



Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Tuesday 15 September 2026

4th Meeting, 2026 (Session 7)

Creative Scotland – update on the Independent Review

1. The Committee will take evidence from representative of Creative Scotland in order to explore progress in taking forward the recommendations of the [independent review of Creative Scotland published in November 2025](#) (“the review”). On 7 September 2026, [Creative Scotland published an action plan](#), in response to the review.
2. The review looked at the remit and functions of Creative Scotland. Currently Screen Scotland is part of Creative Scotland and the review examined these arrangements. The [Programme for Government 2026 to 2031](#) said that in the current parliamentary year, it would “establish Screen Scotland as a distinct organisation”.
3. This paper sets out the background to the review, summarises the main findings and the associated actions Creative Scotland has identified, and also provides background information on the current arrangements for Screen Scotland.

Background to the review

4. The review was initially announced in the [Scottish Government's 2024-25 programme for government](#). In that document the review was framed as part of the Government's aim to ensure “excellence in Scotland's public services”. It was also, alongside a wider review of the way the culture sector is supported, intended to inform how to ensure that additional funding in the arts would be distributed in the most effective way.
5. The then [Cabinet Secretary wrote to the Session 6 Committee on 11 December 2024](#) and in this he said in relation to the review of Creative Scotland—

“The Scottish Government's review of CS is to ensure that the functions and remit of public bodies continue to meet the needs of the culture sector in Scotland. The Review of CS will consider whether its remit and functions as set out in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 continue to be relevant for the culture sector today recognising that there has been much change in the sector since the functions were initially established.”

6. Creative Scotland is an NDPB of the Scottish Government. It was established under [Part 4 of the Public Services Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#). The general functions of Creative Scotland are set out in section 37 of the 2010 Act and are:

- identifying, supporting and developing quality and excellence in the arts and culture from those engaged in artistic and other creative endeavours,
 - promoting understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the arts and culture,
 - encouraging as many people as possible to access and participate in the arts and culture,
 - realising, as far as reasonably practicable to do so, the value and benefits (in particular, the national and international value and benefits) of the arts and culture,
 - encouraging and supporting artistic and other creative endeavours which contribute to an understanding of Scotland's national culture in its broad sense as a way of life,
 - promoting and supporting industries and other commercial activity the primary focus of which is the application of creative skills.
7. The extent to which Creative Scotland effectively carries out all of these activities will be crucial to the cultural, economic and social outcomes created by the arts, culture and creative sectors.
8. The [remit of the review was published on 18 May 2025](#). This included Creative Scotland's:
- Purpose and functions
 - Structure and performance
 - Governance and leadership
 - Finances and distribution of funds; and it's
 - Collaboration, relationships and partnerships
9. The review was led by Angela Leitch and the report was published on [25 November 2025](#).

Scrutiny of the review by the Session 6 Committee

10. The Session 6 Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee took evidence from Angela Leitch and Stuart Currie, vice-chair of the review, on [4 December 2025](#). They spoke to the conclusions and recommendations of their review which are covered in more detail below and in Annexe A of this paper.
11. Creative Scotland wrote to the predecessor Committee on [2 December 2025](#). In this letter, Creative Scotland welcomed the report and the recommendations. It said that Creative Scotland would “communicate more in due course as we develop a more detailed response to each of the recommendations set out in the report.”

12. Creative Scotland [attended the predecessor Committee on 5 February 2026](#), as part of the scrutiny of the budget. The review was raised in this session both with Creative Scotland and the then Cabinet Secretary, Angus Robertson MSP. Iain Munro told that Committee that Creative Scotland is taking the recommendations “very seriously” and “will move quickly on some of them, while we will take time to understand how we can move forward on those that go a bit wider than just Creative Scotland.” Mr Robertson also noted that there were elements of the review directed at the Scottish Government and both bodies would work to take these forward.
13. Mr Robertson wrote to the previous Committee setting out the Scottish Government’s outline response to the Review on 24 March 2026. This letter is included at Annexe A of paper 1.

