fundamental issue. Scottish Screen is a cultural organisation but it is also a creative industries organisation. It deals with film as an economic sector and film as a cultural sector. The Scottish Arts Council has traditionally dealt with the arts. It has moved slightly towards areas such as publishing and the commercial aspect of music, but it is primarily to do with subsidy and support for the arts.

If we put those two elements together, they do not create an arts body that deals with the full range of arts expression or a creative industries body that deals with the full range of creative industries expression. At the moment, there is no sense of how the Scottish Arts Council interfaces with the other major organisation involved—Scottish Enterprise—or, indeed, of how Scottish Enterprise relates to the priorities of the Scottish Government. I will give you an example of what I mean.

The Scottish Government's economic strategy mentions the creative industries. Scottish Enterprise is steadfast in its belief that the only area of the creative industries that it is interested in is digital media. There are aspects of the creative industries that will not be addressed by Scottish Enterprise. There is already a misalignment in the economic strand of the creative industries. Does that mean that creative Scotland will pick up the bits that Scottish Enterprise is not interested in dealing with? There are huge questions about that.

We need to see the connections between the arts and the creative industries. Art is moving fluidly between them now. Amanda Barry spoke about the importance of the publishing sector for supporting a healthy writing ecology. That can be seen in music, and in practically every area of the arts. We must bring creative industries and arts into synergy in some way. One body needs to have an overview of how those multiple sectors should and can be supported. I am not sure that putting two organisations together at this stage—one dealing with film and the other dealing with arts—will be the answer unless people can broaden their perspective of what creative Scotland might do. Somebody has to have leadership. At the moment, there is no leadership for the creative industries in Scotland.

**Robert Livingston:** I absolutely endorse what Seona Reid said, and the concerns that Fiona Rogan raised. I feel slightly schizophrenic about this subject. Working with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, I absolutely agree with what Seona Reid said in her opening remarks about the importance of the creative industries. I am also concerned that the traditional or conventional arts scene is experiencing a degree of fragmentation. It was marvellous to hear how positive the national companies feel about their relationship with Government. That is great. Nonetheless, as a foundation client in the Scottish Arts Council's group, I have found that there are now 47 of us meeting, whereas we used to be 108. The national companies have gone off to Government and about 50 companies were taken off core funding and are now flexibly funded. That is fragmentation. The fear that Fiona Rogan was referring to is the potential for further fragmentation.

I worry about a creative Scotland that is trying to wrestle with industries as large as that of fashion design software development taking its eye off the ball regarding exactly the core functions that Seona Reid referred to. As I said, it is a matter of collateral damage. Nobody means any harm

through the proposals, and nobody means to disadvantage any sector, but that will happen by default.

**Amanda Barry:** I would like to say something about the place of literature, which underpins so much other activity, including film, drama and education. Until now, literature has occupied a sidelined place in the structure of the Scottish Arts Council. We believe that literature should be more centrally positioned when the new structures are being discussed, for the various reasons that have been mentioned already. I echo what Seona Reid said about the creative industries: publishing is the way in which the art reaches the audience. It should not be split off; art should be seen in its totality.

**The Convener:** Do you think that the key thing with creative Scotland will be the leadership that is given to the new organisation by whoever is responsible for heading it up? Can the bill that the Parliament will consider address some of those issues by ensuring that the remit for creative Scotland addresses the need for a strategic overview of the creative industries and the arts?

**Seona Reid:** That is a huge question, and the answer is that I do not know whether the bill will or can do that.

I know that you will talk about the creative industries in a couple of weeks' time, so I am keen not to divert too much attention from the arts part of the agenda, but, from the creative industries' perspective, if creative Scotland is to take the lead on and be the champion of the creative industries, it will have to be a very different organisation from either of its two predecessors. It will have to have a range of expertise and knowledge that enhances—but does not replace—that of the two predecessor bodies. That is not impossible, but some sort of political lead will have to be given as that body probably could not assume that pole position otherwise. If it were in that position, the relationship between it and Scottish Enterprise would have to be considered. What would Scottish Enterprise's role be if creative Scotland were the strategic overview body?

The situation is achievable, because someone has to take the lead. It would be fantastic if creative Scotland took the lead, but it would need to be a very different body from its two predecessors. I am not party to the discussions that are going on in creative Scotland at the moment about whether that is on the cards or whether we are simply looking at the merger of two organisations.

