

CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

14th Meeting, 2023, Session 6

4 May 2023

Culture in Communities

1. The Committee is undertaking an inquiry focused on the idea of a ‘place-based approach’ to culture within communities in Scotland, with the aim of understanding good practice and barriers to place-based cultural policy.
2. The [call for views](#) on this inquiry opened on Friday 17 February and closed on Friday 7 April. It received 57 submissions which are available to view [online](#). The themes arising from these submissions were [summarised by SPICe](#).
3. At this meeting, the Committee will take evidence in a roundtable format from—
 - Kresanna Aigner, CEO and Creative Director, Findhorn Bay Arts
 - Rachael Didsbury, Co-Director, Alchemy Film and Arts
 - Caitlin Skinner, CEO and Artistic Director, Stellar Quines
 - Arthur Cormack, Chief Executive, Fèisean nan Gàidheal
 - Murray Dawson, Chief Executive, Station House Media Unit
 - Robert Rae, Co-Director, Art 27 Scotland
 - Steve Byrne, Director, Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland

Followed by—

- Kathryn Welch, Programme Lead, Culture Collective
 - Morvern Cunningham, Creative Lead, Culture Collective.
4. This week’s evidence session will give the Committee the opportunity to hear the experiences of organisations working within communities across Scotland.
 5. As all the organisations attending the roundtable are involved in projects of the [Culture Collective](#), it will also give the Committee an opportunity to explore this model of programme as an example of a national place-based initiative. Creative Scotland’s Culture Collective programme is a network of 26 participatory arts projects, which are shaped by local communities alongside artists and creative organisations. The Culture Collective programme provides a network for those projects to share resources, learning and experiences.

6. The roundtable will consider the following key themes—

- **Place-based cultural policy** – e.g., What factors and conditions enable local cultural organisations to form and grow? What support should be in place to develop and grow cultural activities or events in local areas, and what barriers currently exist? What does good ‘place-based’ cultural policy look like in practice?
- **The culture eco-system** – e.g., How do cultural and arts organisations work with other actors, such as national organisations and local authorities, to ensure that communities have opportunities to take part in cultural activities? To what extent is the work of local cultural organisations influenced by national and local strategies, and vice versa?
- **Unmet cultural need** – How are local cultural organisations informed by the cultural needs of local communities in the work they deliver? How do organisations evaluate and understand their impact on communities? Where are there barriers to cultural participation, and how can these be overcome?

7. Written submissions from the organisations giving evidence are attached at Annexe A. This includes an excerpt from Creative Scotland's submission on its Culture Collective programme.

CEEAC Committee Clerks
April 2023

Written submission from Findhorn Bay Arts

Findhorn Bay Arts is an award-winning creative producer of cultural events and activities rooted in the communities of Moray. We have grown from our initial Culture Day celebration, first held in 2013, to establish a year-round programme of high quality arts and cultural activities for young people and their families, locals and visitors alike, including the flagship biennial Findhorn Bay Festival.

Driven by a passion to celebrate and promote the area as a place of outstanding arts and culture, Findhorn Bay Arts was established in 2012 as a non-profit organisation and company limited by guarantee (SC413997). In 2020, we became a charity registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (SC049867) further cementing our aim to bring increased creative opportunities and investment to the communities that we work with.

Our development has been significantly informed by a desire to increase recognition for the Moray creative sector and for the positive role that arts and culture can make to so many parts of our lives. We have been a driving contributor to the revitalisation of the region as a creative place, including establishing Ignite: Moray Youth Arts Hub, co-founding the Culture Cafe creative network and contributing to the Moray Cultural Strategy: We Make Moray - which was prepared in the shadow of negative news stories about lack of support for arts and culture in the region.

We are based in the town of Forres - situated in the west of Moray and adjacent to Findhorn Bay - the large tidal basin from which we, and our festival, take their name. The surrounding communities of Forres, Findhorn, and Kinloss have been key sites for festival venues for the first three editions. However, our other strands of work make increasingly wider connections through year-round activities that connect with audiences, participants and artists across Moray and beyond.

As the only multi-arts producer working within this part of Scotland, we increasingly understand our role as a key part of national cultural infrastructure - and as such our activities are aligned to regional and national cultural strategies including those from Moray Council, Moray Community Planning Partnership, Moray Speyside Tourism, Visit Scotland, Creative Scotland and The Scottish Government.

Please tell us about your attendance or participation in cultural activities in your local area. For example: What supports you to attend or participate in cultural activities? What barriers have you faced? Do you think there is a good variety and availability of cultural activities to participate in? Or do you think there is a currently unmet need for this in your community, and if so, what is missing?

Culture is an important to me, more than this it is vital and it is an essential part of my existence.

I attend and am inspired to attend live performances, exhibitions, films, talks and workshops in and around the region, and also in our neighbouring regions with events taking place in rural village halls, cultural venues and community spaces.

Immersion in creativity helps me to cultivate greater self awareness, bring me closer to the people around me and help me to make meaningful connections in my community.

Immersion in creativity supports my sense of self, and helps me to see / view the world through different lenses, to reflect, to release, to aspire, to celebrate and to connect.

Immersion in creativity brings me joy and hope, and hope in and among the every day local and global challenges we face is so very important.

There are a number of amazing arts organisations and creatives producing fantastic work in our region, however, this is also limited due to limited funding available to support regular and ongoing activities in rural communities.

The limitations of our rural transport infrastructure can be a barrier to attending events i.e. cost of trains, buses but also the timings and routes limit access. I drive but because of the climate emergency and cost of fuel I would prefer to avail of public transport.

The main gap I see is in ongoing and regular provision of high quality creative and cultural activities for young people and their families to take part in and experience - quite simply put it is the lack of funding from our local council and limited national funding available to supports our cultural organisations and creatives to develop and deliver these exceptional creative experiences, regularly in our rural communities that is the main barrier to access.

I need healthy food, clean water, a roof over my head and I also need to 'play, to create, to reflect and release' in order to be resilient and to thrive.

Written submission from Stellar Quines

Stellar Quines is an intersectional theatre company based in Scotland. For over 30 years we have used theatre as a creative, social and political force to work towards greater gender equity. We do this by creating spaces onstage, backstage and in the community, for those who experience inequalities to share their stories, create inclusive collaborations and take positive action.

Please tell us about your attendance or participation in cultural activities in your local area. For example: What supports you to attend or participate in cultural activities? What barriers have you faced? Do you think there is a good variety and availability of cultural activities to participate in? Or do you think there is a currently unmet need for this in your community, and if so, what is missing?

What supports you to attend or participate in cultural activities? – We are based in Edinburgh City Centre where there are good transport links and cultural activities take place centrally. It is easy to find out about what is happening and we are well networked to find out about new or interesting activity.

What barriers have you faced? – The cost of public transport further out of Edinburgh, particularly to other cities such as Glasgow and Dundee, make it challenging to access activity happening in other parts of the country. The cost of activities within the city can also be prohibitive as many arts workers are on low salaries.

Do you think there is a good variety of cultural activities to participate in? – Since the pandemic it is clear there are a lot less activities. Things are not regular yet, some programmes much reduced and much of the activity is smaller scale than previous.

What is missing? – I think there is a lack of local cultural activity in Edinburgh, particularly at the grassroots, fringe level with a lack of live music spaces and the cost of making culture being pretty high.

Please tell us about the cultural activities that you organise in your local area. For example: What support has there been in place to develop and grow cultural activities or events in your local area? What barriers have you faced? Is there anything you would like to deliver but don't have the means to? What needs to be in place to enable or to support a variety of cultural activities or events being organised and delivered in your local area?

We present new theatre productions which we present in theatre's and often tour around the country. We also run engagement activities within the city and beyond as well as opportunities for artists and practitioners to develop.

What support has there been in place to develop and grow cultural activities or events in your local area? – Most of our support comes from a national level despite the fact that we often work locally. We receive no support from the local authority. We have

often collaborated with third sector organisations such as women's groups etc in order to create activity at a local level.

What barriers have you faced? – Our main source of funding comes from Creative Scotland which has been at standstill level since 2015. Although we are grateful for this support, funding at this level is no longer enough for us to deliver a meaningful artistic programme.

