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Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture



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Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

To consider and report on the following (and any additional matter added under Rule 6.1.5A)—

- (a) the Scottish Government's EU and external affairs policy;
- (b) policy in relation to the UK's exit from the EU;
- (c) the international activities of the Scottish Administration, including international development; and
- (d) any other matter falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture and any matter relating to intergovernmental relations within the responsibility of the Deputy First Minister.



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Introduction

1. This report details the findings and recommendations of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee ('the Committee') following its [pre-budget scrutiny](#) of the culture portfolio ahead of the 2026-27 Budget.
2. To inform its scrutiny, the Committee ran a [call for views](#) from 25 June 2025 to 15 August 2025. The call for views received 37 submissions which have been published [online](#).
3. The Committee took evidence from stakeholders at its meetings on [11 September 2025](#) and [18 September 2025](#), and from Creative Scotland and the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture ('the Cabinet Secretary') on [25 September 2025](#). The Committee wishes to extend its thanks to all those who provided written and oral evidence to inform its inquiry.
4. As the Committee agreed to take a cumulative approach to budget scrutiny over Session 6, focusing on the culture spending portfolio, this inquiry follows on from the Committee's previous pre-budget scrutiny in advance of the [2022-23](#), [2023-24](#), [2024-25](#) and [2025-26](#) budgets.
5. As the Committee's final pre-budget report of this session, alongside consideration of the evidence received for this year's scrutiny, the purpose of this report is to consider the cumulative evidence considered by the Committee over Session 6 and the Scottish Government's responses. Tables outlining the main themes from the Committee's budget recommendations over the course of the session and the Scottish Government's responses to said recommendations are included at the end of this report.

Context

6. Over the course of Session 6, several recurring themes have arisen in the Committee's budget scrutiny. These include—
 - The ongoing financial context for the culture and heritage sector, and the impact and distribution of additional funding provided by the Scottish Government
 - Multi-year funding
 - Strategic approaches to funding decisions
 - Mainstreaming and cross-portfolio funding
 - Alternative funding models
7. This report will consider the further evidence received this year in relation to each of these themes, as well as the cumulative evidence considered by the Committee over Session 6.
8. Additionally, in the context of the Scottish Government's [draft Climate Change Plan](#) (which was published on 6 November 2025), the report will also consider the culture sector's role in addressing climate change and reaching net zero, and some of the challenges relating to this raised in evidence.
9. The Committee's 2022-23 and 2023-24 Pre-Budget reports highlighted ongoing challenges facing the sector following long-term budget pressures and continued fragility following the Covid-19 pandemic. Our 2023-24 report concluded that the budgetary challenges facing the sector had become "much more acute", contributed to by a "perfect storm" of long-term budget pressures, reduced income generation and increased operating costs.
10. Our 2024-25 report highlighted the continuation of the "perfect storm" facing the sector, noting that the risks facing the sector had increased in recent years, and sectoral confidence had been negatively impacted.
11. During the statement [introducing the 2024-25 Scottish Budget](#) on 19 December 2023, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance Shona Robison confirmed the Scottish Government's commitment of "investing at least £100 million more in the arts and culture by 2028-29."
12. In his [letter to the Committee](#) in December 2024, following the publication of the Pre-Budget report, the Cabinet Secretary provided the following update on the progress of the £100 million funding commitment—
 - ” The Government has clearly demonstrated its confidence in, and commitment to, the sector by proving a further £34 million in 2025/26 taking the uplifts to date to £50 million a year – halfway to the intended £100 million more annually by 2028/29 with an aim for a further £20 million in 2026/2027 subject to the usual Parliamentary procedures.
13. The majority of the 2025-26 additional funding has been provided to Creative

Scotland (including Screen Scotland). Of the £34.9 million of additional funding provided in 2025-26, £26.6 millionⁱ was allocated to Creative Scotland’s multi-year funding, £2.0 million of which was intended for Screen Scotland. The National Collections received a £4.7 million uplift, and the National Performing Companies received £1 million.

14. The Cabinet Secretary’s 2024 letter also highlighted some increases in additional areas of spend, including £4 million to support festivals and the EXPO fund and £4 million to restart the Culture Collective programme. The Scottish Government also announced £4 million for a new Scottish Culture & Heritage Capacity Fund (launched under the name “Museum Futures programme”).
15. SPICe published a [blog](#) in February 2025 which examined the additional funding for the sector, its strategic intent and outcomes.
16. Responses to the Committee’s call for views welcomed the Scottish Government’s commitment to increase investment in culture by £100 million by 2028-29, with Scottish Ballet noting that the commitment “represents significant progress” and increases confidence in the sector. Creative Scotland’s submission stated—

” We believe the impact of the increase in funding in 2025/26 will be highly significant and help to stabilise the culture sector, following a period of sustained challenge. [...] The budget announcement moves us far away from [considering managed decline], enabling sector organisations to plan more effectively and to think positively and ambitiously about the future.
17. Many respondents to the Committee’s call for views emphasised that, despite the additional funding provided by the Scottish Government, the sector remains under significant financial pressure. For example, though the Museums Association “warmly welcomed” the uplift to the culture budget, it stated that the increase is not sufficient to address systemic underfunding and the additional costs museums are facing, including increases to employer National Insurance contributions and the National Living Wage and rising operating costs. Scottish Opera echoed these concerns, stating that the increased funding “has been primarily deployed to address unavoidable cost pressures rather than generating the improved cultural outcomes”.
18. Scottish Ballet highlighted that its core grant has “devalued by 36% or £2.36m” since 2010, and National Museums Scotland (NMS) noted that a 5.9% uplift was “entirely consumed in delivering Scottish Government Pay Policy.” Furthermore, National Galleries Scotland (NGS) highlighted in evidence that the £1.75m (9%) increase received in its budget for 2025-26 was entirely subsumed by pay increases, increases to employer National Insurance contributions and costs relating to the implementation of a 35-hour working week.
19. The Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) told the Committee that it receives “more or less the same funding as in 2008-09”, and that, although it has managed to increase its income significantly in recent years, “the price of that has been a huge suppression of pay and conditions for our staff”. The result of this, it said, has been decreasing competitiveness against other orchestras and professions. The RSNO stated—

ⁱ The £26.6m included £20m of new money and a “baselined £6.6m lottery shortfall”.

” We have done everything that we can. We have squeezed every budget line, but the only way that we can be fiscally responsible is by paying salaries that I think are way too low. [...] Our costs are much higher, our employment costs are much higher, and the amount of money that we can generate in Scotland is much less. [...] We are at the end of the road.

20. **The Committee welcomes the positive impact on sectoral confidence and stability provided by the Scottish Government’s commitment to increase investment in culture by £100 million by 2028-29. We note that the £34 million uplift to funding for the sector in 2025-26 took the uplifts to date to £50 million a year, and that this is set to increase by an additional £20 million in 2026-27. The Committee’s expectation is that this additional funding will be delivered in full.**

21. **However, we also note that despite this welcome investment, the culture and heritage sector continues to face significant financial challenges as a result of long-term budget pressures and increased operating costs, including increased employment costs such as employer National Insurance contributions, the Scottish Government’s Public Sector Pay Policy and Fair Work commitments. We therefore recognise that the uplift in cultural spend may to some degree be being used to help meet ongoing financial pressures, rather than necessarily generating improved cultural outcomes. Nevertheless, the Committee recognises that significant additional funding has been made available to the sector within a tight fiscal environment and this has been welcomed across the sector.**

Local Authority funding

22. Art Fund (a charity organisation that advocates on behalf of museums and aims to help museums to expand their collections and grow their audiences) described funding pressures as “manifest”, noting that approximately a third of the museum sector is made up of civic museums, which are supported directly by local authorities and which have seen real terms funding decline by about 26 to 27 percent between 2011 and 2022. This, they stated, has been compounded by rising costs, meaning that “public and civic institutions are finding it difficult to deliver the core services and programmes that they are so brilliant at delivering.”

