

Cross-Party Group on Culture and Communities

19th January 2022

MSPs Present:

Sarah Boyack MSP (Convener); Jenny Minto MSP; Clare Adamson MSP;
Claire Baker MSP

CPG Members and Guests:

Bryan Beattie (Eden Court); Gavin Crichton (Active Inquiry); Jane Davidson (Scottish Opera); Anne Diack (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society); Caroline Dooley (Scottish Opera); Barb Fraser (Luminate); Anne Gallacher (Luminate); Jennifer Hunter (Culture Counts); Poppy Jarratt (UNESCO City of Design Dundee); Moira Jeffrey (SCAN); Trevor MacFarlane (Culture Commons); Rebecca Madgin (University of Glasgow); David Martin (SDS); Shona McCarthy (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society); Lyndsey McLean (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society); Catherine Middleton Findlay (Freelance Producer); Helen Mill (The Village Storytelling Centre); David Nicholson (Musician); Janie Nicoll (Visual Artist/Scottish Artists Union); Andrej Ninkovic (Office of Foysoil Choudhury MSP); Emma Jayne Park (Freelance Dancer and Theatre Maker); Catriona Patterson (Inspiring Scotland); Joseph Peach (Culture Counts); Alison Reeves (Making Music); Andy Roberston (Culture Counts); Esther Robertson (OnFife); Chiara Ronchini (Historic Environment Scotland); David P Scott (Freelance Artist); Sally Thomson (Grampian Hospitals Art Trust); Christopher Walker (UK Theatre); Nicola Walls (Page\Park Architects/Tron Theatre/Wasps Studios); David Watt (Arts & Business Scotland); Kathryn Welch (Freelancer/Culture Collective); Hazel Wotherspoon (Toonspeak Young People's Theatre)

1 Welcome

Sarah Boyack MSP (convener) welcomed attendees to the meeting and informed the group that deputy convener Sue Webber MSP has had to withdraw from the group owing to work commitments. The group will wait until the next meeting to elect a new deputy convener.

2 Group Purpose

Sarah introduced the purpose of the Culture & Communities Group:

To encourage the exchange of knowledge and understanding between the Scottish Parliament and arts, culture, heritage, and historic environment communities.

The group will focus on the impact of the public sector, for example the social, health and educational impact of access and participation in the arts, heritage, libraries, and museums.

3 Introduction to Secretariat

Sarah introduced Culture Counts as the group's secretariat along with an invitation for CPG members to contact Culture Counts with ideas for future meeting themes.

4 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were moved by Clare Adamson MSP and seconded by Jenny Minto MSP.

5 – Any Other Business

No additional business was raised at this stage

6 Presentation – Hazel Wotherspoon, CEO of Toonspeak Young People's Theatre

Hazel provided a presentation on Toonspeak's work with their participants and communities over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic.

<https://toonspeak.co.uk/summer-2020/>

Presentation - David P Scott, Freelance Photographer

David provided a presentation on his 'Loving Photography' project, delivered in partnership with the Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust, ST/ART Project and The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery & Museum.

<https://davidpscott.com/loving-photography/>

Presentation - Shona McCarthy, CEO of Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society

Shona provided a presentation on the Fringe Society's community engagement, access and learning programmes.

Fringe Days Out

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1qyv2UpfRs>

It's my Fringe too

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbsPQzjE_jl

Schools on the Street
<https://youtu.be/ikgRInVf6qA>

7 Discussion/Q&A

Following the presentation, the group held a discussion and Q&A with speakers. Key themes and questions that emerged from the discussion included:

- How can culture sector be part of recovery from Covid-19, focusing on loneliness, isolation, and mental health issues – what can be done to help communities recover?
- How can the sector be part of the wider picture of health and social care? In areas such as social prescribing, arts and culture can be a very cost-effective approach to public health.
- In approaching social prescribing, part of the current issue may be that the health sector is not fully aware of how the arts sector operates, particularly around the need to and process of commissioning work.
- How can policy makers for the arts and health and wellbeing be brought together to thread those policies together?
- The crisis saw more experimentation and flexibility than previously with organisations' existing funding packages. How can this be continued in the future?
- The group discussed the fact that most freelancers in the sector lack any sort of financial buffer – as soon as the work stops, there's nothing. What can be done to change this?
- Covid has changed how some culture sector organisations will operate going forward: Models of hybrid engagement, placing community at the centre of activity, and working with health boards.
- The nature of funding for individual creative people can hold challenges in terms of restrictive and difficult to fulfil criteria. Greater flexibility and opportunity to experiment within funding of this nature would be beneficial. The group discussed with interest recent announcements relating to a Universal Basic Income for artists in Ireland.

8 Any Other Business

No additional business was raised at this stage

9 Actions

There were no actions following the meeting

10 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is TBC, it will depend on whether or not we are allowed to host it in the Parliament and the availability of meeting space. Culture Counts will send out more information when we know more.

Minutes approved by Kathryn Welch and Jenni Minto MSP on 21st Sept 2022