Is there anything you would like to deliver but don't have the means to? – Yes we would like to deliver more theatre productions, particularly to community venues and to do more long term engagement programmes with communities, particularly in the Edinburgh area. We would like to develop more theatre work for women and non-binary people and have the means to support artists to create exciting and ground breaking theatre.

What needs to be in place? – We need more financial backing from Creative Scotland and local council support to deliver more work based in Edinburgh.

One million Scots are regularly engaged in creative activity through their participation in the 10,000 volunteer-led, community based creative groups in Scotland.

There is growing optimism in the volunteer-led, community based creative sector. 91% of creative groups from across a diverse range of artforms representing everything from visual arts and crafts through music, singing, drama and dance, to writing, photography and film have expressed their confidence in the sectors' ability to deliver activities that promote greater connection with others in the community, that maintain or improve mental health and wellbeing, and boost learning or share skills.

However, the current cost of living crisis is a major concern to our sector and may result in less availability of creative activities as the cost of materials, utilities and venue hire charges increase. And so too does the cost of transport and digital connectivity which are also essential in allowing more people to participate in creative activity alongside others.

The affordability of local venues continues to be a barrier for many groups, as are concerns about the longer term viability of venues run by local councils or arms-length culture and leisure trusts, which may be subject to closure.

Local authorities and those in decision-making positions should look to ease the burden of bureaucracy on volunteer-led creative groups and take an enabling approach to working with their local creative organisations who may be able to help keep venues open or share the use and maintenance of assets.

Councils should map local creativity to better understand its widespread impact and its potential as a resource to boost community resilience, esteem and worth.

Small micro grants schemes should be made available to volunteer-led groups, for whom larger grants may be inappropriate. Small sums can go a long way in sustaining creative activity.

Governments should recognise the diversity and scale of culture in Scotland, by acknowledging that creativity extends far beyond the boundaries of the professional and publicly funded arts sector.

Locally based, volunteer-led creative groups should be given equal consideration to other cultural bodies whenever culture in Scotland is being considered.

Policy discussions on place-based activities such as 15/20 minute neighbourhoods should be inclusive of the volunteer-led creative sector, recognising their use of local venues as creative hubs at the heart of local communities.

Everyone should have the right to access creative activities in their own communities. In communities where creativity is nurtured, innovation, resilience and belonging can flourish. We believe that this right to access creative activity should apply “for all without distinction” (The Charter of the U.N. art. 1, para. 3) and that these rights should apply to those living in Scotland who do not currently have UK Citizenship.

Written submission from Fèisean nan Gàidheal

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Fèisean nan Gàidheal offers this response to the call for evidence on Culture in Communities.
- 1.2 Creative Scotland's *Time to Shine 0-25 Arts Strategy* states: "The traditional arts sector and in particular the Fèisean movement spearheaded by Fèisean nan Gàidheal is looked at with envy from many other parts of the globe. There is much that Scotland's young people's arts sector can learn from it in terms of how it is networked, how it reaches out beyond its perceived usual participants, how it identifies and supports talent and how it supports the continued up-skilling of its workforce."

2 FÈISEAN NAN GÀIDHEAL'S CONTRIBUTION TO CULTURE COMMUNITIES

- 2.1 Fèisean nan Gàidheal's mission is *A' toirt ar dualchais do ar n-òigridh* (passing on our culture to our young people). The organisation is one of Creative Scotland's regularly funded organisations supporting a membership of 47 independent, local Fèisean which offer access to Gaelic arts in communities across Scotland.
- 2.2 We offer funding, officer support, insurance, musical instruments, training, teaching resources as well as compliance with child protection and other legal requirements.
- 2.3 Fèisean nan Gàidheal believes participation in cultural activities promotes equality and diversity, contributes to wellbeing and to the economy of Scotland. Fèisean nan Gàidheal has done much to promote a sense of place, linking young people with their culture, language and heritage.
- 2.4 For 40 years, the Fèisean have been tutoring young people in Scottish traditional music, Gaelic song and Gaelic drama now engaging with over 100,000 people annually. 116 FTE posts are supported by our programme, with a significant contribution from hundreds of individual freelance artists.
- 2.5 The current sense of vitality in the traditional arts and Gaelic language in Scotland is, in no small measure, due to the success of initiatives such as the Fèis movement. A report published by the Traditional Music Forum, following a 2015-16 census, found that 17,240 people under 18 were involved in learning traditional music, which meant our work accounted for over a third of all traditional youth music tuition in Scotland.
- 2.6 The interest and ability in Gaelic language and traditional music in Scotland has grown exponentially since the Fèisean began and they have been a driver in raising awareness and promoting the use of the Gaelic while contributing to community and social cohesion.

- 2.7 The creative, social, educational, linguistic and economic impacts of the work of Fèisean nan Gàidheal, and the network of Fèisean, has been widely recognised. Research has identified positive outcomes in individual and community confidence, skills development, job creation and equality of access to creative experiences.
- 2.8 It is interesting to observe support for more recent initiatives, such as Sistema Scotland, enabling Big Noise to work in socially challenged areas using classical music as the means of engaging young people in overcoming difficulties and building confidence in themselves and their communities.
- 2.9 What is less well recognised is the role the Fèisean have played in doing just that - using traditional music and Gaelic arts - over the 40+ years of their existence. Of 37 Fèisean within the area covered by Highlands & Islands Enterprise, 23 are in what HIE terms Fragile Areas. Those communities may not have the same challenges as Raploch, Torry and Govanhill, but they do experience socioeconomic deprivation which Fèisean have contributed to overcoming. Fèisean offer access to cultural activities in rurally isolated places and help increase income in areas where lower economic activity and higher unemployment may be a feature.
- 2.10 Fèisean employ hundreds of musicians and singers on a regular basis to teach in communities and schools. They have played a key part in producing a large number of excellent performers and players, some of whom are among the top-flight of Scottish musicians who make their living from performing and teaching Scottish traditional music and Gaelic song across the globe. They produce content that helps fill the schedules of radio and television programmes as well as contributing to the earnings of recording studios and record companies.
- 2.11 Fèisean also play an important part in supporting the Gaelic language skills of young people, and engendering positive attitudes towards the language among participants, with many having gone on to achieving fluency in Gaelic.
- 2.12 Fèisean deliver in the informal education sector, in their own communities. However, having also delivered traditional music lessons in schools for over 20 years, since the introduction of the Youth Music Initiative, Fèisean nan Gàidheal identified an opportunity to develop a formal education service. Fèisgoil was established initially to provide music lessons but, with the advent of Gaelic Language Plans, has been providing Gaelic language and cultural activities for schools and a range of local authorities as well as Gaelic Awareness Training to several public bodies.

In 2021, the Scottish Government approached Fèisean nan Gàidheal to devise and deliver a £322,000 programme - Treòir | Voar | Virr - offered to all islands schools in Scotland. In the wake of Covid, this provided employment opportunities for artists, as well as professional learning, while engaging young people in cultural activities relevant to their island communities. 1,390 pupils in 92 class groups within 80 schools in 6 local authority areas took part in a total of 1,656 sessions, with 61 individual artists employed.

The programme delivered the following outcomes:

- Creation of employment opportunities
- The transfer of skills as part of programme delivery
- Access to cultural and heritage education
- Re-training and/or skills development and employment opportunities for creative freelancers
- Training in creative content for classrooms and business administration made available for all tutors
- Education recovery associated with the COVID-19 pandemic
- Delivery of aspects of the National Islands Plan and
- Support for our island economies.

- 2.13 Our Blasad Gàidhlig (taste of Gaelic) provision has grown steadily over the past seven years offering local authorities the ability to introduce Gaelic as an additional language in schools or to supplement support where it is already on the curriculum as L2 or L3. Thousands of young people have been introduced to the language for the first time through our Blasad Gàidhlig work and over the past two years we have worked with a consortium of 8 local authorities involved in the delivery of Gaelic with around 2,500 children currently learning topic-based Gaelic online or in-person, mainly through the arts.
- 2.14 Over the past five years, Fèisean nan Gàidheal's Fèisgoil service has delivered Gaelic Awareness Training to a number of different public bodies and local authorities in support of their fulfilling obligations in their Gaelic Language Plan (GLP). Each organisation is different with specific requirements. Some require ongoing support while others prefer to access the service as an introductory approach.
- 2.15 The Fèisgoil service has been involved in *Beairteas* – Gaelic enrichment initiatives – including the running of a conversational café for teenagers and the production of a series of podcasts featuring some of those young people interviewing a range of people from various community and business backgrounds. School visits encourages inter-generational engagement, with community-based fluent Gaelic speakers matched with schools and community groups. Their richness of language, specialist knowledge of Gaelic culture and many other subjects about which they could speak in Gaelic, provides a valuable resource for pupils complementing the sterling work being done by teachers in Gaelic education.
- 2.16 Fèisean nan Gàidheal's FèisTV service streams live events to a wider audience and offers online lessons in traditional music with the ability to access tuition in Gaelic or English.
- 2.17 Our Gaelic song resource, Fuaran, encourages young people to research and collect Gaelic songs in their communities and offers them the opportunity to record new versions of them. For the 2020 Year of Coasts and Waters, with support from the Scottish Government, Fuaran created a new strand featuring some of the hundreds of Gaelic songs connected with that themed year.