23. In evidence, Creative Scotland explained that “we are still in an environment in which there are inflationary pressures and mixed audience projections” and noted that confidence afforded by the increase in funding may be offset by reductions from other funders (for example, local government). Creative Scotland stated that—

” We are already seeing examples of where, because of an evident increase in support for organisations from us, as the national body, and because of the pressures that local government is under, there is an opportunity for local authorities to [...] retreat from their previous commitments.

24. Creative Scotland told the Committee that it is engaging with local authorities to “put

forward a positive case why the partnership with local government is an important dimension not just for us but for organisations in those communities.”

25. Aberdeen City Council’s submission highlighted regional disparities in the allocation of Creative Scotland’s multi-year funding, stating that “66% (£133m) of the funding was distributed to the 2 central belt authority areas making up 24% of the population.” In evidence Creative Scotland stated that—

” We work and support people and organisations in all 32 local authority areas. [...] we do place-based work, whether in the form of partnership programmes that run for a sustained period, such as our place partnerships, or by attending funding fairs with other funders in the local area in order to build capacity. [...] Because of the number of organisations that we support in Edinburgh and Glasgow, there could be a misunderstanding that our work is only about Edinburgh and Glasgow, but many of those organisations work across the geography of Scotland.

26. Acknowledging ongoing and potentially increasing sectoral cost pressures, Creative Scotland stated that it is supporting organisations to maximise their additional income alongside the multi-year commitments they receive from Creative Scotland—

” We want to support them in finding a way of navigating this without their having to turn to us, because we do not have the ability to add further funding into the equation for those organisations that have already secured multiyear funding.

27. In October 2025, the Accounts Commission published a report on [Local government performance: Spotlight on culture and leisure services](#). The report found that, although councils’ income from charging for culture and leisure services increased by 27% in real terms since 2018-19, their spending on culture and leisure services reduced by 3% in real terms over the same period. With regard to cultural services specifically, the report explains that some cultural services have faced more significant funding cuts than others, highlighting that spending on library services reduced by around 6% in real terms from 2018-19 to 2023-24, whereas spending on museums and galleries rose by 9% over the same period.

28. The Accounts Commission report noted the positive cross-portfolio benefits of culture and leisure services. It also highlighted an increasing reliance on charging people to use culture and leisure services, and noted that there is a “mixed picture of community consultation and the use of Equality Impact Assessments when considering service changes, such as potentially closing facilities or increasing charges.” It stated that there is a lack of data to assess the performance of these services and their contribution to improving outcomes.

29. In evidence, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed that he is engaging with COSLA and the cultural leads of local authorities, and that he is “optimistic” that the ongoing review of Creative Scotland will provide clarity about the availability of cultural services in different areas of Scotland. The Cabinet Secretary stated that he is “keen to understand” whether there are gaps in the provision of cultural services across Scotland, adding that—

” We must then add the question of the extent to which Creative Scotland’s decision making is about what is funded and what that means in different parts of the country.

30. The Cabinet Secretary also stated that the Scottish Government’s role is to use its “convening power and the best possible information to ensure that we have cultural provision across Scotland”, while respecting its arms-length relationship with local authorities.

31. The Committee shares the concerns raised in evidence that the impact of increased Scottish Government funding for the sector may be being offset by funding reductions by local government. We ask that the Scottish Government to respond to these concerns in the context of the £100 million additional investment in the culture sector. We also request that COSLA provides a response to these concerns.

32. The Committee welcomes the Cabinet Secretary’s comments that the review of Creative Scotland will provide clarity about the availability of cultural services in different areas of Scotland. We would welcome additional clarity about how the findings of the review will be used to address issues surrounding the level of local government culture funding and disparities in cultural provision.

33. The Committee notes the Cabinet Secretary’s statement that the role of the Scottish Government is to use its “convening power” to ensure cultural provision across Scotland. We seek further detail as to how the Scottish Government is using this power to address potential disparities in cultural provision across Scotland and the level of local government spending on culture.

Skills shortages

34. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) reported that there remains an “acute” skills shortage in the historic environment sector, estimating that 10,000 new jobs will be needed over the next decade to maintain and adapt Scotland’s traditional building stock.

35. HES argued that expanding training in traditional skills is “critical” and requires coordinated investment from the Scottish Government, local authorities and the education sector, stating that—

” Without targeted investment in the skills pipelines, capital planning support, and financial resilience, these constraints will continue to limit the value and reach of cultural investment.

36. The Committee notes the announcement earlier this year of funding for Lock 16 - Scotland's Centre of Excellence for Canals & Traditional Skills which aims to develop pathways into heritage skills training, volunteering, and employment within the historic environment sector. The Committee also notes that the Skills Investment Plan for Scotland's Historic Environment was updated in April 2024.
37. The Institute of Conservation emphasised the impact of the skills shortage, stating that “even modest reductions in workforce capacity can have a dramatic and immediate impact on the ability to care for Scotland’s shared cultural heritage.”
- 38. The Committee recognises stakeholders’ concerns that the historic environment sector is facing an “acute” skills shortage. We therefore request that the Scottish Government provides detail as to how it is targeting investment to address these skills shortages and to provide an update on the actions set out in the sector’s Skills Investment Plan, following the most recent update in April 2024.**
- 39. Given the cross-portfolio nature of skills development, we ask that the Scottish Government outlines how it intends to co-ordinate across portfolios to address the skills shortage.**

Open Fund for individuals

40. Several organisations raised concerns about the funding landscape for freelancers and individual artists. For example, Scottish Contemporary Art Network criticised the reduced cap of Creative Scotland’s Open Fund for individuals from £100,000 to £50,000. Creative Scotland’s submission noted that there was high demand for the Fund, writing that there was a “35% success rate for applications to our National Lottery Open Fund for Individuals in Q1 of 2025/26”.
41. The Scottish Artists Union (SAU) described the Fund as “an even more demoralising lottery for artists,” with many strong applications rejected due to oversubscription. In evidence, Creative Scotland responded that—
- ” historical data shows that 3 per cent of applications to the open fund for individuals were for more than £50,000. The principle of it is important, but individuals can work with organisations to access support in different ways. In reality, the number of those wanting to access more than £50,000 before we made that change was very low.
42. Creative Scotland added that it will be revising and reforming the funds for individual artists with the aim of making them “simpler, clearer and easier for individuals to navigate”. However, they highlighted that ever-increasing demand, particularly post-COVID, represents an ongoing challenge.

Infrastructure funding

43. Respondents also raised concerns about infrastructure needs in the sector. For example, NGS told the Committee that the maintenance backlog is estimated to currently be around £20m, explaining that ageing estates are using ageing systems, and that an estimated £4m a year is needed to tackle the backlog.
 44. The Museums Association also highlighted the significant backlog in repairs and maintenance in the museums sector, stating that “urgent investment is needed to resolve these issues as museums do not have the budget to fund this essential work” and noting that historically significant buildings risk falling into disrepair if action is not taken.
 45. The Committee’s 2023 report on [Culture in Communities](#) suggested that the Scottish Government could explore whether there should be a role for Creative Scotland to deliver a capital programme to support the refurbishment, retrofitting and upkeep of assets that are used for cultural activity.
 46. In the Scottish Government’s [response](#) to the Committee’s report on Culture in Communities, the Cabinet Secretary described the outlook for the capital budget as “very challenging”, explaining that this meant the Scottish Government could not deliver on all capital commitments within the current funding envelope and to the planned timescales. He stated that a “capital fund managed by Creative Scotland could be considered and assessed at the next Capital Spending Review.”
 47. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government confirmed in a letter to the Finance and Public Administration Committee in June 2025 that the Scottish Government will publish a multi-year spending review, covering both capital and resource funding, alongside the 2026-27 Scottish Budget.
48. **The Committee asks the Scottish Government whether the upcoming Spending Review will include consideration of a capital programme managed by Creative Scotland to support the refurbishment, retrofitting and upkeep of assets that are used for cultural activity.**

Multi-year funding

49. The Committee has advocated for greater provision of multi-year funding throughout the session, recommending in our first Pre-Budget report this session (2022-23) that the Scottish Government make progress towards increasing multi-year funding settlements for the organisations it provides regular funding for. The Scottish Government's 2021 Programme for Government committed to “invest in much needed stability for the cultural organisations that we provide regular funding for, by agreeing 3-year funding settlements”.
50. Our 2023-24 Pre-Budget report highlighted that a shift towards multi-year funding would allow greater progress to be made in mainstreaming culture across policy areas and our 2024-25 report considered the delivery of multi-year settlements for the cultural organisations the Scottish Government funds to be a crucial component in increasing sectoral support.
51. The Committee's 2024-25 and 2025-26 Budget reports highlighted concerns about the lack of progress made towards the commitment made in 2021 to agree 3-year funding settlements for the organisations funded directly by the Scottish Government.