Conclusions, recommendations and actions

14. The review noted that its recommendations focus on areas where Creative Scotland could improve. The wider report is also mainly concerned with areas of potential improvement, but it also highlighted areas where the organisation is valued and had been praised by stakeholders.
15. A central theme of the review was that Creative Scotland needs to improve its strategic clarity and long-term planning. The review said that the organisation needs a clearer long-term vision, stronger strategic leadership and a more systematic approach to planning and managing change.
16. The review concluded that the legislative framework for Creative Scotland is sufficiently flexible to support its roles as a funder, advocate, influencer and development agency. However, it found that Creative Scotland has often interpreted its remit too narrowly. The review also said that stakeholders primarily view it as a funding body, with its development, advocacy and influencing functions seen as less prominent and less effectively delivered.
17. The review found concerns about Creative Scotland’s strategic direction, governance and leadership. The review also concluded that governance arrangements were difficult to navigate and insufficiently transparent, with concerns about oversight and accountability. While the review recognised the success of Screen Scotland, it recommended greater autonomy and flexibility to enable it to operate more effectively and respond at the pace required by the screen sector.
18. The review suggested improvements in Creative Scotland’s approach to performance management and organisational improvement. The review found limited evidence of regular monitoring against clear objectives, milestones or performance indicators, or of a structured approach to managing organisational change and transformation. It also identified concerns about the organisation’s culture, including a lack of continuous improvement, limited learning from comparable organisations and insufficient internal dialogue with staff.
19. The review highlighted the need to strike a better balance between accountability and administrative burden for funded organisations and applicants, arguing that

reporting requirements should be proportionate and focused on outcomes. Another theme was the need for stronger data collection and analysis, both within funded organisations and across the wider sector, to support evidence-based decision-making, improve performance management and strengthen strategic planning.

20. The review found that funding pressures remain a major challenge across the arts, culture and creative sectors, with stakeholders arguing that current investment levels do not match the sector's ambitions despite recent funding increases. In addition, it noted the absence of a dedicated capital funding programme and argued that Creative Scotland should develop a more strategic approach to addressing infrastructure needs across the sector, including working towards the establishment of a dedicated capital fund.
21. The review reported that some stakeholders said that the organisation has become more distant and less visible, particularly following the loss of regional and lead officer roles. The review highlighted concerns of stakeholders on whether the organisation adequately reflects regional perspectives, especially outside the Central Belt. The review argued that Creative Scotland should take a stronger leadership role in coordinating support across the cultural landscape and work more closely with partner organisations in areas such as heritage, museums, libraries and archives. More broadly, it suggested that the organisation could do more to build effective partnerships, align its activity with that of local authorities and other funders, and use its relationships with governments and international partners.
22. The report of the review and its recommendations were organised under five themes:
 1. Creative Scotland's purpose, functions and structure
 2. Governance and leadership within Creative Scotland
 3. Creative Scotland's performance
 4. Creative Scotland's finances and distribution of funds
 5. Collaboration, relationships and partnerships
23. On 7 September 2026, [Creative Scotland published an action plan](#) in response to the review. Creative Scotland also highlighted areas where it will take forward work to respond to the review in its [Annual Plan 2026-27](#), such as refreshing its strategy, developing more streamlined and proportionate funding processes.
24. A table is included in Annexe A of this paper of all 36 recommendations along with the relevant aspects of Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government's responses. The Annexe also highlights possible areas of enquiry with witnesses.

