

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Thursday 18 September 2025
23rd Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2026-27

1. The Committee will take evidence in relation to its [Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2026-27](#).
2. The Committee agreed to take a cumulative approach to budget scrutiny over Session 6, focusing primarily on the culture spending portfolio.
3. The Committee ran a pre-budget call for views from 25 June to 15 August 2025. The call for views received 37 responses, which are available to view [online](#). The Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) has produced a summary of the evidence received and a briefing paper, which are included in the papers for the Committee's [11 September 2025 meeting](#).
4. The Committee will take evidence from—
 - Rachael Browning, Director of Programme and Policy, Art Fund
 - Lewis Coenen-Rowe, culture/SHIFT Manager, Culture for Climate Scotland
 - Alison Nolan, Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Library and Information Council
 - Tamara Rogovic, President, Scottish Artists Union
5. All of the above organisations provided responses to the Committee's call for views, which are attached at Annexe A:
 - Art Fund
 - Culture for Climate Scotland
 - Scottish Library and Information Council
 - Scottish Artists Union
6. SPICe has also produced a short summary of the Committee's pre-budget work this session and an outline of themes raised in the call for views, including in relation to the Scottish Government's draft Climate Change Plan. This is available at Annexe B.

Clerks, September 2025

Annexe A

Art Fund

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture

Art Fund is the UK charity that connects museums, people and art. Our charitable programme gives millions of pounds in grants to museums and galleries that support acquisitions, art commissions, touring, curation, early years, workforce development, and career development for teachers and students.

Art Fund is an independent charity. It raises money through trusts, foundations, funders and philanthropy as well as the generosity of Art Fund's 142,000 members who buy a National Art Pass, demonstrating the unique public support for museums and galleries.

Art Fund has long been a supporter of museums in Scotland, distributing tens of millions in funding to museums, galleries and historic houses in Scotland since being founded in 1903. Art Fund has over 1,000 museums, galleries and historic houses in our network, of which 119 are based in Scotland.

Art Fund welcomes the vital commitment by the Scottish Government to increase investment in arts and culture by £100 million by 2028-29 alongside a funding increase of £20 million in 2026-27. We are delighted that £4 million has been invested into a new funding programme "Museum Futures" to support the sustainability of Scotland's museums. We hope this funding will be maintained, with ongoing core revenue funding allocated for museum operation and collection care.

Museums in Scotland are operating in an uncertain environment, with real term funding cuts, ageing buildings, and increased overheads (including increases to employer National Insurance contributions, the National Living Wage and rising operating costs) placing them under enormous strain. The fragile situation of civic museums – a third of the sector - has reached tipping point. It is the very things that bring museums to life for their communities, such as outreach, education, and health and wellbeing, that have become increasingly difficult to sustain.

Whilst the Museum Futures funding is greatly welcomed, the funding will not be enough to address the additional costs museums face. We hope that museums will receive a fair share of the funding yet to be allocated, recognising that there are over 450 museums and galleries across Scotland, in cities, towns and villages, providing creative inspiration, education, social mobility, health and wellbeing, economic growth and civic pride.

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We hope that part of the funding yet to be allocated will be ringfenced for the Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums Steering Group (ESSM) who have suggested that £5 million would be required to deliver the recommendations of their report, to ensure museums are inclusive places where we can celebrate all the people of Scotland and interrogate colonial and slavery histories.

To ensure that museum collections remain dynamic and relevant, funding for acquisitions and commissions should also be prioritised. They are not only central to the future of museums, but they also provide an opportunity to speak to a diversity of communities, histories, and art forms that can educate and inspire audiences. However, individual acquisition grants in England are on average more than double the amount of funding in Scotland. The plans for budget increases present an opportunity to ensure both acquisition and commissioning funding is prioritised and sustained year-round.

Finally, to ensure planned budget increases maximise outcomes the sector needs more clarity on how the planned budget increases will be spent. The Scottish Government's delay to confirming Creative Scotland's RFI budget set a bad precedent of using reserves, led to organisations having to model and implement budgets with a tight turnaround time, impacted on staff mental health and eroded trust between cultural organisations and government funding. Timely clarity on future funding is essential. The ability of Creative Scotland to provide multi-year funding and expert support is vital for cultural organisations to stabilise, grow, and deliver against the cultural strategy.

We are delighted that investment from Scottish Government has supported Museums Galleries Scotland's Small Grants Fund to be open to non-accredited museums for the first time, and that the new Repair and Adaptation Fund has been announced to address the need for capital funding in the sector. To ensure this funding sustainably supports the sector in the long term, the museum sector is continuing to advocate for capital funding similar to the Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND) administered by Arts Council England.

Whilst we welcome ambitions to promote philanthropy in Scotland, public investment is key to unlocking philanthropy, with many programmes only securing external funding after a contribution from the public purse has been confirmed. It's harder to raise unrestricted income and fundraise for core activity or 'behind the scenes' collection work. New, ambitious and time-bound initiatives are often more appealing and therefore government core funding is essential. Public subsidy creates a multiplier effect that enables organisations to grow more income and support.

Growing international partnerships such as Scotland + Venice could be further developed. Art Fund has supported organisations in Scotland to bring work by artists showing at the prestigious Venice Biennale to home institutions, so that UK audiences have the opportunity to enjoy some of the highlights of Venice. For example, Art Fund supported the UK premiere and Scottish cinema tour of Alberta Whittle's *Lagareh – The Last Born*, as well as its presentation at the Modern in

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Edinburgh, which brought together an exhibition which gave focus to the strength of contemporary Black women and acts of resistance. The continuation and expansion of this programme would deliver against the outcomes of the International Culture Strategy by enhancing Scotland's international reputation and ensuring cultural organisations and artists are internationally connected.

In recognition of museums role in growing tourism in Scotland, we would also like to see the museum sector receive its fair share of funding from tourist taxes. For example, V&A Dundee, a previous finalist of Art Fund Museum of the Year, developed the city as an international tourist destination attracting new first-time visitors to the city, many of whom would not have visited Dundee without it. There has been a 54% increase in tourism to Dundee since before the museum opened. According to Dundee City Council, tourism in Dundee is now worth over £10 million a month to the city. Tourist taxes are therefore a fantastic mechanism to support the cultural sector to further build its role in growing the visitor economy.

