

Community Leisure Scotland is responding on behalf of our members who deliver public leisure, sport and culture services. In Scotland, we currently have 27 members, which are all registered charities (with a public benefit asset lock), often working in partnership with local authorities. 16 of our 27 members deliver some form of public culture within their local communities, including libraries, museums, galleries, theatres and community halls. Since taking over the running of services on behalf of local authority partners, culture trusts have invested significant amounts into maintaining and developing cultural services and have seen a growth in footfall and customer base.

What should be the Scottish Government's immediate priorities in supporting the culture sector's recovery through Budget 2022-23?

1. It is important to recognise that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been particularly severe across the culture sector, and many parts of the sector have not yet reopened since the initial lockdown in March 2020.
 - 1.1 Theatres have largely remained closed throughout the pandemic due to reopening restrictions, financial viability to operate with reduced capacities and challenges in ensuring sufficient lead in time for programming and rehearsals to take place.
 - 1.2 Museums and galleries have reopened in some areas, though a sector survey summary from Museums Galleries Scotland reports that 40% of museums and galleries are still closed in what should be the busiest time in the visitor calendar, therefore impacting on income which might be needed to cover operating costs over the winter period.¹
 - 1.3 Libraries have been operating on a limited basis since restrictions allowed, with many offering click and collect or mobile library services, as well as digital offerings throughout the pandemic.
 - 1.4 Similar to other venues, community and town halls and spaces face reopening challenges in terms of financial considerations, ventilation compliance and staffing.
 - 1.5 Many cultural activities have moved outdoors, where possible, but as we move into the autumn and winter weather and shorter days, this will once again be restricted.
2. As we move towards 2022-23, many of our members are anticipating reduced management fees from their local authority partners, most of which were planned prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. This will inevitably impact on the ability of the sector to reopen and resume services and programmes as they are currently in a fragile financial position.
3. The majority of cultural services are offered free of charge, however, there is currently limited trading activity of ancillary services able to take place and any income generation opportunities are severely constrained, thereby further impacting on the viability of many cultural venues and services.
4. The immediate priorities for the Scottish Government should include emergency contingency funding to support the sector through the recovery period. As Scotland is

¹ Museums Galleries Scotland. *Sector Survey Report*. July 2021.

currently in a position of increasing Covid-19 cases and an anxiety among the general public, particularly in older age groups and among those with long-term conditions, there is likely to be an impact on footfall and customer confidence to return to cultural venues, or indeed any public spaces. It is imperative that the public's trust and confidence is rebuilt to support both wellbeing and the viability of the sector. There are ongoing issues already evident in relation to customer confidence and behaviour which are impacting usage of these services and which are unlikely to settle down to pre covid levels any time in the near future. Providing one off and temporary financial support to the cultural sector is therefore an important part of recovery but wider and longer term renewal will be dependent on the ability to find longer term financial solutions to reflect pre covid pressures and the legacy of covid on these services.

5. There must be insurance provision for the sector to protect in the event of future cancellations, restrictions or further lockdowns. The sector is in a fragile position at present, yet is keen to look forward and plan events and activities. However, in order to do this there must be assurance and protection from Government backed insurance. The Live Events Insurance Scheme is a good start but does not cover lost income due to reduced ticket sales or costs of staff needing to self-isolate. Furthermore, not all insurers are included yet which creates an additional challenge for some organisations. Without this insurance and security live events and theatre in particular are unable to return fully due to the lead in time required to plan and promote such events to ensure their viability.
6. There needs to be support for freelancers within the cultural sector, to ensure that they are supported and that the skilled workforce is maintained and enabled to return to work once circumstances permit.
7. There is an urgent need for investment in the workforce to ensure that any skills gaps are met and addressed. The move towards new, often digital ways of working, requires new skills and training. Equally, there are opportunities for the culture sector to do more, particularly in health and wellbeing, but this required skilled staff and ongoing investment into training and development.
8. In the culture sector, many positions require specific technical expertise and training, such as librarians and technicians in theatres. However, the sector is currently experiencing significant challenges with retaining staff, with most staff having been furloughed and while off-work, have found other employment that come with less responsibility and higher pay, and/or their priorities have changed, leading to the decision not to return to work. Considering the skills and training required in most public culture jobs, losing staff significantly impacts on their day-to-day operations and their ability to re-open (and recover) fully.

Do you agree with UNESCO that “a degree of restructuring is inevitable” [1] as the sector recovers from COVID? If so, what approach should the Scottish Government adopt?

9. We agree that a degree of restructuring is inevitable and indeed there will be some learning from the pandemic that may inform or benefit the cultural sector going forward.
10. As previously mentioned, there has been a significant pivot to digital offerings right across the culture sector, from ebooks and online bookbug sessions, to virtual museum tours and

live streamed theatre productions. However the move to digital may hamper the recovery of the sector as digital offers are significantly cheaper for consumers than live entertainment.

10.1 Whilst we recognise the potential of digital to support and expand the reach of cultural activities, this must not be at the expense of in person activities. It is essential that we continue to support and enable people to attend physical venues, events and activities. There are significant mental, physical and social health benefits from cultural activities and an opportunity for people to connect. At a time of increasing concern around mental health and social isolation, the Scottish Government must recognise and protect the support and value offered by local cultural partners.

10.2 We must also be aware of ensuring that public culture remains open, inclusive and accessible to all people within communities. With this in mind, the pivot to digital will inevitably pose barriers for some people, particularly older populations and those affected by digital poverty. Cultural trusts are particularly conscious of this and this was evidenced during lockdown with such initiatives as telephone clubs to ensure that those customers who were not well-connected digitally were still engaged with and supported to access important community services.

