

# **ENTERPRISE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 13 February 2007

Session 2

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# CONTENTS

Tuesday 13 February 2007

Col.

CREATIVE SCOTLAND.....	3645
TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION (MEETING) .....	3661
LEGACY PAPER.....	3665
BUSINESS IN THE PARLIAMENT CONFERENCE .....	3669

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## ENTERPRISE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

### 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2007, Session 2

#### CONVENER

\*Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### DEPUTY CONVENER

\*Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab)

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green)

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab)

\*Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)

\*Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

\*Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)

\*Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP)

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

#### COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

\*Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green)

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD)

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP)

Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)

\*attended

#### THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Patricia Ferguson (Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport)

#### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Stephen Imrie

#### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Douglas Thornton

#### ASSISTANT CLERK

Nick Hawthorne

#### LOCATION

Committee Room 2



## Scottish Parliament

### Enterprise and Culture Committee

*Tuesday 13 February 2007*

[THE CONVENER opened the meeting at 14:02]

### Creative Scotland

**The Convener (Alex Neil):** Welcome to the fourth meeting in 2007 of the Enterprise and Culture Committee. I have received apologies from Richard Baker and Shiona Baird—I welcome Shiona's committee substitute, Mark Ballard. Susan Deacon will join us shortly.

**Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab):** Karen Gillon will also be late—she had to attend to a constituency matter at lunch time.

**The Convener:** Okay. I ask everyone to switch off their mobile phones.

I welcome Patricia Ferguson, the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, and invite her to introduce her officials and kick off the discussion.

**The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson):** I am joined by Greig Chalmers, from the Education Department, and Greg Allan, from the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department.

I am grateful to the committee for its invitation to speak about what creative Scotland will mean for culture in Scotland and about the creative industries. It is important to say that we are not proposing the establishment of a new body because we want to solve a particular problem or address a failure. Scotland has a vibrant and colourful culture, which is a feature of a successful nation. I pay tribute to the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen, which have played a commendable part in contributing to that success.

We are proposing the establishment of a new body because we want to bring even more energy and ambition to the stimulation of creative and cultural endeavour. Creative Scotland will be Scotland's new national cultural development body and will have an exciting and challenging remit to support and develop artists, cultural and creative talent and excellence. As members know, we are encouraging closer joint working between the Scottish Arts Council, Scottish Screen and all cultural bodies. I have appointed a joint board under the leadership of Richard Holloway, which I think had its first meeting last week.

Last year, in the document "Scotland's Culture", we considered how best to stimulate the creative

industries. We all have an interest in the issue and want to make progress, but it is important that we do not underestimate the complexity of what we are dealing with. The creative industries are made up of diverse enterprises, which have some things in common with the rest of the economy but which also have special and distinct features. The important point is that the creative industries are a successful and expanding part of the Scottish economy.

As members have heard, support is given to the creative industries through a wide range of efforts on the part of the public sector in Scotland. Support comes from a number of organisations, such as the Scottish Arts Council, Scottish Screen, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Cultural Enterprise Office. Other organisations have important roles and we must acknowledge the significant progress and successes that have been achieved.

Last year, in the course of discussions, I realised that businesses and entrepreneurs want a simple and straightforward mechanism for accessing business support. We can deliver that—much support is given in the current set-up, but we need to consider how we improve the situation. I am committed to working with the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning to consider how better advice and assistance can be delivered, in a more straightforward way. Like me, he wants to ensure that our economic development policies concentrate on the areas and industries that bring the most benefit to people in Scotland and our economy, which sometimes means that we must make hard choices about priorities.

We will not make changes just for the sake of it or just to make the situation look tidier on paper. What matters is the success of what we do to help businesses and what businesses achieve. Executive departments are working closely together to gather and assess the evidence that will help us to make the right decision. The issues are complex. The creative industries are disparate and diverse, as I said. Needs vary and innovative solutions to problems are often needed. After we have reached our conclusion, a number of bodies might still be involved in delivery. I welcome the opportunity to discuss and reflect on those complex issues with the committee.

**The Convener:** When the draft Culture (Scotland) Bill was published, the degree of ministerial intervention and direction that will be allowed was a major concern. During the committee's recent round-table discussion, a number of witnesses, including James Boyle, expressed concern about political direction of creative Scotland. What are your intentions in that regard? Of course, after the election there might be a new Administration—who knows?

**Patricia Ferguson:** We are talking about a ministerial power of direction, which would not necessarily be used. That is important. We are talking about a significant chunk of public money, and such powers are a mechanism that we use as a backstop whenever a new public body is set up, to ensure that public money is properly protected, in case there are difficulties further down the line.

Neither I nor my predecessor ministers have ever interfered with the artistic judgments of the Scottish Arts Council or Scottish Screen. We should not interfere with those, and I certainly do not want to do so in the foreseeable future. I hope that that reassures committee members.

**The Convener:** Will you specify the circumstances in which a minister can give direction in a way that allays the fears of people who worry that the state will interfere in the running of the arts?

**Patricia Ferguson:** I assure anyone who inherits the job that the last thing that they will want is to have such day-to-day involvement or to become involved in artistic decisions. We would have to be careful if we tried to specify circumstances, because we might do so in a way that meant that we had ruled out intervening in a circumstance that we cannot foresee. The bill is the subject of consultation, so we hope that some useful ideas will be fed back that we can use. We are considering the form of words that we could use to describe the position better.

**The Convener:** Other members want to ask about the issue, so I will bring in Christine May, Jamie Stone and Mark Ballard, after which I will return to the minister to discuss wider issues.

**Christine May:** Good afternoon, minister and gentlemen. I would like the minister or her officials to comment on three issues that arose from our round-table discussion. One was the issue of being commercial versus art for art's sake. I simplify, but will you address the tension that will always exist because what is commercially viable might not necessarily be what someone wants to do artistically if we are talking about pure art?

The round-table discussion showed that the industry was to an extent all over the place on what it sees as the priorities. Will you talk a little about how you have tried to tease out the common priorities rather than specific significant issues for elements of the arts? The minister's role was perhaps the one matter on which all the witnesses agreed. I concur that clarity is needed on that.

The final matters are standards, excellence, service to communities not just in cities, but in other areas, and skills development.

**Patricia Ferguson:** That tranche of questions was broad. Some of my comments may overlap

and, if I am honest, I want them to overlap. Guiding everything that we are trying to do is the idea of increased access for as many people as possible to the best that Scottish creativity and Scottish culture have to offer our citizens.

