



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 26 November 2013

Session 4

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EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
30th Meeting 2013, Session 4

CONVENER

*Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)

*Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

*Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)

*Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP)

*Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)

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

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

*Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)

*Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab)

*Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

*Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Janet Archer (Creative Scotland)

Gillian Berrie (Sigma Films)

Judith Doherty (Grid Iron Theatre Company)

David Greig

Liz Lochhead

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Terry Shevlin

LOCATION

Committee Room 3

Scottish Parliament

Education and Culture Committee

Tuesday 26 November 2013

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:04*]

Creative Scotland

The Convener (Stewart Maxwell): Good morning and welcome to the Education and Culture Committee's 30th meeting in 2013. I remind all those present that electronic devices should be switched off at all times.

On our agenda today is evidence on Creative Scotland from two panels. The item follows on from an evidence session last year on Creative Scotland, when we questioned its former chief executive and various figures in the artistic and cultural community. As members are well aware, shortly after that meeting, 100 leading artists—some of whom are here today—wrote a critical open letter to Creative Scotland, which, it is not unfair to say, triggered a series of events that led to the then chief executive's resignation and a number of reforms in Creative Scotland.

One year on, we want to look at what has happened and look to the future for Creative Scotland and artists in Scotland. We have two panels. Later, we will take evidence from the chief executive and the deputy chief executive of Creative Scotland. First, I am delighted to welcome some of Scotland's leading figures from the arts world: Gillian Berrie from Sigma Films; Judith Doherty from the Grid Iron Theatre Company; David Greig, a playwright; and Liz Lochhead, a poet and dramatist.

We did something slightly unusual last week, as we put out a tweet to ask people to send in or tweet questions to us. I have no doubt that some of those questions, as well as questions from members, will come up. I hope that that has been an open and transparent process that has allowed members of the artistic community and other members of the public to get involved in the committee's work.

I will begin with a general question. The letter that was signed by 100 artists had quite an impact on Creative Scotland and processes that were under way. It raised a number of issues—seven in particular—that the artists wanted to be addressed. Is it fair to say that those issues have been addressed? If not, which have and which have not been addressed?

David Greig: The direction of travel is positive. The Pitlochry statement that Creative Scotland's board made was a strong move to address the points—it was a strong statement of intent. It showed that we had finally been heard, which was perhaps the most overwhelming demand. Since then, we have had the speech about the arts by the cabinet secretary, Fiona Hyslop. From another direction, that has also shown that the policy intention is going in the right direction.

Between those two poles is the organisation. We cannot expect an organisation to change overnight all the policies, cultures and problems that it might have. However, the direction of travel is great. One example of that is the CS open sessions, which were run as part of the process of addressing the problem of communication between artists and the organisation. The sessions have been brought back recently, with the chief executive, Janet Archer, and Iain Munro going out to meet people face to face.

I definitely want to acknowledge that the business of being prepared to listen has started. There is still some way to go on one or two issues, which I am sure that we will talk about, but the direction of travel is right and some principles that have been established are right.

Gillian Berrie (Sigma Films): I was not one of the signatories to the letter, which was from a different sector. Film is in a terrible state and has been for some time. Just before Scottish Screen was abolished, it was getting its act together and was becoming an organisation that we could be proud of. We felt that we were being nurtured and looked after by its 35 employees and that our international connections were strengthening.

However, going from Scottish Screen, with 35 employees, to a department of under five within Creative Scotland while it is going through all this turmoil has had a really damaging effect on film makers. I doubt whether any film makers make a decent living in the sector.

We sat back while the artists raised their issues, because we felt that our issue should be separate and we wanted to communicate directly about the film sector. We formed Independent Producers Scotland back in August, so we are now a united voice.

If we are going to be an independent country next year, where is the strategy for film? There is not one, and that is the biggest problem. Are we going to be members of Eurimages? Where is the funding going to come from? Are we going to have a level of funding that is comparable to that of our nearest small neighbours such as Northern Ireland, which receives £12 million per annum, and the Republic of Ireland, which has €14 million, compared with our £3 million? The figures get

higher as you go into Europe. A lot of questions need to be answered.

I am delighted that Janet Archer has joined Creative Scotland. She is listening to us; we have had several meetings with her. She is going to try to source new funding streams. What we need now is direct investment from the Government in the film sector, because it is missing a trick. In Ireland, the sector is valued at €500 million and the knock-on effect on tourism is €300 million. In Scotland, the sector is valued at £32 million in total, which, frankly, is not good enough.

The Convener: Thank you. We will no doubt cover many of those points as the meeting goes on.

Judith Doherty (Grid Iron Theatre Company): I was one of the signatories to the letter. I very much agree with David Greig that there has been a massive change in the quality of communication between the artists and Creative Scotland. I generally feel very positive about the changes that are being made and about the thinking that has come out of the recent open sessions.

Given that we were one of the out-going flexibly funded organisations, regular funding was a real point of worry and concern for us, so the commitment to regular funding coming back in is fabulous; so, too, is the protection of a lead officer for artists, for individuals and organisations within Creative Scotland, because we were all concerned about that.

There is real concrete evidence that we have been and are being listened to. Obviously we need a lot more detail about funding strands and restructuring within Creative Scotland, which we will learn more about in the coming months when a business plan comes out and the funding application processes are made clearer to us.

Liz Lochhead: Like David Greig, I feel that things seem to be going the right way, but I do not know yet. What I put in my submission was probably historical stuff that was all about last year. I do not really know enough about what it is going to be like yet.

These things often do not affect me directly and I do not get to know about them until quite a bit later. I am not part of an organisation that is looking for funding; I just see what the ecology is. As an audience member and someone who works within theatre, I knew that theatre was under incredible threat—that came from everybody I knew. Across literature and all other areas there was a sense of real panic. The sense now is: “They are listening to us, so things will change.” I have not internalised what those things are, so I am not really competent to speak in that way—not yet. I am sorry.

The Convener: Thank you for that. I apologise, because I should have said earlier that Liz Smith, Neil Bibby and Jayne Baxter, who has now joined us, were held up due to transport difficulties.

Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The traffic is unbelievable.

The Convener: You are with us now, so thank you.

10:15

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I want to follow up on Ms Berrie’s point about the film sector. There was a tremendous amount of publicity around the impact that “Brave” had, and those who are not necessarily closely involved in the sector might have the impression that the film sector in Scotland is doing reasonably well, especially through the use of locations. Is there a focus on the wrong aspects of developing the sector, in that some bits of it are doing well while other critical parts are not doing so well? Let us leave aside funding for a second, because you have made your views clear about that. Is something happening around strategy in the film sector that needs a change of policy rather than just additional funding?

Gillian Berrie: Sadly there is no policy for film in Scotland. I go back to the issue of funding. With such limited funds, the amount of projects and talent or artists that can be developed is also limited.

“Brave” is a bit of a red rag to a bull because VisitScotland spent £6 million promoting Disney’s cartoon version of

“oor wee bit hill and glen”

and if that money had been more wisely spent in the industry, it would have had a far greater impact on the indigenous sector.

Savvy policy makers in other countries know that it all begins with empowering the producers and every project begins with the bud of an idea. We have such a rich culture and so many stories to be told, but we are simply not telling them, or we are letting the rights be taken by companies that are based in Los Angeles or London when we have it all on a plate.

On bringing productions into Scotland, Scottish Enterprise’s remit covers inward investment and it is missing a trick by not having an incentive fund and going out to seek productions.

Liam McArthur: In the creation of Creative Scotland, there was an amalgamation of Scottish Screen and other previously existing bodies. Has the impact of doing away with Scottish Screen been more significant on the film sector than the

amalgamation has been on the other art forms that became part of it and, if so, why?

Gillian Berrie: I cannot say very much about the other art forms and organisations, but significant damage was done by abolishing Scottish Screen. Although there are a few film makers left, we cannot stay here if something is not done. We are the only country in Europe without a screen agency. It is embarrassing being Scottish when we go to international film festivals such as Toronto or Cannes because people look at us and are baffled that the economic and cultural benefits are not recognised and rewarded by the Scottish Government. It is not good.

The Convener: I just want to challenge you on one thing. You said that VisitScotland had spent £6 million on “Brave” and it should have been spent more wisely. That money was about promoting Scotland as a tourist destination. If it had not been spent on “Brave”, it would not have been spent on making films.

Gillian Berrie: Well, I would rather it had.

The Convener: But it would not. VisitScotland is an agency that promotes visiting Scotland, hence the name.