2026-27 evidence

52. The Committee heard calls for multi-year funding to be extended to a greater variety of organisations (museums, libraries, heritage, and local authority services), not just arts organisations. NGS explained that multi-year funding “brings about security and an ability to plan that, ultimately, means that the public purse is spent more efficiently” and HES stated that—
 - ” Multi-year, flexible funding settlements would give organisations the stability needed to plan effectively, innovate, and align with long-term national goals.
53. The Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society (EFFS) explained that—
 - ” multiyear funding is exponentially more impactful than multiple single-year funding cycles. A three-year grant has more impact than one-year grants that are received for three years. [...] having a clearer line of sight of what the future holds means that you are able to invest in programmes that might not deliver immediate returns but are likely to do so over an 18-month or two-year period.
54. Art Fund advocated for a broadening of the types of organisations able to apply for multi-year funding, noting that many organisations (including museums, galleries, libraries and heritage organisations) do not benefit from multi-year funding and are “really suffering as a result”. The Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) added that, for libraries, the lack of access to multi-year funding limits the sector's ability to “plan strategically, invest in long-term service delivery and retain and develop skilled staff, which would, of course, lead to reducing job insecurity and skills loss.”

55. **While acknowledging the challenging fiscal environment continuing to face the Scottish Government, the Committee reiterates the concerns outlined in our 2024-25 and 2025-26 Pre-Budget reports that there has been limited progress on the Scottish Government’s 2021 commitment to agree 3-year funding settlements for the organisations it funds directly. We ask that the Scottish Government explains why its 2021 Programme for Government commitment to agree 3-year funding settlements for the organisations it funds directly has not been delivered.**

Creative Scotland's Multi-Year Funding Programme

56. Creative Scotland concluded its allocations for its Multi-Year Funding Programme in January 2025, allocating over £200 million to 251 cultural organisations for the next three years (the highest number ever to receive regular funding from Creative Scotland). Over half of these organisations received multi-year commitments for the first time, with existing regularly funded organisations seeing an average funding increase of 34% in 2025-26, rising to an average 54% from 2026-27.
57. Creative Scotland emphasised that more than half of the organisations in the Multi-Year Funding Programme are new to having regular funding over multiple years and that—
- ” The important thing is that the diversity and reach of those organisations is greater than ever before. More confidence and a stable platform are being provided for more organisations, so that they can forward plan and deliver even greater outcomes and impacts for the communities that they work with and for across the geography of Scotland—as well as impacts for culture itself and, we should remember, for the economy.
58. Several respondents to the Committee’s call for views welcomed the expansion of Creative Scotland’s Multi-Year Funding Programme. For example, Art Fund described the provision of multi-year funding by Creative Scotland as “vital” in allowing cultural organisations to “stabilise, grow, and deliver against the cultural strategy.”
59. However, some respondents raised concerns about the overall balance of new investment, with some respondents indicating that many organisations received less than they applied for, highlighting apprehensions about sustainability in the face of rising costs. The Federation of Scottish Theatre reported—
- ” The important thing is that the diversity and reach of those organisations is greater than ever before. More confidence and a stable platform are being provided for more organisations, so that they can forward plan and deliver even greater outcomes and impacts for the communities that they work with and for across the geography of Scotland—as well as impacts for culture itself and, we should remember, for the economy.
60. In evidence, Creative Scotland explained that, though it recognises that organisations want to make the case for receiving as much funding as possible, multi-year funding is intended to be a “contribution” towards the overall turnover of those organisations and Creative Scotland has “always been very clear” to ask

applicants to be realistic. Creative Scotland reiterated that the average increase in funding for organisations in year 1 of the Multi-Year Funding Programme is 34 percent, rising to 54 percent next year, and explained that—

” we do not fund organisations 100 per cent; they have other partnerships. [...] However, ultimately, with the £74 million budget committed in principle for next yearⁱⁱ, we will be able to fund those 251 organisations, plus potentially 13 more, at an average of 86 per cent of their original ask, which is very close to the total that they aspired to.

61. Some organisations were concerned that Creative Scotland appeared to prioritise the number of organisations funded over the depth of support. In evidence, the SAU stated that fewer organisations should be funded “properly”, noting that “the majority of new RFOs received around 70 per cent of the funding that they asked for”. The SAU argued that “the other 30 per cent will come at the cost of artists. [...] It never reaches the artists, who are the workers who deliver and are the producers of culture. That affects fair work compliance and affects artists directly.”
62. With regard to the tension between providing funding to a greater number of organisations and providing higher levels of funding to existing organisations, Creative Scotland stated—

” Within reason, we are doing both. There is a conscious decision to fund as many organisations as possible through the programme. That was always part of the intent, and the budget increases are enabling us to do that. With the higher levels of budget, we have settled at meeting 86 per cent of organisations’ original ask, and that means that we are able to grow the portfolio of organisations, consolidate them into the programme and support them at a level that is very close to their original level of ask.
63. Creative Scotland also explained that fair work “was baked into the process, so the real-terms costs that organisations have been experiencing were able to be reflected in the applications to us.” Additionally, the Cabinet Secretary told the Committee in evidence that he is “very confident that there is a significant level of funding across the cultural landscape. The funding is wider and deeper—it is the best of all worlds.”
64. Several organisations who responded to the Committee’s call for views expressed frustration at the delay in announcing Creative Scotland’s multi-year funding decisions. For example, Sistema Scotland noted that the delay “caused uncertainty in financial planning and made it difficult to secure matched funding from partners.”
65. The Committee’s 2025-26 Pre-Budget report outlined evidence indicating that the process of applying for multi-year funding had been overly burdensome for many organisations. These concerns were echoed this year, with some respondents describing the application process as resource-intensive and complex. For example, Sistema Scotland described the Creative Scotland multi-year process as requiring “considerable amounts of staff hours” and Festivals Edinburgh

ii The Cabinet Secretary’s [letter to the Committee](#) in December 2024, which followed the publication of the 2025-26 Pre-Budget report, stated that the Scottish Government will make £74 million of funding available for organisations successful in the Multi-Year Funding Programme.

recommended that “future application processes for funding should be proportionate to the funding award and/or the applicant.”

66. In its 2025-26 Pre-Budget report, the Committee encouraged Creative Scotland to—

” consider, ahead of future funding rounds, the feedback provided by witnesses that the process for applying for the Multi-Year Funding Programme was unduly burdensome, having required significant resources within the sector which could have been better directed elsewhere.

67. The Committee welcomes the expansion of Creative Scotland’s Multi-Year Funding Programme and recognises the added stability and confidence it provides to the cultural organisations it supports.

68. The Committee recognises that there is a potential for a tension to arise between the number of organisations supported through Creative Scotland’s Multi-Year Funding Programme and the depth of support afforded to each organisation. We ask that Creative Scotland indicate how its approach will be evaluated in relation to maximising cultural outcomes and establishing clear metrics to assess the impact of the Multi-Year Funding Programme.

69. We note the evidence received relating to the resource-intensive and complex nature of the Multi-Year Funding Programme application process. The Committee recognises that there is likely to be a tension between ensuring that applications are not overly onerous and Creative Scotland ensuring that the awards support high quality outcomes. The Committee therefore asks how Creative Scotland will evaluate whether the process for multi-year funding strikes the right balance.