- 2.18 Gaelic cultural activities attract local residents but, with VisitScotland finding that 1 in 3 visitors are interested in learning more about Gaelic when coming to Scotland, clearly there is potential to enhance the visitor experience. VisitScotland's Gaelic Tourism Strategy defines Gaelic, and its associated culture, as a unique selling point and authentic part of the experience of visiting Scotland.
- 2.19 Our work supports domestic tourism through residential events for young Gaelic speakers, including the language enriching 5 Latha in Lewis and an annual Gaelic Drama Summer School in Skye. Our Cèilidh Trails cater for visitors giving them an authentic flavour of Gaelic arts and culture through a programme of around 250 local events, as well as employment opportunities for young musicians. The annual Blas Festival, in partnership with The Highland Council, takes place in communities across the Highlands gives young musicians the chance to perform alongside some of the best-known traditional musicians and singers from Scotland and Cape Breton, normally drawing around 45% of its audience from outwith the Highlands and around 8% from overseas.
- 2.20 All artists are paid at least industry standard fees, all exceeding the Scottish Living Wage. The overall turnover of Fèisean nan Gàidheal and its member Fèisean is just under £3m which produces economic benefits in excess of that sum.

3 CULTURE IN COMMUNITIES

3.1 Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Fèisean in place-based partnerships

Although it has several definitions, the Gaelic word *Fèis* is synonymous with a network of community events through which young people engage with traditional music, Gaelic song and Gaelic drama. The *Fèis Movement*, as it has become known, has spanned three generations who have engaged in Gaelic culture with many having gone on to employment, full or part time, in the creative industries. Others have gained valuable linguistic and social skills through participation and enjoy being a part of Gaelic culture as audience members, parents, viewers of television and listeners of radio and recordings.

A Culture Strategy for Scotland (Scottish Government 2020) highlights the importance of recognising "each community's own local cultures in generating a distinct sense of place, identity and confidence". It also calls for the adoption of the Place Principle stating that: "Place - community, landscape, language and geography - is important and reflects the creativity of the past and provides inspiration for cultural expression today".

The Fèisean do this well with the interest and ability in traditional music in Scotland having grown exponentially since their establishment. In addition to offering thousands of young people access to traditional music and song our work also supports Gaelic. It provides opportunities for language acquisition and use through the arts, contributing to linguistic performance and confidence, supporting language enrichment for pupils in Gaelic education and access to the language for thousands who are not.

Many places in which Fèis activities take place are considered important for a variety of reasons - the environment, the level of provision of arts in the community, the economic circumstances of an area or the health of the Gaelic language. For young people to understand who they are they need a sense of belonging, values, beliefs, identity and expression, the promotion of which has been a key success of the Fèis movement in line with UNESCO's definition of intangible cultural heritage.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal sees its role as supporting local communities to deliver what they want, within the parameters of the understating or what is a Fèis and in line with agreed broad aims and objectives. Fèisean nan Gàidheal is governed by representatives of those communities and local committees make decisions about the cultural activities in which they engage. They are very much rooted in place, often utilising songs, tunes and stories from their own locality.

Investment in Fèisean nan Gàidheal enables cultural activities in more than 200 communities across Scotland. Membership supports 47 independent, local cultural organisations with a range of services, without which Fèisean would have to make provision on an individual basis.

One measure of the success of the Fèisean is the way in which they nurture young people, teach them skills, often transferable to supporting other community initiatives, before welcoming their return as tutors, performers and organisers. They are a positive force within their communities and demonstrate that their culture is essential to wellbeing and contributes towards the social, economic and environmental prosperity of their places.

3.2 Funding and challenges

Fèisean nan Gàidheal has built up fruitful collaborative relationships over many years and, as a third sector body, has built up experience in delivering outcomes for local and national government.

The organisation has been extremely fortunate to have had funding from Creative Scotland, and its predecessor the Scottish Arts Council, for a long period of time. The organisation also had long-term funding from Highlands & Island Enterprise and, in recent times, regular funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal delivers two service level agreements for The Highland Council. One supports the Fèisean in the area while another supports the organisation's delivery of the annual Blas Festival. Fèisean nan Gàidheal also delivers a range of activities in Argyll & Bute through a service level agreement with the council there.

Some local authorities support Gaelic cultural activities to which they have committed in their Gaelic Language Plans. In general, however, local authorities no longer support a wide range of cultural activities in communities. Several fund arms-length organisations which do, but this has removed accountability from elected representatives. There is a lack of planning with few councils developing and, importantly, delivering place-based cultural strategies or providing funding for cultural activities in their communities.

Challenges of standstill funding are exacerbated by local authorities renting schools for up to £5k for a two-day event. Just one of our Fèisean will be required to pay around £16k to the local authority to provide a venue for its year-round activity. Schools are often said to be community hubs and are certainly the only suitable space for Fèis activities, particularly in rural communities, but those unaffordable rental levels present a very real threat to community cultural activities.

It could be concluded, therefore, that different layers of government do not complement each other particularly well in ensuring communities have opportunities to take part in cultural activities. The pressure is on national bodies funded by the Scottish Government, such as Creative Scotland, Screen Scotland, EventScotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and others to provide funding for community-based cultural organisations. However, all of those bodies appear unable to satisfy demand within their current funding settlements.

While the organisation has been fortunate to have benefitted from investment by a range of agencies over the years there was a case for Fèisean nan Gàidheal's work to be recognised more formally, with funding in line with other national companies, articulated in Creative Scotland's Music Sector Review: "Notwithstanding the different organisational bases on which they operate they can only operate as long-term flagships and development organisations with some assurance of core funding. Five professional National Performing Companies are all permanently funded by the Scottish Government in recognition of their flagship status. Whilst not proposing that the national youth companies should be moved away from the aegis of Creative Scotland, we suggest it is reasonable that they should be seen in the same light as permanent national institutions."

A move towards permanence and surety of funding was never progressed and a lack of parity endures in the way national companies, as well as some other organisations, are funded with most organisations which form the Scottish cultural infrastructure competing for diminishing funds from Creative Scotland and others.

In common with all of Creative Scotland's regularly-funded organisations, Fèisean nan Gàidheal has had standstill funding for 6 years. There have been welcome one-off sums from recovery funds, but the regular funding we receive from Creative Scotland is vital to supporting the work of a wide network of volunteers involved in running Fèisean across Scotland. It is also important in enabling us to lever funds from elsewhere.

With the cost of everything increasing, standstill funding is having a negative impact on our programme of work. We are committed to Fair Work and contractually obliged to pay industry standard rates to artists. On standstill funding, however, this commitment will inevitably mean delivering fewer activities with a corresponding decrease in employment opportunities for freelance artists in order to accommodate appropriate rates of pay.

3.3 Demand and opportunity

It is becoming increasingly challenging to maintain that which has been built up over the past four decades, never mind meeting demand for growth. To enable the community Fèisean to meet current demand and keep pace with cost increases would require a 70% increase in funding to them.

One thing we learned from the Covid pandemic is the extent to which participation in arts and Gaelic cultural activities contributes to wellbeing, a point acknowledged in the 2021 SNP manifesto: “the pandemic has demonstrated more than ever how vital it [culture] is to our wellbeing, mental health and sense of belonging”. During that period, Fèisean nan Gàidheal did all it could to ensure artists had regular employment and we are playing our part in ensuring the arts and education recover from the pandemic.