Art Fund continues to support sector wide calls for investment in culture to be increased to 1% in line with the 2019 CEAC report Putting Artists in the Picture which recommended that culture should establish a baseline target for national arts and culture funding above 1% of the Scottish Government's overall budget. This investment will bring Scotland closer to the levels of investment across Europe, where the average is 1.5%.

We also believe there is further opportunity in growing partnership working between museums. Art Fund's new UK-wide Going Places programme builds on the recommendations of the research report Going Places: Touring and shared exhibitions in the UK, commissioned by Art Fund and Creative Scotland. Going Places has established five networks of small to mid-sized museums across all four UK nations, with each network producing two touring exhibitions over five years (2025-2030). These networks include Aberdeenshire Museums Service, Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery.

To overcome barriers of disjointed funding support, there is an opportunity for further strategic working between Creative Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland, recognising that there is much overlap between the organisations that both funders support. In 2011 the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council moved its library and museum functions to Arts Council England (ACE). ACE assuming this responsibility ensured there was efficient and effective join up of the sector, and that organisations working across museums and galleries didn't fall through the gaps of two different funders. Much of the museum sector in Scotland is heritage based and does need its own development priorities, however, much of the work is also delivered creatively and in a manner that makes it eligible for Creative Scotland's support and arts funding. Whilst we aren't necessarily advocating for Creative Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland to merge, we hope the benefits of Creative Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland working more closely together can be explored.

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Art Fund welcomes the commitment Scottish Government to mainstream culture across portfolios and develop cross-portfolio funding for culture.

Many museums are finding new ways forward through gaining recognition for museums' social impact in their local community in health and wellbeing, and learning and skills. For example, Perth Museum was shortlisted for Art Fund Museum of the Year 2025 whose museum's Partner Schools Project has engaged 10 primary schools from local areas, building lasting partnerships that empower teachers, pupils and communities to connect with their heritage. Art Fund has also worked with MGS on the Workforce for the Future projects in partnership with Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), museums and schools in lower Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation areas. Supporting both primary and secondary school pupils, the projects provide young people with the opportunity to learn more about how local history is shared and increase employability skills across 21 council areas over a 3 year period.

We would like to see this work recognised through increased access to cross-portfolio funding that recognise the important contribution of museums and galleries in education as well as climate, health and wellbeing

The new population health framework in Scotland does not mention museums despite Art Fund's recent audience attitude survey with More in Common finding that 78% of people in Scotland say museums make them proud of where they live. Furthermore, Art Fund's Calm and Collected report found that 63% of UK adults have visited museums or galleries to deal with stress and anxiety. More could be done to ensure strategies and frameworks by other departments recognise and support museums.

We believe that there is an opportunity for the cultural sector and education sector to work together to increase the proportion of school-ready children. Together with Nesta, (the UK's innovation agency for social good) Art Fund have launched a UK-wide early years programme, Mini Wonders, working with 15 museums across the UK. We believe that museums' buildings, collections and expert learning teams are uniquely placed to enhance the caregiver-child interactions that enable children to be ready for school. Museums participating in Scotland include National Galleries of Scotland and Perth Art Gallery. We would be delighted to work with Scottish Parliament to scale up a museum-led programme for under 5's to effect lasting and impactful change for some of Scotland's most disadvantaged young children.

The culture and heritage of sector in Scotland is proactively addressing operational emissions despite capacity and cost challenges. For example, organisations taking part in Art Fund's Going Places programme (Aberdeenshire Museums Service, Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery) have been responding directly to museums' needs for more sustainable ways of exhibiting. As part of this programme Art Fund is working with organisations to promote environmentally responsible decision-making in touring exhibitions, including developing a step-by-step planning tool to help museums minimise their carbon

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footprint, with advice on embedding sustainability into organisational practices and exhibition logistics, through to longer-term strategy

Many museums are developing and actioning sustainability strategies such as National Museums Scotland committing to being on the path to net zero carbon by 2030. More could be done to support local authority run museums in Scotland who may not have control over their energy contracts.

Museums have a vital role to play in shaping and informing public attitudes on climate and sustainability. Art Fund's 2024 Museum Directors survey found that one of the key opportunities for museums over the next 5 years is to be spaces that support communities to safely have challenging conversations about complex issues such as climate.

For example, through The Wild Escape project Art Fund worked with the National Trust Scotland, WWF and RSPB to create opportunities for thousands of young people to visit museum and gallery collections and learn about biodiversity. 53 museums and galleries in Scotland took part in The Wild Escape with £40,650 given to MGS to support organisations to take part.

Earlier in 2025 Broughton House and Garden, Dumfries and Galloway and The Watt Institution, Greenock, took part in The Herds project with support from Art Fund. The Herds is a groundbreaking public art and climate-awareness project which features hundreds of life-sized animal puppets traveling over 20,000 km—from Central Africa to the Arctic Circle—symbolizing wildlife displacement by climate change. Broughton House and Garden and The Watt Institution engaged local communities with this project through artistic events, workshops and educational activities inspired by the journey. This has sparked collective action, learning and discussion about climate and sustainability.

We hope that the Climate Change Plan will fully recognise the role of museums and cultural organisations in contributing to net zero outcomes.

To support this work there needs to be funding streams which focus on capital investment such as de-carbonising, retrofitting, and future-proofing museums and galleries, as well as improved travel networks to support public transport to museums based in rural locations.

Art Fund see an opportunity for funding programmes that work in partnership with climate and sustainability organisations to be rolled out more widely. Museums are trusted spaces in their local communities and a well-placed bridge between national and local climate action. We see a critical role of the Scottish Government to resource and facilitate partnerships, programmes and innovation between sectors at scale, that creatively address the issues of the future.

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Culture for Climate Scotland

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture

Culture for Climate Scotland (CCS) – founded in 2011 as Creative Carbon Scotland – is a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) with a core complement of 13 (11.2 FTE) permanent staff. We also employ artists placed in specific climate change projects. An experienced and trusted organisation with strong governance, skilled teams, and a history of delivering collaborative, cross-sector work, we are the only organisation doing what we do in the UK.