Strategic Approaches

70. Our 2022-23 Pre-Budget report recommended that there should be much greater emphasis on embedding the culture strategy across the Scottish Government. The report also recommended that budget choices could be more significantly aligned with the NPF and that the Scottish Government should work towards an outcomes-based approach based on the health and wider social benefits of cultural spend.
71. In our 2025-26 report, we recommended that the Scottish Government should take a strategic approach to the delivery of additional funding for the culture sector and should focus on maximising the impact (including on the economy and wellbeing) of the significant investment in the sector.
72. Our 2025-26 report also noted that the Culture Strategy Action Plan did not reflect the Scottish Government's commitment to increase investment in the sector by £100m by 2028-29. As such, we recommended that there remained a need for the Scottish Government to set out a strategic framework for supporting the prioritisation, and maximising the impact, of additional funding.

2026-27 evidence

73. Several respondents to the Committee's call for views highlighted concerns about the lack of strategic clarity in funding decisions, with some calling for a clearer articulation of cultural outcomes and how they are supported by funding decisions.
74. For example, The National Library of Scotland (NLS) suggested that "Future funding should be more explicitly aligned with National Performance Framework outcomes, particularly around wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability." The NLS also said, "There is a need for clearer metrics and joint understanding in terms of assessing the impact of cultural investment. This includes both quantitative data (e.g. audience reach, economic contribution) and qualitative outcomes (e.g. community cohesion, mental health benefits)."
75. Glasgow Life emphasised that understanding of the contribution of culture to the delivery of the NPF, especially in relation to preventative spend, could be improved through monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
76. The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic confirmed in January 2025 that the Scottish Government will undertake a period of reform of the NPF "to support the development and implementation of a stronger and more strategic and impactful framework for Scotland."
77. Glasgow Life's submission also stated that, as the review of Creative Scotland is ongoing, there is limited strategic clarity around the scope of future allocations, priorities and approach with regard to a large part of new funding. It suggested that the relationship between the Culture Strategy and increased culture funding could benefit from being made more explicit.
78. HES highlighted that there is a need to ensure that investment across the culture portfolio is balanced. Noting that the Culture Strategy and Action Plan is part of a broader strategic framework, it encouraged the Scottish Government to "take a

comprehensive view of all strategies within the culture portfolio when determining investment priorities”.

79. Art Fund suggested that – owing to the degree of overlap between the organisations that both funders support – strategic working between Creative Scotland and Museums Galleries Scotland could help to overcome “barriers of disjointed funding support”. Art Fund cited the example of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council moved its library and museum functions to Arts Council England (ACE), which it stated ensured that the sector was efficiently joined up, and that “organisations working across museums and galleries didn’t fall through the gaps of two different funders.”
80. NGS stated that the Scottish Government could adopt a more active role as a “cultural to commercial matchmaker, supporting medium to long term partnerships between cultural institutions and sectors such as sport, health, education, and fashion” and suggested that “a national framework to identify, facilitate, and co fund these partnerships would multiply opportunities and reach.”
81. In response to the Committee’s 2025-26 Pre-Budget report, the Cabinet Secretary stated that the ongoing review of how the culture sector is supported is intended to maximise the impact of the £100m investment. The Cabinet Secretary also committed in this response to providing an update to the Committee on the delivery of the Culture Strategy Action Plan at the end of the 2024-25 reporting year.

82. The Committee notes the evidence received that stakeholders remain concerned about the lack of strategic clarity in funding decisions for the culture sector. We ask that the Scottish Government sets out in detail what progress it has made towards adopting a strategic approach to the delivery of funding for the culture sector over Session 6.

83. Given the concerns about a lack of strategic clarity in funding decisions and questions raised in evidence about the relationship between the Scottish Government’s Culture Strategy and increased culture funding, the Committee seeks clarity on the delivery of the Plan. We note that, in response to the Committee’s 2025-26 Pre-Budget report, the Cabinet Secretary committed to providing an update on the delivery of the Culture Strategy Action Plan at the end of the 2024-25 reporting year. However, this update was not received. As such, we ask that the Scottish Government provides an urgent update on the delivery of the Plan.

84. We also note that the Cabinet Secretary’s response to the Committee’s 2025-26 Pre-Budget report stated that the ongoing review of how the culture sector is supported is intended to maximise the impact of the £100 million investment. We request that the Scottish Government provides an update on the ongoing review of the culture sector, including timelines for the review’s completion and detail as to whether the review is considering the relationship between the Culture Strategy and increased culture funding. We ask that the Scottish Government outlines how the review’s

findings will be used to inform a more strategic approach.

85. **The Committee reiterates our view that the Scottish Government should seek to adopt an outcomes-based approach to prioritise and maximise the impact of funding, and that clear metrics should be established to assess the impact of cultural investment. We also remain of the view that budget choices could be more significantly aligned with the NPF and note that the ongoing reform of the NPF could offer an opportunity for the Scottish Government to explore greater alignment and to improve its strategic approach to funding for the culture sector.**

Mainstreaming and cross-portfolio funding

86. The Committee has consistently recommended throughout Session 6 that the Scottish Government should make progress towards mainstreaming culture across Scottish Government portfolios.
87. Our 2022-23 Pre-Budget report recommended that the 2022 Resource Spending Review (RSR) should include detailed consideration of how budgetary decisions could support the mainstreaming of culture across the Scottish Government. We also recommended that this should be an outcomes-based process based on the health and wider social benefits of cultural activity.
88. The Committee's 2024-25 Pre-Budget report expressed concern that there had been "no indication of progress made by the Scottish Government on our recommendations on mainstreaming culture across portfolios and developing cross-portfolio funding for culture".
89. We recommended in our 2024-25 report that there was a need for much greater urgency for the Scottish Government to make substantive progress towards cross-portfolio funding for culture. We also supported the recommendation of stakeholders that there needed to be an "active pathway" towards this and urged the Scottish Government to set out detailed plans for the steps it will take to achieve tangible year-on-year progress on this when it published the Culture Strategy Action Plan.
90. Throughout the Committee's evidence taking this year, stakeholders consistently highlighted the role of culture and heritage in delivering outcomes across health, education, climate, and economic development.
91. For example, SLIC noted the important role played by libraries in economic and cultural wellbeing, explaining that "for every £1 that is invested in libraries, local economies stand to gain £6.95 in benefit." SLIC also highlighted that NHS Scotland "saves £3.2 million annually through library-delivered health and wellbeing programmes, including bibliotherapy and digital health access" and that the potential for cross-portfolio impact "remains inadequately realised."
92. The Committee heard evidence that some mainstreaming has taken place. For example, HES told the Committee that progress has been made in education, city region deals and regeneration. RSNO welcomed the announcement that screen studies will be taught throughout the education system and noted that positive work has taken place in primary school music education, though they stated that more progress is needed. EFFE agreed that there has been some progress towards joined-up thinking, for example in culture's role in tourism, place-making, and in raising Scotland's international profile.
93. However, the Committee also heard that there has been a lack of progress towards mainstreaming culture across government portfolios. HES stated that funding remains "overly siloed" and that this is "limiting the potential for joined-up investment or strategic alignment." HES also told the Committee that they would welcome a "whole-Government approach in which heritage is factored into

regeneration, economic inclusion, jobs, education, housing, planning and skills. [...] That would be a more effective use of public resources.”