Cuts to YMI funding and Creative Scotland’s revenue budget, however, proposed in advance of the recent Scottish Government budget, would have stalled recovery. The fact such cuts were proposed at all contributes to a feeling of fragility and uncertainty in the sector.

With challenge comes opportunity and we believe the value of arts activities needs to be recognised now more than ever. In line with the spirit of commitments made in *A Culture Strategy for Scotland*, better support is needed for the cultural sector as a whole on the back of recognition that funding for the arts is a real investment in communities with the potential to generate significant cultural, economic, social, linguistic, wellbeing and educational benefits for the people of Scotland and those who visit our country.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Gaelic culture is unique to Scotland and important to the economy, providing jobs, contributing to equalities and wellbeing as well as language revitalisation. Despite progress, Gaelic remains fragile and momentum is vital with every effort needed to ensure the language, and its associated culture, has a viable future.
- 4.2 Fèisean nan Gàidheal welcomes the Culture in Communities focus of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee and supports better recognition, and increased funding support, for community-based cultural activities.
- 4.3 We would be happy to give further evidence to the Committee at a later stage of the inquiry.

Arthur Cormack

Chief Executive, Fèisean nan Gàidheal

April 2023

Written submission from Station House Media Unit

Established as a charity in 2003, Station House Media Unit (shmu), is one of the core cultural organisations in North East Scotland and is at the forefront of community media development in the UK.

We are a community anchor organisation, supporting residents in the seven regeneration areas of Aberdeen in radio and video production, traditional and on-line publications, music production and digital inclusion. These platforms are used as vehicles for personal and collective change; supporting skills development, active citizenship, community capacity building and community development.

The organisation also supports other disadvantaged communities, both geographic and communities of interest, including an employability and training arm, and an adult services arm which provides support and opportunities for adults with barriers, including young adults who are criminal justice experienced.

Successful initiatives have made the organisation a nationally recognised centre of excellence and created models of good practice in youth work; community development; digital inclusion; literacy and numeracy; community capacity building; personal and community development; employability skills; community justice, and the curriculum for excellence.

Please tell us about the cultural activities that you organise in your local area. For example: What support has there been in place to develop and grow cultural activities or events in your local area? What barriers have you faced? Is there anything you would like to deliver but don't have the means to? What needs to be in place to enable or to support a variety of cultural activities or events being organised and delivered in your local area?

As a community anchor organisation, owned and run by the communities we serve, we organise a wide range of cultural activities, focussed around radio/podcasting, film & TV production, paper-based and online publications and digital sound production.

In addition to supporting and encouraging skills development and creativity, our programmes focus on outcomes and the development of meta-skills.

These outcomes include using creativity as a key tool to improve employability, attainment, community development, tackling poverty and the cost-of-living crisis, the climate crisis, and improving mental health & wellbeing.

We have developed a successful sustainable financial model for the organisation with a turnover of over £1.5m in 2022-23, supporting a staff team of 32FTE, with over 150 regular volunteers contributing to the organisations work on a weekly basis. This financial model includes a range of contracted work, significant multi-year grant funded work, alongside some philanthropic donations.

Although we have developed a successful financial model for the organisation we can still struggle to secure the 'core' funding required to cover the costs of the senior management team and the support team (IT, admin) as the funding secured is to pay for the operational elements of the organisation. The recent increases in overheads (esp energy prices which have trebled) are also a significant challenge.

We have been fortunate to have secured CashBack for Communities, and Investing in Communities funding which has enabled our organisation to develop a place-based approach to our work, co-designing our initiatives alongside our communities and providing long-term cultural programmes that support progression, volunteering and mentoring opportunities across a range of target communities across the north east. This work has been further enhanced and developed through our role as lead organisation for the North East Culture Collective as part of the national Culture Collective programme. It is clear from the evidence and impact of our work that strategic long-term investment in local cultural organisations such as our transforms lives and communities. Enabling and supporting creative community anchor organisations to run long-term interventions, co-designed and developed alongside those who benefit from them, creates long-term lasting change.

This impact is almost impossible to replicate with short-term funded project work, where city centre based, regional, or national cultural organisations parachute in with 'outreach' course for a number of weeks and then have to pull out again when the funding comes to an end. For this to work, the cultural organisations need to embed themselves in the community, ignore the 'outreach' nature, and commit towards long-term relationships within and alongside the communities they aim to serve.

<p>Please tell us about the premises that you run and the cultural activities that it hosts. For example: What are the key things that support cultural activities to take place on your premises? What support has there been in place to grow cultural activities or events in your local area? What barriers have you faced in trying to host cultural activities?</p>

shmu is a leader in its field, recognised internationally for its innovative work in community and creative media, however our facilities and equipment have not matched the quality of the services that we deliver.

In 2019, with funding from the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Fund, and significant local fundraising, we completed a £1.5m transformation of the building's HQ in Woodside, Aberdeen, creating a visionary creative media hub for the region, offering transformational creative experiences for all, especially those from our targeted communities, by offering an accessible innovative creative space with industry standard equipment and studios. The transformation of our new building into an exemplar community media facility, recognised across the UK as the leading operation of its kind, has enabled our organisation to offer an enhanced and more diverse programme of creative learning opportunities. New platforms for expression for individuals and groups across North East Scotland have been realised – especially

those who are more vulnerable, disadvantaged or disengaged. Key to the success of our organisation and our facilities are our volunteers who are passionate about the organisation and give freely of their time to ensure the aims of the organisation are delivered. This contribution ranges from leading and informing the strategic vision of the organisation as trustees, to volunteering to host the breakfast show on the organisation's community radio station from 6am in the morning. This commitment and passion from local community members, including their roles as mentors, means that the building can be open as a free and welcoming community resource seven days a week, from 6am to midnight, without the need for dedicated staffing at all times - enabling the organisation to dedicate the valuable staff resource at times when it is most impactful.

Although we have had to absorb significant increases in running costs in the last year due to rising energy costs, we have managed to meet these costs by spreading the increases across the range of programmes that operate out of our building - however this increase has shifted resource away from services which we hope will be relatively short lived.

We are now in the process of trying to secure resources to develop the older part of our building to develop a community venue (community cinema and performance space) and teaching space. We are keen to develop this space with a focus around environmental sustainability and are working with a number of partners to realise this ambition.

We believe the model of community ownership of cultural assets can provide an innovative and sustainable future for creative community engagement and have been working with a number of community partners to discuss the potential of developing other community owned cultural spaces in the region. We would welcome a discussion with the Scottish Government around the development of strategic investment that could support this process moving forward.

Written submission from Art27 Scotland

Art27 Scotland is an arts and human rights organisation based in the Southside of Edinburgh. It is a relatively new organisation established in 2020 but with experienced Directors at the helm. As long standing socially engaged practitioners we recognised the disconnect between the expectation of the right to take part in cultural life for many of the people we'd worked with, and the reality. We took our mission from Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that 'everyone has the right freely to participate in the culture of their community.' We believe the Right to Cultural Life is indivisible from other human rights and a driver of citizenship and democracy. As a value led organisation, we centre the promotion of Dignity, Justice, and Peace through our cultural role in civic society, articulated through great art and great stories. We use three methodologies: artist-led (commissions on specific themes), artist-led and community driven (collaborative work with, for and by communities), and community-led (cultural democracy facilitation).

As the UN explains "Cultural rights protect the rights for each person, individually and in community with others, as well as groups of people, to develop and express their humanity, their world view and the meanings they give to their existence and their development through values, beliefs, convictions, languages, knowledge and the arts, institutions and ways of life. They are also considered as protecting access to cultural heritage and resources that allow such identification and development processes to take place".

When the Scottish parliament declared its intention to incorporate Social, Economic and Cultural Rights into Scots Law we joined Human Rights Consortium Scotland, the civic organisation dedicated to seeing through incorporation, and quickly realised that while Cultural Rights was on the agenda, it was complex and underrepresented with no sector champion to move it forward – a vacancy we were happy to fill. Socially engaged practice (or Community arts) does not take place in a rarefied aesthetic space but is very much in the here and now of people's everyday lives. Our residency in Southside Community Centre (August 2021 – August 2022) tested this Right, and through close community collaboration explored what the characteristics of the Right to Cultural Life consisted of and identified where embedded exclusionary practices effectively denied this Right to people.