UK. We at CCS believe the cultural sector can play a central role in building a climate-just, equitable, zero-carbon, climate-ready society. Cultural narratives shape the values, behaviours and systems that themselves shape society; changing culture is an essential step in changing the world. Our work supports organisations to move beyond dominant models based on unsustainable growth, and towards approaches rooted in justice, equity and climate resilience.

The budget increases are welcome but their impact is reduced by:

- Cumulative deterioration from years of standstill.
- The effect of increased costs on cultural organisations' disposable income eg Employer's National Insurance, price of supplies, wage inflation.
- The Minister's indication that the increased budget for Multi-Year Funding (MYF) could/should fund more organisations rather than funding fewer to a higher level. This also impacts on Creative Scotland's capacity to support its MYF organisations without itself having additional resource, which could lead to reduced quality.

Culture for Climate Scotland recommends that the aim is not to achieve quantitative growth but to grow the quality of cultural activity and its contribution across policy areas

Alternative Funding Models

Culture for Climate Scotland notes the implementation of Creative Scotland's Multi-Year Funding programme and welcomes the stability provided to the funded cultural organisations over the three years to 2028, especially as many of this new cohort are small community-based organisations.

We are aware that the Scottish Government's Culture team is working on identifying and developing alternative funding models and intends to report on this work before the end of the current session.

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Years of experience in the funded arts sector, working at various scales, lead some members of the Culture for Climate Scotland team to question whether it is possible to find a very different funding model that works. Arts funding, particularly in a country where the venues and markets are relatively small, is effectively supporting work that is not profitable. This can and does sometimes lead to self-funding (ie profitable) companies and events or products, but most of the support ensures access by the public to high-quality work. We are not aware of any example of subsidy that operates in a different way to assessments of likely quality of future activity by expert staff in a relevant organisation, and subsequent monitoring of the results.

Culture for Climate Scotland is unable to comment on alternative funding models other than what we have noted in our response to Q2. We understand that Scottish Government colleagues are investigating alternative models, and we look forward to hearing more about that research as it comes to hand.

Preventative Spending

Culture for Climate Scotland is unable to comment on whether or not progress has been made towards mainstreaming culture across the Scottish Government as the SG's inner workings are opaque and we have not seen external evidence of mainstreaming. As we noted in our response to last year's pre-budget scrutiny call for views, we are aware through our own working relationships with officers in the Culture and the Energy & Climate Change teams that they are actively pursuing cross-portfolio working. However, without these relationships we would not see any indication of progress. We are pleased to note the involvement of the Marine Directorate and of a Scottish Government climate change researcher in our project Sea Change: co-creating coastal futures (<https://cultureforclimate.scot/project/sea-change/>) for which we have secured significant funding from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; our project partner NatureScot, which is also providing funding, made the initial contact with the Marine Directorate through an existing relationship. It is notable that CCS has secured external funding to support this mainstreaming cross-departmental work (culture, climate change, just transition, marine).

In terms of culture, the Scottish Government should prioritise preventative spending on pathways to culture as research shows the multiple social, health, environmental and economic benefits that result from participating in and consuming cultural activities and products. CCS believes key areas for preventative spending are:

- Universal provision of cultural participation for under-18s (eg music, visual art, drama, dance embedded in early years and school curricula): the West Bromwich Shireland Academy's collaboration with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/jan/05/banging-drum-music-education-uk-school-run-orchestra>) is an innovative approach to holistic child development.

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- Subsidising carbon-reducing audience travel to cultural venues, for example by providing low-carbon group travel options – CCS's Transforming Audience Travel Through Art project (<https://cultureforclimate.scot/guest-article-reimagining-audience-travel/>) investigated this.
- Helping communities and society understand the need to move towards a more sustainable future and the possibility and benefits of doing so. The CreaTures project (Horizon 2020 funded; <https://verture.org.uk/our-impact/creatures/>) demonstrated the benefits of creative practices in this shift

Net Zero and the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan

The Scottish cultural sector is leading the way nationally and internationally in understanding and transparency of emissions. Since 2014-15 Culture for Climate Scotland (formerly Creative Carbon Scotland) has been funded by Creative Scotland to train and support its funded organisations on emissions reduction, and to collect and analyse these organisations' environmental data. Having seven years of emissions data from a mostly constant group of small, publicly funded organisations is unique in Scotland. It provides a good example to other sectors and a benchmark for the cultural sector going forward. The sector has built good practices and processes so that now many organisations and individual cultural workers understand the core emissions that are the essential first step to reaching net zero. The 2022-23 data showed that 46% of cultural organisations were on track to be net zero by 2045 (Full report: 'Greening culture: Are we on track?' (PDF 2.16MB) [https://creativecarbonscotland.sharepoint.com/structures/Shared Documents/Transformational Change/Consultations/Greening culture: Are we on track?%20\(PDF%202.16MB\)?](https://creativecarbonscotland.sharepoint.com/structures/Shared Documents/Transformational Change/Consultations/Greening culture: Are we on track?%20(PDF%202.16MB)?)).

The 2023-24 reporting period was the last under Creative Scotland's Regular Funded Organisations programme. One-hundred-and-thirty-one organisations (RFOs, Edinburgh festivals and City of Edinburgh Council Culture Service funded) reported their environmental data, which included new data points on emissions from procurement, digital and audience travel (Summary report: Environmental reporting update <https://cultureforclimate.scot/environmental-reporting-update/>)

Culture for Climate Scotland (CCS) will begin to analyse the data for 2024-25 in August 2025 and will report the results to Creative Scotland in the new year. 2025-26 will be the first reporting period for the 246 cultural organisations funded through Creative Scotland's Multi-Year Funding programme and CCS is currently delivering a suite of training to all MYF recipients that were not previously RFOs.

The national performing arts companies (opera, ballet, orchestras, theatre) are not included in the emissions reporting system described above as they are funded directly by the Scottish Government rather than via Creative Scotland; neither do they report under the public bodies duties system as they aren't included in the list of public bodies.