Gillian Berrie: That is fine if the Government wants to pour money into promoting Scotland but, as a film maker, I find it hard to see that amount of money being put into the promotion of a film that was not made by indigenous film makers. It is painful.

The Convener: I accept the general point that you are making, but the point that I am trying to make is that VisitScotland’s budget was used to promote Scotland to people around the world on the back of the opportunity that arose from a Disney film. If the Disney film had not existed, the money would not have been spent on making films or anything to do with film production; it would have been spent on other ways of bringing tourists to Scotland. I cannot see how the £6 million that was spent on promoting visiting Scotland on the back of “Brave” is connected to the film industry.

Gillian Berrie: There is a massive knock-on effect on tourism from investing in an indigenous film industry. As I said, the value of the industry in the Republic of Ireland is €500 million and the knock-on effect on tourism is €300 million. If whoever decided that £6 million from VisitScotland should go to “Brave” had thought strategically about how they could intervene and help the indigenous film industry, I am sure that the long-term impact on tourism would have been much greater.

The Convener: Colin Beattie has questions about film so, since we have opened that up, I will come to him first.

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): Thanks, convener.

It is clear from comments that have been made that there is cautious hopefulness about the future. Is Creative Scotland responding effectively to the concerns about the future of the film industry? I see that it is in the process of hiring a director of film and media. Does that mean that it is putting a focus on the film industry?

Gillian Berrie: Absolutely. Under Janet Archer’s leadership, Creative Scotland is focusing. There will be a director of film, but will we have a fully populated film department? Will we have someone to look after international promotion, marketing, co-productions, festivals and distribution? We need a much healthier and bigger department. I do not want to be the one who says that Creative Scotland should shift some money from another part of its organisation into film—every department is struggling. Therefore, we need Scottish Government intervention. The Scottish Government should for the first time invest directly in film, as it does in the national performing companies. Why does more than £20 million go to theatre every year when only £3 million goes to film? I just do not see the justification for that and I do not know why it has happened.

Janet Archer has made lots of positive moves. She is trying to find out whether we are eligible for European money, which would make an enormous difference. Northern Ireland Screen and Screen Yorkshire received such money last year. She has also suggested that we develop our own film agency in Scotland, which again is a great idea. However, we still have not answered the point that there is no screen agency for Scotland, and we really need one. The question whether it is a subgroup of Creative Scotland or a separate agency is, I guess, one for the committee.

Colin Beattie: Your written submission states that you

“expect to see positive changes to investment policy before the new financial year.”

What makes you think that and what changes do you think are going to happen?

Gillian Berrie: I hope that there will at least be a recognition of the changes that need to be made on funding levels, match funding and opening up other funding streams.

Colin Beattie: You talked about the formation of Independent Producers Scotland. What is the significance and function of that body, and what is its anticipated effect?

Gillian Berrie: It unifies the producers in Scotland, which historically have never been united. We get together regularly as a body to discuss possible funding streams and other

possibilities. We share ideas and strategies for international film. We only formed in August but, so far, it has been positive.

Colin Beattie: Does Scotland have an adequate skills base to form a film industry?

Gillian Berrie: Absolutely. Internationally, we are recognised as having some incredibly talented individuals. Sadly, we have haemorrhaged an awful lot of talent because the business is not thriving here. However, for example, we shot "Under the Skin" here the year before last and probably spent about three quarters of a £10 million budget in Scotland. The London film makers could not believe the level of talent that was operating in Scotland.

Colin Beattie: Why was Scottish Screen abolished?

Gillian Berrie: I think that it was abolished because the statisticians were looking for a commercial return. I think that they failed to recognise the wider economic benefits of film and were looking just for box-office success. Of course, we currently have that phenomenon in Scotland with two successful films, which is fantastic, but there must also be a training ground for film makers here.

There was an awful lot of pressure on Scottish Screen for commercial results. These days, it has been proven over and over again that, for every £1 invested in the film industry, there is a £6 return. I therefore think that the measuring was wrong for Scottish Screen.

Colin Beattie: Where does the figure of a £6 return for every £1 come from?

Gillian Berrie: It can be more in some countries. For example, for New York the comparable proportion is 9:1 and for Northern Ireland it is 6:1. The effect of "Game of Thrones" for Northern Ireland was 8:1. For South Africa, the proportion is 5:1. The proportion goes down to 3:1 for co-productions. The figures are available and I have sources for all of them.

Colin Beattie: I would be interested, convener, in seeing the sources for those figures.

The Convener: I am sure that, if Gillian Berrie has them, she will be happy to supply them.

Gillian Berrie: Absolutely. In fact, I supplied them to Scottish Enterprise yesterday.

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Ms Berrie, you painted quite a bleak picture of where we are at the moment. I take on board your genuine concerns, but is it not true that some progress has been made? For example, Creative Scotland has done a review of the film sector, the draft report of which was tabled at the review group this month. In addition, the cabinet secretary

recently announced a £2 million loan fund to support long-term development of production infrastructure in commercial film and television in Scotland. Although there are concerns, do you not feel that, in part, they are being addressed and that people are taking them very seriously?

Gillian Berrie: Not seriously enough. I think that very small steps have been taken. It is great that the film sector review has been completed, but it does not show us anything that we did not know already or have not been shouting about for a long time.

We will see the end of the film sector here if something is not done soon. We need to get the studio built as soon as possible because we are missing a massive trick. The studio will affect every department of the film industry and produce amazing cross-fertilisation opportunities. The £2 million from the Scottish Government in the form of a loan for the infrastructure is not really enough.

Clare Adamson: Other areas of the United Kingdom have managed to access European structural funding for film. What barriers have you found in getting to that money? Have we just not tried to get European structural funds?

Gillian Berrie: I believe that Ken Hay prepared an application before Scottish Screen was abolished, but I do not know why the application was not taken further. We cannot apply for the funds as individuals. I have had conversations with Janet Archer about the issue, and she is investigating the possibilities of making an application from Scotland. I do not see any reason why we should not have a great case.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I had a question for Liz Lochhead but, as we are talking about film, I want to ask a quick supplementary question. The BBC puts quite a lot of money into film making. What do you think of its record in investing in film in Scotland?

Gillian Berrie: BBC Films, which is based in London, has the ability to finance films up to a level of about £500,000. It is funded by 50 per cent from the licence fee and 50 per cent from equity. BBC Scotland has a much smaller fund. It does not come from BBC drama in Scotland, which I think does no business with film at all. The small amount of funding that BBC Scotland has comes from the commissioner and is about £100,000 per film, so it can maybe contribute to a handful of films.

Joan McAlpine: The commissioners for the fund in London are not putting a great deal of money into Scottish film or Scottish subjects, are they?

Gillian Berrie: No.

10:30

Joan McAlpine: Thank you.

My question for Liz Lochhead was about paragraph 7 of your submission, in which you said:

“Creative Scotland’ ... Had no conception, it seemed, that there was such a thing as any kind of indigenous Scottish culture, or that it behoved them to learn about it.”

That our national machar should make such a statement is cause for considerable concern. Will you elaborate on what you wrote?

Liz Lochhead: That is just my experience. The issue is historical; it is not about anything that Janet Archer is doing. It really seemed that Andrew Dixon never listened to anything that was going on. The attitude was that people would come up and set up lots of initiatives for which we should all be incredibly grateful. Agendas would be set for artists.

All the artists in Scotland who I met, in every field—because I am the machar I get round, from wee schools to everywhere, high and low—felt that the people did not get us. It is very difficult to give evidence about such things, but it is clear if everybody feels something and everybody is not crazy. Such a lot of people felt despair.

My paper does not have evidence and figures, because I am just an individual. I have never applied for funding myself. Sometimes I have been commissioned by people who are funded, of course, but I have never filled out one of those forms.

I read a lot of Scottish Arts Council forms when I was on the council’s drama committee. The amount of paper that came in was unbelievable, and much of it was not relevant or belonged in fantasy land—elaborate business plans and so on. I wanted to know whether the companies that I was making judgments about were fiscally competent and could bring in projects under budget, and I was giving my opinion of their artistic stuff. I was just one of several practitioners doing that.

In the new structure there were no practitioners. Let me give you an example. The very first time I met Andrew Dixon was at an event in Perth about arts and the aged. As I was going up, I thought, “What will I talk to these old people about?” Then I thought, “Hey, I am going up here with my bus pass—maybe they will be something like me.”