Our neighbourhood is home to a large number of diverse cultural communities who live, study, work and practice faith here. Noticeably, after the wave of BLM activism local "migrant" communities were experiencing heightened degrees of racism, the Chinese and Hong Kong community attacks were fired by populist politicians blaming China for the pandemic, the Arabic speaking communities through the simplistic association made between Islam, terrorism and the Taliban, the Eastern European communities were experiencing post-Brexit fall out of having to justify their right to stay in the city they had been happily working for many years.

Art27 Scotland acknowledges that “identity” is no longer fixed, but a point of departure on a journey towards a negotiated destination. Culture has the capacity to create connections, imagine alternate futures and generate hope. Culture is not neutral; it is democracy in action and must be born anew in every generation.

It is in this context that our artistic work has meaning, to create the conditions that affirm the cultural strength of different communities, build a shared neighbourhood community through intercultural exchange and create spaces of solidarity and safety recognising differences in cultural knowledge and lived experience that surround us.

From August 2021 to August 2022 Art27 was based in The Southside Community Centre in a partnership that included Edinburgh City Council. From August 22 to the present day Art27 has an office and workshop based in a disused shop around the corner and organises cultural events often into the Centre, and the Directors of Art27 are local residents and regularly attend cultural events in their local area. It was the lack of participatory community events relevant to the diversity of the locality that led to the initial approach to the Southside Centre.

Please tell us about your attendance or participation in cultural activities in your local area. For example: What supports you to attend or participate in cultural activities? What barriers have you faced? Do you think there is a good variety and availability of cultural activities to participate in? Or do you think there is a currently unmet need for this in your community, and if so, what is missing?

The Co-Directors of Art27 live in the Edinburgh Southside. The Southside, like inner-city areas across the world, is a dynamic and constantly changing place – it had become the High Street for the MENA communities, the extensive recruitment by Edinburgh University in China and Hong Kong had created a vibrant student and service community, the presence of the Central Mosque had meant that the area had become a safe space for many migrant communities.

During Art27’s partnership with the Southside Centre the space was used by the different communities of the Southside, - Polish, Hong Kong, Palestinian, South Asian, Yemeni, Chinese, North and West African. These communities presented their own culture on their own terms, and in their own language (Art27 provided translation services), the public facing events often involved food and music. As Southside residents we were able to learn more about the different cultures with whom we co-exist.

In our area there is lack of a Cultural Hub that serves the whole community, embracing and enabling the diversity of all people, connecting and sharing cultural expression by design.

The Culture Collective had potential to strengthen the community arts sector. An embedded creative organisation as cultural community developers within the public

space itself to build relationships, develop trust, support access and grow shared ownership. This is not an outreach and education department of a larger organisation.

There is little sustained support for community arts organisations available and a need to remove the project cliff-edges for community work. Short term and underfunded work disrupts trust - particularly with minority communities who can often feel there engagement is tokenistic.

There is very little funding available for core support to socially engaged arts organisations. There is however increased demand from them to create 'meaningful' experiences and change. As there is no objective measurement of what an experience of meaning or the nature of change, the duration and nature of the funding available, has little relation to practice, the how of meeting those expectations.

Availability of engaged or community arts is often limited to the youth sector, targeted communities or commercially priced teaching-based workshops. These tend not to impact on community development or overcome barriers to participation. With increasingly time-poor lives, the availability of public spaces need to be available when people can use them if they are to participate freely in cultural life.

Please tell us about the cultural activities that you organise in your local area. For example: What support has there been in place to develop and grow cultural activities or events in your local area? What barriers have you faced? Is there anything you would like to deliver but don't have the means to? What needs to be in place to enable or to support a variety of cultural activities or events being organised and delivered in your local area?

Despite being no longer resident in the Southside Centre we continue to engage with the City of Edinburgh Council around the need for a Cultural Hub on the Southside. We were delighted to see Article 27 prominently displayed in the City's new Cultural Strategy. Our artists continue to engage with their communities as we continue our mission to make Cultural Rights real.

We are more appreciative than ever of the barriers faced by communities seeking to express their Rights as guaranteed under Article 27. Across the world Cultural Rights are being recognised as the lynch pin of cultural policy, a way to ensure increased citizenship, protect democracy and a keystone to all other rights - the most recent being Rome in 2020 and Barcelona in 2022. While Scotland moves to the incorporation of Cultural Rights into our legal system, we hope that this creates a Public Duty to ensure a fairer share of cultural resources across all its citizens. Much of the drive internationally towards the implementation of Cultural Rights comes from the UCLG (United Cities & Local Government) , as yet nowhere in Scotland is a member. Perhaps Glasgow, or Edinburgh - Scotland's most diverse city, will lead the way.

Art27 is one of 26 organisations as part of the Culture Collective. The Scottish Government through Creative Scotland has recently ended the funding for this much needed initiative. The funding for the Culture Collective enabled committed organisations to take root in their localities, but from Art27's perspective it has struggled to provide leadership in the context of community or socially engaged practice, focusing rather on the legitimate needs of artists working in the sector. In other countries the complex and multifaceted community arts sector is recognised through its own sector development agencies, where socially engaged practice and its varied methodologies are properly recognised, valued and the practice evolved e.g. Create Ireland. The companies whose *raison d'être* is to embed within their community are now being cut loose to compete with 'priority' established venues for scarce resources. Community arts practice in communities is the seedbank for the future of a flourishing diverse culture sector and this needs time, trust and dedication – none of which is reflected in current project funding opportunities.

What we learned?

- Overwhelmingly it has been clear from the take up and the quality of that engagement that there is significant demand from the diverse communities of the Southside for a space to be involved in projects that reflect their right to a cultural life. The need and desire for a safe, collective space for their own community, but also a place to meet others, to grow a shared community and sense of belonging was very strong.
- We quickly learned that offering participatory workshops in different languages not only increased the community take up, but for many of our migrant artists created the opportunity to work in their first language, which brought a new and more thoughtful engagement with their work – through shared language and cultural identity the lines between the artist and the community dissolved – and the work was about “us”. Art27 Scotland's workshops take place in Polish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Arabic and English, and to encourage intercultural dialogue our presentations offer live translation through surtitles.
- A sense of safety, supported access, and a welcoming relevant offer isn't something that can be delivered through an institutionalised space. It requires human interaction, hospitality, community development and trust. The different communities need to become authors of the space, not simply treated as customers.

Please tell us about the premises that you run and the cultural activities that it hosts. For example: What are the key things that support cultural activities to take place on your premises? What support has there been in place to grow cultural activities or events in your local area? What barriers have you faced in trying to host cultural activities?

From August 2021 to August 2022 Art27 was based in The Southside Community Centre in a partnership with the voluntary management committee that included Edinburgh City Council. The Centre is owned and maintained by City of Edinburgh Council with adult learning part of their offer. but managed by a self-elected voluntary group which had programming authority outwith the council's minimal use. From Art27's perspective MC programming was done without due regard to the obligations surrounding the use of public space in the context of current Equalities legislation, there was a disconnect between Council policy and the practice of the MC.

The centre had become underused, facilities management staff told us of the many failed attempts to encourage wider usage. Our surveys demonstrated that there was little or no local recognition of it as a space for use by them, most of the local community had no reason to enter the building, if they did they reported feelings of being unwelcome. However the MC's authority had been secured by its successful building of reserves through commercial lets for festivals and events such as Wrestling, at a time when the City maintained the building and paid the utility bills.

We were granted use of a base inside the Centre and from that position were able to programme the use of its underused space, extend its opening hours and facilitate wider community use, particularly amongst communities who found the language, form filling and cost of facilities management at the weekend and evenings a barrier. With the initial support of the MC we led its development as a Community Cultural Hub that reflected the changing demographic of the neighbourhood. We developed the infrastructure of the physical space and hosted multi-artform participatory creative projects led by artists in residence from Hong Kong, Poland, Palestine, the Middle East and North Africa, Yemen and Iran engaging directly with these communities. These projects and events were delivered in the first languages and barriers to participation lifted. The community demand was significant and over the year even within Covid restrictions we had over 5000 attendances, with overwhelmingly positive feedback . Please see: https://issuu.com/art27scotland/docs/annual_report_v8/2

However, the acceptance of neighbourhoods and cities as dynamic places, where those who live there creatively reshape and rework their own heritage and the heritage of the place in which they find themselves, proved difficult for some to accept.. As the user demographic of the space visibly changed, the language of "take-over" began, as did the criticism that Art27 were not looking after "our people" and ignoring the needs of the "white working class". There was no evidence to suggest "white" people were disadvantaged in use of the space, and the racial foregrounding of "working class" denied the validity of migrant experience primarily working in the service and gig economy.