Some pieces of art are more commercial than others and some cultural endeavours are more commercial than others. Considering that is tricky. In trying to define a creative industry, we get into that debate. That is one reason why I do not think that ministers should be involved in making artistic decisions. It is not my job to do that. The Government's job is to put in place a framework—an infrastructure—that helps everything else to flourish, and to stand well back to let that happen. That is the approach that we have taken.

In "Scotland's Culture", I referred to the escalator model. I will digress slightly. It is interesting that I deal with a similar issue in sport, in which we refer to the player pathway, which represents the same concept of involving as many people as possible at the bottom and allowing them a mechanism that supports them through to the top, if that is where their skill, talent and ambition take them. Stepping-off posts are allowed on the way so that people have the opportunity just to enjoy the arts for their own sake as spectators or as participants, but they can take that further if they are able to. Such ideas underpin what we are trying to do.

That is important when we consider the skills agenda, which comes into play when we examine the commercial side of the business, because people want to have an identifiable and marketable skill and trade. I return to the question about the commercial side versus art for art's sake. Some overlap must exist, because if we do not have the artistic content, the skills will not be wanted.

The two things come together neatly. By way of example, I draw to the committee's attention screen academy Scotland at Napier University in Edinburgh, which, by sheer coincidence, I visited this morning. The academy provides masters courses in subjects that we might describe as artistic endeavours but which are tied to the mechanics of producing a film, such as screenwriting or composing film music. However, these days, producing a film goes beyond such mechanics and enters into new technology and new media.

We must make the connection across the different areas and sectors and we must be able to support that connection. At the moment, we are discussing how best it can be supported. That is a slightly broad answer to your question, but it helps to underpin where we are coming from.

14:15

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I agree with the minister and support her in her endeavours. She mentioned the interface with enterprise—one of the officials with her is from the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department. This should not be the case but, unfortunately, some people might have the impression at first sight that nothing that we are discussing today impacts hugely on their working lives, although I do not believe that or agree with it.

I will get specific about my constituency, as ever. In Caithness, we face the rundown of Dounreay. We have socioeconomic studies on the area, but what can the minister say to me about how her endeavours—in particular, the interface with enterprise—could help people who are desperately worried about losing their jobs? Perhaps that question is for her officials rather than for her.

**Patricia Ferguson:** The debate was sparked off by the First Minister in his St Andrew's day speech, and I have been concerned to ensure that people understand that culture is not just something that they do when they go to the theatre, but that it must be embedded into their lives and the life of their communities. That is the reason for our entitlements agenda. When we talk to local authorities about that agenda, we also tell them that we want to see evidence of the ways in which they are using culture to achieve other ends and ambitions.

We are also trying to set an example on that in the Executive. For instance, the regeneration policy statement that the previous Minister for Communities published makes specific mention of the role of culture in regeneration, because we know that it can have a major effect. There are examples of that throughout the country. Culture is important because it gives communities confidence about themselves, what they can do and what they can achieve. Having a cultural hinterland in a community also makes it a place where people want to live.

Let us take Dundee as an example. Fifteen or 20 years ago, the local authority, with support from bodies such as the Scottish Arts Council, took a brave decision to focus on the arts in the city. It is no coincidence that, today, Dundee is thriving in a way that it was not previously, albeit that there were some glitches along the way. That success is due to not only the fact that Dundee has state-of-the-art facilities for people who want to work in bioscience, but the fact that people want to go there because they know that they and their children can enjoy everything that the city has to offer, be that the historic environment or the cultural environment.

Culture has a lot to offer communities, but we sometimes have to work hard to get it right.

**Mr Stone:** I agree. I can see with my own eyes what has happened in Dundee, but the northern Highlands are different. Can I take it as a given that your department and officials apply a litmus test to what enterprise agencies and socioeconomic forums say and do to ensure that you have an input and are co-ordinating with them?

**Patricia Ferguson:** Yes. We are using our national collections, our national performing companies and others to try to ensure that standards exist for local provision for which people must aim and which they must achieve. If those collections and companies are to live up their names and reputations, they must be the very best that we have. That work is about access and excellence.

Places such as Caithness fit into the mould of an area in which the small creative industries can be very important—these opportunities work in our smaller-scale communities. For example, the impact of a small jewellery or silversmithing business that may employ only two or three people is felt much more in an area such as Caithness than may be the case in an area such as the one that I represent in Glasgow. We must never underestimate the opportunities or shy away from trying to promote them.

**Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green):** As a substitute member, I was not present at the round-table discussion. On reading the summary paper and the *Official Report* of the meeting, I was struck by a number of things, some of which Alex Neil and Christine May have mentioned.

I turn first to ministerial involvement. In that context, I note the remark made by Professor John Wallace of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama that

“we need to slacken off ministerial control at every level.”—*[Official Report, Enterprise and Culture Committee, 23 January 2007; c 3612.]*

What he said takes us back to the points that have been made about what is in the draft bill on the creation of the new body.

As you said, minister, the mechanism is used with all new bodies, but not with existing bodies such as the Scottish Arts Council, given that the mechanism was not in existence when they were established. You argue that it is important for the power of ministerial direction to be included in the bill in case there are difficulties. However, you also said clearly—indeed, you welcomed the point—that ministers should not be involved in artistic decisions. Again, in response to Alex Neil, you said that it was very difficult to draw up, either on the face of the bill or elsewhere, restrictions on when such powers could and could not be used.

Obviously, the danger is that a minister with less benign intent could use the power as drafted to get involved in artistic decisions. From what you said, there is nothing to prevent a minister with less benign intent from doing that. The 7:84 Theatre Company is an example of a theatre company that felt that part of the reason for its funding difficulties was what it perceived to be a political question mark over the politics of its material. I say that without knowing what happens at Scottish Arts Council meetings. The decision on 7:84 shows the importance of making it very clear that there is no political involvement and therefore no possibility of political decision making. I am talking about not only what is done but what is seen to be done. In that light, is there not still a danger that the powers that are of concern to the artistic community could be misused?

**Patricia Ferguson:** There are a number of things to say in response to the question. It would be a very unwise minister who would get involved in artistic decisions. Frankly, it would be foolish for a minister to get involved in such issues. It is fair to point out that, at the moment, I have certain powers with regard to both the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen. Given that next year those two bodies will between them spend something like £68 million of public money, I think that those powers are entirely legitimate.