11. There must be recognition that there were challenges within the sector prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and that many of these have simply been exacerbated in the last 18 months. It is crucial that we take the opportunity to understand what communities both want and need and to assess the best method to deliver this. In some areas this may involve a strategic review of assets, which is a conversation that is important to ensure that local culture has the strongest offer for local people. We must move away from the idea that all venues and services will return to pre-Covid operation, as in some instances this was not the most effective delivery mechanism.

A crisis can also trigger new ways of thinking – should the Scottish Government rethink how it supports the culture sector?

12. The sector is concerned that there is a lack of understanding of the arm's length delivery model for cultural services and that this therefore represents a significant threat to cultural services being delivered through charitable trusts as services. These are essential public and community services and we need to ensure that such services are not disadvantaged when facing increased financial challenges simply as a result of the model of delivery. There is an urgent need for care and ownership of cultural services and facilities at a political level, seeking to protect and support these services regardless of the delivery model. Arguably, the level and nature of the scrutiny which trusts are subject to is greater than that relating to other public services still delivered within local authorities, and the sole member model which is prevalent in Scotland with the local authority as the sole member of these companies, ensures strong strategic and political alignment alongside the legal and governance arrangements also in place.
13. Local authorities are key partners for charitable trusts and pay a management fee to support the delivery of services. However, local authorities are under incredible financial pressures

and faced with difficult decisions around funding of services. The Scottish Government need to properly resource local authorities to ensure that they are able to support their local services and partners, and to enable them to both protect and support valuable cultural services. Currently there are increasing concerns that the management fee no longer covers the real cost of the public and core services which trusts are commissioned to deliver for local authorities and that this gap is continually widening. The ability of trusts to fill this gap through trading and related income generation activities is of course substantially reduced as a result of covid.

14. The culture sector has a key role in supporting a number of health, wellbeing and economic outcomes within Scotland. The Scottish Government must work to ensure that the contribution and impact of the sector is both recognised and valued across Government and support the joining up of conversations to maximise the potential that the sector has to offer.

14.1 There are opportunities where the cultural sector can make a significant impact, including the regeneration of towns and high streets, social prescribing, 20 minute neighbourhoods, Scotland loves local campaign. However, the sector needs to be involved in discussions and seen as a key partner.

14.2 These opportunities in terms of the contribution of the creative sector were highlighted in the report from the independent advisory group established by Scottish Government to advise on Scotland's economic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.² We would specifically support the points made highlighting that the creative sector should be given high priority in Scotland's recovery plan as Scotland must emerge from the crisis with purpose, humanity, and resilience, and that we must look after our cultural heritage to create an enabled, inclusive society to build the heritage for the future. The report emphasises that, as a priority, the Scottish Government should support the sector to protect and adapt strategically important physical cultural infrastructure, with a strong link to apprenticeships in the construction and specialist industries to help develop new skills, and to seek ways to increase public and private investment across the sector to allow it to recover and compete. We are also conscious that the Programme for Government published on 7 September does not reflect a prioritisation of the cultural and creative sector in that way or reflect the importance of the sector to wider economic and societal recovery and renewal.³

Specifically, are there opportunities to develop a more strategic approach through, for example, the medium-term financial strategy, a multi-year spending review and the National Performance Framework?

15. There are significant opportunities for a more strategic approach through looking at longer-term funding for the sector. For our members, budgets are set on an annual basis,

² Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland: Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery

³ A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Programme for Government 2021-22

based on local authority financial support. Income from other sources, such as grant funding, is also on a short-term basis and where there are examples of good practice from pilot projects, there is often an inability to sustain these in the longer term. If there could be commitment to long-term funding for the sector, this would enable planning and projects to deliver meaningful results and also provide security to the sector.

16. Many local cultural venues and provision is in need of investment to upgrade facilities to ensure that they are safe, accessible and equipped with modern technology and infrastructure to enable delivery of services. This requires ongoing investment, which must be seen as investment rather than a financial burden.
17. There is an opportunity to move towards a spend to save approach, which may in the short-term result in higher capital expenditure, but would enable long-term gains and savings to be made.
18. Similarly, with regard to health, a focus on prevention, and the understanding of the role of culture within this agenda, would offer long term health benefits.
19. There is a vast amount of evidence demonstrating the impact and benefits of various parts of the cultural sector. What is needed is more joined up messaging to articulate this, and greater cross-sector collaboration to make relevant connections across policy areas and more explicit links to the National Performance Framework.
20. The cultural landscape, both in terms of delivery organisations, and impact, needs to be better understood by both National and Local Government. Without a full understanding of the landscape, it is incredibly difficult to make the best decisions in order to support the sector. The work of the National Partnership for Culture (appointed by Scottish Government) will play a key role in informing this understanding and making recommendations to Ministers about the future of the cultural and creative sector, in relation to the 4 key priority areas identified from the national cultural strategy – wellbeing (particularly mental health); Fair Work; Culture in education (including wider skills considerations) and measuring change. Consideration of these recommendations requires to be undertaken in light of the pandemic and also in a way which reflects joined up government, a human rights-based approach, and increased equality, diversity, and inclusion.
21. Culture trusts are ideally positioned as registered charities to deliver on their key priorities of social value and community benefit. There is a need to recognise the distinct delivery models of charities and social enterprises and the inherent social value that these organisations provide in delivering services, as distinct to other delivery models.

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