Although the City's new cultural strategy references Article 27 as a founding principle, the department responsible for the community building prioritises "sustainability" as it seeks to transfer running costs to voluntary management committees. So while one part of the City supported Art27's attempts at cultural democratisation, another supported the financially viable preservation of the status quo. Without an assertion of public duty and targeted resources to fulfil that duty, this scenario will continue to play

out. Public spaces that are needed to facilitate people's right to freely participate in cultural life are being closed or sold off, while those left become driven by their need to generate income rather than considerations of cultural, social or community well-being.

Our research evidenced that very few people from the communities we engaged with accessed any of the other publicly Regular Funded arts and culture spaces in the locality. Our research also showed widespread local support for an anti-racist, welcoming facilitated safe space for collective community-led, and socially engaged activity. The public reaction to the Art27 public facing events was overwhelmingly positive.

Our vision for a public cultural space addressed its character, activities, uses, and meaning in the community. This vision should be further defined by the people who live or work in or near the space. Much of the success of any community space can be attributed to its management's ability to respond effectively to the ever changing dynamic place it is situated in. The City has shared with us its own frustration with voluntary Management Committee set ups. In our experience the model of governance where a self-selected group (reinforced by other self-selected groups such as The Southside Community Association) act as gatekeepers to public spaces without public accountability is out of sync with developing models of democratic accountability and is no longer fit for purpose.

We've been told by City workers and officials that the attitudes and barriers that we experienced and witnessed during our residency at Southside Community Centre, were typical of other centres. These included:

- Lack of a sense of welcome to buildings that feel like an institution. Art27 for example filled the Centre walls and corridors with artwork and exhibitions that reflected the local community. They have now reverted to public information notice boards with random flyers and council notices.
- No access support: Booking a space requires a good level of written English for the booking details, a written risk assessment for your activity, a fire safety and emergency evacuation procedure. There is no easily available access support relating to language or disability.
- Lack of accountability: The voluntary management committee was effectively unaccountable due to their voluntary status and do not have transparency in decision making. Requests for use of space are often ignored, take months to be confirmed, with the excuse being lack of resources and time amongst the volunteer committee members, there is no available criteria for what activity will be "allowed in".
- There is a Lack of appropriate skills and knowledge on MCs required to operate a public building.
- No processes of appeal or complaint for users who feel discriminated against without going through an off putting mainstream complaint with the council.

Written submission from Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland

Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS) was set up in 2012 in order to create a cohesive voice for the traditional arts in Scotland, principally those of storytelling, music and dance. TRACS's work also encompasses Scotland's indigenous languages. TRACS has been developed since its beginning as a framework for collaboration, delivery and advocacy. It comprises the Scottish Storytelling Forum, the Traditional Music Forum and the Traditional Dance Forum of Scotland. It is based at the Scottish Storytelling Centre in the historic Netherbow in Edinburgh's Old Town, with staff also located in different areas of Scotland. TRACS draws, through its three constituting Forums, on a membership network numbering over one hundred organisations and five hundred individuals in all parts of Scotland, as well as a distributed engagement, live and digital, with 900,000 people annually. Among TRACS's responsibilities is the annual Scottish International Storytelling Festival, Trads programming at the Storytelling Centre, the annual Celtic Summer School, a programme of courses and workshops in support of lifelong learning and continuing professional development, and the People's Parish, a distinctive contribution to place-based community arts across Scotland. TRACS' governing principles are rooted in the UNESCO definition of culture and the conventions on cultural diversity, artistic education, minority languages, and Intangible Cultural Heritage. We are also committed to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our collective and creative processes respect persons and organisations, irrespective of ethnicity, race, religious belief, gender, sex, age, sexual orientation, physical capacity or learning ability. TRACS is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) governed by a Board of Trustees. We have a Scotland-wide remit, representing cultural organisations and organising cultural activities throughout the country.

How do national and local layers of government, along with the third sector, complement each other to ensure that communities have opportunities to take part in cultural activities?

Certain rights are inherent in our nature as social beings, because they fulfil needs that are intrinsic to our lives, or needs which arise from our relationship with the givens of nature (climate, topography, natural resources). Rights flow from the universal similarity of human needs. Just as we acquire needs and the rights which arise from them through our human nature, and our human condition, we participate in culture by the fact of our being born into a society. Culture we define as the whole way of life, and the capacity for living it, which arises from the dialectic between the givens of nature and the world as we find it, and human need and human aspiration.

The right to participate in cultural activity is recognised and asserted by international convention, e.g. the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Such declaration results in:

- an entitlement to the citizen

and therefore

- a duty on government (national and local) to allow cultural activity (in its narrow definition of creative and recreational activity and its associated forms) initiated, developed, and sustained by citizens, individually and in community, to take place, i.e. not to interfere in or suppress activity, where such activity does not contravene local law or natural rights.
- a duty on government (national and local) to make adequate provision for cultural activity
 - by means of the development of an infrastructure for cultural activity, including the maintenance of artifacts, archives and cultural objects in general
 - by fostering and supporting creativity, talent and excellence and helping them to develop
 - by making available spaces for cultural activity: rehearsal rooms, galleries, theatres, stages, studios
 - the stewardship and interpretation of the cultural memory
 - media
 - networks
 - marketing
 - by means of direct and indirect funding and support for cultural organisations in the third sector
- a simultaneous duty on government (national and local) to redress inequalities of access
 - by augmenting the capacity of citizens, through social, economic and educational development, to participate
 - as creative individuals
 - as audiences
 - as members of communities where community life is enhanced by the presence of cultural activity
 - by addressing the means and scope of distribution of cultural activity

Such duties form the basis of cultural policy, the aim of which is to meet the citizen's entitlement to cultural participation, and to provide a framework for the allocation of the resources to make that happen. Entitlement rests with the citizen; therefore, it is not given to local authorities to designate particular services as 'entitlements'. All cultural services currently provided are part of the citizen's general cultural entitlement. If national and local governments address the duties outlined, which are implied in the assertion of the existence of cultural rights, then citizens' entitlements will be fulfilled.

In practice, the mixture of arms-length organisations now providing cultural services on behalf of local authorities can be a confusing landscape for the public, and for

organisations such as TRACS seeking to engage equitably with local cultural activity across the country. Where traditionally there had been dedicated local authority arts officers, the 'brand names' of such organisations (e.g. Angus Alive, ONFife, Glasgow Life) can at times contribute to a sense of disconnect between communities and local authority cultural provision. Some thought could be given to improve access to information on how local cultural services are provided, such as the listings collated by the Association of Local Authority Arts Officers in Ireland.

How is unmet cultural need determined? And who decides this?

How is the entitlement referred to above best served? There is a distinction to be made between entitlement and empowerment, the ability to act on that entitlement. It is useful to reflect on the difference between the democratisation of culture and cultural democracy. The democratisation of culture refers to a policy of making accessible already existing cultural opportunities that have hitherto been taken by a restricted range of the population: cut-price tickets for the opera for example, or the opening of arts centres in communities where such facilities were unheard of. Arts Council England defines it thus: [The assumption] that there is a formally recognised definition of what constitutes culture (determined by a relatively small number of people) and that it is the duty of publicly funded arts organisations (who are the gatekeepers) to make it widely available .

Cultural democracy on the other hand is a state in which everyone feels empowered to actively participate in the broadest range of cultural activity, what the Culture Strategy for Scotland describes as 'everyday culture'. Our perspective on cultural need is seen through the prism of the co-creative and democratic approach of community arts. The theatre company Welfare State International and its founder John Fox made work in and with communities that would explore local history, traditions and so on not simply to document and produce something picturesque and pleasing, but, as Fox put it 'a series of resonating images' which would present a 'mythic pattern of aspects of life'. These they would often frame in ceremonial and ritual forms, often drawing on the changes acknowledged in seasonal ceremonies, which in traditional cultures served, through the use of symbols drawn from the cultural unconscious, to realign and harmonise individuals and communities with changing realities, connecting changes in material circumstances – weather, light, soil, animal and plant life – with social and spiritual aspects of community life.