**Robert Livingston:** It is important to be careful about definitions. We all agree that creativity, as a concept, should be central to the Scottish economy, but you cannot expect the agency that we are talking about to address that broad scope on its own. There are even varying ideas about what we mean when we talk about the creative industries. The definition of culture is fraught as well. I have had people from the heritage sector say to me that they do not want to come under the umbrella of culture, because they feel that doing so would lead to the arts robbing heritage of its due. It is certainly true that the Cultural Commission did very little to change the circumstances of the heritage sector—an approach that is continued in the first draft of the culture bill. The heritage sector is infinitely more fragmented and fraught than the arts sector. A small historical society with a collection in the Uists might have to deal with as many as 10 national agencies, many of which will have differing agendas and regulatory rules that must be met.

Any culture bill must be careful about what it includes under the heading of culture.

**Fiona Rogan:** We have concerns about the consultation process that is informing the shape of the new creative Scotland. There was a clear message in the compact with the voluntary sector that any strategic change should allow for consultation at the beginning of the process, not the end, but quite significant strategic change is already happening as the two organisations begin to come together, which can be seen in the funding arrangements for organisations such as Voluntary Arts Scotland.

My organisation, the Scottish Community Drama Association, was given a completely new quality framework with a huge application form and a requirement to deliver a business plan and was told to respond in eight weeks. There was no recognition of the fact that my organisation meets only every three months, that our volunteers have day jobs and that getting them together from places as far apart as Shetland and the Borders is impossible in that timescale. As a result, we put in a bid that we knew was not as good as it could be. We are concerned about the possibility that we were set up to fail. We feel that there was a fundamental lack of understanding of what it takes for a big volunteer-led organisation to respond.

The structure of consultation in the transition period will be vital. It is important to ensure that people are not being disadvantaged or disenfranchised by the mechanisms and processes that are used.

**Aileen Campbell:** Many of you who were in the public gallery will have heard the discussion about the draft culture bill and the new Government's plans for legislation on cultural entitlement and planning, the difficulties in defining those things, and the evident lack of mapping of existing cultural

pursuits. Have any of you had any thoughts about whether that is a useful area in which to legislate?

12:30

**Robert Livingston:** I was very relieved that cultural partnerships in the form in which they were set out in the guidance document were not implemented. As has already been said, it would have resulted in a tick-box exercise because it did not seem to address the quality of the experience.

As a child, I had exactly the opposite experience to Fiona Rogan. My first hearing of the SNO before it got into the City Halls was in a dreadful, clapped-out cinema, which was the only venue it had. We were given no preparation for it. No one explained to me that the orchestra was being conducted by one of Britain's greatest composers, Michael Tippett. Fortunately, I had an interest in classical music, and that bad experience did not crush it, but I am sure that it did for most of my fellow 12-year-olds who were there.

Anything to do with the concept of cultural entitlements is useful only if the quality of the experience is brought to the fore. It is far better for children to have one quality experience than 10 mediocre ones.

**Seona Reid:** Part of the discussion about the cultural co-ordinators connects with cultural entitlement. They are two sides of the same coin, or two different approaches to possibly achieving the same thing.

I agree with Robert Livingston: I too was relieved when cultural entitlement was dropped from the agenda, because it was in danger of becoming a tick-box exercise that would have said, "We have entitled so many people." The danger would have been that we would go for quantity rather than quality and that it would be said that because 100,000 people had been entitled we had achieved our ambition, when it is better that fewer people have a much more profound experience.

Simply opening doors does not make people come through them. There is a range of threshold issues for the arts and for those who are not brought up to be familiar with all the things that can be associated with the arts. I will give an analogy. When I left the Arts Council, I was bought a trout fishing rod. People seemed to think that I needed more relaxation. I have never managed to get into trout fishing because I do not understand the culture; I do not understand where to go, what websites to access, or which bit of the loch to go to. I do not understand the culture of trout fishing. A lot of people do not understand the culture of culture. The threshold issue is fundamental. Arts development officers, cultural co-ordinators and people who can mediate and support those initial experiences are also fundamental.

Rather than cultural entitlements, we should create cultural entrepreneurs—cultural co-ordinators is such a horrible name—or people who exist to nurture the relationship between people of whatever age and the arts in their area. That would be worth the investment—far more so than any kind of cultural entitlement. The result will be the same in the end, but it will come with the notion of quality attached, rather than quantity.

