

Cross-Party Group on Music

October 9, 6pm, Online

Minute

Present

MSPs

Michelle Thomson, Claire Baker

Invited guests

Jenny Jamison, Royal High School Preservation Trust
Mehtar Shagufta, Playlist for Life

Non-MSP Group Members

Iona Fyfe, Pamela Black (HITS), Neil Fox (NYOS), Donald Macleod (Holdfast), Stina Tweeddale (Music Venues Trust), Carol Main (Live Music Now Scotland), Robert Kilpatrick (SMIA), Ailsa Macintosh (BBC), Alison Reeves (Making Music), Robert Baxter (St Mary's Music School), Jo Buckley (Impact), Matthew Whiteside (The Night With), Katy Taylor (EIF), Jen O'Brien (Music Broth), Jenna Main (ABRSM), Caroline Farren (EIS), David Francis (Traditional Music Forum)

In Attendance

Ryan Brown

Apologies

Andrew Cruickshank (MU), Lisa Whytock (Active), John Wallace, Graham Smillie, Mae Murray (all MEPG), Alan Midwinter (Forget Me Notes), Ray Black (Craft Management)

Agenda item 1

Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting (December 2023) were approved. The scheduled June meeting had been cancelled due to the General Election.

Agenda item 2

Playlist for Life

Mehar Shagufta from Playlist for Life outlined research outlining the neurological and care benefits of music in supporting people with dementia, particularly in reducing pharmacological treatment. The aims of the charity are to put anyone in Scotland living with dementia in contact with a personalised playlist of meaningful music. Pfl also provides support for medical and care staff in promoting the benefits. The organisation would like to see playlists used more extensively and indeed embedded in healthcare structures. www.playlistforlife.org.uk/resources

David Francis: How widespread is the use of playlists?

MS: Currently embedded in Fife NHS and in discussion with Glasgow and South Lanarkshire. The hope is that sufficient evidence will be drawn from these that will encourage other NHS boards to adopt the practice.

Donald Macleod: Work with Nordoff Robins has shown over many years the value of this work.

Robert Baxter: Could Mehar say more about dementia pathway reform?

MS: Playlist for Life is included in the Scottish Government's Dementia Strategy but there are currently many gaps in provision where Playlist for Life can help.

RB: What is the best way to raise awareness?

MS: First to carry on doing what we're doing, second to work with community groups and provide support for free, and third to show the benefits across the whole of Scotland.

Agenda item 3

National Centre for Music

Jenny Jamison, Creative Director at the National Centre for Music, planned for the site of the old Royal High School in Edinburgh which is being developed at an estimated cost of £68m, of which the Dunard Foundation has contributed £55m. JJ shared a presentation outlining the development plans for an important building which has not been in continuous use since the 1970s. It will be a mid-scale music venue with a variety of flexible performance spaces. The main build is due to start in 2025, with the aim of being available by summer 2027. The aim is to showcase the full diversity of music-making in Scotland across all genres. Programmes will include a core programme, partnerships, talent development, and music education. Tours of the building can be arranged. jenny@rhspt.org

MT: How realistic is the final cost estimate?

JJ: The £68m includes development of the building, the gardens, and client costs which will get the project to the point of operation. The remaining £13m is projected to come from Lottery and philanthropists. The main contractor has been engaged and tender processes for sub-contractors are under way. It's a heritage building and there may be unknown issues lurking but the initial exploratory work has been very thorough.

Alison Reeves: Will there be programming and affordable hire costs for leisure-time music making and amateur ensembles?

JJ: The scale of the performance spaces is ideal for such groups and the national status of the building will give performers there an elevated profile and pro-am collaborations. There should be a sliding scale and a range of rates and the aim is to offer facilities at reasonable rates.

Steen Tweeddale: The plans fit very well with the development role of grassroots music venues.

Neil Fox: Young people can be quite difficult to attract to venues that look superficially unapproachable. Has there been consultation with potential young users in local communities?

JJ: It's a very present consideration at the moment. The atmosphere will have to be welcoming and partnerships will be helpful in that regard. Consultations will begin in January and consultations with young people will be part of that.

MT: How much active business modelling has been done particularly in terms of audience behaviour post-Covid?

JJ: There has been extensive modelling. Realism and caution have been watchwords.

MT reminded the group that the convening power of the Scottish Parliament is always available for promoting events, sponsoring meetings, building relationships.

Agenda item 4

Round Table on Ticket Levy

The report of the recent round table was circulated with the agenda.