I think that the Parliament would be concerned if we did not have a mechanism by which we could ensure that organisations spend their money wisely. That needs to be controlled in the sense that we need to make sure that the books are in order. That is the sort of mechanism that we are looking to put in place. Under the involvement that I have at the moment, I grant money, after which I send a letter in which I outline the strategic guidance. That will continue, but it may be put on the face of the bill.

You raised the issue of 7:84. The decision was made entirely by the Scottish Arts Council and was the result of a new system of vetting and considering applications. What is interesting about all that is that 7:84 appealed the decision and was able to come through what seems to me to be a fairly robust appeals process. The company came out the other end with a bit more than it had gone in with at the beginning. That is a very robust way of dealing with an issue.

An organisation that receives funding from the Scottish Arts Council or its successor body must be very good and must have satisfied the grant-giving organisation that it can be relied on to do what it promised to do—such decisions must be left to the grant-giving organisation. Like everyone, I read the newspapers with interest, but being a bystander would be the extent of my involvement in such matters. That is how it should be. The SAC

is much closer to the artistic community than I am, so it can discuss and explain much better than I can the rationale behind decisions. The Government's job is to establish the framework and infrastructure and then, I hope, to stand back and allow culture and creativity to flourish in Scotland.

**Mark Ballard:** You said that the letter that you would send to the SAC or creative Scotland would set out not just the amount of grant but strategic objectives. The draft bill says that a function of creative Scotland would be to realise the value and benefits of the arts and culture,

“in particular, the economic value and benefits”.

What is the rationale for giving particular status to economic factors, rather than the access issues that you mentioned, or social, health or other impacts of the arts?

**Patricia Ferguson:** The purpose of the letter of strategic guidance is to ensure that the overall framework for the SAC—or any other body—is in line with broad Executive priorities. We have said that growing the economy is our number 1 priority, so you would expect there to be a reference to economic factors, but the issue is about the whole gamut of Executive policy and about ensuring that we have the best possible approach to the arts.

As part of its remit, the SAC must ensure that there is excellence and that educational provision and pathways for artists are available—such responsibilities will also be part of the remit of the successor body. All those factors are involved and they are equally important, but I rely on the SAC to deal with the artistic aspects. We would not want a particular aspect to have a higher priority but we would want creative Scotland to bear it in mind when it considered its processes.

**Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP):** I do not want to labour the point, but the proposed ministerial power of direction has generated much interest in the culture sector. Can you give an example of how it might be used? You suggested in response to Mark Ballard that the power of direction might be used to make sure that “the books are in order”—I noted carefully what you said. Did you mean to say that? I would have thought that mismanagement of the books would be a matter for the police. If money was mismanaged people would be sacked and the issue would be dealt with through routes other than ministerial direction.

**Patricia Ferguson:** I do not want to labour the point about mismanagement of the books; the issue is governance in the general sense. It is about ensuring that arrangements are appropriate to the organisation. I hope that we would deal with a question about the books or anything else before it became a matter for the police. We would



consider the matter and what needed to be done. The power would be used only in extreme circumstances and not on a daily basis. It is extremely unlikely that we would use the power. However, such a power is necessary to protect a large amount of public money—the Parliament would expect no less of us.

14:30

**Mr Maxwell:** I accept what you said about how rarely the power would be used. Many people have accepted that argument and opinion, but fear that it sends out the wrong message to the artistic community about ministerial involvement, irrespective of the detail of what is proposed. How do you try to deal with that fear? Rightly or wrongly, the message has gone out that a ministerial power of direction for the arts is being taken.

**Patricia Ferguson:** The power is not very different from those that we have at the moment, but it would be included in the bill. We do not currently have culture legislation in that sense, so there has not previously been an opportunity to frame the power in that way. It is important to remember that this is a consultation, to which we will respond. As I said in response to a question from the convener, we will seek a form of words that helps people to understand exactly what is meant. We are working on that at the moment. It is interesting that on the one hand we are criticised for not taking enough interest in the arts, but on the other we are criticised for looking at them too closely. As I said earlier, the role of Government is to put in place a framework and then to stand back and allow the arts to flourish. That is the intention behind everything that we are trying to do in the bill.

**Mr Maxwell:** I did not want to labour the issue, but I thought that it was worth raising. I will now move on.

During our round-table discussion, Mr Cosgrove mentioned some of our competitor areas, especially Wales and the north-west of England. I think that he said that they have a great deal more joined-up thinking than we have. How do you respond to that point? At our meeting, the impression was given that those areas are taking a bigger chunk of the digital industries' cake than we are taking. How should we respond to the competitive world in which those industries are involved?

**Patricia Ferguson:** The discussion that the Education Department and the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department are having at the moment is about the best way of supporting the creative industries in the broadest sense. The new media pose a new challenge,

because they move so quickly and require such a swift response. We need to be able to respond quickly enough to allow that development to continue. We know that over the coming years the creative industries are likely to expand by about 10 per cent per annum and that those that specialise in digital content are likely to increase by about 20 per cent per annum, so there is a big prize.

Scotland is well placed to be involved, and we are doing fairly well at the moment. What we do should be judged on outputs, and at the moment those outputs happen to be particularly strong. The number of people involved in the creative industries—excluding those who are self-employed—increased by about 19 per cent between 2000 and 2004. That big increase is continuing. However, we need to do a bit more thinking and to have more discussion about the best way of reacting to and supporting that development. We need to be as fleet of foot as possible, because the creative industries are moving so rapidly. We must also ensure that all our partners engage with the issue. It is not enough for screen academy Scotland to have up-to-the-minute equipment and ensure that its students get the best education possible. We must also ensure that linkages are made between that organisation and broadcasters, so that broadcasters can use the facility to upskill existing members of staff in the new media that come along day by day. There is still a challenge for us. We are fairly successful in the area, but we can always do more.

**Mr Maxwell:** I am glad that you mentioned broadcasting, which I want to move on to. You said that we are doing particularly well at the moment, but that there is always more that we can do. I agree. However, I understand that although we have 8.9 per cent of the United Kingdom's population, we are responsible for only around 4 per cent of its broadcasting production. How will we close that gap, so that many more of the high-quality broadcasting jobs and industries are based here?