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Culture for Climate Scotland doesn't work directly with most heritage organisations, but we have provided advice and support to the National Museums of Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland and have collaborated with those organisations as well as Historic Environment Scotland and various smaller heritage organisations over the past few years. Those organisations, along with the National Galleries of Scotland, are all sectoral leaders in this area.

The culture and heritage sector has a vital role to play. Our heritage sector holds the evidence of how our nation coalesced, its sense of itself, its communities and its perceptions of its place in the world. Our cultural sector tells the stories of how our nation and communities came to be what they are today, gives us insight into others' experiences and viewpoints, imagines where we might have taken different choices and creates visions of futures that can influence the choices we make now. By its nature, the culture and heritage sector is perfectly positioned to frame the complex systemic challenges of the poly-crises we all face in ways that are engaging and understandable for the public, and its reach extends from small community organisations to national festivals.

Creative practitioners – artists of all disciplines and forms – can play a powerful role in contributing to climate change and sustainability projects. They can open discussion, offer new and different ways of thinking, make the invisible visible, enable other professionals to innovate, widen audiences, enable genuine participation – and more, as discussed on our website (<https://cultureforclimate.scot/services/arts-into-climate/>).

Indigo Limited's 2024 Act Green Report (<https://www.indigo-ltd.com/resources/act-green-2024-report>) evidences UK-wide cultural audiences' expectations of the sector in response to the climate emergency and CCS believes that many Scottish cultural and heritage organisations are rising to meet those expectations.

Culture has a long history of challenging the political response either overtly (eg Brecht) or covertly (eg Shostakovich) and Scotland is fortunate that scrutiny and challenge by the sector of its own funding sources is viewed as constructive.

The impact of the Climate Change Plan on the culture and heritage sector can just as easily be positive or negative depending whether the plan embraces the important role the sector has to play and allows it be proactive in that role, particularly cross department/portfolio. This article on using artists as a strategic weapon (<https://ourmanifesto.substack.com/p/what-if-artists-were-your-strategic>) is recommended.

Here are some suggestions about how funding streams could better support culture and heritage organisations to contribute towards net zero outcomes.

- Re-align other national policies and plans so that they do not counteract the prioritising of environmental impact of cultural and heritage organisations' activities. Positively support exploring alternative methods of delivering and experiencing cultural products nationally and internationally instead of

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pursuing business as usual as key to maintaining and growing Scotland's international profile.

- Support the retrofit for mitigation and adaptation of cultural buildings as key public assets that help to develop resilient communities and facilitate joint understanding of challenging topics like climate change and the collective imagining of sustainable futures. A key point to come out of the recent Edinburgh buildings workshop was the need for funding for repair and maintenance of buildings (<https://cultureforclimate.scot/future-proofing-edinburghs-cultural-buildings-event-reflection/>) . The environmental data received by CCS for 2023-24 showed that in just over half of reporting organisations 51% of their core emissions footprint came from buildings.
- Strengthen public transport provision that enables audiences to attend cultural events and doesn't discourage artists travelling for work eg via luggage allowances that don't accommodate musical instruments. The environmental data received by CCS for 2023-24 showed that 36% of the combined core emissions footprint of all reporting organisations came from their own travel; this does not include audience travel data which, based on trial data collection instances, is likely to be around three times higher than all other emissions combined.
- Invest in circular economy infrastructure that supports re-use and resource sharing.
- Invest in energy infrastructure that supports access by touring companies and screen productions to mains (greened grid) electricity or, in off-grid locations, to local or portable renewable sources.
- Invest in infrastructure that enables universal food waste provision.
- Avoid funding activity via a silo-ed portal (eg "Is your project an arts project or an environmental project or a health project or a just transition project?").
- For any cross-portfolio funding that involves creative practitioners, seek to provide multi-year funding with an adequate proposal preparation period: effective public engagement – ie engagement that seeks to effect social change – takes time to build trust, include diverse voices and produce meaningful responses.

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Scottish Artists Union

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture

Scottish Artists Union is the trade union that represents visual artists and applied artists in Scotland.

Scottish Artists Union welcomes the increase in funding to Regularly Funded arts Organisations (RFOs), because it is important to make sure that the organisational architecture/framework of the arts & culture sector is robust. We are also pleased to see that some of the new RFOs are artist's led initiatives. However, the increase to the budgets of arts organisations will not necessarily directly benefit individual freelance artists or independent freelance curators. There seems to be an assumption by the Scottish Government and Creative Scotland that there will be an automatic "trickle-down" type economics to artists. Unfortunately, we know that "trickle-down" economics doesn't work.

Scottish Artists Union is very concerned that there has not been an increase in funding to the primary funding for individual artists to make and develop their own artworks and art practice on their own terms – out with the confines of the parameters that are set by the RFOs' programming. From what we understand, the budget for the Open Fund for Individuals was reduced in the 2025 - 2026 Creative Scotland budget, and there was no money from the Scottish Government that went into this fund this year.

In addition, the Open Fund for Individuals (OFI) is seriously over-subscribed (especially since the glut of applications following the announcement of the closure of the fund in August 2024) and it has not been adequately increased to accommodate the fall-out from this situation. Applying to the (OFI) has become an even more demoralising lottery for artists, since many great applications are being rejected simply because there is not enough money in the OFI budget. The application process is arduous and time consuming, and it is a kick in the teeth to be rejected while at the same time told that you have a great application and promising project. We are especially concerned that this combination of factors is having a more concentrated detrimental impact on artists from under-represented strata, particularly artists from BPoC / global majority backgrounds and those from low income households.

Scotland is still experiencing a cultural brain drain. We are hearing from artists who are either giving up their practice because they are not making enough income to keep their art practice afloat, or they are leaving the country to move to locations

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where they will have lower overheads. This is due to a combination of issues: an ever escalating high cost of living (especially rents, both residential and commercial), fewer paid opportunities for individual artists (over the last several years), and massively increased competition for the Open Fund for Individuals because this fund is seriously over-subscribed and the fund has not been adequately increased to accommodate this situation.

Plus, the negative consequences of Brexit (including added shipping & customs expenses, travel visas & carnet expenses), combined with the recent introduction of the new General Product Safety Regulation rules (which adds additional overheads and complications for shipping to EU and Northern Ireland), and now Trump's tariff import-taxes to the US all have made it much harder for artists to exhibit and/or sell their artwork abroad.