Welfare State was well aware that in contemporary communities communal practices and shared images are often the shells, shadow images of a previous organic culture (although there are of course exceptions to this: in England, for example, the Horn Dance at Abbots Bromley, the Padstow Oss and nearer to home, the Burry Man). By re-imagining myth and ritual Welfare State sought to re-connect them with current realities, and, as one observer of the company wrote 'raise back into their proper places in the public culture areas of experience that are under direct threat from the official culture – creativity, sensuality and communality.'

So the making of myth is a serious business. It is about the construction of reality, re-defining notions of where you come from, who you are and what your future might hold. And because it is a serious business it is the domain of those who make it their business to work with the stuff of life, filter it through the imagination and create symbolic and creative work – artists. When artists put this work at the service of communities they might claim the designation ‘bard’, although nowadays you are more likely to be termed something like ‘community artist’ or ‘artist working in participatory settings’. Folklorist the late John MacInnes writes of how the bard maintained a poetic map of a community’s social and geographical relations, the connections between people, and between people and place.

There is a significant difference, however, between an artist embedded in the community and an artist, directed by their own artistic vision, who comes in to work with a community, possibly with aims and objectives that have to be shared and negotiated with the community. The influential community artist and commentator François Matarasso proposed the following questions for consideration if a project is not to be imposed on a community and is to be properly considered democratic:

- Who defines the aim and implicitly the problem it is supposed to solve?
- Are the intended beneficiaries aware of this thinking?
- Have they consented to the possibility of change or even harm?
- What commitments have been made, applied or assumed?
- What responsibilities do the professional artists recognise?
- Whose interests are being served?

What does good ‘place-based’ cultural policy look like in practice?

The People’s Parish

The People’s Parish is an initiative of Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS), currently funded by Creative Scotland through the Scottish Government’s Culture Collective programme. In its first year it worked in nine different locations across Scotland: Kilwinning, Dumbarton, Barrhead, Falkirk, Restalrig (Edinburgh), Mayfield (Midlothian), Kinross, Glenorchy and Dalmally, and Dufftown – a mix of post-war housing schemes scoring high on the SIMD, small towns, and a sparsely populated rural area. A second round of projects is planned for Livingston, Lower Lochaber, Eskdalemuir, and Fife. The People’s Parish is a comprehensive methodology, based on accessing and using communities’ intangible cultural heritage, that aims to enable people to shape and share the story of their own community by combining local traditions with local creative voices. Over two hundred years ago, at the close of the eighteenth century, ministers of religion were asked to write the story of their parish for the Statistical Account of Scotland. From 1845 to 1930, civil parishes formed part of Scotland’s local government system. The parishes, which had their origins in the ecclesiastical parishes of the church of Scotland, often overlapped the then existing county boundaries. There are 871 civil parishes in Scotland.

The People's Parish aims to have that story told not by a few professionals or central institutions, but by the people who live and work in each of Scotland's ancient civil parishes – local people are the experts. The result will be a local resource, not a statistical account but a creative and cultural account, a multi-faceted and evolving mosaic of human life and nature in Scotland as a whole, in the first part of the 21st century. The People's Parish aims to combine practical work, with a theoretical underpinning, an understanding of the policy context, methodologies, case studies and examples of similar approaches.

Our starting point is an acknowledgement that the world is in a state of profound crisis – but that, by digging where we stand, we have the immediate means to start addressing that crisis. The elements are familiar to all of us. In a nutshell: climate change, pollution and waste, the exhaustion of finite resources, population growth, surfeit of information and stimulus, fear of 'otherness', violence, inequality, fragmentation. All presented to us in such a way as to induce an almost permanent state of anger and fear.

To address that crisis we need, among other things, a revived and enriched civic life: flourishing communities, characterised by their members' sense of well-being and good health; civic engagement (the encouragement of social capital); social justice (equality in the distribution of wealth, power, privilege); respectful relationships with nature and each other - all bound together by a sense of place. The renewal of the social and civil fabric is both the goal and the means by which we might accomplish it.

In order to flourish in the present and in the future communities also need a relationship with their past, their collective memory. It is our contention that two of the chief ills of our time (a direct result perhaps of the many already enumerated) are alienation and loss of meaning. One way of addressing these deep-seated problems is by identifying and exploring aspects of the cultural memory linked to place. Within the cultural memory we are interested in the possibilities of the 'folk voice' (the overlooked and vernacular voice, as opposed to official accounts and the perspective of those with political and economic power).

Because the traditional arts are a collectively created expression of the people's encounter with geographical, historical, psychological and social circumstance, including the processes of settlement, relocation and dislocation, they offer a unique way of understanding the heritage, character and identity of a place.

By identifying and exploring the folk aspects of cultural memory, communities can enlarge their cultural capital and claim cultural equity for it: a community's tangible and intangible assets, developed in many cases by unknown hands and minds, and which may have been hitherto undervalued, can be given value and have their value recognised both inside and outside communities.

We propose, therefore, that communities develop resources and tools for exploring the folk voice within the cultural memory, using it to share knowledge of the past, and

to explore and express its creative possibilities for social, educational and economic benefit.

The Traditional Arts Working Group, which reported to the Scottish Government in 2010, identified tackling geographical inequities in cultural infrastructure, a more effective use of local resources, better networking, and amateurs working with clusters of local activists as ways of stimulating community arts across Scotland. The People's Parish can address these issues through:

- local networks of engaged individuals and organisations,
- skilled field-workers who can map the local trad arts ecology, negotiate with, guide, and work with local groups and work in communities to identify strengths and weaknesses, initiate projects which explore tangible and intangible material and work creatively with the knowledge developed
- raising awareness of information on sources of that material. The value of this approach does not need to be proved from scratch. Numerous studies have concluded that 'active forms of engagement - actively creating, exhibiting and participating – have better outcomes in terms of social capital.'

To sum up the People's Parish approach:

Purpose

- To stimulate participation
- To empower communities across Scotland to access, explore, shape and own their local assets
- To record local culture
- To enable connections between local history, archaeology, literature, intangible cultural heritage and creativity
- To affirm the work of local practitioners
- To broker platforms for the expression and celebration of local culture and creativity
- To equalise opportunities for support

The People's Parish aims

- To involve all Scotland
- To bring together local activists and organisations
- To inspire new forms of mapping
- To gather and give voice to songs, stories, dances, traditions, visuals, histories and fictions
- To facilitate digital representation of local culture and access to it
- To support a new Scottish ethnographic survey of identities, beliefs, ideas, customs and relationships

The outcomes we are looking to support are these:

- Participation in community life
- Communities are empowered to access, explore, shape and own their local assets
- A record is made of contemporary local culture

- Connections are opened up between local history, archaeology, literature, intangible cultural heritage and creativity
- The work of local practitioners (in story, song, dance, local history, cultural activities) is affirmed and valued
- Platforms are created for the expression and celebration of local culture and creativity
- Opportunities are created and supported in every part of the country

We have identified a seven stage framework for working in a parish.

Stages 1.

Preliminary engagement – who are

- The local networks
- Potential partners
- The anchor organisations
- The individual activists
- Where are the resources

2. Action-research

E.g.

- Ways of showing local diversity
- ABC of Local Distinctiveness
- Parish maps
- Stories, traditions, topography
- Workshops on local traditions
- Story circles
- Fieldwork Interviews and oral histories

3. Formulation of creative ideas

- Report-back and presentation of material documented in action-research (an event): what are the key assets, ideas?
- Propose a choice of project models based on these (people can choose)
- Can be cross art-form

4. Creative learning

- What skills need to be developed to realise the project? What learning?

5. Performance/ exhibition/ installation

6. Evaluation

7. Documenting and archiving

The approach takes in several policy areas include:

- Community empowerment
- Equalities, diversity, inclusion
- Community cultural development
- Local democracy

- Intangible Cultural Heritage
- Curriculum for Excellence
- Health and well-being
- 20 Minute Neighbourhoods

The People's Parish is one initiative among many that are part of the Culture Collective, a programme which emblemises that idea of cultural democracy. It would be our hope that the Scottish Government sees the value of this approach to cultural provision within communities with its emphasis on the local and the co-created.