**Fiona Rogan:** It goes with the remit. One of the problems was that the cultural co-ordinators scheme was about cultural co-ordinators in schools. They were often housed within education departments and their job was to enhance the school-based curriculum. Voluntary Arts Scotland had very little contact with them. There were one or two shining beacons but, generally speaking, they did not see that kind of contact as being within their remit.

The one-off visit might trigger an enthusiasm or inspire, but there has to be something after the visitor has gone. That can happen in the voluntary sector. One of my concerns is that if, for example, the National Theatre of Scotland goes to a school and works with the children and the children are enthused and think, "This is wonderful; I want this," the National Theatre of Scotland moves on and the children are left with the local amateur dramatic society. They might go along and think that it is not very good, as I did when I went to Paisley Players and thought that I wanted something better.

The point is that I knew that I wanted it. My mantra for 30 years has been that if you have never had it, how do you know you want it? You trigger the enthusiasm for someone to think, "There's something here that I quite fancy getting involved in." There must also be the local volunteer effort. I moved around until someone told me that another amateur group was better. I went there, then moved on to more professionally led work.

What was going wrong with cultural co-ordinators was that they did not know what the local opportunities in the non-professional sector were. Perhaps there should be a look at the whole arts scene, not just a focus on schools or bringing TAG in once a year, for example. There should be a move to an holistic approach. That has been missing so far.

**Aileen Campbell:** I do not know whether it will help with trout fishing, but there is a good book called "Salmon Fishing in the Yemen" that I can heartily recommend.

Amanda Barry talked about Scottish writers and the relationship with and access to the publishing sector. How vibrant is that sector in Scotland? We have recently heard about Penguin's decision to

lose its presence in Edinburgh and start commissioning Scottish writers from its base in London. What are the implications for Scottish writers if more and more of them decide to get commissioned from London? Are you confident that they will be nurtured in the same way as they would be if they were looked after in Scotland?

**Amanda Barry:** Publishing is not my area of expertise, but I will try to answer your questions. First, the general view is that because there is a concentration of publishers in London, any writer will aspire to be published there. That would happen with all Scottish writers were it not for the fact that we have a great group of small independent Scottish publishers who are creative in what they do in Scotland. If they did not exist, their writers would, of course, go to London.

Secondly, Scottish writers may go to London publishers, but the publishers might not publish them because they do not understand their work. In the case of work about Scottish history or politics—work that is specific to the place that it comes from and is created in—the small independent Scottish publishers understand it and know where it is coming from. They can therefore make much better judgments about whether to publish a particular writer. They can nurture talent and guide it in the right direction. A writer may eventually leave the small Scottish publisher and go elsewhere—some obviously do to earn a living—but we need the bedrock of creativity in the first place to get Scottish writers started on that journey.

I am afraid that I do not know enough about the Penguin situation to comment on it, but I think that the small independent Scottish publishers are the gateway for Scottish writers to get their work out into the world.

**Robert Livingston:** In the past two years, two new independent publishers have opened up in the Highlands and Islands with substantial book lists. HIE recognised that growth and funded our writing co-ordinator to go out to Tokyo book fair last year for a first venture, with a catalogue that included more than 100 newly published books from, or about, the Highlands. The publishers exist, so we need to provide the support to make the kind of links that give them access to the international markets that will make them viable in the longer term.

**Rob Gibson:** Funding is central to the way in which the arts develop at every level of performance and involvement. We have limited funds because of the circumstances we face, so unfortunate decisions might have to be taken. Should the Scottish Government support arts organisations through core funding? Do you think that the main sources of funding on which organisations rely should be more diverse than that? Do you think that the voluntary, the local and the education sectors have an important role to play in maintaining a high level of state support for the arts?

**Robert Livingston:** Recently, many funds have made it more and more difficult for people to apply for funding for posts yet, fundamentally, people are critical to achieving the vibrancy and leadership to which Seona Reid referred—that has been reflected in many of the comments today. There is a point beyond which support can come only through state funding, whether national, regional or local.

In the Highlands and Islands, the issue is maximised because of the issues of distance from the centre, small populations and scale. Our screen machine mobile cinema has one of the best seat occupancy ratios of any cinema in Scotland, despite the size of the communities that it goes to, and we have a major sponsor. We cannot get any more income, but we still cover only 50 per cent of the costs. We have a stark choice—either the service is subsidised or it is not and the 25 communities that it visits will be without good quality cinema. In a country with the geography and demography of Scotland, I cannot envisage a substantial amount of state funding not being crucial.