94. The RSNO emphasised that “music and culture does not live in isolation from the wider economy. [...] The more integrated that we are with the funding, and the more connected that we are within the broader education and culture ecosystem, the stronger we will all be.”
95. EFFE called for the embedding of culture KPIs across portfolios and a “culture-as-prevention fund or awareness campaign that takes what we instinctively know and practise and puts it more firmly into the consciousness not just of the public but of policy makers and lawmakers.”
96. In evidence, EFFE stated that—
- ” Perhaps less evident and in need of work is realising the impact of culture on, for example, health and wellbeing, place-based regeneration, education and employability. Organisationally, we want to contribute to all that from our side. What we need from the Government’s side is recognition that that work spans multiple departments and that there is a need to break through the siloed thinking, so that those things do not become just an incidental, nice by-product of what we do as the regular course of business but become part of the reason that we do business in the first place.
97. Additionally, in its response to the Committee’s call for views, NMS advocated for greater progress to be made in mainstreaming culture across portfolios, writing—
- ” To fully realise culture’s contribution to a fairer, healthier and more empowered Scotland, preventative investment in cultural activity must be structurally embedded, consistently resourced, and cross-portfolio in nature.
98. In evidence, the Cabinet Secretary agreed that some cross-portfolio funding is in place, citing funding for Sistema Scotland coming from the children and family fund, and funding for instrumental music tuition coming from the education portfolio. He went on to state—
- ” That formal commitment is there from the Government; a number of years ago, I presented a paper to the Scottish Government Cabinet on the mainstreaming of culture right across all portfolios, and it is the standing policy of the Scottish Government that it should be so.
99. The Cabinet Secretary described cross-portfolio working as “key” and stated that the expansion of Creative Scotland’s multi-year funding is “foundational for the delivery of cross-departmental benefits, which might have been harder to achieve in the past.” He told the Committee that the Scottish Government is “keen to build on a number of aspects of cross portfolio working” and noted that there are areas, particularly relating to health and wellbeing and the economy space where there is “the potential for us to do more.”
100. Previously, in response to the Committee’s 2022-23 Pre-Budget report, the Cabinet Secretary committed to starting a series of conversations with fellow Cabinet Secretaries in the complementary areas of education and skills; health and wellbeing; economic development; and net zero. This was intended to identify areas of joint collaboration and action to inform the portfolios’ part in the multi-year RSR.

The Scottish Government intended this to inform the outcome of the RSR as well as a longer-term cultural recovery plan.

101. The following year, the Cabinet Secretary told the Committee that the Scottish Government had been working to develop closer cross-portfolio relationships, including with health and social care services and committed to continue to prioritise that.
102. Our 2024-25 report noted that the Cabinet Secretary had told the Committee in 2021 that he was progressing this work by starting a series of conversations with fellow Cabinet Secretaries, but that in September 2023 the then First Minister told Conveners Group that the Cabinet Secretary was progressing this work by “in the first instance, taking forward a number of bilaterals” with fellow Cabinet Secretaries.
103. In response to the Committee’s 2025-26 report, the Cabinet Secretary stated that the Scottish Government is engaging in ongoing discussions with partners about where collective priorities lie and how resources can be targeted.

104. **The Committee notes that the Cabinet Secretary first committed to engage directly with other Cabinet Secretaries with regard to cross-portfolio working in 2021, and that this was followed by further commitments in 2022 and 2023 to engage in conversations with fellow Cabinet Secretaries to progress cross-portfolio working. In 2024 the Cabinet Secretary stated to the Committee again that he was engaging in discussions with partners about where collective priorities lie and how resources can be targeted. The Committee asks the Scottish Government to provide detail as to the content and outcomes of these discussions and how they have contributed to progress towards mainstreaming and cross-portfolio working over Session 6.**

Alternative funding models

105. The Committee's 2022-23 Pre-Budget report noted that the pandemic offered an opportunity to explore new perspectives and recommended that the Scottish Government should work with the culture sector to embed innovative responses. We also recommended that funding mechanisms should be directed at achieving outcomes and that a process for ensuring that public funds achieve those outcomes is needed.
106. The following year, our 2023-24 report recommended that, given the difficult fiscal environment, there was an increased urgency to progress additional revenue streams such as the Percentage for the Arts scheme (which the Scottish Government committed to work towards in 2021). The Committee asked the Scottish Government to provide an urgent update on progress in establishing the scheme.
107. In our 2024-25 report, we raised concerns that there had been no indication of progress towards the commitment to work towards establishing a Percentage for the Arts scheme. We requested that the Scottish Government provide a substantive update on its progress towards developing the scheme, including a clear indication of timescales for development and implementation during this parliamentary session.
108. Our 2025-26 report welcomed that the Scottish Government's review of the culture sector would examine the way in which the sector is supported and emphasised the importance of wide consultation with stakeholders. We noted that, as the review would consider ways to maximise the impact of available public funding for culture, and examine ways to grow the overall funding pot, diversify funding streams and support the sector to become more sustainable, it should consider the Committee's previous work on innovative funding solutions. We also recommended that the review should set out a clear pathway to making tangible progress in areas such as cross-portfolio funding, a Percentage for the Arts scheme, and leveraging private investment, as well as other possible solutions.

2026-27 evidence

109. In their written submissions to the Committee, NMS, NGS, and MGS all stressed that core funding is a prerequisite for leveraging additional investment and for maintaining the infrastructure upon which project-based activities depend.
110. Some of the alternative models mentioned in the responses to the Committee's call for views included:
 - Visitor Levy - Respondents suggested cultural organisations could be included in the allocation of levy funds, with transparent criteria and community involvement.
 - Percentage for the Arts - support for a national scheme allocating a fixed percentage (often 1%) of public infrastructure project budgets to arts and culture. Backed by Aberdeen City Council, Museums Association, SCAN, and others.

- Matched funding and Challenge funds - Noted by HES, Scottish Opera, and others, these models involve public funds matching and thereby incentivising co-investment from private or philanthropic sources.
- Endowment funds - Suggested by the RSNO, SLIC and other as a way to provide long-term, sustainable core funding, with seed funding from government matched by private donors.
- Social impact bonds - Proposed by Aberdeen City Council, these would fund cultural projects with measurable social or environmental outcomes, with returns paid by government or philanthropic bodies if outcomes are achieved.
- Admission charges for non-residents - Some local authorities and museums are considering targeted charges to generate income, though legislative changes may be required.
- Tax incentives for philanthropy - Scottish Opera and others called for enhanced tax relief schemes to encourage private giving, including exploring artist income tax exemptions.
- Crowdfunding and community bonds - Creative Scotland and the National Lottery Heritage Fund highlighted pilot successes and the potential for scaling matched crowdfunding and social investment vehicles.

111. The Committee explored some of these models in evidence, an overview of which is provided below.

Visitor Levy

112. The [Visitor Levy \(Scotland\) Act](#) allows a visitor levy, a type of fee or tax, to be charged on overnight stays in some types of accommodation. Individual Local Authorities are able to decide whether to introduce a charge and what the level of the charge should be, and the revenues from the charge can then be used to help meet the costs of local services and facilities.
113. In evidence, the EFFS highlighted the Visitor Levy as a source of alternative support for the sector, noting that the funds raised by the Levy will come from those who benefit most from the activities of the culture sector, and the hope is that the use of the levy as an alternative funding model will result in some funds flowing back into the sector.
114. The Committee sought clarity from stakeholders as to how potential revenues from the Levy should be invested to support outcomes. Art Fund suggested that Local Authorities should be encouraged to invest revenues where need is greatest and recommended that a proportion of the levy be ring-fenced for cultural organisations that generate tourism across Scotland. They stated that—
- ” it is a matter of being fair and recognising the contribution that those organisations bring and reflecting that in their annual budgets. That could be delivered through Creative Scotland or Museums Galleries Scotland, or could come directly from the Scottish Government. [...] we want to see fairness and proportionality in the apportionment.

Ability to build reserves

115. NGS highlighted that the ability for organisations to carry funds over from one fiscal year to another would increase resilience in the sector. NGS also suggested that the sector could benefit from borrowing powers akin to those held by national institutions in England, which have the opportunity to build up reserves by carrying over funds from one fiscal year to another and by borrowing. This, they argued, would provide greater security and certainty, especially with regard to unexpected occurrences, such as issues relating to aging estates.

Endowment Funds

116. The RSNO told the Committee that “it is worth considering a system of match funding for individuals who want to put money into an endowment fund” and noted that, if organisations want to reduce their reliance on public subsidy, endowment funds “will be an incredibly important piece of the future funding jigsaw that we must talk about and build financial structures to support.”
117. The RSNO suggested that rather than being used to cover in-year budget deficits, endowment funds would be used to support the organisation in the long term: “we can invest it well, grow that money and get it to work.”