In the immediate term, it would help matters immensely if the budget for the Open Fund for Individuals was increased to accommodate the higher number of applications from individual freelance artists and freelance independent curators.

Following feedback from our members, SAU is also recommending:

EDI Accountability with Structure – Require mentoring, peer networks, and sponsored inclusion for global majority and low-income freelancers within funded organisations.”

Some of the most significant problems that have been arising (in funding provision and in Fair Work compliance) stem directly from the legislation that defines Creative Scotland's remit. Scottish Artists Union is very concerned that Creative Scotland's current Remit (in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010) does not directly reference or include professional artists and cultural workers at all. The current wording in the remit is totally vague - “those engaged in artistic and other creative endeavours” - which could refer to a member of the public (of any age) attending a beginner art class for the first time. Whether intended or not, Creative Scotland's current Remit heavily skews the funding provision and decisions towards arts organisations. As a consequence, individual artists (and their practices) appear to be an afterthought.

If professional artists and cultural workers are not central to the legislation, and directly written into Creative Scotland's Remit, then the funding priorities may ignore artists needs, and in some circumstances artists may end up being an afterthought, or potentially not on the decision making radar at all.

Scottish Artists Union is requesting that the legislation that determines Creative Scotland's Remit is adjusted to incorporate the UNESCO Status of the Artist Recommendations 1980, particularly since UNESCO are already paying attention to the Scottish Government's Fair Work Framework in their most recent 2023 "Global Consultation" Report (mentioned on Page 24). The UNESCO Status of the Artist Recommendations are readymade and internationally recognised, and have been the basis for legislation in Canada and Ireland, as well as many other countries.

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Furthermore, if we are aiming for a solid and lasting positive change in the 'workplace culture' for artists and cultural workers, then embedding the UNESCO Status of the Artists Recommendations into the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 legislation may be a crucial component to secure/anchor the Fair Work Framework into workplaces in the Arts & Culture sectors, particularly in terms of Fair Work for freelance artists.

It is completely unacceptable that artists and cultural workers - the very people who generate the work that sustains Scotland's cultural sector - continue to be deprioritised. The UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of the Artist clearly recognises artists as professionals who "shall enjoy the same rights as other workers" and asserts that "States should adopt measures to ensure that artists benefit from social security, including health protection, unemployment insurance, and pensions." Despite these clear international standards, the current funding distribution model employed by Creative Scotland works against artists, prioritising the infrastructure, administration, and logistics of RFOs over the people who actually create the work - leaving artists trapped in precarity and struggling to sustain their practices and livelihoods.

The UNESCO Status of the Artist Recommendations 1980

<https://www.unesco.org/creativity/en/1980-recommendation-concerning-status-artist>

UNESCO 5th Global Consultation - Empowering Creativity: Implementing the UNESCO 1980 Recommendation Concerning the Status of the Artist (2023)

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387452>

The SCVO HR For Creatives Pilot was an extremely successful project. All of the organisations and individuals involved have gained lasting benefits. It is clear from the report following the SCVO HR for Creatives Pilot that further investment in the continuation of this project would benefit the entire arts & culture sector, particularly in terms of delivering Fair Work. Please see link to the report "Supporting creative talent to thrive in Scotland: Navigating a resilient and fair HR landscape for creative industries" <https://www.creativescotland.com/binaries/content/assets/creative-scotland/resources-and-publications/research/2025/supporting-creative-talent-to-thrive-in-sco>

In the 2023 Scottish Artists Union Members' Survey, 25% said that they had a neurodivergent condition, and 33% said they had a disability or long-term health condition lasting more than a year. Taking this data into account, SAU are recommending/requesting the introduction of ring-fenced funding to enable equity of Fair Work for disabled freelance artists. This would be grant funding specifically to support access requirements for disabled freelance artists who are presenting their work in exhibitions and events, presenting artist's talks/lectures, attending artists' residencies, and attending professional development training. The funding should include provision for travel & accommodation requirements that are necessary to meet the artists needs stated in their access riders. In addition to a funding stream directly for the disabled freelance artists (who may also be presenting work outside

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of Scotland), there should be funding streams available to all organisations that provide professional development training opportunities for artists, and that host artist's exhibitions/performances/talks/lectures. Note: reference to "freelance artists" should include artists across all of the arts sectors, including: visual and applied artists, independent/freelance curators, musicians, writers, performers, independent/freelance choreographers, and independent/freelance artistic directors. For best practice for disability access for artists' speaking events please see the Inklusion Guide. <https://www.inklusionguide.org/>

In order to mitigate some of the negative consequences from Brexit, GPSR rules and the Trump US import taxes (that make our products less affordable for Americans), SAU recommends the establishment of a culture export hub to support Scotland's artists to be able to exhibit and sell their artworks abroad.

SAU also recommends the introduction of a ring-fenced fund for artists and freelance curators travel grants. If freelance artists and independent freelance curators are to develop their careers internationally (and across the UK), they need to be able to travel to present their artwork anywhere in the world. There are often paid opportunities for artists in other countries (exhibitions, residencies, lectures/talks), but the cost of the travel to get there may cancel out the point in applying for these opportunities in the first place. What at first glance seems to be a way to make an income could cause the artist to be out of pocket because of the overhead costs of travel & accommodation. Looking at a model that works - so many more local and international opportunities are available for artists based in Canada because of the Canada Council of the Arts travel grants scheme. For example, if a curator in another country (or another part of the UK) is confident that an artist will be able to secure a travel grant from Creative Scotland, then they are more likely to seek out artists from Scotland to curate into their exhibition or screening programmes and artist talks/lectures

The Basic Income for the Arts Pilot in Ireland has clearly demonstrated the benefits of implementing a similar project in Scotland. We recognise that the entire benefits portfolio is not yet devolved to Scotland, however, we understand that there could be a possibility of a pilot akin to the one that was run in Ireland. Please see link for more details about the positive outcomes of the Irish Basic Income for the Arts Pilot <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-culture-communications-and-sport/campaigns/basic-income-for-the-arts-pilot-scheme/#>

SAU welcomes the expansion of opportunities for artists to be employed in "Social Prescribing" projects/initiatives. However, we are very concerned that

there is not sufficient wellbeing supervision for Socially Engaged Artists involved in "Social Prescribing" projects/initiatives. We have heard from our

members that when they are commissioned to produce, lead, or take part in these projects, there are sometimes situations that can become very

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stressful and unpredictable. Unfortunately, usually, freelance artists do not have the same kinds of support that employed workers have, even the workers that they are collaborating with or working alongside.