**Seona Reid:** I agree totally—core funding is essential. As the representatives of the national companies said, there is a link between the level of core funding and the level of access. We want to have a symphony orchestra, an opera company and a theatre in every area but, unfortunately, that is not commercially viable in the sense that, without an element of subsidy, they cannot be delivered with ticket prices that enable people to come and enjoy them. There is no hard and fast rule. I struggled for nine years at the Scottish Arts Council to try to find the holy grail—a balance between supporting individual artists and supporting the national companies. There is no holy grail—we just have to manage the fact that everybody will make demands.

We cannot have national companies unless we nurture musicians and we cannot have musicians unless we have an education system that develops them and we cannot have that unless that system sees the value of culture. The value of culture must be presented to the nation first and foremost through its Government, which must make a statement about the value of culture to the nation's standing and quality of life and then support that statement in some way. Does that mean lots more public funding? Of course, all of us would say that that would be fantastic but, realistically, it is probably not going to happen. So, in the absence of lots more public funding, we need to consider what other services the public

sector can provide for artists and arts organisations. A range of services can be provided. Indeed, many local authorities provide such services, such as low-cost rented accommodation, business and organisational support and web support.

Public subsidy is core to the arts, which is what separates the arts from other businesses. That subsidy must continue if we want a vibrant and healthy cultural sector. However, we should not consider the subsidy in isolation and without considering other ways in which local authorities, the Government and education establishments can support the arts.

**Fiona Rogan:** Support should not be an either/or issue. Different approaches are needed for different parts of the sector. For example, as I said, for the voluntary arts, infrastructure bodies are crucial because voluntary arts organisations do not have staff. A theatre company might have five or six paid staff who can rally round to deal with new legislation, but voluntary sector organisations do not have that, which is why the umbrella bodies are crucial.

The Scottish Community Drama Association has 28 committees made up of 400 volunteers, with one photocopier and three personal computers in Edinburgh to serve them. The volunteers come together to meet and use the office. We have just produced 3,000 leaflets for local committees to put on seats because nobody has a photocopier and most of our people do not have e-mail. Fairly modest central core funding has an incredible ripple effect out to the grass-roots people but, because those people are not very visible, the effect is hard to see. Local authorities will not fund the association to support those people because we are a national organisation that is not based in local authority areas. That is the sort of support we need, but it is maybe not the answer for other parts of the sector. We need different solutions for different parts of the sector.

12:45

**Rob Gibson:** Obviously, many issues arise from that, but I am conscious that other members want to ask questions.

As Seona Reid is here, I want to ask about the art school's ceramics course, which seems to be in question. Obviously, fashions change as there is now less competition for places on the ceramic design course. Is that perhaps an effect of changes in schooling or the display of ceramics in our museums? Can Seona Reid perhaps give us a flavour of that without entering the controversy that the school must face up to in cash terms? It seems to me that the ceramics course is a rather interesting example. I have a slight interest in the matter because my uncle was a studio potter and I know a bit about the difficulties that face particular bits of the arts.

**Seona Reid:** I can make some comments, but the proposal is currently going through our academic committees so I can talk about it only as a proposal.

Over the past five years, applications for such courses not just at Glasgow School of Art but at colleges nationwide have fallen significantly—by about a third. That inevitably means that the applicants to entrants ratio, which maintains a course's competitiveness and, in turn, its quality, has diminished. The risk is actually an academic risk as much as a financial risk.

Is that something to do with schools? Yes, I am sure that it is to do with education. There is less making in education than there was. Ceramics is fundamentally a making discipline. On whether ceramics are less visible in museums and galleries, I am not aware of any significant change in the popularity or otherwise of ceramics in the public sphere. I am not in a position to comment on that.

**Rob Gibson:** The issue opens up a lot of questions that I do not have time to ask. However, thank you for that.

**Elizabeth Smith:** I have one quick question. Mr Livingston has done a fantastic job in developing the artistic world in the Highlands and Islands. Does HI-Arts have a productive relationship with local businesses? Are there barriers to people getting involved in helping and supporting such developments?

**Robert Livingston:** There have been some good examples, but the issue is problematic because many of the main businesses in the area are national or multinational companies, whose decisions on sponsorship are taken at a national or international level. As was said already, sponsorship is a commercial arrangement, but the returns that are possible from an event or activity in the Highlands and Islands often do not register on the radar of the publicity and marketing teams in those organisations. Things often work best at the most local level, where a local organisation can form a link with a local company that can gain some benefit from sponsorship.