Screen Scotland: purpose and governance

25. Screen Scotland aims to support the “development of all aspects of Scotland’s film and TV industry, through funding and strategic support.” [Screen Scotland has commissioned research](#) that has shown that there has been “continued economic growth in Scotland’s film and television sector” and demonstrates the “value of sustained public investment in film and television production, cinema exhibition, screen education, talent and skills development.”
26. Screen Scotland sits within Creative Scotland but was established as a partnership between Creative Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, and the Scottish Funding Council. This [was formalised in an MoU in 2018](#). The intention was that these partners would “work together to co-ordinate services, share information and resources to make the processes of accessing our support and investment in the screen sector more agile, flexible, and collaborative.” The involvement of the partner agencies in Screen Scotland, outside of Creative Scotland, has been unclear and the review suggested the MoU be reviewed “as a matter of urgency” (p27).
27. The recent [Programme for Government was published on 1 September 2026](#). This said that the Scottish Government will establish Screen Scotland as a distinct organisation, separating it from Creative Scotland. Speaking to the Committee last week about this issue, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic highlighted the successes in the screen sector. She said that Screen Scotland has performed well in “being nimble and seizing opportunity” and that being a standalone body would assist further. She said that Screen Scotland had outgrown the structure of being part of Creative Scotland.
28. The review did not recommend that Screen Scotland be separated from Creative Scotland, but it did recommend greater autonomy for Screen Scotland. It said:

“Given the benefits of working as part of an organisation representing the entirety of the culture sector, Screen Scotland should remain part of Creative Scotland. However it is important that Screen Scotland can influence wider Creative Scotland decisions and have a degree of autonomy that enhances its ability to support the screen sector.” (p18)
29. The review did address the current governance arrangements for Screen Scotland and its position within Creative Scotland. The review said that Screen Scotland should have a stronger identity and greater operational autonomy “to act and market itself more independently within the umbrella of the national body”. It also said that there should be “clear delegation to the Screen Committee for delivery of its strategy, with this set out in its terms of reference to enable Screen Scotland to operate at the pace required.” (Recommendation 13)
30. The Screen Committee is a sub-committee of the Board of Creative Scotland. The purpose of this committee is to oversee the delivery of Screen Scotland’s aims and objectives. Its membership includes senior representatives from Scotland’s screen industry, Board members, the Chief Executive, Screen Scotland Executive Director and Director of Screen.

31. The previous Cabinet Secretary's outline response addressed the governance arrangements of Screen Scotland. It said:

"To build on Screen Scotland's success, we must also recognise the Review's recommendation that its position and autonomy within Creative Scotland should be enhanced. Ensuring an arrangement that combines the benefits of shared capacity with the flexibility required to meet the needs of the screen sector will be essential. I will work with Creative Scotland and Screen Scotland to ensure this is achieved."

32. Creative Scotland's action plan in response to the review said that it recognises the Scottish Government's commitment to make Screen Scotland a standalone agency and that it would "support that work as it evolves".

Areas the Committee may wish to explore

- The opportunities that a standalone agency will have to better serve the Screen sectors compared to the current governance arrangements.

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SPICe

Date: 09/09/2026

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Annexe A: Independent Review recommendations and responses/actions

This Annexe sets out the 36 recommendations of the review and the relevant actions set out in Creative Scotland's Response Plan published on 7 September 2026. It also highlights relevant aspects of the Scottish Government's March 2026 outline response.

Creative Scotland has grouped its responses under four areas:

- Strategy and Funding
- Target Operating Model
- Governance and Performance
- Partnerships and Relationships

The responses under these headings do not correspond to the structure of the report of the independent review, but Creative Scotland identified which recommendations fall under which heading. There were some recommendations that are aimed at the Scottish Government. The tables below group the recommendations under each of Creative Scotland's four headings along with a fifth for those recommendations aimed at the Scottish Government for completeness.

Notes on the tables:

- The recommendations and actions have been paraphrased and shortened for the sake of brevity. While every effort is made to ensure the full meaning of the recommendations and actions are retained, inevitably some nuance may be lost. Members may wish to refer directly to the [independent review report](#) and [Creative Scotland's plan](#) for the full text and background.
- CS: Creative Scotland, SG: Scottish Government