SAU is recommending/requesting that ring fenced, targeted funding should be available for artists' wellbeing supervision on projects that include freelance Socially Engaged Artists, especially in "Social Prescribing" projects/initiatives. Freelance Socially Engaged Artists often work on projects that are partnered with NHS facilities, schools and community projects, and also with charities in the areas of health and the care sector. This may include working with clients in: youth services, disability support services, parental support, elder care services, hospice care, drug & alcohol rehabilitation services, and mental health services.

Wellbeing supervision/coaching/counseling should be free and available for all freelance Socially Engaged Artists in workplace circumstances where the artist may be at risk of psychological stress, or/and if there is a risk of physical violence towards the artist. There are supervision, coaching and counseling services aimed at artists & cultural workers which are offered from Wellbeing in the Arts. It would make a huge difference to all involved if this kind of service to support artists was mandatory for these projects. Wellbeing in the Arts <https://www.wellbeinginthearts.org.uk/>

We also recommend reading Professor Eleonora Belfiore's paper - "Who cares? At what price? The hidden costs of socially engaged arts labour and the moral failure of cultural policy" <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1367549420982863>

Scotland has a significant number of artists whose practices address the climate crisis and sustainability. It is vital that these artists are given the support to keep doing their important work. It is crucial to pay attention to the work of artists in this matter, because our research material draws from a vast range of academic disciplines. Artists work well in cross-disciplinary collaborations with scientists, farmers, economists, sociologists, industry stakeholders and policy makers.

Fund/employ artists to work with farmers, particularly artists who work in collaboration with hydrologists, agronomists, pedologists, marine biologists, meteorologists and other types of scientists.

The Crichton Carbon Centre is leading the way in Scotland to demonstrate how artists placement can work in practice - an artist and scientists working together. See link to the Crichton Carbon Centre for more information about their team and the Peatland Connections project. <https://www.carboncentre.org/about>

Fund/employ artists to work with civil servants in the Scottish Government and Local Government, and within industry bodies on projects akin to the Artists Placement Group. See link to information about Artists Placement Group <https://barbarasteveni.org/Work-APG-Artist-Placement-group>

Keep funding the Circular Arts Network, which "is a circular economy tool created to support the arts". <https://www.canarts.org.uk/>

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Keep funding the kinds of project work that Cove Park is doing to develop the nature reserve aspects of their artists residency. <https://covepark.org/>

Give tax breaks and grants to artists studios providers for renovations to insulate buildings in order to lower heating costs, and to install renewable energy, solar power etc. In addition to reducing carbon footprints, this will also hopefully reduce the rent for artists' studio spaces.

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Scottish Library and Information Council

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture

The Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) is the independent advisory body to the Scottish Government on library and information related matters.

SLIC was formed in 1991 and provides a leadership focus for Scottish library and information services. It advances development in the library sector, monitors standards of provision and promotes best practice. SLIC regularly undertakes research, promotes innovation and a greater understanding of the library and information sector in Scotland.

SLIC is a membership organisation. Members are drawn from the public sector, higher education institutions, further education colleges, and special interest libraries.

SLIC led in the creation of Forward: Scotland's Public Library Strategy 2021-2025.

The Scottish Government's commitment to increase culture funding during this Parliamentary session is welcome. However, Scotland's public libraries have not consistently received a fair proportion of this uplift, despite their critical role in delivering literacy, learning, digital inclusion, wellbeing, and community cohesion outcomes. While the Culture Strategy Action Plan recognises the importance of libraries — notably in E1: supporting free-of-charge services in the heart of communities and E4: amplifying the role of community-based cultural assets — the funding allocated to libraries has not yet reflected their strategic value.

For many people, their first engagement with culture is through a local library. Reading remains Scotland's most popular cultural activity, and evidence shows that it fosters empathy, strengthens communities, and equips citizens to navigate the challenges of a mobile, globalised, and digitally complex society. Libraries' ability to deliver these cultural outcomes depends on sustained, equitable investment.

Despite successes such as the targeted impact of the Public Library Improvement Fund (PLIF) — the absence of multi-year funding settlements limits the sector's ability to:

- Plan strategically and invest in long-term service development.
- Retain and develop skilled staff, reducing job insecurity and skills loss.
- Maintain consistent outreach to priority communities, particularly those facing deprivation or digital exclusion

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The volatility of annual grants also affects SLIC's own ability to plan long-term sector development. While PLIF has delivered strong results, its annual allocation model restricts the potential for transformational change, partnership building, and external investment leverage. Since 2013/14, 54 public libraries have closed and around 612 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff have been lost (2012/13–2022/23). The funding gap is stark: Scottish local authority spend per head on library resources ranges from 50p to £2.41. In comparison: Ireland invests £3 per capita; the Netherlands invests €29.41 per capita. This uneven landscape results in significant disparities in service quality and access across the country, undermining cultural equality. Under the national priority of Delivering Better Public Services, libraries can be catalysts for culture-led regeneration — especially in areas of deprivation, smaller towns, and rural communities.

Capital investment in libraries: ie including modernise buildings and digital infrastructure

- Modernises facilities in line with Net Zero requirements.
- Improves accessibility and digital connectivity.
- Creates multipurpose community hubs, attracting cultural and economic activity.

Libraries' track record in community-focused cultural programming means that regeneration funding invested in libraries delivers both infrastructure improvements and immediate cultural impact. Landmark investments, like Paisley's Central Library, show that where there has been investment in libraries, decline in usage has been reversed. The flourishing service in Paisley, previously an empty unit on the high street, welcomed 115,000 visitors in its first year.