**Patricia Ferguson:** The investment that has already been made at Pacific Quay and Seabraes Yards, for instance, is key. There must be a hub, and people must want to work there, where the very best is located. Companies need to want to produce there because the talent, the technology and the willingness are there. That is what we are bringing together at the moment. I think that the figure to which Stewart Maxwell refers is in fact about 6.9 per cent. Obviously, that still leaves a gap, which I would like to be closed.

We work closely with our Westminster colleagues at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport because broadcasting is a reserved issue, although we have a keen interest in it. We

will take forward the issue in the future. We note the links that have been made by screen academy Scotland, with its broadcasting department at Napier University in Edinburgh. That is exactly the kind of thing that we should be doing more of. It is heartening to see such organisations understanding the need for that and working in a positive way.

**Mr Maxwell:** I will not argue about the figures, although we might be talking at cross-purposes. Your figure might be correct for independent production, so I accept what you are saying. In any case, we agree that there is a gap and that it would be good to close it.

I will cover one final area, which is the issue of local cultural entitlements. There seems to be a great deal of confusion about exactly what they are supposed to be. Many people are suggesting that they should be entitled to an entitlement, but that is not what the consultation document on the draft bill says. Indeed, it is careful not to say that. How do you see local cultural entitlements working in practice? What difference will people see in their ability to access various areas of culture? I would like you to think in particular about how the entitlements would operate. Local councils will operate them and there are clearly vast differences between councils in terms of size and resources. For instance, how will Glasgow City Council operate with East Dunbartonshire Council or East Renfrewshire Council, which are tiny councils on the edge of a large urban area?

**Patricia Ferguson:** The entitlements should be about ensuring that people have more influence over what is provided to them in their areas. We do not expect there to be a standard for every local authority area; the arrangements should deliberately vary from area to area in response to the culture of each area and to what people say they would like. Not only should the entitlements be different in each local authority area, they should perhaps be different among different communities of interest.

In order that we can give more guidance to local authorities about that, we have undertaken a number of pathfinder projects in conjunction with local authorities around Scotland. For me, the really pleasing thing about that exercise has been the number of local authorities that have wanted to get involved. There has been a diverse range of activity as a result of the pilot projects. There are a couple of examples of projects that are aimed, during the year of Highland culture, at young people who can choose from a menu of options. There are projects that are aimed particularly at older citizens, who are often excluded from cultural activity. One of the projects is focusing on ethnic minority communities in order to highlight the need for those communities to enjoy their own

culture and for us to enjoy it, too, to help widen our view of the world and our experience of other people's activities. There are a wide range of such projects. We will evaluate all of them, and we will pass on best practice to local authorities, based on the work that is being done.

We will also give to local authorities standards that will explain what we are looking for in terms of quality. It is not just about access, as I said earlier; we must ensure that there is access to the best that is available. That can vary hugely, but it must involve the very best in the form concerned. We will be asking local authorities to keep in touch with us—to evaluate, to monitor and to give us information, so that we can keep a check on what is happening.

It is absolutely right to highlight the fact that bigger local authorities might have more provision than smaller ones, so I would like authorities to talk to one another and to work in partnership. My dealings with people from the edges of particular political boundaries suggest that they do not necessarily recognise those boundaries or stick to them.

People who work in Glasgow might want to use cultural entitlements there. Where there are small local authorities round a large hub local authority, a lot of partnership working should take place. Authorities should bounce ideas off one another and encourage people to talk to one another about what happens in their areas. We do not want to be prescriptive, but we want to ensure that what is available is the best.

**Mr Maxwell:** Did you say that you will set minimum standards for cultural entitlements?

**Patricia Ferguson:** We will not set minimum standards, but standards—we will provide examples of good practice and excellence. The initiative must be driven by what people want, so some of it will be about how we engage with people.

**Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab):** I apologise for missing your opening remarks; I am sure that you will be quick to tell me if you have already addressed issues that I will raise. You talked earlier about the importance of being fleet of foot. I want to ask you about three aspects of the decision-making infrastructure in the arts and creativity in Scotland. This can be a highly charged and polarised debate, but it is a fact that a range of Government departments both north and south of the border have different responsibilities that impinge on the role, work and development of the creative industries. I do not know to what extent you want to talk about the north-south interface, but I would be interested to hear your comments on the roles of the DCMS and the Department of Trade and

Industry, and how those can be made to work better and more smoothly.

I also invite you to comment on the roles of bodies in Scotland, especially the enterprise network. Putting to one side any political or ideological baggage, what are you doing and what can be done practically to provide the context within which our creative industries can flourish even more and better than they have to date?

**Patricia Ferguson:** Your question goes back to the discussion that Nicol Stephen and I, and our departments, are having about how best to support the creative industries. It is important to recognise that the enterprise companies—Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the local enterprise companies—provide a great deal of support to the creative industries. There are different models because of the different remits of the enterprise companies. Support also comes from the Scottish Arts Council, Scottish Screen and the creative industries offices that have been set up across the country as a joint project by the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Enterprise. A range of support is available.

There are a number of questions, but one of them must be to ask whether there is only one model that works. I suspect that there are more and that we must respond to different areas' requirements in ways that work for them. It is important that we ensure that organisations work together, that we increase opportunities for them to do that and that we encourage them to see the opportunities that exist. From an enterprise point of view, the aim may be to create jobs and dynamism in a local economy and community. From an arts point of view, the aim may be to increase the opportunities that exist for people to take forward their skills and talents in the arts. If the organisations that are involved in supporting the creative industries remember that those two aims can be combined, it is possible for them to work together. There have been some good collaborations, but we can do more to encourage them. The debate that we are having is about how best to do that. I would be interested to hear the committee's views on the issue.

14:45

**Susan Deacon:** To underpin the fostering of co-operation and collaboration, which I suspect all committee members support, do you envisage any mechanisms that will put in place the systems or practices that are required to ensure that co-operation? How much of that can be achieved voluntarily through appropriate encouragement and exhortation? Could anything more be done at a practical level—I stress the word "practical"—to ensure that people, industries and businesses that have good projects, ideas and products that they

want to develop and exploit do not have to go round knocking on many different doors and trying to work out who the right person to talk to is?

**Patricia Ferguson:** That is very much what the Cultural Enterprise Office has tried to do around the country. Its services are jointly funded by the Scottish Arts Council and by Scottish Enterprise and have made a big impact in the areas in which they have operated. We started with one office and we now have six because of the success. We can learn from that lesson that we must think not in a silo but across the board.