It turned out that every single person in the hall stood up and said, “We don’t feel there need to be different arts for older people, in any way, shape or form. What we want is the same arts as anyone else, but we want access, help, subsidies and so on.” Everybody came out with the same thing, even the Provost of Perth. They said that the

difficulty was not getting older people into the arts but getting younger people into the arts.

Andrew Dixon had come along at the very beginning. I was on second, so I listened to him from the wings. He said that he was there to announce another festival—I cannot remember how many wonderful arts festivals he said that there were in Scotland—called the lunate festival of creative ageing. Then he left. If I was him, I would have stayed to listen to the newly created machar, to see whether she was any good, but he just left instantly. All day, people said, “We don’t need lunate”—but there was no way of getting that information over.

That is what it was like. I can only tell you about these things in boring anecdotal ways. Glasgow tried to get a play written by me—I am quite well known in theatre. It was as cheap as chips, and I did loads of work about it for free. The play was about Edwin Morgan and it was to be put on a year after his death. The Tron wanted to do it; it was for three actors. It has been a big success and it will be on next year due to funding from the Commonwealth games funds, so we have done something in the end. However, I remember writing to Andrew Dixon saying, “If you don’t tell us whether we’re going to be able to do this, we won’t be able to do it.” I had to write it all in the month before we went into rehearsal. We had two weeks of rehearsal. I did not get paid fully for writing it but, because I am an artist, I wanted to do it so I did it.

It is very different from film. I can write my poems and leave them under the bed. I have never applied for a grant but people like me should be able to, especially if they do not have access to other ways of earning an income, which I have done all my life via teaching and various different things. Sometimes I have been paid very well for my job as an artist; sometimes I have done it because of my passion for doing it. I come from the absolute other end of things from Gillian Berrie.

I wish that I could ask questions of the committee. I remember that, when Creative Scotland was set up, a lot of people in the arts said, “Why are they yoking together these very different organisations under one umbrella? Won’t it be very difficult?” The kinds of budgets that—of necessity—have to go into film are huge and yet there seems to be a certain kind of mismatch.

Creative Scotland did not seem to have any conception at all of the situation. I should perhaps have been more judicious in my language, but the organisation did not seem to get us and everybody felt that we were not got. Is that not true, David?

David Greig: I think so. I would also broadly reflect on what Gillian Berrie said and yoke the two together.

There is a general starting point, which is: do we want to have a culture in Scotland? I would hesitate to call it Scottish culture—I think that it is all kinds of culture—but do we want it in Scotland? If we do, we have to put the structures in place to fund and support that culture.

In our art form—primarily drama and literature—there is a lot of experience of doing that, and in the past the Scottish Arts Council was quite good at it. Despite the wobble, I think that the direction of travel is right. However, it is important to recognise that visual arts are not represented here so we cannot speak on their behalf, and I think that young and emerging artists would also have issues.

I think that what I am hearing from Gillian as regards film, which I completely agree with, is that we can let things happen if we want—in which case, the great success and talent that we know exists, as I know from being a playwright, will cross-fertilise with film; for example, “Sunshine on Leith” was originally a musical at Dundee Rep, and much of the acting talent in “Filth” involves actors whom I have worked with in the theatre—and we can let things drift, or we can decide that we would like to have a film culture in Scotland.

There is something about success—ironically, it is what causes the sort of bolshiness that you experienced last year. When there is a feeling of, “Actually, we have something, so please help us with it”, it gives people the energy to be bolshie. My strong request is: please learn from last year and what is happening with film that listening and responding is the way to go rather than trying to pretend that something is not happening, because it will not go away.

Clare Adamson: We talked a little about quite significant events that have happened since the letter was produced by the artists. I think that one of the significant events, which David Greig has already mentioned, was the Talbot Rice lecture by the cabinet secretary. The cabinet secretary set out a vision for culture in Scotland that is in stark contrast to that of Maria Miller down south, who is still talking about culture in terms of economic benefits.

In the context of that speech, can we talk about the eight commitments that Creative Scotland made last year, which include both cultural ideas and changes to the structure? Is Creative Scotland moving towards fulfilling those eight commitments? Are you still concerned about any of them in particular?

David Greig: For me, it is important to see that there is pressure from two ends, if you like. The

board made the commitment in Pitlochry, but up to a point it was easy for it to do that; the organisation then had to enact it. The cabinet secretary made her extremely valuable and morale boosting speech, but up to a point it was easy for her to do that; the organisation in the middle has to deliver and it will need support. That support will need to be political, but the organisation also needs co-operation from the artistic sector—and that is what it will get if it listens and responds.

As we have discussed, film has always been structurally problematic. However, speaking purely personally, I think that many of the commitments are going in the right direction. Language remains an issue, but it is hard, culturally, to change that kind of language, which is predicated on economic values, although not just on that.

As Liz Lochhead pointed out, nobody knows better than artists how to manage a budget because, in general, we have very little to manage on, both as individual human beings and with the tiny companies that we run. Therefore, I am talking not about being afraid of economics but about having a sense of value that is bigger than the immediate box office return.

I think that that language is embedded not just within an organisation such as Creative Scotland but across our culture. It is always going to be hard for an organisation to move against that and to come back to, if you like, plain dealing with artists, but that is one example of a place where we need more of a sense that the language reflects a philosophy. The cabinet secretary’s philosophy was very well articulated, and it would be fantastic to see that approach trickle down.

The Convener: Can I bring in Judith Doherty here? David Greig is a playwright and, Judith, you are involved in Grid Iron Theatre Company. From your perspective, how have the changes and the commitments been enacted?

Judith Doherty: I run a theatre company that has been based in Edinburgh for 18 years. You can probably tell that I am not Scottish, although my accent is getting more Scottish the longer I am in the country. I have actually been here for longer than I was in Northern Ireland.

It was an incredibly destabilising time for all of us. I see myself as an artist as well as a producer and chief executive, and it was unbelievable how completely devalued we became and how our confidence was completely knocked. However, that was matched by something that was possibly even more damaging, which is that we felt that the organisation back then—a year and a half ago—did not value the skills and expertise that it had in its own staff team. It is important that in future—we have been glad to hear thoughts on this,

particularly from the open sessions—there is going to be support and development for art form expertise within the organisation.

We would ask that, with the restructuring, the direct communication between the artist practitioner and a person within the organisation with relevant expertise is maintained and supported and that portfolios are not stretched to such a level that funding streams trickle out and new, little streams come in under what appears to be a clear and straightforward presentation of three funding streams. That will enable the experts within the organisation to come back to a point where they can give us good, clear and supportive advice.

My present experience with the organisation is that, in the past three or four months, I have had really good dialogue, understanding and support, but we now need to know what the new strategic aims and ambitions are.

We are willing and determined to find our place within those aims and ambitions. All we want to do is to deliver our art and entertain our audiences; of course we want to sell our tickets but mostly we want the creative experience and to do Scotland proud not only on the world stage but on our own stages and the various buildings, holes in the ground, parks, gardens, playgrounds and airports in our own country. The focus needs to be national and international as well as local and regional.

10:45

Liam McArthur: I have been struck by the very positive response to some of Janet Archer's work and approach since she was appointed and the references to the cabinet secretary's speeches on this matter. Do you think that Creative Scotland's personnel have the skills and so on to deliver what the board on one hand and the cabinet secretary on the other have said now needs to be delivered? Liz Lochhead talked about practitioners having a go in the process, while Judith Doherty mentioned training and support for those who are already involved in it. Is it a question of training and support or is there a requirement for more practitioner input in key positions in the organisation rather than just liaison with different parts of the creative sector?

Judith Doherty: I have always felt very clearly that there are practitioners in the organisation, but I can speak only of theatre and my knowledge of the dance practitioners in the organisation. A confusing and worrying development for us was the removal of practitioner peer review from funding assessments and processes, which meant that for a period of time—which I believe that we are still in—a whole body of expertise in the Scottish Arts Council, Creative Scotland and the

sectors was not available to be seen. We are talking about people simply going out and experiencing work, and I definitely think that that element of extra support could be brought in. That said, I believe that there are still theatre, dance and literature practitioners in the organisation, although having more of them would always be fantastic.

Gillian Berrie: I believe that there are two people with film experience in Creative Scotland.

David Greig: I would not like to comment too much on the staff issue, but I think that Janet Archer herself is a former practitioner or at least knows the world of dance very well. For me, a key issue is the board, whose personnel essentially remains the same. Of course, that was the same board that brought us the statement in Pitlochry, which was a very good thing. That said, I would like to see a good deal more development in the board soon, part of which would involve putting more practitioners on it, and there must be some recognition that putting on more people from the world of film is bound to be reflected in the development of the organisation's policies. After all, that is where the direction comes from in the very first instance.