The Museums Galleries Scotland Museums Futures programme offers a transferable blueprint for libraries — providing wraparound support, organisational sustainability, and sector-wide collaboration.

A Library Futures equivalent could:

- Support innovation and workforce development.
- Build capacity to secure external funding.
- Establish a sector-wide approach to resilience and sustainability.

To ensure further planned budget increases deliver maximum cultural outcomes, SLIC recommends:

1. Introduce multi-year revenue funding for public libraries to enable:
 - o Stable, long-term planning.
 - o Retention and upskilling of staff.
 - o Sustainable community outreach and programming.
2. Increase capital investment to:

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- o Modernise buildings.
 - o Improve accessibility and energy efficiency.
 - o Support co-location and culture-led regeneration.
3. Ring-fence programme funding to protect:
 - o Literacy and early years initiatives.
 - o Digital inclusion projects.
 - o Health and wellbeing programmes.
 4. Ensure equitable distribution of cultural funding so that libraries, as key community cultural assets, receive proportionate investment in line with their role in delivering national cultural, social, and economic priorities.
 5. Adapt a sector development model similar to Museums Futures, creating a sustained support programme for library innovation, collaboration, and sustainability

Public libraries are dynamic, inclusive, and essential cultural spaces. With sustained, equitable investment — delivered through multi-year settlements, capital upgrades, and ring-fenced outreach funding — they can continue to empower communities, support Scotland's cultural ambitions, and deliver measurable social and economic returns.

We must recognise the role that local government plays as major funder of culture in Scotland, but sustained budget pressures threaten cultural spend. To protect and grow investment, the Scottish Government should:

- Embed culture in local priorities such as education, health, regeneration, and wellbeing, demonstrating its cross-portfolio value (How do we leverage the Verity House Agreement clearly defining the role culture has to play in tackling the three shared priorities – tackling poverty, just transition to net zero and sustainable public services)
- Provide targeted, multi-year funding for libraries and other cultural services, reducing reliance on short-term grants.
- Lead on policy and incentivise collaboration by making funding contingent on cross-sector partnerships that deliver shared outcomes.
- Recognise local government as a key delivery partner in national cultural strategies, with clear, measurable commitments.

This approach would secure the long-term sustainability of libraries as community anchors and cultural gateways, ensuring equitable access to culture across Scotland.

Libraries have also explored alternative funding avenues, including:

- Partnerships with local / National businesses, trusts, and national bodies.
- Regional procurement collaborations to reduce costs.
- Participation in community wealth-building pilots (North Ayrshire).

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These remain supplementary and project-specific, not a replacement for core public funding.

Investment in libraries is among the best and most cost-effective ways for the Government to invest in its communities.

Potential Models:

- Percentage for Culture: A minimum of 1% of the national budget allocated to culture, including libraries.
- Visitor Levy Reinvestment: Ensuring a proportion directly supports local library services.
- Endowment Funds: For literacy, learning, and digital inclusion.
- Social Prescribing Funding: Embedding libraries into health and wellbeing budgets.

Implementation Considerations:

- Develop sector capacity for fundraising and partnerships.
- Safeguard universal free access to core services.
- Address barriers such as procurement rules and competition between cultural providers.

SLIC believes culture must be embedded across all Scottish Government priority areas—not solely within the remit of the Culture Directorate. Public libraries already contribute directly to multiple national priorities, but the potential for cross-portfolio impact remains under-realised due to limited direct funding from non-culture directorates and the financial constraints under which they operate. While there is genuine willingness among officials to collaborate, structural funding barriers make consistent cross-portfolio delivery difficult.

Scotland's public libraries currently deliver against four key government priorities:

1. Eradicating Child Poverty

Every Child a Library Member ensures children have access to books and reading before they start school—improving attainment, literacy, and long-term economic outcomes.

Public libraries provide free family learning, holiday activities, and health programmes, promoting wellbeing for children and families.

Digital inclusion and employability support for parents expands access to the labour market, reducing household poverty risks.

2. Growing the Economy

Libraries offer free public WiFi, business information, co-working spaces, and meeting facilities—supporting small businesses and freelancers.

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They provide job-seeker training, career guidance, and digital skills development, improving employability across communities.

Support for film education and creative industries creates pathways into growth sectors such as Scotland's expanding film industry.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency

Built on the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, FORWARD: Scotland's Public Library Strategy embeds climate action in service delivery.

Libraries have introduced Lend and Mend Hubs with John Lewis Circular Future Funding, promoting reuse and repair.

Programmes include Climate Conversations, community food larders, and clothing banks, helping communities address both local and global climate issues.

4. Delivering Better Public Services

Strong capital investment in some areas has produced new, BREEAM-rated library buildings and modernised facilities.

Libraries have pioneered co-location with other services, expanding access and reducing costs.

With over 40 million visits annually, libraries are the most popular local government service, delivering a £6.95 return for every £1 invested.

NHS Scotland saves £3.2 million annually through library-delivered health and wellbeing programmes, including bibliotherapy and digital health access.

Libraries are increasingly recognised as preventative spend assets, addressing issues before they escalate into costly interventions:

Health & Wellbeing: bibliotherapy groups, dementia-friendly services, exercise and walking groups, and partnerships with Alzheimer Scotland, Diabetes Scotland, and others.

Education & Skills: early years literacy, homework clubs, adult learning, and ESOL provision.

Digital Inclusion: device lending, skills training, and support for NHS digital tools such as Near Me and the Right Decision Service.

The Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing Action Plan (2021–23)—delivered with Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Health and Social Care ALLIANCE Scotland—has shown the transformative potential of

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embedding libraries in national health priorities. With correct funding, libraries can further:

Act as community health hubs, supporting self-management and shared decision-making.

Deliver digital health literacy, ensuring equitable access to NHS online services.

Serve as access points for community-based healthcare consultations, shifting the balance of care away from acute settings.

Target outreach to those facing the greatest barriers to accessing care and public services.

Where libraries are embedded in cross-portfolio work, the impact is clear:

- Improved school readiness and educational attainment through early literacy programmes.
- Enhanced economic participation through free access to digital infrastructure and business support.
- Increased public engagement with climate action at a community level.
- Reduced pressure on NHS services through early intervention and trusted health information delivery.