Basic income for artists

118. SAU emphasised to the Committee the importance of secure incomes for artists. They highlighted the pilot programme to provide basic income for artists in Irelandⁱⁱⁱ, stating that the pilot—

” demonstrates the revolutionary potential of that approach to financial security [...] the idea of the basic income is not necessarily just about more money; it is about how we ensure that individual artists can sustain their practices and not give up on their profession because they find it completely unsustainable to continue working. When artists have secure incomes, they spend locally, they cluster in creative hubs and they strengthen regional cultural ecosystems.

Historic Environment Scotland new funding model

119. In evidence, the Committee enquired into the new funding model adopted by HES, which trades a £2 million annual reduction in Government grant-in-aid for the ability to retain surplus commercial income. In its written submission, HES stated that this shift supports long-term planning but increases exposure to market volatility.
120. In evidence, HES explained that it is in the first year of the new model, and that a baseline of grant in aid is required to unlock its potential, stating that “for £74 million

ⁱⁱⁱ Basic income for artists will be made permanent in Ireland in 2026, following the culmination of the pilot programme.

of Government investment, the economic impact is £1 billion, and we are looking to grow that in the next three years.” HES stated that it is looking to increase funding from non-Government sources by 20% by 2028, and that, as well as reducing reliance on public funding, it wants to have the ability to retain surplus and look for multiyear funding.

121. In its follow up information to the Committee, HES added that—

” For 2025/26, we set an ambitious net commercial income target of £74.9m, against which we are currently forecasting £71.9m; while this does represent an in-year shortfall against the target, it compares against a full year 2024/25 outturn of £65.8m and as such still represents a strong performance.

122. Following the Committee’s 2023-24 report recommendation that the Scottish Government should more urgently pursue additional revenue schemes such as the Percentage for the Arts scheme, the Scottish Government confirmed that it was in the “initial stages of scoping this commitment”, and that it expected to be able to share more information in the coming months.

123. In response to our 2024-25 report, the Cabinet Secretary stated that the Scottish Government was keen to see the commitment to work towards establishing a Percentage for the Arts scheme taken forward and would prioritise scoping potential delivery options in 2024-25. The Cabinet Secretary committed to keeping the Committee updated on the scheme’s progress.

124. **The Committee notes the progress on introducing the Visitor Levy, recognising that – should individual Local Authorities choose to implement the Levy – the revenues could be used to help with the cost of local services and facilities. Given the culture sector's contribution to tourism in Scotland, we request COSLA provide clarity as to what opportunities for support the Levy might bring to the culture sector.**

125. **The Committee invites the Scottish Government’s view on the provision of basic income for artists in Ireland, which will be made permanent in 2026 following the culmination of the pilot program.**

126. **Despite the Scottish Government’s confirmation in 2022 that it was in the “initial stages” of scoping a Percentage for the Arts scheme, the Committee has not yet received an update on progress towards establishing the scheme. This is despite an additional commitment in 2023 to scope potential delivery options in 2024-25 and to keep the Committee updated on the scheme’s progress. The Committee asks the Scottish Government why, despite the above commitments, there has been no further update on the progress towards establishing a Percentage for the Arts scheme. We ask that the Scottish Government provides an urgent update on progress towards establishing the scheme and detail as to what the scheme would look like in practice.**

127. The Committee recommended in 2022 that, given the difficult fiscal environment, there was an increased urgency for the Scottish Government to work towards additional revenue streams for the culture and heritage sector. We ask that the Scottish Government sets out in detail what progress it has made over Session 6 on delivering alternative funding models for the sector.

Climate change and Net Zero

128. Respondents to the Committee's call for views indicated that organisations across the cultural and heritage sector are actively implementing a wide range of measures to reduce emissions and contribute to Scotland's net zero ambitions. Culture for Climate Scotland (CCS) noted that 46% of cultural organisations (reporting to it) were on track to be net zero by 2045.
129. Some of the actions highlighted in submissions included:
- Energy efficiency upgrades such as LED lighting, improved insulation, and Building Management Systems (e.g. NMS, Community Leisure UK).
 - Renewable energy integration, including photovoltaic panels (e.g. Museums Association referenced Gairloch Museum) and switching to green energy tariffs.
 - Sustainable exhibition and production practices, with reuse of materials and modular displays (e.g. Museums Association referenced Perth Museum's "Waters Rising").
 - Digital engagement and remote working to reduce travel emissions.
 - Carbon literacy training for staff and volunteers (e.g. Community Leisure UK members).
 - Promotion of sustainable travel, including cycle-to-work schemes and partnerships with transport providers (e.g. RSNO).
 - Circular economy initiatives, such as the Arts Resource Management Scotland (ARMS) project (see SCAN submission) and Lend & Mend Hubs in libraries (see SLIC).
 - Carbon budgeting and reporting, with sector-wide data collection led by CCS.

Shaping public attitudes

130. Submissions to the Committee's call for views outlined the impact of the sector on shaping public attitudes. Creative Scotland's submission stated that "research has shown that the cultural and creative sector are well placed to play this role, engaging with the narratives and challenges of climate change and helping us to envisage alternative futures." Additionally, the Museums Association highlighted that "Museums are ideal places for people to have big conversations about complex issues."
131. Several exhibitions were highlighted by respondents, including "Rewrite the Future" at the Wardlaw Museum (MGS submission) and "Waters Rising" at Perth Museum (Museums Association), which were said to have engaged audiences with climate themes. Participatory projects like "Sewing Hope: Quilts for Climate Change" (Museums Association) and the RSNO's "Sounds of the Deep" schools initiative were said to demonstrate how creative programming can foster climate literacy and intergenerational dialogue.

132. CCS told the Committee that cultural organisations “reach the hard-to-reach groups and provide welcoming spaces” and “provide creative, accessible and restorative ways of having conversations about climate change.”
133. CCS also highlighted the Scottish Government’s climate change public engagement strategy, which contains a reference to the role of the cultural sector, and the climate change public engagement fund that certain organisations in the cultural sector have taken advantage of. However, CCS noted that the fund is “very small” and oversubscribed, explaining that “The application success rate was something like 12 or 13 per cent during the last round of funding. Loads of organisations want to do public engagement work on climate change but are not able to access the funds to do it.”
134. CCS went on to state that it is—
- ” interested in how funds that are being mobilised to address the environmental emergency can be used by the cultural sector, because we have a lot of the skills that are needed and I do not think that they are being taken advantage of at the moment. It is an important funding stream.

- 135. The Committee recognises the role of the culture sector in shaping public understanding of, and attitudes towards, climate change. We recommend that the sector’s role be recognised in the Scottish Government’s Climate Change Plan and that the Scottish Government considers how funding to support net zero ambitions could be used to further the impact of the culture sector on public attitudes.**

Funding challenges

136. Submissions highlighted several further challenges facing the sector. For example, HES stated that—
- ” With nearly a fifth of Scotland’s homes and a large proportion of public and civic buildings constructed before 1919, the challenge of decarbonising the built environment cannot be met without sustained action on traditional buildings. Preserving and adapting existing historic buildings presents a major opportunity to avoid the emissions associated with demolition and new construction, while the use of traditional materials and skills ensures compatibility, durability, and low-carbon performance over the long term.
137. Respondents to the call for views also noted that achieving net zero will require substantial capital investment. Retrofitting historic buildings, upgrading heating systems, and improving energy infrastructure are costly and complex, particularly for listed or heritage properties. NMS said—

- ” Achieving net zero is contingent on finding alternative carbon-free heating sources for four sites which are heated from gas boilers. Sourcing alternative heating solutions is technologically challenging and expensive, beyond our annual operating budgets. We can only achieve this level of change through partnership working and major external funds.

138. We invite the Scottish Government to outline how it intends to address the substantial capital investment required in the culture and heritage sector in order to meet its climate change and net zero ambitions.