Liam McArthur: That was helpful.

We have heard quite a bit this morning about what are seen as inadequacies in the cover for the film sector in Creative Scotland's current structure, funding and so on. Are other aspects of creative activity for which the organisation is responsible not being adequately reflected at this stage? I acknowledge the point that although the direction of travel has markedly improved it will take a bit of time for that to be reflected and turned round in the organisation's work. Are there any such aspects that have not been adequately reflected in the plan and in which you would expect to see a marked change of approach?

Liz Lochhead: There used to be committees in the Scottish Arts Council that were composed of practitioners. At one point there was a drama committee, which was chaired by a wonderful man called John Scott Moncrieff, who was fantastic and knew a lot about theatre. I remember him being very taken aback one day, when he had to suddenly announce to us that our committee was being disbanded completely.

There was a lot of expertise in that committee. The decision-making process was laborious and imperfect, but there was input from a lot of practitioners. Then there came a single committee that dealt with everything, so there was less expertise. In Creative Scotland now there are no unpaid, voluntary people who give advice, as far as I know. However, I do not know a lot about it. I just experienced it and I do not know everything

about how it was put together, although I do not think that there was much consultation with people.

A lot of people told me that decisions about their funding were being made by people who had no expertise in their art form, because at one point all categories were abandoned within the organisation.

Liam McArthur: If personnel do not necessarily have personal experience, is that reflected in such a way that some creative activity has not had the attention that it might have?

David Greig: In the past, things were much more haphazard. If you were fortunate enough that your lead officer was able to help you, you were helped.

We must recognise who is not here. I know that you cannot have everybody, but there are no visual artists here. They would probably have a story, as would people in dance.

The one area in which I have heard on the grapevine that there are issues, which we cannot really speak to, but would be interesting to investigate, is what it is like for young and emergent artists across all art forms, whether that be visual, dance or even film and television. There is always a tension—particularly when budgets are tight—between supporting the established culture and supporting or developing and growing those who are trying to break through. I am hearing a lot that young and emergent artists are suffering when trying to make any kind of a living.

I draw attention to the fact that Creative Scotland can only ever be one part of the ecology. In the past, there were other parts of the ecology, such as local authorities, from which you could get funding or matched funding, small sums of money or part-time jobs in the education sector as an artist in residence, which would all help someone to be a visual artist. There is a lot of pressure on those things, which leaves Creative Scotland exposed as the only part of the ecology.

Today's meeting is about Creative Scotland, but it is worth thinking more broadly about what is going on with local authorities, in which those—in a sense—minuscule amounts of money that were set aside for the arts are being cut. That is having a magnified effect, which is affecting particularly the more fragile—I would not call it vulnerable—ecology of the artists and companies that are trying to emerge.

Judith Doherty: I want to mention the artists' bursaries scheme, which is a recent Creative Scotland scheme that made its first awards in July. It is a very welcome scheme and when you skim the list of artists who have been given awards, you see that it covers a full range of art forms.

As an organisation, we strongly feel our responsibility to give opportunities to emergent artists—playwrights, designers and the full gamut of creative people, including stage management and technical people. If we are destabilised, where do they go for support and help? That is one of the things that was so worrying about the removal of a regular funding scheme under the last set of funding schemes—I will not use that word again. It is important that we are able to plan two or three years in advance so that we can spot the emergent artists—the new writers and the new technical team—and guide them.

Liam McArthur: I recognise what David Greig said about what others are not doing and the resulting additional pressure and focus on what Creative Scotland does. Is there anything that they could and should be doing for new and emergent artists, such as changing the way that funding schemes are operated or targeted?

David Greig: Do you mean Creative Scotland or other bodies?

Liam McArthur: Creative Scotland.

David Greig: I would not feel competent to talk about that at a policy level, although I am sure that there are things that it could do. However, a theme has emerged—it perhaps applies to film as well, but I felt it strongly in our 100 artists letter—that cultures can seem strong and successful in a small country but they are fragile and can get eroded from below. There will be a moment when they just go. That moment is highly unpredictable, but the problem can often be solved by tiny things.

If local authorities in Scotland were required to fund the arts to small amounts, that could result in three or four new theatre productions a year or three or four theatre productions a year being able to take place that would not otherwise have taken place. That would result in 20 acting jobs, which would give 20 actors the boost to stay in Scotland, which would mean a small strengthening of the pool of indigenous talent, so we would not need to bring it in from outside.

The area is very responsive to funding. Small amounts of funding bring big amounts of response. I hope that the emergent artists are being supported by Creative Scotland—you would have to speak to them about it—but any political pressure that you can put on all of the cultural support institutions in Scotland will have a disproportionately positive effect in the culture generally.

Liam McArthur: We have been told that local authority funding for culture and the arts is varied. Some local authorities do it well and have been consistent in that; others less so. Is the witnesses' view that new and emerging art is probably more the space in which Creative Scotland ought to

operate and that local authorities would be expected to operate more in traditional and established arts or should it be a mix?

Judith Doherty: There are some more lateral, more practical ways that local authorities could support all artists, including emerging artists, over and above cash, because we all know what the situation is. There are empty buildings all over the country and support resources that could be made available. There are spaces in which work could be being made if it was made affordable for artists to be in them. That would also be beneficial for the people who run those buildings and a straightforward way for local authorities to give some very practical and much-needed support to artists across art forms.

Gillian Berrie: There are no nursery slopes for emerging talent in film at the moment, apart from DigiCult. Four or five years ago, there were at least three, four or five short or medium-length film schemes or drama schemes at any one time. BBC Scotland has completely stopped supporting the tartan shorts scheme, and that is where Peter Mullan, David Mackenzie, Lynne Ramsay and numerous others came through as filmmakers.

There are a lot of film courses all over Scotland, but none of them involves immersive and mentored on-the-job training. Every day, we have calls, emails or letters from graduates looking for work experience, because that immersive experience is just not available to them any more. The situation is bleak for the emerging film-making talent.

11:00

Liz Lochhead: To again speak anecdotally, previously, emerging artists were often successful in getting funding—sometimes quite large amounts and more than what they had asked for—if that fitted with one of the agendas that had been set up as something that was happening. It is important that emerging artists can set their own agendas and that they are judged on what they want to do.

To clarify something that I said way back, when I talk about Scottish indigenous art, I do not mean Scottish—I mean art here in Scotland. That is all that I am talking about. This is a country with a varied set of backgrounds and sets of cultures. I am talking about the indigenous things that are here in this country in all their variety. I want to make that very clear.

The Convener: That is very clear.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): My question is for David Greig and Judith Doherty. Judith brought up the exciting point about buildings and spaces that could be used for other things. In my constituency of Paisley, we have quite a lot of

older buildings. For example, we have the PACE Theatre Company, which is in a former church and which has gone from success to success. Is that success because of the work by the local authority and the basket of funding that the company constantly receives? One of the former actors was on a wee show on television on Saturday night—having a Dr Who from the PACE Theatre Company is not bad. Do we have that company because we have that mechanism in Paisley? Does that not happen elsewhere? Is it an issue that companies have to get that basket of funding?

David Greig: One answer to that is that the situation varies. I live in Fife, which has a fantastic record on the arts. The Fife Cultural Trust has been excellent and has even commissioned work across the scale, from me and from newer and emerging artists. However, in a place such as Moray, what was already a tiny amount of money going to the arts was cut. That seems to me to be utterly missing an opportunity. Why could there not be an equivalent of PACE in Moray? There must be young kids in Moray who want to be involved in the theatre. Youth theatre was where I and many other people began. There are schemes for kids to get involved in film-making and digital and video, which is so available now. That kind of stuff can be done at local level and has huge benefits further down the line.

Judith Doherty: We are based in Edinburgh, but we have taken work everywhere in Scotland. For one of our most successful shows, which we have reproduced over 10 years, we opened in Paisley. That is because there are individuals working in the council there who think that theatre is a good thing. They have support from the council and resources such as the Paisley Arts Centre, although our show was an outdoor one called “Decky Does a Bronco”, the world premiere of which was in Paisley. The same is true in Fife. There are proactive individuals in the Fife Cultural Trust and, before that trust was established, individuals were really proactive and put themselves out there. They had the ear of people in the council who made decisions and they undoubtedly had the support of their MSPs.