Even if people see their art as their way of life and as how they want to earn their living, they still need to have basic business skills and acumen to succeed. They can be supported in gaining those skills. The support that the Scottish Arts Council would give to an artist is brought together with the support that an enterprise company would give to a small entrepreneur. Such skills are beginning to be taught in our further education colleges. It is vital to have modules in courses that people can pick up, or modules in other departments in a further education establishment to which people can opt in to obtain skill in finances, management and writing business plans. The example of the Cultural Enterprise Office is good.

It is important to respond to what is required. One solution does not necessarily exist; a range of ways to handle a problem may exist. At the moment, a range exists and the solutions work pretty well. Some work a bit better than others and we must learn the lessons of those that work particularly well and try to roll them out more across the board to make the picture more constant.

**Susan Deacon:** I will stick with the theme of being fleet of foot, for want of a better phrase. How will the creation of creative Scotland and the forthcoming legislation be managed to ensure that valuable time, energy and momentum are not lost in structural reorganisation or the legislative process? I guess that you share the concern to avoid that. How would you hope those two matters will, in the coming months and in the next year or two, be handled to ensure that momentum is not lost in the short term?

**Patricia Ferguson:** It is fair to say that when I produced the cultural statement—"Scotland's Culture"—I said that I wanted not to introduce a new bureaucracy that would cost us money but to free up as much money as possible to deliver at the front end of everything that we do. That has been behind the thinking on much of what we have tried to do.

That is why we have established the joint board between the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen, to ensure that skills and talents from both

those bodies come together early. It is difficult to ask two existing bodies to work together to create one new body. It is much easier for the putative board of the new body to bring all the skills and that experience together to work towards that end. Where we can, we have tried to ensure that that happens. Much work is being done behind the scenes and in front of the scenes to make the transition as easy as we can and to take with us the best of everything that both organisations have to offer. That is very much the principle by which we have been guided. We have had great co-operation from the chairmen and boards of both bodies. The two bodies are working well together and are beginning to set in place the kind of body that we ultimately want to see. We have kept that consideration in mind all the way through—I hope that it will continue to guide us as we go forward.

Fortunately, when the legislation is introduced after the election—if I continue to be involved as I am just now—it will be taken forward primarily by me and my team. I hope that, far from stifling artistic endeavour in Scotland, the proposed change will underpin that endeavour and help it to flourish.

**Susan Deacon:** My final question, which I will try to keep brief, is about future gazing—if the minister can do that—and expressing hopes for the future. It is fair to say that, since devolution, culture has been the subject of much activity. Without question, culture has risen up the agenda with a great many policy statements and culture strategies. We have had a report from the cultural commission, the Executive's response to that report and we now have a draft bill. Does the minister hope or expect that the passing of the bill—let us assume that the bill is enacted and that the new organisation is set up—will result in an expectation of greater stability in the structure and legislation of the culture bodies and a rebalancing of emphases? Will the practical outcomes that we all hope for result from the proposed changes to structure and law?

**Patricia Ferguson:** It is interesting that culture and the arts in Scotland have flourished since devolution. I genuinely think that that is the case. One need only look at the example of our national companies, which have performed on the world stage and gained accolades wherever they have gone. That is just one example, but that experience filters down through every level of artistic endeavour in Scotland.

In a way, the debate has been a good thing because it has raised the profile of the arts and culture and it has got people involved in ways that they were perhaps not involved before. I think that there is a new understanding of how the arts give us opportunities for enjoyment, for building our confidence as a nation and for showcasing the

kind of country that we are. All those things are vital. I believe that the arts have flourished and are continuing to flourish and I hope that they will continue to do so in the future. The debate has also helped to push the issue up the political agenda.

As I said to Mark Ballard earlier, I am concerned to ensure that we send out a signal that culture is not just about going to a theatre to enjoy something but about the way in which the community operates. Culture goes right down into your own life and into the life of your community. Culture matters. It also has a huge number of spin-offs in many other directions, such as regeneration and the economy. There are all sorts of things on which culture can have a good and benign effect. I want to see culture remain embedded in the lives of everyone in Scotland and I want everyone in Scotland to have the opportunity to enjoy the very best that the rest of Scotland and international artists have to offer.

**The Convener:** I have a final question on a practical issue. Will the new body be located in Edinburgh or has that not been decided?

**Patricia Ferguson:** At the moment, Scottish Screen is based in Edinburgh and the Scottish Arts Council is in Edinburgh. Creative Scotland will be a new body, so we need to undertake a location review. That is happening at the moment. We hope to be in a position to announce the outcome of that review very shortly.

**The Convener:** I thank the minister and her team. Their presence today is much appreciated.

## Transport and General Workers Union (Meeting)

14:54

**The Convener:** We move on to agenda item 2. I put this item on the agenda because of the general issues that have been raised in correspondence. However, I do not think that the committee should get involved in the individual case. I seek the committee's agreement that Christine May and I should meet representatives of the workers concerned to discuss with them the wider issue. If issues arise that we want to minute, we can add them to our legacy paper. I do not think that we want to get involved in the individual case.

**Christine May:** For clarity, I should say that I am a member of the Transport and General Workers Union. I would never refuse to meet a trade union. Nothing would be lost by discussing the issues with the union, although I would have to make it clear that the committee can take no action about an individual company's commercial decisions. On that basis I would be more than happy to meet the TGWU.

**Susan Deacon:** I should also confess my membership of the TGWU—although "confess" might not be the right word.

I have no difficulty with colleagues meeting the union. However, all members are saying that it is not the committee's job to consider a specific case, so I seek clarification on what the committee might do. If Alex Neil and Christine May meet the union in their roles as convener and deputy convener of the Enterprise and Culture Committee, rather than as MSPs in their own right, it will be hard for the people on the receiving end of the conversation to understand that there is no role for the committee.

A fascinating issue has been raised, which I would like to understand an awful lot better, in relation not just to the activities of one company but to the global context. I have no difficulty in that regard, but I am not quite clear why the convener and deputy convener would meet the union to discuss a case in which the committee can have no role.

**The Convener:** We are at the tail end of this session of Parliament and there will be only one full meeting of the committee after this one, so there is no time for the committee to do anything. I would regard a meeting with the union as exploratory, so that we can obtain information and perhaps agree a minute, which we could put in an annex to our legacy paper. That is how I envisage our possibly taking the matter forward. It would be

for our successor committee to decide whether to take up the matter in more detail.