Audience travel

139. The Committee heard from CCS that audience travel to and from cultural events and venues is the largest source of emissions associated with the cultural sector and that, as such, “in terms of value for money, it is useful to focus on that.”
140. CCS suggested that possible solutions include the provision of bus travel from surrounding areas to venues through working with community transport groups or private bus companies. This, they stated, could be provided through the cultural partner itself, through collaboration with transport providers, or through the implementation of a levy on ticket sales to subsidise travel for those who need it.
141. In evidence, the Committee asked whether organisations in the culture sector experience pressure to prove that they are encouraging international visitors, rather than thinking about how the sector might focus on serving a domestic audience or address some of the impacts of audience travel. CCS responded that, though experiences vary, “there is still a pressure, in that cultural organisations, in order to be seen as being in the top flight of what they do, have to be seen to have that international impact.”
142. CCS noted, however, that this appears to be changing, citing as an example the recent funding decisions from Creative Scotland which made the international aspect criteria non-compulsory, compared with the situation in previous years. This, they explained, resulted in a greater number of smaller community arts organisations receiving funding “that do the kind of work that does not have an international impact but has enormous local significance.”
143. Noting the reliance on international visitors of, for example, the festivals in Edinburgh, CCS highlighted that there are “difficult questions for the culture sector about international travel” and that part of this involves “thinking about how we can do more to serve local audiences and value that kind of work.”
144. In evidence, the Cabinet Secretary told the Committee that the Scottish Government is focussing efforts on increasing public transport use and that there is a need to ensure that the culture sector is “properly served with the ability for people to travel with the least environmental impact possible.”

145. **The Committee notes the evidence heard that audience travel to and from cultural events and venues is the largest source of emissions associated with the cultural sector. As such, we welcome the Cabinet Secretary’s confirmation that the Scottish Government is focussing efforts on public transport use. The Committee requests more details on how the Scottish Government is supporting greater use of public transport to cultural events or sites and how progress is being measured.**

146. **Noting the evidence heard that there are “difficult questions for the culture sector about international travel”, we also ask the Scottish Government to outline what steps it is taking to address aviation emissions associated with audience travel.**

Table 1 - Multi-year funding: themes from the Committee's budget recommendations over the course of the session and the Scottish Government's responses.

Year	Committee recommendations	Scottish Government response
2022-23	Welcomed the Scottish Government's commitment to 3-year funding settlements for the cultural organisations they provided regular funding for, and recommended that, wherever practical, multi-year funding is passed on to the groups and individuals being funded, who should also receive 3-year settlements.	The Resource Spending Review (RSR) sets out the Scottish Government's intentions to develop and publish multiyear portfolio spending plans by the end of May 2022. Creative Scotland confirmed its intention to develop a multi-year funding approach from April 2023, and the upcoming resource spending review* will support that aim. The funding for Creative Scotland in the 2022-23 budget will enable the transition to this new approach.*the RSR was published in June 2022
2023-24	The Committee recognised the difficulty of providing multi-year funding in current fiscal context, but recommended that level 3 figures should be provided for the period of the Spending Review alongside the 2023-24 Budget. The Committee's report on the Resource Spending Review Framework recommended that the aim to redirect funding towards preventative approaches should include considerations of a more systemic approach to multi-year funding of scalable culture projects supporting health and wellbeing. The Committee's view was that a shift towards multi-year funding would allow greater progress to be made in mainstreaming culture across all policy areas.	Scottish Government recognised that the need to have a sense of the planning horizon, and stated that they remain keen to conclude some work on multi-year funding, even if economic uncertainty means that the figures for later years can be only indicative
2024-25	The Committee considered that delivering multi-year funding settlements for the cultural organisations the Scottish Government funding to be a crucial component in providing the sector with a longer-term view of how it will be supported, thereby increasing sectoral confidence. Raised concerns that there had been limited progress to date on the Scottish Government's 2021 Programme for Government commitment to "invest in much needed stability for the cultural organisations that we provide regular funding for, by agreeing 3-year funding settlements, to allow them to plan for a sustainable recovery". Welcomed Scottish Government commitment to provide multi-year funding envelopes alongside 2024-25 Budget, but recommended that these envelopes should be provided to level 3 in order to provide greater certainty of future funding for organisations.	The Scottish Government's response to the Committee's report did not provide comment.
2025-26	Raised concerns about the lack of progress made towards the commitment made in 2021 to agree 3-year funding settlements for the organisations funded directly by the Scottish Government. Noted the Cabinet Secretary's commitment to revisit the multi-year outlook in the next MTFs*. Recommended that the Scottish Government should provide greater clarity and certainty to the culture sector following the UK Spending Review.*The MTFs was published in June 2025	The Scottish Government welcomed Creative Scotland's plans to introduce multi-year funding from 2025-26. The Scottish Government set out £20m in the draft budget for the multi-year funding programme in 2025-26 and aims to provide a further £20m in 2026-27.

Table 2 - Strategic approaches and mainstreaming/cross-portfolio funding: themes from the Committee’s budget recommendations over the course of the session and the Scottish Government’s responses.

Year	Committee recommendations	Scottish Government response
2022-23	<p>Noted the Cabinet Secretary's view that the upcoming resource spending review would provide a significant opportunity to align budget choices with the NPF because it would be multi-year and most outcomes will not be delivered in the space of a year. Recommended that the resource spending review should include detailed consideration of how budgetary decisions could support the mainstreaming of culture across the Scottish Government. Recommended that this should be an outcomes-based process based on the health and wider social benefits of cultural activity and that there should be a much greater emphasis on embedding the culture strategy across the Scottish Government.</p>	<p>The Cabinet Secretary committed to starting a series of conversations with fellow Cabinet Secretaries in the complementary areas of education and skills; health and wellbeing; economic development; and net zero. This was intended to identify areas of joint collaboration and action to inform the portfolios' part in the multi-year RSR. The Scottish Government intended this to inform the outcome of the RSR as well as a longer-term cultural recovery plan</p>
2023-24	<p>The Committee's report on the resource spending review framework recommended that there needed to be "a reappraisal of what is considered as health spending", and that this should include consideration of the contribution of investment from budget lines beyond the culture portfolio and, in particular, from the health budget. Specifically, there needs to be consideration of the contribution which preventative spend in areas like the arts and other cultural activities makes towards health and wellbeing. Asked the Scottish Government for an update on progress in embedding culture in its plans for a wellbeing economy including through a legislative approach and on the progress of the short life working group set up by the Cabinet Secretary.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government had been working to develop closer cross-portfolio relationships, including with health and social care services and committed to continue prioritising that. Stated that the short-life working group had met in recent weeks and committed to working on joint actions. Committed to providing more information on the work of the group in the Scottish Government's Culture Strategy Action Plan Refresh.</p>
2024-25	<p>Expressed concern that there had been "no indication of progress made by the Scottish Government on our recommendations on mainstreaming culture across portfolios and developing cross-portfolio funding for culture". Noted that the Cabinet Secretary had told the Committee in 2021 that he was progressing this work by starting a series of conversations with fellow Cabinet Secretaries, but that in September 2023 the FM told Conveners Group that the Cabinet Secretary was progressing this work by "in the first instance, taking forward a number of bilaterals" with fellow Cabinet Secretaries. Recommended that there was a need for much greater urgency for the Scottish Government to make substantive progress towards cross-portfolio funding for culture. Agreed with stakeholders that there needed to be an "active pathway" towards this, and urged the Scottish Government to set out detailed plans for the steps it will take to achieve tangible year-on-year progress on this when it published the Culture Strategy Action Plan. Recommended that public funding must be supported by a long-term strategic approach in order to underpin the</p>	<p>The Cabinet Secretary stated that he was actively engaging across government to mainstream culture in policy-making, prioritising health and wellbeing initially. "By recognising the transformational power of culture and the value of the contribution it makes to achieving key policy outcomes the Scottish Government will deliver significant benefits for the people of Scotland." Stated that this work would result in cross-policy and sector working, knowledge-sharing and increased resilience.</p>