Further to the earlier discussion, sponsorship has always been tough in the Highlands and Islands. For some years, we worked closely with Arts & Business to try to build up a board bank and other kinds of voluntary involvement of businesses. However, for the reasons that I have given, that proved very difficult. We were leaping from multinationals, which already felt that they were contributing to the arts at a London or Edinburgh level, to very small companies that

simply did not have the people or the time to spare for participating in events.

**Mary Mulligan:** In the evidence session today, we have heard much about social inclusion. Without repeating what has been said, do people want to mention anything else about what they are doing that they feel is important in making social inclusion a reality?

**Seona Reid:** From the art school perspective, all the higher education institutions in Scotland are trying hard to find ways of breaking the pattern of those who go into higher education. Despite the huge increase in the number of students who are entering higher education, the socioeconomic profile of those students has not changed significantly.

In our area, through schemes such as artists and designers in education, portfolio clinics and a range of workshops that are being delivered throughout the west of Scotland, which are sponsored by a legal firm, we are trying to raise aspirations and enable pupils to recognise that it is possible to have a career in architecture, design or the fine arts. One of the most successful schemes has been artists and designers in education, which involves students going into schools and running projects. A direct link is created in the pupils' minds between themselves and the students who run the projects, and they can see themselves in the role of students. That is lovely, and it is great for the students as well.

**Amanda Barry:** At the book festival, we have been working with different organisations to get out into the communities and bring people into the book festival to experience the festival in its totality, instead of taking an event out into the community, which might be just an author sitting in a draughty library or whatever. We have been working with organisations such as Young Scot and CLAN—city literacy and numeracy—Edinburgh trying to reach the people whom they deal with and providing different types of information, on which they advise us.

Also, before we start programming, we say what we are going to do in this year's programme, which might involve setting up an event or series of events especially for emergent readers, for instance. We will look at the on-site facilities to ensure that the experience of the event is not too daunting for them. For example, we might set up the event differently. Rather than setting up a black, empty stage with two chairs on it in front of a big bank of people and expecting them to feel comfortable although they have perhaps not been in that situation before, we might make the event a bit more informal and hold it in a slightly smaller venue. We have been doing that for the past few years with some success, and we will carry on working on that. However, it tends to be the case that the groups of people that we bring through the door in that way are small—they are building blocks—and that we are not able to claim, "We have brought in 23,000 of these types of people." We try to encourage them to come back again and, eventually, to look on the book festival as something that they would go to with their friends and families.

**Robert Livingston:** Much of the work that we have done in the contemporary music sector and with other bodies such as the fèisean movement in traditional Gaelic music has helped hugely with young people who are not academically successful but who find through their music another type of skill and intelligence. However, as I have said, in the Highlands we are heavily reliant on voluntary groups such as those that Fiona Rogan has described. Few of the professional organisations have core funding, so they often have to survive from project to project. We are trying to find ways in which we can help them to address social inclusion issues, building on the audience development programmes that we have been running with them, raising awareness and backing that work up with resources to a further level. With the resources that they have at present, it is difficult for them to be proactive in that area.

**Fiona Rogan:** Voluntary Arts Scotland covers a wide profile of people. People from ethnic minority backgrounds tend to be involved at the voluntary level, and many groups have come to Voluntary Arts Scotland asking how to set up a group in a Scottish context. For example, the Holy Cow performing arts group was a collection of Indian graduates who had got together at university. They came from all parts of India and discovered an amazing difference in the kind of theatre that they produced. They were working under two-year fresh talent initiative visas and were not interested in becoming professional actors, although some were of a professional standard. They had no knowledge of Scotland's amateur dramatic society tradition, so Voluntary Arts Scotland sent them to me at the SCDA and we showed them how to write a constitution, get a bank account and start a group. Some of the local voluntary groups then helped them with things such as finding rehearsal premises and putting on their first show.

That is just one example—about six groups from black and minority ethnic communities have come to us via Voluntary Arts Scotland. In fact, the Arts Council has flagged them up to us, and we found them mentors. We are starting a buddy scheme, so that well-established groups can teach other groups. That is what happens naturally in the voluntary arts sector—people learn from one another. There is a tradition of musicians sitting in the pub afterwards showing one another different fingering techniques and so on—a similar thing

happens across all the art forms. We are used to doing that, but the beauty of organisations such as Voluntary Arts Scotland is that we know where people are and who they are, so we can signpost help for people. Some of those individuals move into the sector. A professional actress came to the one-act play festival—the event on Friday is looming large—because she is looking for actors for a professional film that she is making. The networks help to facilitate such synergies.