**Christine May:** I would also like to explore with the union—in the context of its role in the global trade union movement—the tension between environment and economy. The case that we are considering involves the movement of produce half way round the world for processing and then back again. That is a commercial decision for the company, but we have just had Scottish environment week and seen considerable publicity about the use of transport, for example. I would like to discuss what might be done through global trade talks and European Union trade and other influential bodies.

**Mark Ballard:** The classic tension between environment and economy is illustrated by a situation in which jobs and the environment are one side of the equation and commercial decisions are the other. However, in the case that we are considering the decision that would be good for the environment would also be good for jobs.

The TGWU says in its letter:

"Workers at Young's Seafood's are not the first to be affected by globalisation and they will certainly not be the last."

As the convener said, we should consider the case in the context of the wider discussion on the impact of globalisation. We should certainly mention the issue in our legacy paper.

Shiona Baird is particularly interested in the issue. Can other members of the committee participate in the meeting with the union?

**The Convener:** I will come back to that.

**Mr Maxwell:** The issue is becoming less clear as we go on. I have no problem with the convener and deputy convener meeting people on behalf of the committee, if the committee has a remit to take up the matter that they discuss. However, I do not see a role for the committee in the case that we are considering. It might be perfectly appropriate for two MSPs from the committee to meet the union—that might be a better approach.

The discussion has headed off down various roads to do with the environment, globalisation and other stuff. As the convener said, we will have only one more meeting. I am more confused about the fundamental rules and purpose of our proposed meeting now than I was when we started. Although I was quite relaxed at the start, I am less relaxed now, given some of the comments that have been made.

15:00

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I should say, for the avoidance of doubt, that I am

not a member of the Transport and General Workers Union. I agree with Stewart Maxwell, who makes a fair point. I, too, am starting to get a bit concerned about the matter, having been quite relaxed at the beginning of our discussion. I am getting a bit more concerned about the status of the proposed meeting. If committee members wish to meet informally with the trade union, that is absolutely fine. However, if we are elevating it to the status of a formal or semi-formal meeting involving the convener and the deputy convener, we should think a bit more carefully about where that will take us.

**The Convener:** I will not go to the barricades over the status of the meeting, and I do not think that Christine May will either. I would be happy if the committee preferred to offer an informal meeting, in which it would be open to every committee member to participate. Later in the agenda, we will suggest that the theme for next year's business in the Parliament conference should be the business challenges of climate change. Subjects such as this would be very relevant to that. As I said, I am relaxed about the matter as, I think, is Christine May. We do not want to elevate the meeting to something that it is not.

**Mr Stone:** It might come as a surprise to some members, but I should perhaps remind the committee that I was, once upon a time, a member of the T&G. It is typical of us Liberals to go into the middle road, of course.

**The Convener:** You are not in Equity now, are you?

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** They have standards at Equity, convener.

**Mr Stone:** I disagree with Stewart Maxwell and Murdo Fraser. The trade union branch took it upon itself to get in touch with us. It is an enterprise matter, because jobs are going. That is to do with Scotland's enterprise, is it not? I will go with the option of having an informal meeting. However, I think that the matter should be included in the legacy paper, with a gentle suggestion to consider what is an important issue. It is not for us to dictate what happens in the future, but our successor committee may choose to pick the matter up.

**Susan Deacon:** To build on what has already been said, I suggest that it is worth commissioning work on the issue, or at least setting the ball rolling, via the Scottish Parliament information centre. I am always careful not to commission research papers casually, because I know that a lot of time, effort and resource go into them. The issue will continue to be relevant in the future, however, and it is bound to be considered further in some shape or form during the next session. I think that it is worth getting some of the work

done. I do not know whether some research is being done already. Perhaps part of the response would be for researchers to capture some information on the matter.

I would strongly favour the idea of any meeting being open not just to Enterprise and Culture Committee members, but to MSPs in general. There is nothing to stop any organisation with an MSP sponsor holding a meeting here in the Parliament. We are invited to and go along to such meetings all the time. I think that that would be a better way to proceed, for a number of reasons. This will affect some of us less than others, but, for the sake of our successor committee, we must be cautious about setting any precedents. That is particularly the case when it comes to enterprise, I think.

There are any number of industries and companies across the country facing various difficult and complex issues. Many of them throw up legitimate policy issues for the committee to consider, but it is always worth pausing for thought about how a parliamentary committee such as this one can best consider such issues. Simply responding to a request from an organisation—be it an employer, a union, a campaign group or whatever—is not, in my experience, the best way of doing things.

I return to the point about precedent. We should be sensitive to that, too.

**The Convener:** I think that the idea of asking SPICe to prepare some research, which would be available to our successor committee, is sensible.

*Members indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** I take it from members' nodding that we agree to ask SPICe to do that. That will keep them busy while the rest of us are campaigning. I should point out to Stephen Herbert that I am of course joking if I seem to be implying anything in saying that. On the second point, about a meeting, would members be happy if Christine May and I, simply as MSPs, organise a meeting, inviting all members of the Scottish Parliament?

*Members indicated agreement.*

## Legacy Paper

15:04

**The Convener:** We discussed an approach to our legacy paper and the first draft has now been circulated. I ask Stephen Imrie to introduce it, please.

**Stephen Imrie (Clerk):** I circulated a draft of the legacy paper. Previously, the committee discussed a framework and agreed the structure for the legacy paper, which I have fleshed out. Members kindly e-mailed me comments on the points that they wanted to be included in the paper; I hope that I have done those justice. I reiterate my offer to meet any member of the committee privately between now and the committee's final meeting, if there are issues relating to the legacy paper that they would like to discuss.

We are still waiting for some information. The committee was keen for us to ask the Executive to provide us with an update on the conclusions and recommendations of the inquiries that the committee has undertaken during the parliamentary session. On the committee's behalf, I have written to the Executive to ask it to provide that information, which should be available by our last meeting. In addition to the legacy paper, we will write up the notes from all the round-table discussions that the committee has had, including the one on the creative industries that we had a few weeks ago. By our next meeting we will have a revised version of the legacy paper, depending on members' comments today, the notes from the various round-table discussions that have taken place and the post-inquiry update on conclusions and recommendations.