Strategy and Funding

Strategy and Funding		Creative Scotland Actions
1	CS should reassess its understanding of its remit in light of evolving sector needs.	- CS is developing its long-term strategy. This is intended to: - Align to the needs of the sector and SG priorities; - Articulate its remit and long-term vision, having consulted with the SG and partners. - Update plans, policies, procedures to align with the new strategy, including reporting mechanisms. - Strategic work to be supported by long-term financial planning “as far as this is possible within our current annual budget cycles”. - Work with SG and other Partners to explore the viability of opening a dedicated Capital fund in the future. This year, CS will begin an assessment of infrastructure needs across the sector which is preparatory to a future “Capital Plan”.
6	CS should clearly articulate its remit through strategy, planning and performance reporting.	
7	CS should develop a long-term vision informed by the sector.	
10	CS's leadership should demonstrate greater ambition and appetite for risk.	
15	CS should develop and implement a transformation plan.	
23	CS should establish a dedicated capital fund informed by infrastructure needs.	
25	CS should develop short-, medium- and long-term financial plans, including on the planned use of reserves linked to strategic decision-making.	

27 CS should use local intelligence to inform national funding decisions.

- Consider whether support provided to recipients of multi-year funding is effective.
- Revise open funding processes to be simpler and aligned to the revised strategy.

Scottish Government's March 2026 outline response

Angus Robertson said he agreed that there is “a gap in the support landscape for the development of the culture and creative sector” and indicated the Government would seek to strengthen CS’ capacity for sectoral development. He also said that he would like to explore how CS could support the commercial development of emerging and converging creative industries.

Mr Robertson also said that the SG would explore avenues to bringing capital investment into the culture and creative sector. He said the SG would work with CS on an infrastructure needs assessment “to fully understand the scale of the challenge”.

Areas the Committee could explore

- More details on any, or all, of Creative Scotland’s actions highlighted above.
- How CS will demonstrate greater ambition and appetite for risk.
- The development of short-, medium- and long-term financial plans, including on the planned use of reserves linked to strategic decision-making. Whether reserves mitigate year-to-year uncertainty.
- Views on the previous Cabinet Secretary’s suggestion that CS should take a larger role in sectoral development and support commercial development.

Target Operating Model

Recommendation	Creative Scotland Actions
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4	CS should review its structure to ensure its four core roles of funding, development, advocacy and influencing are properly resourced.	
8	CS should strengthen governance, transparency, challenge and performance oversight, including increasing the time commitment for Board members.	
11	CS should develop its workforce plan for the next three to five years, ensuring diversity of representation amongst staff.	
12	CS should incorporate a regional approach into its governance arrangements.	
13	CS should strengthen Screen Scotland's identity, autonomy and delegated authority.	
16	CS should strengthen staff engagement and collaboration across the organisation, including between Screen Scotland staff and the rest of the organisation.	
		• Review of an operating model began in 2025 and currently considering how its structure can be optimised to fulfil its four roles and align with its strategy. • Reviewing governance arrangements, including the terms of reference of the board and its sub-committees, including how Board members can provide further strategic challenge and performance oversight in their roles. • Develop a workforce plan, to be implemented from 2027. • Build on and learn from existing work across Scotland to enhance the regional relationships and intelligence and understand needs and opportunities and local levels. • Engage staff in work to improve ways of working. Aims to create more “opportunity and diversity” into the staff base.

Areas the Committee could explore

- More details on any, or all, of Creative Scotland’s actions highlighted above.
- The size and nature of the task to ensure that the structure supports CS to fulfil its four roles of funding, development, advocacy and influencing.
- How the organisation will strengthen the oversight function of its Board. The role of the Scottish Government in this.

Governance & Performance

Recommendation		Creative Scotland Actions
3	CS should strengthen sector intelligence, advocacy and development across the whole sector.	• Appointment of members of the Board is a role for Scottish Ministers. CS will continue to support this process. • Work with other public bodies to a refreshed Creative Industries Framework Agreement for Scotland. Being clearer on CS' role in this. • Explore the potential for gathering better sector level data. • Use data to improve the understanding of sector need and advocate on behalf of the sector. Make more of this data available on CS' website. • Review the information required from applicants in line with the future strategy. Will seek a "a balance between the information we ask for and what we are statutorily required to collect, with the emphasis on improving collective knowledge across the sector." • Further digitisation of funding applications to help streamline the process.
9	CS should regularly review Board skills, diversity and experience in governance roles.	
14	The Board should regularly scrutinise organisational and annual plan performance.	
17	CS should streamline reporting and monitoring requirements for funding recipients.	
18	CS should improve monitoring of fair work compliance.	
19	CS should improve website transparency and public access to information.	
24	CS should digitise and streamline funding application processes.	
26	CS should strengthen analytical capacity to demonstrate impact and value.	
28	Screen Scotland should reduce delays in funding allocation processes.	