**Christina McKelvie:** We have heard many comments this morning about the challenges that all your organisations currently face. Could you tell us a wee bit about the future? What challenges will you face as organisations and in your area of activity over the next five years?

**Robert Livingston:** I have reached the age where I now worry greatly about memory in the arts. I had the good fortune—though it sometimes did not feel like it at the time—to work in the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow in the early 1980s. It nearly killed some of us who worked there, but we did what we did without using any of the current jargon on inclusion, equalities and outreach work because the people at the top of it believed that that was what should be done.

In the Highlands and Islands, through the activities of our agency and many others, we have reached a plateau. I worry that, in the next five years, what it has taken to get there is forgotten and lost so, rather than moving from that plateau to a higher plateau, we slip back down the other side. My concern is to maintain and nurture what we have got and move on from there. We should remember the investment and effort that it took, on the part of all kinds of organisations, to get to where we are.

**Amanda Barry:** The book festival has been enjoying a huge amount of success in the past few years. The challenges that face us are fantastic in one sense. We are based in one site in Charlotte Square gardens and are at capacity in all senses of the word. We have got about as many events and venues as we can get in there.

We are successful in terms of audience numbers—we are at about 80 per cent capacity on average. We would probably be failing if we sold out completely across the board, because we programme some quite obscure events and obscure writers, which should be and are challenging, so we do not expect to sell out every event. We are at the stage of thinking where we go from here. The gardens are one of the key features that make the book festival unique. Should we move or expand? Should we extend the period of the festival? All those questions come up, and they all have different implications. Our main focus now and going forward is to look outwith the book festival in isolation and consider the different things that we can achieve together with Festivals Edinburgh, which is the organisation that represents the joint Edinburgh festivals, and the literature forum, which consists of all the literature sector organisations.

13:00

**Fiona Rogan:** A challenge for us is getting funding to be rather than funding to do. We need to be able to respond to our members' needs. Obviously, it is good to be able to submit proposals to deliver projects that will meet the strategic aims of the Scottish Arts Council or creative Scotland, but we also need to be able to deliver things that will meet our strategic aims and the needs and aspirations of our members. There must be room for that. I sometimes worry that everything is becoming instrumental, and that it is being said, "Here's a shopping list of things that we want delivered. Can you deliver any of these?"

I also worry about short-termism. Our turnover of volunteers is quite high. People come and go, so we have to keep repeating things. For example, we can get money for child protection training once, but perhaps such training is needed every three years to ensure that our committees are continually educated. Therefore, we should not get money for such training only once and tick a box. The issue is how we can support volunteers in the long term to do what they do well and how we can focus on responding to their needs and wants.

**Seona Reid**: Obviously, I come at the issue from a different angle. One of our many challenges is to know what skills graduates will need in the future. We are in an extraordinarily rapidly changing environment. Ten or 15 years ago, it might have been possible to track the career route of an architect or designer or even a fine artist, although doing so for the latter is always much more difficult. Now, the general view is that a person will have six careers—not six jobs—in their lifetime before they retire, if they do retire. What should somebody be taught to equip them for an adult life that might change so radically? We are increasingly moving towards trying to find ways of embedding curiosity, adaptive capacity and a range of soft skills. Everybody will work in very complex environments with complex teams of people from other sectors. A fine artist who works in the public sector might work with an engineer, a planner or a community group. Developing people's ability not just to make great art but to negotiate great art in an increasingly complex world is among our biggest challenges.

**Ken Macintosh:** I am conscious that this has been a long session for our guests, whom I thank for their evidence.

I was pleased and encouraged by the evidence that the previous panel gave. They described where they are now as a very happy place to be compared with where they were eight years ago. However, perhaps I am even more enthused by the challenges facing creative Scotland and cultural Scotland that you have described, and by the passion with which you clearly approach your task.

You have already answered some of my questions. I say to Mr Livingston that I am a big fan of HI-Arts and that I have been envious of it for many years, because we do not have a similar organisation in my area—there is a different structure in the central belt. I hope that you will let the committee know if creative Scotland does not replace your current funding streams, as it would be terrible to lose what you have achieved over the years.