The legacy paper is relatively straightforward. I have tried to keep it short, because it is not helpful for an incoming committee to get reams of paper that it does not examine in detail. The committee has learned many lessons along the way that would be valuable to a successor committee. I have tried to provide the new committee with accessible, brief hints, thoughts and advice on new inquiry topics. The paper is fairly self-explanatory, and I am happy to revise it in light of any comments that members make today.

**The Convener:** There is only one full meeting of the committee left, although we need a special meeting to deal with a Scottish statutory instrument. It is likely that the full meeting will have to be postponed beyond 6 March, because of the availability of the minister and other people. We will probably meet on 13 March, but Stephen Imrie will be in touch with members once the position is clearer.

A legacy paper is only advisory and informative—there is no way in which we can commit our successor committee or committees to anything. However, when I joined a committee the second time, in 2003, I found the legacy paper useful, because it let me know what the committee had already done and passed on the baton for issues that could be taken up more immediately, especially in the first year after the election. The idea is to inform and advise, but we can in no way dictate or decide. I invite comments from members.

**Murdo Fraser:** I am generally content with the legacy paper, which is comprehensive and covers all the ground. I would like to make a small point about paragraph 21, which refers to the idea of a skills summit. Although a skills summit is an excellent idea, we need to flesh out what we mean by that. I think that I made that point at a previous meeting; if I did not, I apologise.

**Stephen Imrie:** I recall that the idea of a skills summit was discussed. I would be happy, if members wish, to say a bit more in a redraft of the legacy paper about what a skills summit might look like, in order to give a successor committee more guidance on what this committee was talking about.

**Murdo Fraser:** That would be helpful.

**The Convener:** In light of the Leitch review and talk from some parties of establishing a full employment agency, it is a very relevant subject.

**Christine May:** I have a number of comments. The first relates to the Harold Wilson quotation in the paper. I am not averse to a quotation, but perhaps we can find a better one.

**The Convener:** I have one from Alex Salmond. Would you like that to be included?

**Christine May:** Is it the tip for the 2.45 at Newmarket?

**The Convener:** It was Stephen Imrie's idea to include the quotation. When he asked me whether I wanted it to be left in, I said yes, as I wanted to see who would move to take it out.

**Christine May:** I am more than happy to have a Harold Wilson quotation—just not that one.

**The Convener:** I forecast that it would be you.

**Christine May:** I know that—why do you think I raised the matter?

To an extent, paragraphs 7 and 19 deal with the same subject—the overlap in the remits of various committees. The example that is chosen is European structural funding, which the European and External Relations Committee has dealt with, but which is definitely relevant to the Enterprise and Culture Committee. Would it be sensible to

put in something further around paragraph 7 on joint working and the possibility of joint inquiries, which we have not done to the extent that we might have? I know that that is difficult, but other committees have selected rapporteurs, for example.

**The Convener:** Is everybody happy to add a reference at that point to joint working?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**Christine May:** I felt that one sentence in paragraph 11 said, "You really have to do your homework, members, because it is not good for you or your mental processes to have us make up questions for you." As I said when we previously discussed the legacy paper, it is appropriate at times to have guidance on questions.

**The Convener:** Should we rephrase that paragraph?

**Christine May:** We should rephrase it to make it a little less teacher-ish.

**The Convener:** Okay. Do members have other comments?

**Karen Gillon:** I do not disagree, but I like the sentiment behind paragraph 11.

**Christine May:** So do I.

**Karen Gillon:** The change has been important.

**The Convener:** Our practice is much better, although it has downsides, such as very long questions. I tend not to interrupt members, because it is up to members to pose questions. Even when a member asks a constituency question, which should not really be done at a committee other than when giving an example, I allow that, on the basis that an example is being given. Jamie Stone asked Patricia Ferguson about Caithness earlier.

**Christine May:** Do the words "pot" and "kettle" come to mind?

**The Convener:** My experience is that members should be given the maximum freedom to ask what they want to ask. They are the members of the committee.

**Susan Deacon:** I say—to avoid doubt—that I agree completely with the convener. However, I am a bit confused. Karen Gillon referred to "the change" and we have talked about agreeing to the change and dispensing with the practice. I do not think that the committee has ever used prepared questions, although some other committees do.

**Karen Gillon:** The theme has been pretty regular in other committees, too.

**Susan Deacon:** It is important to make it clear that we have not made a change; we just did not

adopt the practice, although some committees have. I agree absolutely that we should not go down that road.

**The Convener:** The situation was the same in the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee, which did not have prepared questions.

**Susan Deacon:** That is what I thought.

In paragraphs 8 and 9, which are about working practices, we need—for clarity if nothing else—to distinguish between what is formal and informal, what is private and not private and what takes place in a round table and across the table. The variations on a theme do not come across. The example is given of the social enterprise session, which was too far along the spectrum. That session was a round table and informal and was therefore in private, so it was without an *Official Report*, for example. We pushed that session too far along the spectrum. It could have been a round-table discussion with the OR, which would have felt better for all concerned.

The legacy paper does not convey the fact that we have had bona fide informal meetings, some of which have been valuable just as briefing sessions, such as the Royal Society of Edinburgh's briefing on its renewable energy report. Nobody would suggest that that could or should have been made more formal or public. It is good to channel such events just to committee members.

On the other hand, when we tried to capture something from the bona fide informal meeting that we had with Scottish Enterprise about its structural changes, we ran into difficulties in pure process terms, if nothing else, because we had not captured the discussion.

I think that we would all agree with what I have said, on the basis of experience. My plea is that the legacy paper should unpack all that a little more. If a recommendation is to be made, I suggest that we should recommend or suggest that our successors continue the practice of considering a range of models. The point is to find the right one to suit the purpose. That is partly about the subjects, partly about the organisations involved and partly about the timing of what we do with the output from the discussions. Stephen Imrie could elaborate a bit on that. I do not want him to write a book, just a few extra paragraphs.

**The Convener:** Murdo, did you have something to add?

**Murdo Fraser:** No. It is fine—the moment has passed.

**The Convener:** Stephen Imrie will redraft the report for us to approve at our final meeting. Is everybody happy with that?

**Members indicated agreement.**



## Business in the Parliament Conference

15:15

**The Convener:** I had a private—formal, informal, round-table—meeting with Nicol Stephen, his officials, Stephen Imrie and Nick Hawthorne to talk about the business in the Parliament conference. Normally we would have tried to hold it next September or October. For obvious reasons, none of us thought that that would be a convenient date, because it would not give us time to organise it properly, arrange speakers and all the rest of it.