The loss of support for the one individual who was left fighting his battle in Moray was heartbreaking for us all, because a lot of more established companies cut their teeth in some of his venues. We must support the arts workers that we have. Youth arts workers make a huge difference.

George Adam: Can you as artists feed into the curriculum for excellence? Paisley was the last place to burn people for being witches and an amateur dramatic show was done about that in the town centre. That covered the curriculum for excellence because it told kids about our history—

they were told that the people were not really witches. That went through the whole process, but it also involved a dramatic show on the street by artists who were not working at that stage. That hits one or two things; it also brings footfall to places such as Paisley town centre. Can you feed into the curriculum for excellence with local authorities?

Judith Doherty: Absolutely—we unashamedly feed in everywhere that we can. As makers of art, we are always thinking about ways of talking about politics, history and emotions. The more communication we have with our education establishments—Grid Iron has great involvement with a lot of them—the more we prepare our artists of the future, but they need to know their route. Levels of support need to be created.

David Greig: George Adam is right—art feeds into all the things that he mentioned. Particularly in a small country, culture can have disproportionate benefits. It can bring benefits through tourism, which we have talked about. It can benefit the self-esteem of kids who are involved in a youth theatre and make people aware of their history, language and so on.

The easiest way to make all that happen is to start by recognising the value of culture and by ensuring that the relatively small amounts of money, the political support and the support in local authorities are brought to bear. If that is done, all the benefits will tumble forth naturally. It is your job as politicians to work out exactly how you manage the competing resources to achieve that, but the ratio of benefits to the small amounts of support warrants your attention.

Liz Lochhead: David Greig talked about the record of the arts in Fife. Fife has that because the arts in Fife were a huge thing in the 1970s. Fife was the first place where I worked; I was always getting on the train to go there. David Harding went to Glenrothes and built all these sculptures—he created public art in Scotland and he set up a course in it at Glasgow School of Art. One thing feeds another all the time.

I am just as happy working with the Scottish Youth Theatre as I am with the National Theatre of Scotland; I do not care, because work is work and it is all the best stuff. I worked with talented kids last summer in the Scottish Youth Theatre and, a couple of weeks ago, I worked with fantastic students at the conservatoire—I hate that word, but I have to say it—on “Misery Guts”. It breaks my heart that there will be nowhere for them to go next if we do not get a decent ecology going.

I will say why we all wrote the letter last year. David Greig and I had a conversation by phone at one point. We said that we would get by anyway, whether we were poorer or richer, but he said that

the thing will not exist at all if we do not fight for it now. The whole thing will die and the next people will not be able to get on the ladder. That matters a lot to me. I have no kids, so the future and the kids matter a lot to me. All the friends of those kids at the conservatoire who went to see the play said, “They’re proper grown-up actors” and it breaks my heart that there might not be jobs for them. It is very hard.

Creative Scotland has to be flexible enough to help things like that to happen and to be able to respond to what is happening rather than setting the agenda from on high. That is the most important thing.

Joan McAlpine: I was going to go back several questions but before I do that, it might be quite helpful if I say that I am the co-convenor of the recently formed cross-party group on culture. The issues that you raised about local authority funding have been discussed in that group and we will explore them further at one of our meetings during the next year. You have just reinforced what we were thinking about that being a real problem for artists.

You talked about the influence of expertise and individuals being in the right place at the right time. Liz Lochhead mentioned David Harding in the 1970s in Glenrothes. It has already been said that literature is one of our strengths and it feeds into other art forms. Is the loss of Gavin Wallace to Creative Scotland of concern to writers? How do we go forward? Does it threaten the development of literature at that level in Scotland? Obviously artists will continue to write, but will the loss of Gavin Wallace be a problem for the promotion of literature in Scotland?

Liz Lochhead: The writers of my generation are still in a state of grief. They were aware that Gavin Wallace was not happy and did not feel that the organisation that he worked for was supporting the things that he had fought for for all those years. The future has to be different from that.

I am sorry; I do not have policies and ideas. I am being a moan about how things are but if we talk about things not being good, we need to do them differently, so where do we go? The loss of Gavin Wallace was drastic. He is not replaceable as a human being because his expertise in and passionate and wide knowledge of literature was invaluable. I am not speaking about it being financially invaluable; it was much bigger than that.

Joan McAlpine talked about one thing feeding another, and that is one of the real advantages that Scotland has. The different art forms are not all in different bags. We all work together whenever we get the chance, and that is one of the joys of living here.

The Convener: Thank you very much. We have not covered everything that we wanted to cover, given the time constraints that we are working under. I thank you for coming along this morning and giving us your views of what has happened in the past year and what will, I hope, happen in future.

I thank you all for taking the time to come in this morning; it is very much appreciated.

11:13

Meeting suspended.

11:16

On resuming—

The Convener: I welcome to the meeting Janet Archer, who is the chief executive of Creative Scotland. Thank you very much for coming along to this evidence session.

Janet Archer (Creative Scotland): Thank you.

The Convener: I will kick off with a general question. Clearly the past 18 months or so have been difficult. Do you think that we are over the hump of that difficulty? We heard positive comments from the artists earlier, but obviously a lot of work is still to be done. Given the commitments that you have made to making changes in Creative Scotland, how far along the road do you think you are?

Janet Archer: I think that we are doing well. As you heard from David Greig earlier, a year ago the board made a strong commitment to change. We have achieved a great deal in tackling our commitments, which we reported to you in our submission.

For the five months or so that I have been in post, I have been trying to understand what the problem is. I think we are there with that now, so we need to apply ourselves to fixing it. I will not promise to do that overnight; I am not interested in a sticking-plaster approach. We need to fix things properly, so that we create a platform for long-term sustainability for the arts, screen and creative industries in this country. That is what we are setting out to do.

The Convener: Do you think that in the near future you will provide a more open and accessible route into Creative Scotland for artists working in Scotland? One of the complaints from last year was that it felt like Creative Scotland operated almost separately from the artistic community.

Janet Archer: Indeed. Some of you might be aware that I was the chair of an organisation based in Glasgow called the Work Room, which is an artists membership organisation that supports

emerging artists as well as established artists working in dance. I heard loud and clear what the concerns were from that constituency and I am committed to ensuring that we engage with artists across Scotland in shaping the way forward.

We have just completed three days of open sessions in Glasgow, Langholm and Inverness. The tweets that came through from yesterday's meeting in Inverness signal that we are having an open conversation. We are listening to what people say to us. We are amending and adapting our plan as comment and feedback come in and we will continue to do so until the end of January, when we submit our final plan to the Scottish Government.

The Convener: Thanks very much. Committee members have a number of questions. We will start with George Adam.

George Adam: The previous panel had concerns about structure and access for younger people and emerging talent. I mentioned the PACE Theatre Company, which is in my area. It is unusual for me to mention Paisley in committees; normally, I just do so in the chamber. What there is is pretty patchy across the country. Ministers recently announced the time to shine strategy, which is the Scottish Government's youth arts strategy. How will that be integrated with the curriculum for excellence to give young people a chance to see the arts totally joined up with their learning environment?

Janet Archer: Yes. First, I should say how great it is to work in a country that has a curriculum for excellence that talks about creativity in the way that it does. As you know, I have come from England and the situation is not quite the same there at the moment.

I spoke to directors of education at the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland conference last week. One of the questions that I posed for the conference was how we can effect a closer working relationship with them and bring together our constituency—artists and creative organisations—to work more closely with local authorities in developing the curriculum for excellence. We got a good response, so we are opening up that dialogue.

Time to shine is a fantastic strategy for children and young people. We are delighted that we now have £5 million to distribute through that. We are in the process of identifying the route that we will use to do it. We will be announcing a series of hubs, because we want people to work together in different parts of Scotland and to bid to become creative clusters—we have not yet decided what they will be called; a group of young people is going to come up with a name—for young people to work together, learn, develop their skills and

open up pathways to a career route, if that is what they choose to do, or a creative life, if that is their preferred option. We are building a country-wide approach to be able to offer youth provision in the future.

Joan McAlpine: You said that one of your open sessions was in Langholm, which is in the south of Scotland and part of the area that I represent. Probably one of the few chinks of light for Creative Scotland before you arrived was a feeling in south-west Scotland that more attention was being paid to it. There was quite a bit of focus on Dumfries and Galloway, which is where Langholm is. However, people there were concerned that the pendulum would swing back towards the central belt. Can you reassure artists in south-west Scotland that that will not happen?