29 CS should review the options for reintroducing relationship-based roles (ie lead officers who would build personal relationships with individuals and organisations).

- Work with partners and research bodies to explore how CS's analytical capacity can be improved at sector and regional levels.

Scottish Government's March 2026 outline response

The previous Cabinet Secretary supported the review's recommendations on improving the use of data and intelligence and strengthening Fair Work. He committed to the SG working with CS to take forward these recommendations alongside recommendations of the Culture Fair Work Taskforce.

Mr Robertson also recognised the importance of CS' capacity and governance being improved to support an enhanced role, including strengthening the Board. He said SG officials were working with CS to fill current vacancies on the Board. He said the SG would begin the process of recruiting a new Chair.

Areas the Committee could explore

- More details on any, or all, of Creative Scotland's actions highlighted above.
- The tension between reducing the amount of information Creative Scotland asks for from applicants and recipients of funding, and collecting high quality sector-level information or monitoring of fair work compliance.
- Details on work of Screen Scotland to reduce delays in funding allocation processes.
- How Creative Scotland will ensure deeper and more supportive relationships between its staff and applicants and recipients of funding.
- Creative Scotland's current analytical capacity and how it might be improved.

Partnerships and Relationships

Recommendation		Creative Scotland Actions
5	CS should work with others to provide economies of scale and improve outcomes.	CS will work with partners “to amplify the benefits that public funding delivers for the sector and the public.”
20	CS should strengthen internal and external communications.	Review CS’ national and local networks and articulate CS’ national role relative to other bodies.
31	CS should clarify its role in relation to other national bodies to strengthen collaboration and reduce duplication.	Strengthen CS’ role with partners at a local level, particularly to explore the potential benefits of becoming a statutory partner in local community planning decisions.
32	CS should review its networks to improve representation and intelligence gathering.	- Strengthen internal communications. - Improve external communication.
33	CS should strengthen its relationship with the SG sponsorship team.	Work with sponsorship team at SG, especially to influence policy across Government and at a UK level.
35	CS should strengthen its influence across local, Scottish and UK governments.	Support international collaboration, cultural export and exchange, inward investment and market development, through CS’ own work and that of the organisations and individuals it funds.
36	CS should expand and promote international collaboration.	

Areas the Committee could explore

- More details on any, or all, of Creative Scotland's actions highlighted above.

Recommendations aimed at the Scottish Government

Recommendation	
2	The SG should develop a refreshed Creative Industries Framework Agreement with national bodies.
21	The SG should review its approach to direct cultural funding of parts of the arts, culture and creativity sector.
22	The SG should consider increasing flexibility for areas of funding which are currently ringfenced and CS should make greater use of that flexibility.
30	The SG should consider making CS a statutory planning consultee.
34	The SG should review how the culture portfolio functions within government, and how that impacts the remit across other government departments.

The actions set out by Creative Scotland includes a reference to how it will play a part in developing a new Creative Industries Framework Agreement.

The Scottish Government's March 2026 outline response said:

“Several recommendations are directed primarily at the Scottish Government, including those relating to direct support provided outside Creative Scotland and the specificity attached to elements of Creative Scotland's funding. I will consider these alongside wider public service reform work and related recommendations, including those on data and intelligence. ... Delivering an ambitious reform programme will, inevitably, raise questions of resource. We are at the beginning of this process, and I approach it with ambition and a realistic understanding of the wider financial context. Work to take forward the Review's recommendations must be aligned with, and reinforce, the wider work underway in the portfolio on funding models and new approaches to supporting the sector.”