Written submission from Creative Scotland – excerpt on the Culture Collective

Creative Scotland's Culture Collective programme, supported by Scottish Government, is a network of 26 participatory arts projects, shaped by local communities alongside artists and creative organisations. From Shetland to Inverclyde, Aberdeen to Hawick, each unique project is designed and driven by the community in which it is rooted, playing an important part in shaping the future cultural life of Scotland. For the projects themselves, the Culture Collective provides a network: opportunities to share resources, learning and experiences. For the sector as a whole, the Culture Collective shines a light on the crucial importance of participatory arts projects for artists, for communities and for the future.

Website: www.culturecollective.scot

Many Culture Collective projects highlight the wider wellbeing potential of the arts, in bringing people together, tackling loneliness and isolation, and enabling people to embrace the joy and pleasure of creativity, whilst others have a focus on creative placemaking.

As the programme was designed to be flexible and respond to local need, and to deliver against the National Culture Strategy, Culture Collective and the projects it supports offers a strong example of how to address unmet need, through place-based and people-centred creative processes. The programme provides multi-faceted explorations, learning and examples of how to enable people to shape the future cultural life of their community.

Some examples of Culture Collective projects:

- Toonspeak: The Here We Are Culture Collective project is based in Ward 17 (Springburn/Balornock/Barmulloch/Robroyston/Millerston), in the North of Glasgow, with a programme which has contributed to the wellbeing of members of the community, from children and young people to adults. Project website: www.toonspeak.co.uk/culture-collective-2
- Alchemy Film & Arts: Alchemy's Culture Collective project, The Teviot, the Flag and the Rich, Rich Soil, aims to investigate the borders, boundaries and lines of Hawick, reframing the town's cultural identities as they relate to land, water, industry, territory, place and environment. Project website: www.alchemyfilmandarts.org.uk/the-teviot-the-flag-and-the-rich-rich-soil Blog post by Michael Pattinson: www.culturecollective.scot/blog/up-the-teviot-on-artists-and-residencies-in-hawick
- SEALL: Aiserigh project is a collaboration between SEALL, ATLAS Arts and Fèisean nan Gàidheal, to work together with individuals, communities, businesses and organisations across Skye, Raasay and Lochalsh to develop a range of ways

to use culture as a powerful tool for creating strong and healthy communities for the future. Project website: www.seall.co.uk/aiseirigh Blog post by Louis Barabbas: www.culturecollective.scot/blog/louis-barabbas-on-keeping-community-spaces-alive-and-thriving

- Open Road: Safe Harbour, Open Sea: this project, in partnership with Fittie Community Development Trust, aims to celebrate the history and heritage of the community, create a cultural programme for the community hall and explore the future of the coastal community. Project website: www.openroadltd.com/projects/culture-collective/

Further blog posts from Culture Collective: www.culturecollective.scot/blog

We would be happy to share a copy of the interim findings from our research and evaluation programme, undertaken by Queen Margaret University, to further demonstrate the impact of Culture Collective.

Written Submission from Alchemy Film and Arts

Alchemy Film & Arts is based in the Scottish Borders town of Hawick. We work with communities and artists both locally and internationally, using film as a way to come together, have conversations and strengthen community.

Across a year-round programme of screenings, workshops, residencies, community filmmaking and the internationally renowned **Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival**, we strive to create spaces in which collective expression, creative learning and critical thinking can take place.

Through our award-winning **Film Town** method, we approach film as something that is actively made through experimentation and collaboration rather than as a product or object that is produced by one set of people and consumed by another set of people. Film is an adaptable medium that, with robust safeguarding policies and proper resources in place, lends itself to the kind of democratisation and demystification that underpin broader and deeper access to creative experiences and cultural provision.

Organisational resilience and meeting cultural need

In addition, we count a range of perspectives lived experiences across our team, including senior management and Board of Trustees – including people of colour, trans and queer people, people from working class and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and people living with disability. This range of perspectives grounds and informs the work we do in Hawick, Scottish Borders, South of Scotland and as part of a range of national and international networks.

During COVID-19, we were able to devise and deliver community engagement programmes in an exclusively digital setting, working with vulnerable and marginalised services in the form of community filmmaking workshops to skills development workshops to help local services and societies to digitise their own provision for members otherwise precluded from participating in activities that are of interest and meaning to them.

As such, Alchemy was able to meet cultural needs identified by the very communities with whom we worked due to a) the dexterity and adaptability of our specialist medium; b) the skillsets and diverse range of lived experiences of our team; and c) our strategic deployment of funding and resources through robust and communities-oriented cultural policy.

Our community partners since 2020 include NHS services for suicide bereavement; groups whose service users live with autism; groups whose service users have additional support needs; gender-based violence services; local and longstanding historical and heritage groups; LGBTQIA+ youth groups; young anti-racism initiatives; volunteer befriending services; and local primary schools in partnership with Scottish Borders Council.

Because of this, Alchemy emerged from lockdown confident of its working methods and strategic vision. In all our projects we deploy bespoke progress trackers that gauge and evaluate, in qualitative and quantitative ways, not only the efficacy of our creative learning methods but also the variety of ways in which participants and partners are thinking of their place and cultural identities as a direct result of working on film-related projects with us.

Culture Collective

As such, participating in Culture Collective has allowed Alchemy to intensify year-round activities and offerings, embedding our practice within local communities in a way that is infrastructurally and institutionally complex. Our organisational resilience, our position within the national screen and visual arts sectors, and our standing within the international film festival landscape are all bound to the cross-sectoral partnerships that are making our work in Hawick inextricable from the town's cultural and economic activity.

Culture Collective has supported and confirmed Alchemy's trajectory since 2017, growing from an annual festival to a genuinely year-round proposition. A 'place-based' cultural policy to us means in practice a shift in emphasis from the 'festivalisation of culture', which relies in our view on poor working conditions, unpaid labour and precarious short-term contracts, to one that is delivered through more permanent contracts, better pay, an improved remuneration policy for participating artists, honorariums for community partners, and adopting union rates for artist residencies.

Culture Collective's resources and priorities have allowed us to strategise and mobilise our operations both regionally and nationally and put policies and values into practice. We can demonstrate our local/global growth into sectoral leaders within film and social engagement are in some way a direct result of Culture Collective: our regular speaking invitations from and consultations for national networks and academic institutions; an ongoing PhD project on our methods of cultural management; and our recent success at the Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration hosted by SURF, Scotland's Regeneration Forum, in partnership with Scottish Government.

Our Culture Collective project, *The Teviot, the Flag and the Rich, Rich Soil*, is a programme of artist residencies and community engagement exploring the borders, boundaries and lines of Hawick and the Scottish Borders.

Beginning in July 2021, the programme engages artists in working with communities to consider the pasts, presents and futures of Hawick while researching and investigating the town and wider region's cultural identities in relation to land, water, industry, territory, place and environment.

Emphasising collaboration, collectivity and sustainable growth, *The Teviot, the Flag and the Rich, Rich Soil* also includes artist bursaries, community filmmaking workshops, and a traineeships programme.

In the 18 months since its conception, Alchemy has produced more than 10 culturally significant projects, including five long-term community-engaged artist residencies; four new film commissions; a sustainable community engagement.

Cultural work resulting from this activity include: a collaboratively made feature-length film portrait of Hawick made in partnership with more than 60 of the town's community groups; an anti-racist youth education resource pack; a suite of four films exploring the region's textile trade made in collaboration with local partners; a permanent moving-image installation engaging with the waterwheel beneath a key building in Hawick, deploying local archive film to reanimate a significant feature of the town's heritage; a solar-power moving-image cine-caravan that now operates independent of Alchemy, touring film and community engagement programmes across South of Scotland.

The Teviot, the Flag and the Rich, Rich Soil also includes bespoke bursaries for local artists and a traineeships scheme. Alchemy trainees funded through Culture Collective have since gone on to further artist opportunities with us, including follow-up artist opportunities, permanent employment, and joining our Board of Trustees. We are also proud to say that a number of artists/contractors have permanently relocated to Hawick subsequent to their participation in our Culture Collective programme.

Additionally, Culture Collective's resources have strengthened our long-term access commitments. Through such measures are costly, descriptive subtitles for D/deaf and neurodivergent audiences; audio description for blind and partially sighted audiences; and BSL interpretation at live in-person events are all a normalised part of our practice – embedded into the very conception of projects.