Janet Archer: It will not happen. I absolutely believe that everybody, no matter who they are or where they come from, has the right to have access to arts and culture. We are paying very strong attention to how we will be able to achieve that better in the future. At the session in Langholm we were asked to feed back to the Scottish Government a concern about access to digital platforms and digital infrastructure. There was a call for better information technology. We said that we would feed that back to you. There was also a feeling that mobile phone signals did not always work.

Joan McAlpine: I know that that is a problem in south-west Scotland, which I hope we will be able to address going forward when we have control of such matters.

One of our greatest poets—Christopher Grieve, who wrote as Hugh MacDiarmid—was from Langholm. However, you would hardly know that when visiting Langholm, unless you went up to the memorial. As someone coming into the country from outside, do you think it is extraordinary that there is not more about one of our most influential literary figures in his home town? Perhaps we do not celebrate such people or develop their legacy enough, from an arts point of view. What can your organisation do about that?

Janet Archer: I completely agree with you. Our advocacy role is fundamental. We need to be able to stand up and advocate for all the things that we fund, but much more than that, we need to advocate for all the things that we do not fund and all the things that happened well before our organisation was set up. That is important.

When I was appointed, I went back to my old boss at the Arts Council in England and said, "You know, there are a lot of extraordinary things happening in Scotland." His response was, "But we wouldn't know about that in London." That resonated with me and gave me a strong sense

that we need to ensure that we take responsibility to hold an overview, which means having strong, shared, connected relationships with everybody who is involved in the arts, screen and creative industries across Scotland—and those relationships need to be live. We need to ensure that at any time we have access to—if I may use jargon—a big data set, with information that draws in all the subtleties and nuances of cultural life in Scotland, and we must ensure that we sing about that.

Yesterday, in Inverness, I met a storyteller called George W Macpherson, who told me that he is one of the last three storytellers in Scotland who has in his memory original stories from hundreds and hundreds of years back. Clearly, Creative Scotland needs to work with people such as him, to ensure that the tradition lives on. We need to support him to teach his stories and train up young people—he is in his eighties—to ensure that the heritage continues.

At the same time, we need to be right across young emerging artists, who are perhaps doing things that none of us has experienced, in all kinds of different ways. We must ensure that we are able to horizon scan and understand what future generations will want to connect with in the arts, screen and creative industries. We need to prepare for things that none of us has even imagined might happen in 20 years' time.

Joan McAlpine: In the evidence on film that we heard earlier this morning, it came across strongly that, although other areas of the arts have been quite vibrant in the past and have fed into film, some of the stories that we have as a country are not being told through film. That is not just your fault; it might be the fault of other agencies that are supposed to be doing that, such as the BBC. If you look at the films that the BBC has funded over the past few years, you will see an awful lot of Dickens remakes and so on—that is fantastic; I love Dickens—but our stories are not told in film or in the popular medium that most people get to see. Do you agree that that is a serious problem for this small culture going forward?

Janet Archer: Stories have to be told through all kinds of means. Digital platforms are a fantastic way of getting things out into the wider public domain in a very tangible way, but we have to support the telling of stories through live performance, storytelling, painting and drawing and all kinds of art forms, including dance, as well as through digital media.

What is interesting for me about the construct of Creative Scotland is the opportunity that there is within it. In effect, our remit covers three spheres: the arts, screen and creative industries. Of course, each sphere has discrete development needs in its own right, but the convergence in the middle—

the overlap between areas—is potentially fascinating. There are lots of examples of practitioners who traverse the three, as you said, and we are looking quite hard at whether that creates opportunity, not just in relation to creative and artistic development and pushing the boundaries about how things are expressed but in relation to exploiting that intellectual property and generating new income streams for artists to be able to do the work that they do.

11:30

The Convener: You mentioned in passing the open sessions that you have had over the past few days in various parts of the country. What has emerged from those sessions that you did not already know?

Janet Archer: They offered different things. In Glasgow, for example, we heard loud and clear that what people want now is the detail, and we have been talking to people about the five overarching ambitions in our new plan. People want to know how they are going to access funds in future, how we are going to deliver on our promise to make the process of applying for funding from us easier, clearer and more straightforward and how we are going to be open and transparent in our decision making and generate a sense of trust that we are making the right decisions informed by the right expertise at the right time. There is a hunger for all that and, indeed, I have to remind myself that it did not start the day I started at Creative Scotland. People have been waiting a very long time for a system that works, which is why we are trying to generate this on such a short timeline.

The Convener: I believe that Liam McArthur has some questions on the same issue.

Liam McArthur: My questions relate more to budgetary issues, convener.

Leaving aside the film issue, which colleagues will come to in a moment, I note that in the earlier session we heard about some of the pressures in getting funding to new and emerging artistic talent. Can you say more at this stage as a result of either the open sessions or the other dialogue that you have had about how that can be addressed? I am not saying that any solution will be to the satisfaction of all—people realise that there are budgetary constraints—but it came through strongly in the previous evidence that the area needed to be addressed.

Janet Archer: Time to shine, which is focused on young people, will to an extent support the development of new talent from a very early age. Moreover, we have just funded 50 artist bursaries and have put aside £1.5 million this year to support a new artist bursary scheme that is all

about research into and development of practice. The process has been quite interesting because we found out that there are far more artists out there than we had ever imagined would want to take up such opportunities and, in the event, we were able to fund only 20 per cent of the artists who applied in the first round of the scheme. That is not good enough, and we need to think hard about how we fund individual artists and creative people.

One of the commitments that the board made a year ago was to reduce the amount of money that Creative Scotland spent on projects that it delivers itself through what we call managed funds and to put more money into the sectors that we serve, and we are looking quite hard at how we can move money from one sphere of our work into supporting not only emerging talent but established artists who are continuing to evolve their practice. Research and development is not something that artists do just in the early part of their careers; they do it throughout their lives. Indeed, every great artist I know has a continuum of reflecting on and deepening their practice and pushing to achieve things that they might once have imagined to be impossible. That is what being an artist is all about and artists need time and space to reflect, trial, test and debate with themselves and others if they are going to produce excellence.

Liam McArthur: We have also heard this morning that, although local authorities have traditionally played a crucial role in this area, what councils are actually doing might be a bit of a patchwork. You have mentioned your engagement with ADES on curriculum for excellence, but what discussions have you had with local authorities that are exemplars or which are at the other end of the spectrum about ensuring that what Creative Scotland and the authorities are doing to support culture and the arts works in tandem as far as it can?

Janet Archer: We have a good relationship with VOCAL, which is the organisation that connects up culture across local authorities in Scotland. I have had some very good conversations with Heather Stuart, who heads up culture for Fife and has been chair of VOCAL over the last period. I also attended VOCAL's conference.

The figures that we got through last week show that local authority investment in culture is reasonably stable. The predictions—I say this cautiously—also appear to be reasonably stable. That is good, although there are clearly some places, such as Moray, where things are not stable. There are also other examples where things are beginning to look fragile.

In talking to Heather Stuart and others at the VOCAL conference, I was struck by the fact that

the language is now different. The artists and producers who spoke earlier today called for a particular kind of language in dealing with the arts and film. Over the course of the day at the VOCAL conference, it struck me that the discussion was around culture and perhaps that is the way that local authorities need to think, given the breadth and scope of what culture contains—museums, heritage, sport, arts, education and all kinds of other things. That made me think that perhaps we need to open up another layer of conversation with local authorities about the complexity involved in all the things that we support. Perhaps at the heart of that conversation we can find a way of generating a deeper sense of recognition of the public value of the arts.

Liam McArthur: It is interesting that you say that. George Adam mentioned what happens in Paisley, and I recognise that Orkney Islands Council has a good track record in that respect. The council recognises that the cultural offering is part of population retention, if nothing else, so its effects go far wider.

You say that local authority spending on culture has been fairly stable, but the first panel said that there has been a bit of a retrenchment. Has the funding remained stable but is now going into different areas or being delivered in different ways? Is that what has created additional pressure on Creative Scotland to step in to plug the gaps? I cannot quite draw a correlation between our first panel's concerns about what councils are doing and what you have said about stability of funding. Can you offer an explanation for that?

Janet Archer: I am sure that there is an explanation, but I am not 100 per cent sure that I have the detail in my head yet about what it is. I can offer only some thoughts that are based on conversations that I have had with local authorities.

The answer could simply be that for artists whose focus is on making great work—perhaps they want to do that before connecting with communities and achieving the things that local authorities want them to achieve—it might be difficult to open the door and develop the work that they want to do through the local authority route. However, I cannot begin to give you a hard and fast answer to the question until we have properly interrogated local authorities' plans and their policy priorities in delivering that work.