I have a question about the Edinburgh festivals and how we fund organisations, which I invite Ms Barry to answer first. The national companies know their funding three years in advance. The book festival receives very little public subsidy, which is encouraging, but every year, it is not known until weeks before the Edinburgh festival and other festivals begin what their final budgets will be, which is a bizarre situation. That approach seems to be reflected throughout the sector. Despite the fact that in most years budgets are roughly what people think they will be, with a little tweaking around the edges, uncertainty is built into the system. Is there something that we can do in addition to considering funding for the Edinburgh festival? Can we do something about funding of the sector more generally to give stability and continuity and to remove some of the anxiety that exists and the constant searching for funding that small companies are engaged in?

**Amanda Barry:** The book festival has foundation funding from the Scottish Arts Council and I believe that that situation will continue with creative Scotland. We are lucky that we know roughly what we will receive and what our budget is. I cannot speak for the other Edinburgh festivals but, collectively, we believe that we are of national importance. We bring in a lot of money and tourism and provide lots of benefits. I do not know why other festivals do not know their budgets until late and do not know exactly what funding they will receive. The cost of putting on a production at the Edinburgh international festival is certainly hugely more than that of one book festival event.

On how that can be changed, as with foundation funding, a way must be found to discuss longer-term funding and allow people to know early on what money they will receive. That might be flexible in that there could be a bit more, but an organisation would be guaranteed money for X years, which could be renegotiated, examined, measured and evaluated over that period. Measurement is changing, anyway—it is not just about the number of audience members or schoolchildren who are involved; it involves an intangible other that concerns quality and experience. I do not know how that will be measured; thinking about all those things is an exciting bit of what is happening now.

**Seona Reid:** I do not know whether the committee has read the Brian McMaster report about supporting excellence, which was commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and was published last month. He proposes that some organisations should receive 10-year funding to allow them to aspire, develop and take risks in ways that one-year funding does not allow.

Anybody who is in an organisation would say that longer-term funding would benefit them, provided that it was inflation protected. However, I am representing today not only the visual arts sector but individual artists' views. One of Scotland's enormous strengths in funding since the Scottish Arts Council began has been its support for individual artists. That is why Scotland is pre-eminent in literature and the visual arts. Glasgow is now considered to be the centre for the visual arts in Europe, practically, and certainly in the UK, because individual artists have been supported over the piece.

Enough money has always been carved out and safeguarded for individual artists. We must be careful to avoid the danger of having a funding system that, because it tries to protect organisations' funding from the effects of inflation, greatly reduces the money that is available for smaller projects and individual artists. Such a system would do us a great disservice. That involves another of the awful balancing acts that any funding body must consider. There is no holy grail—that is just a difficult issue. However, we must at all costs protect funding for individual artists and new and emergent work that is inevitably unplanned and unexpected and which must to an extent be opportunistic in obtaining support.

**Robert Livingston:** I thank Kenneth Macintosh for his kind words about HI-Arts. I agree absolutely with Seona Reid because part of our role is to nurture artists.

We, too, are a foundation client of the Arts Council. When we became that after a long, taxing and complex application and assessment process, we all felt that the assessment would perhaps lighten a little. It has not. The burden of assessment is heavier than it was before we became a foundation client—you win some, you lose some.

Over the past eight years, we have been fortunate to have a production fund for theatre companies in the Highlands that was jointly funded by HIE and the SAC. However, each year, we have known only that year whether we would have the fund at all, let alone how much money there would be from the SAC for it. This year, it looks as if we are not going to get it, but we are finding that out only some six weeks before the new financial year begins. The theatre companies that I am talking about have no core funding; they rely on projects to remain alive. It would be hugely beneficial to have more secure, longer-term support for such developmental areas.

**Fiona Rogan:** The voluntary arts bodies are currently being considered for flexible funding. Our posts end at the end of March and we have not yet had an application form for 2008-09, although we have submitted an application for 2009 to 2011. We have been funded year on year. Voluntary Arts Scotland and the Scottish Community Drama Association were originally core funded but lost that status so, for the past three years, we have been applying every year. There has been a different set of criteria every year; the goalposts have kept shifting.

Three-year funding is essential, although I would not say that 10-year funding necessarily is. Organisations can do good work and bad work, and flexibility is necessary. I agree with Seona Reid that we need to have spare capacity to react to new things as they emerge. Organisations go downhill and, sometimes, they should go. We should not be afraid to cut as well; I have seen organisations that enjoyed core funding for years but really should not have done. I am not averse to the axe being wielded from time to time, but any organisation needs three-year funding to be able to plan and deliver a programme of work.