Year	Committee recommendations	Scottish Government response
	<p>leveraging of private investment. The need to restore confidence in the sector extends to donors and sponsors.</p>	
2025-26	<p>The Scottish Government needs to take a strategic approach to the delivery of additional funding for the culture sector, and should focus on maximising the impact (including on the economy and wellbeing) of the Scottish Government's significant investment in the sector. Noted that the Committee has in its Budget scrutiny over the two preceding years asked that the Culture Strategy Action Plan (which was published in Dec 2023) should provide a clear and strategic sense of how the Scottish Government is working to ensure the sustainability of the sector. However, the Action Plan did not reflect the Scottish Government's commitment to increase investment in the sector by £100m by 2028-29. As such, the Committee recommended that there remained a need for the Scottish Government to set out a strategic framework for supporting the prioritisation, and maximising the impact, of additional funding. The Committee recommended that the forthcoming review of how the sector is supported would provide a useful opportunity to respond to this need.</p>	<p>Scottish Government understands that the sector is looking for clarity regarding future funding and how the £100m will be rolled out beyond the next year. Stated that the Scottish Government's planning assumption was to aim to provide a further £20m in 2026-27. This cannot be confirmed until the Scottish Government receives its budget allocation from the UK Government. The review of how the culture sector is supported is intended to maximise the impact of the £100m investment. "The review will look at public funding and working across the public, private and third sectors to grow the overall funding pot for culture, diversify funding streams and supporting the sector to become more sustainable and resilient in the face on ongoing challenges." Programme for Government 2024 sets out that the Scottish Government's strategic activity: "This reform, review and partnership work seeks to deliver transformational change across the sector, and this will take time and commitment from all partners working to achieve over a number of years. These commitments build on both the Culture Strategy Action Plan and the International Culture Strategy, with a renewed focus on those areas where positive change will make the greatest long-term impact." The Scottish Government is engaging in ongoing discussions with partners about where collective priorities lie and how resources can be targeted. This "will result in the acceleration of some planned actions and, consequently, the deceleration of others to match available resource" Committed to providing an update on the delivery of the Culture Strategy Action Plan at the end of the 2024-25 reporting year.</p>

Table 3 - Alternative funding approaches: themes from the Committee’s budget recommendations over the course of the session and the Scottish Government’s responses.

Year	Committee recommendations	Scottish Government response
2022-23	The pandemic offered an opportunity to explore new perspectives. Welcomed the Scottish Government’s commitment to prepare plans for cultural recovery and not to simply return to the status quo Scottish Government should work with the sector to embed innovative responses to the pandemic which are sustainable over the longer-term. This should include national and local agencies working with the sector to build upon a more collaborative approach with a shared focus on achieving outcomes Funding mechanisms should be directed at achieving outcomes and a process for ensuring that public funds achieve those outcomes is needed. Local authorities and Creative Scotland should work more closely with the third sector in sharing good practice in relation to the funding process for grassroots organisations.	Committed to continuing to explore with the sector building on the innovative use of digital technology and reflecting this in the longer-term cultural recovery plan Creative Scotland’s refreshed Strategy and Funding Framework set out that it would move towards a more tailored approach to providing support based on the specific needs and context of organisations, with funding applications and monitoring scaled according to investment.
2023-24	Given the difficult fiscal environment, the Committee’s view was that there was an increased urgency to progress additional revenue streams such as the Percentage for the Arts scheme. The Committee asked the Scottish Government for an urgent update on progress in establishing the scheme. Invited the Cabinet Secretary to provide greater clarity in relation to how the proposed Transient Visitor Levy might support the culture sector at a local level. Recommended that, given the benefits provided by the culture sector in attracting visitors, consideration should be given to how the sector could benefit from the levy.	Percentage for the Arts - the Scottish Government stated that it was in the initial stages of scoping this commitment, and that it expected to be able to share more information in the coming months. Visitor Levy - Scottish Government committed to introducing the Levy Bill during the 2022-23 Parliamentary year, with provisions expected to come into force "as is practicable and reasonable to do so" (estimated that it was unlikely the levy could be charged before 2026).
2024-25	Raised concerns that there had been no indication of progress towards the Scottish Government’s 2021 commitment to work towards establishing a Percentage for the Arts scheme. Called upon the Scottish Government to provide a substantive update on its progress towards developing the scheme, including a clear indication of timescales for development and implementation during this parliamentary session. Reaffirmed previous recommendation that consideration should be given to how the sector could benefit from the Visitor Levy. Recognised that how the revenues from the levy are invested would be at the discretion of local authorities, but considered that cultural bodies should be represented when such decisions are made. Asked the Scottish Government whether it had examined the approach of comparable devolved administrations in supporting culture funding, with a view to learning from innovative ways of increasing funding.	Percentage for the Arts - Scottish Government was keen to see this commitment taken forward, and would prioritise scoping potential delivery options in 2024-25. Committed to keeping the Committee updated. Visitor levy - Scottish Government encourages local authorities to engage directly with culture and heritage organisations, local businesses, communities and tourism organisations before deciding how to invest revenues from the levy. Scottish Government was looking at the potential for additional and parallel funding streams, including looking at the approaches of comparable countries.
2025-26	Welcomed that the Scottish Government’s review would examine the way the culture sector is supported. Emphasised need to consult widely with stakeholders. Noted that throughout the parliamentary session, the Committee has undertaken significant work on funding and support for the sector, and that the Scottish Government’s review would benefit from taking this evidence base and the Committee’s recommendations into account. As the review will consider ways to maximise the impact of available public funding for culture, and examine ways to grow the overall funding pot, diversify funding streams and support the sector to become more sustainable, this should take into account the Committee’s previous work on innovative funding solutions. It should set out a clear pathway to making tangible progress in areas such as cross-portfolio funding, a Percentage for the Arts scheme, and leveraging private investment, as well as other possible solutions.	Agreed that it is essential that the culture sector has the opportunity to engage in the Review. Stated that engagement would begin in early 2025 with a short survey about the scope of the review. Scottish Government agreed that the Review of Creative Scotland should feed into the wider review of how the culture sector is supported. The survey would seek views about how and why the culture sector is supported and what the sector thinks needs to change to best meet its needs going forward. Responses will inform the scope of both the review of culture sector support in Scotland and the review of Creative Scotland.

Extracts from meeting minutes

[Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee - meeting minutes - 22nd meeting, 2025 - Thursday 11 September 2025](#)

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture:

The Committee took evidence from—

- Alistair Mackie, Chief Executive, Royal Scottish National Orchestra;
- Anne Lyden, Director General, National Galleries of Scotland;
- Alison Turnbull, Director of External Relations and Partnerships, Historic Environment Scotland;
- Tony Lankester, Chief Executive, Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society.

[Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee - meeting minutes - 23rd meeting, 2025 - Thursday 18 September 2025](#)

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture:

The Committee took evidence from—

- Rachael Browning, Director of Programme and Policy, Art Fund;
- Alison Nolan, Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Library and Information Council;
- Tamara Rogovic, President, Scottish Artists Union;
- Lewis Coenen-Rowe, Culture/SHIFT Manager, Culture for Climate Scotland.

[Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee - meeting minutes - 24th meeting, 2025 - Thursday 25 September 2025](#)

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture:

The Committee took evidence from—

- Iain Munro, Chief Executive;
- Alastair Evans, Director of Strategy and Planning, Creative Scotland;

And then from—

- Angus Robertson, Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture;
- Lisa Baird, Deputy Director, Culture and Historic Environment;
- Alison Byrne, Chief Executive, National Records of Scotland, Scottish Government.

[Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee - meeting minutes - 28th meeting, 2025 - Thursday 6 November 2025](#)

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture (in private):

The Committee considered its Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture report and agreed to consider a further draft at a future meeting.

[Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee - meeting minutes - 29th meeting, 2025 - Thursday 13 November 2025](#)

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture (in private):

The Committee considered and agreed its Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture report.