Liam McArthur: I have a final question. I do not want to steal the thunder of colleagues who will ask about the film sector, but our first panel made the point that other agencies—Scottish Enterprise and VisitScotland were cited—have budgets that impact on parts of the creative sector. Have you had discussions with those bodies about how they are spending and whether their spending could be

better targeted to deliver across your communal agendas? There is a concern that big budgets are available that are not necessarily fully exploiting the potential of the creative sectors.

Janet Archer: We have had some very positive conversations with Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland. I chair the Scotland's creative industries partnership—SCIP—meetings. I have chaired one meeting so far and I found it to be very constructive. There is a real sense that there is a commitment to work together from the organisations that are represented at that table.

We have agreed to conduct a mapping exercise of the creative industries across Scotland, which will include the arts, so that we understand the context that we are all collectively dealing with. We are also reviewing how public investment in skills development is working in the arts, screen and creative industries. We are looking at that as a team, and I am sure that some thoughts will come out of that about how we might better collectively support the arts, screen and creative industries in the future.

George Adam: I want to develop Liam McArthur's point about the local government level. When we talk about planning, it is economic development that we focus on nine times out of 10. I was previously a councillor, but I have a colleague and friend who is involved in the arts and she talks about cultural planning. Initially I was quite sceptical about the idea, but when I saw some of her projects working, I started to believe that, in this area, we should start looking at things differently.

We have a patchwork of problems at local authority level. What would happen if we were to look at cultural planning with planning for economic development? We heard earlier that, for every £1 that you spend, you get something back, so the two are connected. As someone who has just been converted to this way of thinking, I can see that that is, possibly, the future. What do you think about the idea?

Janet Archer: It would be fantastic if there was joint effort around cultural planning. I find the preventative policy approach in Scotland to be really interesting. For me, the arts and culture have a huge role to play in shaping human beings, creating cultural identity, creating confidence and generating creative people who are able to contribute to society. That involves not just creating artistic work, but creating people who are able to go on and do extraordinary things no matter their choice of career. If there were a connected approach to cultural planning, we would be able to understand and evidence how that has been achieved in the past, and we would be able

to focus policy on fast-tracking development in that area in the future. We would be very interested in working with local authorities to drive that.

The Convener: I will address a couple of the subjects that have come up both in written submissions to the committee and with our first panel this morning. I think it was Liz Lochhead who said that, under the Scottish Arts Council, there were, in effect, various sub-committees on drama and other subjects, but they vanished. What is the current situation in Creative Scotland? How do you get direct input from artists if it is not through sub-committees? Does it come through board membership or some other route?

Janet Archer: We have daily conversations with artists through our staff team. Although we perhaps have not been clear enough over the past couple of years about how that might happen, we are certainly very active now in having regular dialogue and feeding through the views of artists. We have been meeting artists at our open sessions. We will put our plan online in January for people to respond to, and we hope and know that artists will be part of that.

On artists feeding into decision making, we work with a panel of artists and producers to feed into the artist bursary scheme and to consider applications collectively.

11:45

We need to think carefully about how we approach using peers in the future. One of the problems with panels for organisations such as ours is that their administration can be time-consuming and costly. We need to balance that with our imperative to get as much money as we can out to artists and arts organisations. We certainly need to get better at using a suite of evidence. We need to get our staff out to see work, as we were challenged to do earlier, and we need to write reports on work as the Scottish Arts Council did. We need to generate peer reviews from a wide range of voices from outside the organisation and use them to build up a bank of expertise to feed in to funding decisions as they are being made.

The Convener: How aware are artists in Scotland of the routes that you want them to use to contribute to the organisation's work?

Janet Archer: To be honest, our funding schemes are quite confusing. If you visit our website you will see that the route to be navigated is quite complex. It is better than it was six months ago, but it is by no means perfect yet. That is why we are on a trek to simplify our funding programmes and make it clear to artists how they can apply for funding.

One of the people who attended our open session in Inverness yesterday suggested that we might want to think about a pre-application form that would be one side of A4 to say what the project is and how much money they are asking for, and give a general sense of what they want to do with it. That could be the first stage before asking people to fill in the whole application form. That is a pretty smart idea that we will consider.

The Convener: What is the timescale for completion of the work towards a simplified procedure?

Janet Archer: We have committed to 1 April next year as the date on which we will announce what we will do. We will phase how we work, and consolidate all our regularly funded organisations that come through the various schemes that we run—foundation organisations, project-forming programmes, and annual clients—into one pool. We will invite open applications next summer and assess them by next autumn.

About 150 organisations are funded through that kind of route. Incidentally, that figure is higher than it was two or three years ago. At the same time, we will review how we deliver our project funding and have a phased transition from the funding programmes that we currently offer to projects to the new programmes.

The Convener: A question was raised this morning and in the letter from the 100 artists that was signed a year ago about the language that the organisation uses. It was said earlier that many things have changed and improved and we are moving in the right direction, except perhaps in relation to that. You have not used many clichés or jargon this morning, but I did hear “horizon-scanning” and I saw “customer focus” in your submission. Is there still a problem with the language that you use?

Janet Archer: No. We are reining ourselves in and checking ourselves as we communicate.

An interesting point that was raised by the reference group is the need for us to be multi-linguists, as was suggested by one artist. We need to be able to speak different languages, depending on whom we are talking to. For an organisation that spans the subsidised and commercial creative sectors, we have to be smart about that and make sure that we hold the expertise in the different parts of the organisation so that we can communicate in a way that resonates. We want to create opportunities for people who want to generate businesses and jobs out of the work that they do as much as we want to value the intrinsic purpose of so many artists' work. We therefore need to be deft and able to express ourselves in many different ways.

Colin Beattie: The previous panel had quite a few criticisms of the film industry, which to my mind dominated the discussion. How do you respond to those criticisms?

Janet Archer: As Gillian Berrie said, I am working quite closely with her. I am also working with IPS. We put some initial funding into IPS to allow it to set itself up as an organisation and administer itself. We are looking at a number of different avenues for film investment and we need to listen hard to what Gillian Berrie is saying in relation to the amount of investment that goes into film. We are not, within the frame of Creative Scotland's budgets, able to move a lot of the money that we currently put into the arts into film, but we can work with the film industry to increase investment in film.

We are looking at European funding, and there are opportunities to be partners with other organisations to generate new investment in film through that route. You noted earlier that we are appointing a new director of film and media. We hope that that person will have a commercial background and that they will have global networks and contacts to generate new commercial investment in film in Scotland, and that they will work with film companies to develop their skills to do that for themselves in the future.

Colin Beattie: Comment was made about the impact of the abolition of Scottish Screen, which was before your time. Do you see something similar emerging? Is that on the table?

Janet Archer: Our remit is to serve the arts, screen and creative industries; we are working hard to develop a way to do that as sensibly and productively as we can. Interestingly, we currently spend as much money on production as was spent on production in the final year of Scottish Screen. The savings that are being made are in relation to things like finance, marketing, human resources and all the core administrative functions of an organisation such as ours. As I understand it, the shift from two organisations to one was in the context of public reform in Scotland in order to generate savings. I think that we have done that reasonably well.

Colin Beattie: According to Gillian Berrie's submission, the absence of a body like Scottish Screen is a serious loss to the film industry. You have not said whether you think that there should be a similar organisation.

Janet Archer: I want to scrutinise the film sector review and use that to inform where we go in relation to a screen strategy for Scotland. In our guidance letter this year, we have committed to doing that work with the film sector. When we have gone through that process, we will be in a better position to say whether film needs its own

engine, if you like, in terms of a development agency, or whether it sits comfortably within the overall remit of Creative Scotland.

Colin Beattie: Is the skills base for the film industry in Scotland adequate? How can it be expanded and strengthened?

Janet Archer: The message that I am hearing from the film sector is that there is a call for new investment in film and that the film sector has the creative and production skills to make good films. At the moment we are not generating a mixed economy in the film sector, so part of skills development has to be about capacity building and growing the skills that will enable people to drive for new investment alongside Creative Scotland.

Colin Beattie: How much does Creative Scotland invest every year in the film industry?

Janet Archer: It is around £5 million. I could give you an accurate figure if I dig around in my papers, but if it is all right with you I would rather—

Colin Beattie: A ballpark figure is fine.

The Convener: Perhaps you could send us the accurate figure afterwards, if that is acceptable.

Janet Archer: Okay.