However, these successes are not yet systemic. They depend on isolated project funding or local partnerships, rather than being embedded and funded as part of national preventative policy.

Recommendations for the 2026-27 Budget

To fully realise the potential of libraries as a national preventative infrastructure, the Scottish Government should:

Create a cross-portfolio Culture and Wellbeing Fund

Resource libraries to work with health, education, environment, and community sectors to deliver shared outcomes.

Allocate funding proportionally across directorates benefiting from library impact (e.g., Health, Education, Social Justice, Net Zero).

Introduce multi-year funding settlements

Enable stability, efficient planning, and consistent delivery of long-term preventative programmes.

Invest in digital enablement

Provide capital and training to eliminate digital exclusion and ensure universal access to trusted health and wellbeing resources.

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Support libraries as local health access points

Fund infrastructure and staff to expand Near Me, and other digital health services in libraries.

Embed libraries in national policy frameworks

Recognise and legislate for libraries' roles across health, education, climate, and economic development strategies, ensuring they are funded accordingly.

Scotland's public libraries are already delivering measurable outcomes across Government priorities, but current funding structures prevent full mainstreaming of their role. By embedding libraries in preventative spending frameworks and resourcing them through a cross-portfolio approach, the Scottish Government can achieve better outcomes, reduce long-term costs, and ensure equitable access to culture, learning, health, and opportunity in every community

Libraries are taking steps to reduce emissions by:

- Retrofitting buildings with energy-efficient systems.
- Expanding digital lending to reduce physical resource use.
- Co-locating services to maximise space and reduce energy consumption. Challenges include high retrofit costs, inflexible local authority energy contracts, and limited capital funding for sustainability improvements.

Built on the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, FORWARD: Scotland's Public Library Strategy embeds climate action in service delivery

The public library community in Scotland continues to champion the legacy of COP26 with engagement in climate education including programming 160 events with support from Scottish Government Climate engagement fund.

The John Lewis Partnership Circular Future Fund has also supported the creation of 11 'Lend & Mend' hubs across Scotland, allowing citizens to engage with the circular economy.

Partnerships have been forged with multiple organisations to support the delivery of Climate Beacons, Climate Needs Culture film and Climate Conversations Programme.

Libraries act as trusted, non-partisan spaces for climate literacy and engagement:

- Hosting talks, workshops, and exhibitions on sustainability.
- Providing access to reliable, evidence-based resources.
- Facilitating community discussion and debate on climate action.

They are uniquely placed to connect global environmental issues with local relevance.

Embedding culture and specifically libraries in the Climate Change Plan could strengthen community-level climate action and public engagement.

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Funding Needs:

- Capital investment for sustainable building upgrades, particularly in older and listed libraries.
- Support for active travel access to library facilities.
- Core funding for sustainability roles and climate-focused programming.
- Multi-year budgets aligned to carbon budgeting cycles.

Recommendation:

Integrate libraries into the Climate Change Plan with dedicated resources to enable their full contribution to a just and informed transition to net zero.

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Themes from previous years' reports

The Committee has published four pre-budget scrutiny reports this session.¹ Key themes of this work over the course of this session have included:

- Financial pressures and sector fragility.
E.g. the recovery from the pandemic, inflationary pressures, tight funding settlements.
- Strategic investment and long-term planning.
E.g. multi-year funding settlements, using strategic documents, such as the Culture Strategy Action Plan, as a framework for strategic investment.
- Confidence and communication.
E.g. reflecting views of stakeholders that there is a lack of clarity and consistency in communication and funding decisions.
- Innovative and alternative funding models.
E.g. the establishment of a "Percentage for the Arts" scheme, exploring public-private partnerships, and mainstreaming culture across government portfolios.
- Cultural contribution to a range of outcomes.
E.g.: the role of culture in supporting mental health, community cohesion, and education; advocating for preventative spending; and a focus on
- Response to Government commitment to additional funding.
How the pledged additional funding will be spent and support outcomes.

The Committee issued a call for views over the summer. The questions in that call for views reflected the themes above; in addition, the Committee asked for views on the culture sectors' contribution to Net Zero and the Climate Change Plan.

Suggestions from the submissions on strategic and funding approaches

The Committee asked respondents to reflect on some of the key themes of its work over the course of this session and how lessons can be learned in the future. Members have been provided with a summary of the submissions and may wish to explore these issues further with witnesses.

Some of the issues highlighted were:

- A welcome for the additional funding but financial challenges continue
- Insufficient strategic or funding focus on freelancers and individual artists
- Regional and sectoral imbalances of where new resource is being directed

¹ The individual reports can be found online: [2022-23](#); [2023-24](#); [2024-25](#); and [2025-26](#).

- A lack of strategic clarity and links between funding and outcomes
- Multi-Year Funding
- Alternative funding models, respondents suggested a wider range of different approaches, including:
 - Visitor Levy
 - Percentage for Culture (1%)
 - Matched Funding/Crowdfunding/Community bonds
 - Endowment Funds
 - Admission charges for non-residents
- Mainstreaming culture and preventative spending and embedding culture across government portfolios.

Climate Change/Net Zero

The Climate Change Plan (CCP) is a strategy document which outlines how the Scottish Government intends to meet emissions reduction targets across all portfolio areas and sectors of the economy. Parliament is currently approaching its scrutiny of the next CCP which will cover the period 2026-2040. [The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee will be leading on this work](#), but other Committees will have the opportunity to feed into this.

The Committee asked three questions on this topic covering, the sector's operational emissions, how funding streams better support culture and heritage organisations to contribute towards net zero outcomes, and the role of the culture and heritage sector in shaping and informing public attitudes on climate and sustainability. Members will find more details in the summary of the Call for Views provided in their papers, and the Committee may wish to explore these areas with witnesses.

Some of the themes in the responses were:

- Sector is actively implementing emissions reduction measures.
- Challenges in retrofitting historic buildings.
- Strong support for greater capital investment to achieve goals.
- Cultural sector is seen as key in shaping public attitudes and policy scrutiny.

SPICe published a blog, [Climate change and the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee – Arts and Culture](#), in April. This looked at both Arts and Culture and the Historic Environment.