**Christine May:** It would be logistically difficult.

**The Convener:** Yes. We therefore suggested that it would be more appropriate to hold it just before or after the February recess next year.

The second major issue was that the Executive was keen—and I thought that it would be appropriate—to make the main theme the business challenges of climate change. Given the Stern report and all the other work that is going on, it is clear that that is on everybody's agenda. Is everybody reasonably happy for us to proceed on that basis?

**Karen Gillon:** Could we not make the theme the business challenges and opportunities of climate change?

**The Convener:** Did we not include opportunities? That is not a problem.

**Karen Gillon:** The debate around climate change always seems to be negative.

**The Convener:** We made that point. There are downsides and upsides to climate change. For some businesses in Scotland—for tourism, for example—there could be upsides. Everybody is happy with that.

Do we agree to give the clerks and Executive officials the power to proceed along those lines? If they are to identify speakers and others who want to participate, they will need to get to work on that—it will keep them busy while we are campaigning.

**Murdo Fraser:** The theme is fine. I have a suggestion about the timing, which came to me from CBI Scotland—that august body with which your party enjoys such excellent relationships, convener. I note the idea to hold the conference in February 2008. In the past, it has always been held on a Thursday and Friday. The clerk knows about this issue. In the past, we have also debated attendance by MSPs—and, in particular, ministers—on the Friday. Whatever the reality,

there has been a perception that the event has not been as well supported by the Parliament as people in business might have liked. The suggestion was that, rather than hold it on a Thursday and Friday, we should hold it on a Tuesday and Wednesday. Clearly, that would involve displacement of committee business, but, hey, if we can give up our Parliament complex for Microsoft, why can we not give up part of it and our committee work for an event that we are promoting to encourage relationships with the business community? I simply throw that suggestion into the mix.

**The Convener:** I pass that suggestion on to Stephen Imrie—the issue has been discussed. The attendance among MSPs and ministers has been very good. In fact, nearly the whole Cabinet was at the previous event at some point. I thought that attendance by MSPs and ministers was very high—particularly when we stopped the event at 2 o'clock on the Friday. We are talking about 40 out of 129 MSPs. I do not think that we will do better than that. I do not think that that proportion of members would attend such an event at Westminster.

**Stephen Imrie:** The suggestion was made to me and Executive officials during our discussions with CBI Scotland. Since the conference last November, we have met all the main business organisations and the Scottish Trades Union Congress to get feedback on the event and on plans for the 2008 conference. I would not be able to make the decision personally, but if the committee was keen to hold the conference on a Tuesday and Wednesday, we would certainly need the support of the other committees to rearrange their business, because they would not be able to meet on the Tuesday or Wednesday morning. The current programme means that the conference runs until about 1.30 or 2 o'clock on the second day. If that was a Wednesday, it might be necessary to delay the start of plenary business, unless the chamber could be de-rigged quickly.

Again, it is not for me to make a decision one way or the other. If the committee is keen on the idea of holding the conference on a Tuesday and Wednesday, I am happy to take some soundings from other committee conveners, and the business managers of course, because there would be implications for the planning of plenary business.

**The Convener:** I will bring in other members in a moment, but I point out that we issue feedback forms after each conference and the responses show that the businesspeople prefer the Thursday and Friday option by a country mile. We have not broken that down by membership of the CBI or Federation of Small Businesses, but—

**Christine May:** Many ordinary businesses are not a member of either.

**The Convener:** The businesspeople prefer the Thursday and Friday.

**Christine May:** That is the point that I was going to make.

**The Convener:** They always say that midweek is the worst option.

**Mr Maxwell:** I disagree with the Tuesday-Wednesday idea. It would be putting it too strongly to say that it is a dangerous road to go down, but I do not think that we should shift parliamentary business all over the place to allow other things to come in. I am happy to be flexible, to maximise the amount of people who come to the Parliament and to have conferences here so that people can engage with it, but it is not a good idea in principle to move parliamentary business.

If the conference was held on a Tuesday and Wednesday, it would not only cause difficulty with the plenary session on the Wednesday afternoon but wipe out all committee meetings that week. We could not have committees on the Wednesday afternoon or Thursday because chamber work would be going on. Many committees have to meet every week—that is certainly true of the more technical committees such as the Subordinate Legislation Committee. The disruption that a conference on a Tuesday and Wednesday would cause is not acceptable.

**The Convener:** Murdo, it is fair to say that there is not a consensus in favour of holding the conference on a Tuesday and Wednesday. In fact, there is decidedly a majority against the idea.

**Susan Deacon:** I want to check that the more qualitative discussion that we had during our debrief on the previous conference has been captured. This paper focuses on the structure and timing of the conference, whereas a big part of our wash-up conversation was about its tone. We discussed shaping the workshop sessions to allow more interaction and engagement between MSPs and businesses. A lot of that deeper-level stuff was around the facilitation of the conference, the briefs that are given to speakers and so on. I am perfectly happy to be told, "That is not the purpose of the paper at this stage of the planning", but I seek reassurance that those things will be addressed. We can get the shape and timetable of the conference right, but if we do not address those dimensions, the event will be much less meaningful and worth while for all concerned.

**The Convener:** Someone who is organising a wedding has to make sure that they have the minister and the venue first, then they can organise all the details. The paper is basically about the minister and the venue.

**Stephen Imrie:** I wish it was like organising a wedding. That would be fine.

I reassure members that the note is a summary of the convener's meeting with the Deputy First Minister, which majored on the theme of the conference, the basic format and the possible dates. I assure members that we have not forgotten the committees' detailed discussions on how the conference runs, how we create a spark and a bit of debate and controversy at the outset to get it moving, and how we structure the workshops to maximise interaction. I will do my best to make sure that the next conference picks up on those discussions as far as possible.

**The Convener:** As there are no other points, is everyone happy with that?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** Thank you. I look forward to seeing you—

**Christine May:** Whenever the next meeting is.

**The Convener:** It is the 20<sup>th</sup>, I think.

**Stephen Imrie:** It is Wednesday 21 February.

**Susan Deacon:** That is the special meeting to discuss the SSI.

**The Convener:** Aye. It will take us about 15 minutes at the most, I hope.

**Christine May:** Do not count on it.

*Meeting closed at 15:24.*

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