**The Convener:** That concludes our questions to you. Thank you very much for attending the committee.

The meeting will be suspended briefly to allow our witnesses to leave and allow the committee to move on to the second item on its agenda.

13:12

*Meeting suspended.*

13:13

*On resuming—*

# Petition

## PE1022 (Foreign Languages Policy)

**The Convener:** The second item on the agenda is consideration of petition PE1022, on the promotion of foreign language learning and intercultural awareness in Scotland's schools, colleges and universities. The petition has been referred to us by the Public Petitions Committee.

As committee members will be aware, the Public Petitions Committee has already done quite a lot of work on the petition. Copies of the relevant correspondence have been included in the committee papers. Members will see that the cover note provides three possible options for how to proceed with our consideration of the petition. I ask members to comment on the petition.

**Elizabeth Smith:** I am happy to support option 3, because some important recommendations might come out of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council's report on modern languages provision. I add a caveat to that: it is important to see languages in the context of the entire curriculum, and the more evidence we get on other subject areas the better.

13:15

**Jeremy Purvis:** I agree.

**Ken Macintosh:** I also agree with option 3, which is that we keep the petition open until the publication of the funding council's report. We could also write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning in the meantime. I think that most committee members agree that we do not want to interfere—if that is the right word—in the curriculum directly.

Languages are in a vulnerable state in Scotland. We should take the opportunity to send out a strong message about the importance of learning languages in modern Scotland. We have worked to promote our own indigenous languages, and we have also talked about the importance of protecting classics in the curriculum. For the economy and culture of our country, and to be sure that we are an educated society, we must promote language learning.

I am not sure what the solution is, but I do not think that we want to return to compulsory language teaching, because that killed much interest in learning languages. I do not want to make too political a point, but one of Labour's commitments was to a supply-led measure for training more language teachers in Scotland.

When we write to the cabinet secretary we should ask how the Scottish Government intends to proceed. Being prescriptive on the curriculum is not the job of Government, but we should ask how the learning of modern languages can be promoted. The issue is too important for us to opt out of it. While we await the funding council's report, I do not want us to send out any message other than that language learning is of primary importance.

**Aileen Campbell:** I concur. It is correct to discount the first option in our paper. Ken Macintosh makes a good point about ensuring that we couch our views in terms of recent announcements on the teaching of Scots and possibly Gaelic. We live in a country in which many languages other than the standard French and German are spoken. This is a good time to examine the situation, and a combination of options 2 and 3 would be a good way of doing that.

**Rob Gibson:** I am concerned, because the petition refers to "foreign language" policy in Scotland. From an educational point of view, people gain from being able to speak more than one language, no matter what their other languages are. Speaking a language opens doors that allow people to understand issues from different points of view, and people learn languages for lots of different reasons—for example, work, pleasure and travel.

The issue is so complicated that we should be careful about what we ask the cabinet secretary. As with many sectors of education, we need to provide more input, but I hope that we will do so after having worked out a philosophy that the Parliament can believe in.

We can learn from other countries. The ulpan system—based on a method first used in the teaching of Hebrew—is now used in many countries to help students gain fluency. The system is used in Wales for the teaching of Welsh, and I could mention many other countries. Gaels are now starting to use the system. However, our school classrooms are not using such a system. We really need to discover interesting ways of giving people a chance to acquire other languages.

The debate has to be skewed towards the approach that we adopt. Our letter to the cabinet secretary should mention the acquisition of various languages. Later, we can discuss how to proceed. If people are saying that everyone should learn the biggest language, then we should all be learning Chinese, but that is not the issue; the issue is about helping people to speak several languages and to use all the skills that learning languages can bring out. I am not talking about English. We should be doing Chinese from primary 1—although I do not think that we would agree about that.

**The Convener:** The consensus appears to be that we should go with option 3 on our paper but that we should also write to the cabinet secretary beforehand.

Liz Smith made a valid point. Although we all agree on the importance of foreign language learning, we have to consider it in the wider context of the curriculum for excellence. I am sure that scientists and others could present similar arguments to those made in favour of foreign languages.

We will draft a letter to the cabinet secretary so that we can hear her initial comments. Further consideration of the curriculum for excellence will be in our future work programme.

*Meeting closed at 13:21.*

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