Clare Adamson: Can you shed some light on why Scotland has not been able to secure European structural funding for the film sector? It has been secured in Northern Ireland and, I believe, Yorkshire.

Janet Archer: My impression is that the reason that Scotland has not secured funding is that nobody has applied for it. We are looking at how we might partner up with others to apply for it. The Scottish Government's strategy on generating European funding into Scotland is about key agencies putting forward big packages, so we need to discuss with Scottish Enterprise whether there is space in its package to support film and look at that as the potential route.

There might be local authorities that are willing to include film as part of their overall funding request packages and we are beginning to explore that, too.

Clare Adamson: May I ask a different question, convener?

The Convener: I will come back to you if it is not on film. Is Liam McArthur's question on film?

Liam McArthur: Yes. I want to follow up some of the points that were raised by the first panel. We talked about the imminent appointment of a director of film and media. A point was made about the profiling of the film sector at international festivals—Toronto was cited—at which there has

been an inability to punch at our weight. Will that be addressed by the director appointment or does further capacity need to be built into Creative Scotland's film division?

Janet Archer: We had stuff in Toronto this year: we had a reception that profiled Scottish film. We are undertaking that work and will continue to do so with our present resources. The new director will bring in a new level of expertise to the organisation and will be an extra person to unlock potential that is not being tapped currently.

Liam McArthur: Have you benchmarked with the sector? It is raising this concern and will have been aware of the presence in Toronto. Have you benchmarked the impact that our presence has, compared with those of our competitor countries? Are you learning the lessons from what they are doing, or establishing whether there are other things that we can do better with the resources that are being deployed?

Janet Archer: The honest answer is no, but we certainly will do that, going forward.

Liam McArthur: David Greig made a point about the current board of Creative Scotland. One way to address some of the film sector's concerns—perhaps over time, rather than as an immediate action—could be to have a greater level of representation on the board of people from a film background, which could give confidence that that would be reflected throughout the organisation when decisions are taken. Have you discussed with Gillian Berrie or colleagues whether you will try to achieve that over the next few years?

Janet Archer: Indeed. We have board members who have deep knowledge of film and it will always be important that the range of interests that we represent is represented properly on our board. That factors through into policy making.

I am absolutely delighted that the board has supported my decision to appoint a director of film and media. It is the first time that Creative Scotland has had a specialist at that level.

Liam McArthur: Clare Adamson raised the issue of structural funds. Have you had discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs about making representations to the cabinet secretary with responsibility for Scottish Enterprise about making the most compelling case, if you will, for inclusion of film in the wider package that Scottish Enterprise will put forward?

Janet Archer: We have discussed that. A meeting is scheduled for January with all the relevant parties and the IPS to discuss that.

12:00

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Convener, I apologise for my very late arrival, which was due to the traffic chaos on the west side of town delaying me by a couple of hours.

In answer to a question from Joan McAlpine, Janet Archer was clear about the need to be much more coherent and to speak to a wider range of people across the artistic spectrum. By what criteria will you judge your success in doing that? How will you decide whether it has worked?

Janet Archer: I guess that the proof of the pudding will be in the eating—it will be the outcomes that we generate. First, we need to define the key strategic partners that we need to have relationships with in order to drive opportunity, and we are doing that. In our new plan, we will include a series of statements from those partners articulating how they see themselves working with Creative Scotland. Out of that will come a series of actions, which we will develop with those partners. In a year's time, we will review those and test whether we have achieved them.

Liz Smith: How easy will it be to have a look at the strategic direction? Obviously, one of the big criticisms that was thrown up before you took office was about the strategic direction. People said that some in the artistic community were more concerned with balancing the books, which was very much to the frustration of the artists, and that the overall strategic vision was not there. How will you judge how well the strategic vision has worked?

Janet Archer: We are working through an exercise with our audit and risk committee—in fact, we have a meeting tomorrow—to work out what our key performance measures, to use more business-speak, will be going forward. We need to get those right. Of course, we need to generate outcomes in terms of numbers of things and people that we fund, numbers of people that we reach and all the things that are countable, but one of the biggest things that we can do is to create a deeper sense of confidence, ambition, aspiration and hope among people working in the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland.

We need a belief system that is based on a clear and navigable route map that we make available to people so that they can engineer their futures and find ways to open doors and make new partnerships and connections in and out of Scotland in order to afford opportunity and realise dreams. We need to find a way to generate a real sense that that is possible and that people can build extraordinary things that will be valued both for their intrinsic worth and because they generate opportunities, work, jobs and income for people,

which is absolutely fundamental if people are to sustain themselves and live their lives as cultural ambassadors.

Liz Smith: Do you think that that will come about because people feel that there is more consultation with them and that they are more involved in setting the strategy? Obviously, a lot of the previous criticism was because people felt, rightly or wrongly, that they were being left out and that decisions were taken by those who were not actually involved in the arts.

Janet Archer: I think that, already, I have developed a reputation as a listener. In the application process for the role, I came out strongly as a learner in my skills profile. The organisation has a sense of purpose only if it listens and learns from the people whom it has the responsibility to serve and work with. We are doing that in a focused way. So far, the feedback has been that people believe us when we say that we want to take on their views.

At every stage of the journey in producing the plan, we have taken on board comments, and we are introducing new words into the content of the plan as people offer them up. I am comfortable with that and I am comfortable that we will not fix anything until we have had the chance to go out to the widest possible group of people who want to feed in. I hope very much that when we publish our plan, it will not be a surprise because so many people will have contributed to it that it will have become everybody's plan.

Joan McAlpine: You may be aware that the committee invited people to send questions for witnesses through Twitter. We had quite a decent response and I want to pass on one particular question that came to us through that route. The issue raised was again about something that your predecessor and the board of Creative Scotland decided to do, which was to expand the office premises in Waverley Gate in Edinburgh in order to sublet to other organisations and also partly to use it as an event space.

According to the person who submitted the question, you will be paying £270,000 annually for that expanded headquarters. She would like me to ask you whether you think that that is an appropriate use of funds. Also, do you think that there is validity in the criticism that some of your Edinburgh-based clients who used to sublet you premises for events are now losing out because you are hosting them yourself?

The Convener: Could you answer that in 140 characters or less, please?

Janet Archer: I agree that it is a lot of money. It is fixed into our lease. We are trying to rent out the space at reasonable rates so that people can use

it. We are not running events ourselves in those spaces, as far as I know.

Joan McAlpine: Right. Are you suggesting that you think that it is too much money? If it was up to you, would you like to revisit the lease?

Janet Archer: We are trying to recoup the money through leasing out the space to other users across the arts, screen and creative industries. We are currently undertaking a piece of work looking at our estates across Edinburgh and Glasgow. It is our duty as a public body to ensure that we operate as efficiently and as effectively as we can.

Joan McAlpine: How much money are you recouping in Edinburgh?

Janet Archer: I would have to look at the budget and get back to you on that figure, but it was one of the first things that I asked my senior leadership team to look at when I joined the organisation.

Joan McAlpine: I take it that when the decision was made by your predecessors, some kind of plan was in place that you would recoup so much of the £270,000 a year by subletting. Presumably, such a plan was in place—or was it not?

Janet Archer: I have not seen a clear plan but there may well have been a plan that I have not found yet.

Joan McAlpine: In someone's head?

Janet Archer: It is an issue that we are aware of and we are looking at how we can make better sense of the utilisation of that space. We get a lot of people using the space regularly—including the Scottish Government and the other development agencies—so it is a used space. It has become a hub for people to connect up and that is quite useful, in terms of all the things that we talked about, in encouraging more dialogue across the work that we do.

Joan McAlpine: What about the point that you are putting Creative Scotland in a position of competition with other arts organisations in Edinburgh that might have been letting out their space for similar events? Is that a valid criticism?

Janet Archer: It probably is.

Joan McAlpine: Okay, thanks very much.

The Convener: On behalf of the committee, I thank you for coming along this morning and giving us your views. Clearly, as I said at the beginning, it has been a troubled time over the past 12 to 18 months but we all hope—on this committee and, I am sure, in the wider artistic community—that we are over most of those troubles and that we are now travelling in the right direction.

I hope that when the reviews are published next year on the work that you are doing, we can see some of the progress that has been made towards improving some of the communication between the organisation and the wider artistic community. I am sure that we would all like to see that.

Our next meeting will be on 3 December, when we will take evidence on school closures as part of our scrutiny of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.

Meeting closed at 12:09.

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e-format first available
ISBN 978-1-78392-200-0

Revised e-format available
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