DM: It's desirable that any revenue from a ticket levy is not too widely dispersed and that the focus should remain on grassroots music venues. There are a lot of issues to work out but if the large arenas would agree to it the proposal is a feasible one.

ST: Music Venue Trust is clear that the contribution should come from within the existing ticket price, whether voluntary or statutory. The term 'levy' is being sidelined, 'Grassroots Contribution' being the preferred term.

Agenda item 5

Music Education

Pam Black, Vice Chair, HITS reported that MEPG's We Make Music programmes are moving apace, with 11 local authorities now taking part in the Instrumental Library scheme, and We Make Music Schools available nationally. The We Make Music Companion is being used by freelance musicians, in further education, and by community groups. Dr Graham Smillie is carrying out research on MEPG's behalf on the impact of free musical education in schools, and is also working on a non-formal education strategy. Advocacy work continues with local and central government. The Scottish Young Musicians will next year introduce a 'face to face' ensemble competition. MEPG: maemurray@mepgscotland.org

The growth across the music education sector has been fuelled by free instrumental tuition and is being shown in areas like applications to the National Centres of Excellence, Junior Conservatoire, and higher education.

Caroline Farren: EIS echoes these comments. As well as growth, however, there are still concerns over local authority budget constraints.

NF: Without the free instrumental tuition NYOS would not be in the healthy space it is in now. It has to keep going. NF raised awareness of the Children and Youth Arts Advocacy Group which has recently launched a pledge to increase young people's access to arts.

Carol Main: paid respects to John Wallace, convenor of MEPG, who is ill at the moment and asked that the best wishes of the CPG went to him.

Agenda item 6

Funding Concerns

Robert Kilpatrick: SMIA has been working to understand the impact of a number of recent issues in cultural funding, notably the postponement of the decision on multi-year funding and Creative Scotland's decision to close the Open Fund for Individuals. In ten years RK has not known a situation where people in the sector have felt so demoralised. Staff wellbeing within organisations is being affected with the prospect of people leaving the sector. Lead times on projects both for organisations who are successful and unsuccessful with multi-year funding are very short which adding to stress. All of this is on top of a very challenging picture in the commercial music sector. The sector needs clarity as soon as possible, particularly over the promised additional £25m. It's imperative that money is earmarked for Creative Scotland.

MT: Much will depend on the UK Government budget statement on October 30, with the Scottish Government budget following on 4 December. SG won't have final figures until February, which makes committing funds difficult. Multi-year funding in

all sectors from Westminster used to be a feature but stopped in 2008. There is active dialogue between SG and Westminster aimed at having multi-year restored.

For reasons that are obscure budget scrutiny on culture goes through the Culture Committee rather than the Finance Committee, something of an anomaly given the Gross Value Added that the culture sector contributes. MT will continue to raise the question in Parliament including at First Minister's Questions.

The macro-economic picture is poor, which adds to the tightness of margins in the culture sector.

Jen O'Brien: Seconded Robert's words, especially around mental health of workers in the sector with the current instability. It is really concerning for our team, and the many music tutors, artists, musicians and vulnerable people we support.

AR: brought up the question of Creative Scotland issuing multi-year contracts when its own budget is annual.

MT: This is the problem from a risk perspective. If people only have a line of sight for one year it's very difficult to commit and there's always the risk that the budget in Year 2 is x-1. The Scottish Government has limited financial powers as it does not issue the currency. It works on fixed sums.

DF: There is an irony in that we are hearing reports in the meeting of a lot of very positive activity, much of it done by organisations with tiny staffs, against a bleak background of fiscal constraints. Scottish society gets a tremendous bargain from the culture sector.

MT: People on some of the other committees don't understand the pressures of making a living in cultural professions – the margins, the risk, the commitment required in real life terms. More a lack of awareness than a lack of appreciation of its value.

AR: It's a very different picture in Ireland.

MT: Ireland has control over the economic levers in a way Scotland doesn't. Clarity won't emerge until after 4 December and ultimately into February next year when fiscal transfers are finalised.

Other Business

AR: Orchestra tax reliefs have been a feature for some time for amateur and professional orchestras. However, there is no tax relief for choirs. Making Music is arguing that the human voice should be defined as an instrument. If that were accepted it would not need changes in legislation but would be a significant benefit for choirs. AR asked members to contact their MP to advance the argument.

Date of Next Meeting and AGM

Tuesday 10 December. In person (with refreshments)