

# Cross-Party Group on Culture and Communities

**Wednesday 21st September 2022 07:00PM - 8:30PM**  
**Online via Zoom**

## **Present**

- Sarah Boyack MSP (Convenor)
- Claire Baker MSP
- Jenni Minto MSP
- Mark Ruskell MSP
- Claire Adamson MSP

## **Invited guests**

- Caroline Brown, University of Dundee
- Jane Miller, National Museum of Scotland
- Chris Kelly, Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust

## **Non-MSP Group Members**

- Barb Fraser, Luminare
- David Martin, Skills Development Scotland
- Danni Gordon, Inspiring Scotland & Creative Communities
- Rita Velaviciute, Arts and Business Scotland
- Carol Parry, Trades House Glasgow
- Cheryl McGeachan, University of Glasgow
- Matt Hall, Film Access Scotland
- Kate Wimpres, North Edinburgh Arts
- Alison Reeves, Making Music
- Lewis Hou, Science Ceilidh
- Andrew Ormstons, Drew Wylie
- Ealasaid MacDonald, MG Alba
- Fiona MacEwan, The Birks Cinema Trust
- Moira Jeffrey, Scottish Contemporary Arts Network
- Jane Miller, National Museums Scotland
- Jessica Massey, Nevis Ensemble
- Robert Rae, Art 27
- Rio, Kitchimama
- Kate Griffin, WHALE Arts
- Kathryn Welch, Culture Collective
- Alison Scott, Freelance Archivist
- Catherine Middleton Findlay, Freelance arts in health
- Annette McBride, Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust
- Patrik Zvirinsky, Office of Sharon Dowey MSP
- Morvern Cunningham, Culture Collective and Freelancer
- Clare Webster, Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust
- Karine Neill, Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust
- Sandra Scobbie, Freelance
- Andy Stirling Robertson, Culture Counts
- Jennifer Hunter, Culture Counts (secretariat)

## **Apologies**

- N/A

## **Agenda**

### **1. Welcome**

The group convener Sarah Boyack MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting and acknowledged that the meeting itself was very close to the ending of the mourning period for The Queen. However, as the meeting is the AGM which has to take place within a specific timescale, it was decided that we would need to continue with our plan for a meeting this evening.

### **2. AGM Administration**

- Sarah Boyack MSP nominated and elected Convenor
- Jenni Minto MSP - nominated and elected Deputy Convenor
- Culture Counts - Joseph Peach - approved by group as secretariat

### **3. Review the work of the previous year**

As part of the Cross-Party Group Parliamentary rules for AGMs, the group must review the work carried out within the previous year. As such you will all have received by email the minutes of the previous two meetings of this group.

In summary, within the previous twelve months we held two meetings.

The first meeting was the inaugural meeting which is where the group is technically set up and the purpose of the group is agreed.

The second meeting of the group had a focus on how culture has supported communities throughout Covid-19. And we heard from guest speakers Hazel Wotherspoon Toonspeak; David P Scott Freelance Artist and Photographer and Shona McCarthy Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The second meeting allowed MSPs to gain useful insight into some of the ways in which arts and health connect.

### **4. Review and approve the minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes were approved by Kathryn Welch and seconded by Jenni Minto MSP

### **5. Guest speakers on connection and belonging theme**

Sarah Boyack MSP introduced Caroline Brown (University of Dundee) Head of Archive Services at the University of Dundee.

Caroline informed the group about the role of archives in community life and the power of stories, including the power of looking into the past to help understand the present and remember where we come from.

Archives regularly have visits from school groups though many people don't realise that Archives are open to them.

Archives also have a role in justice, both in communities and in high profile cases, such as Windrush.

Dundee University has assisted mental health service users to explore the experiences of asylum patients from the past, as a way of improving their own wellbeing. Participants are looking at hospital records and investigating how people were treated in the past in mental health care. They are looking at for example the story of Edith Swankie and reflecting on people, on stories and experience. The stories also inform the present - what will our decedents think about the way we treat mental health now?

Edith Swankie was just 14 when she was admitted to Dundee Asylum on 19 June 1902. The records show that the cause for admission was recorded as "symptoms of hypomania linked to hormones".

Sarah Boyack MSP introduced Jane Miller from the National Museum of Scotland.

Connecting communities and reducing isolation is part of the National Museum of Scotland strategic plan, for example NMS are running art therapy sessions in Edinburgh, and using objects to stimulate group discussions, there's something about handling objects particularly very old objects that really helps people to connect to the past and to each other. NMS has also launched an LGBTQI+ show on hidden histories, which resulted from youth engagement, they have created a public trail, this supports people to feel a sense of being welcomed and to have a sense of belonging in the space.

An important point to note is that some of the groups who have come together to participate in museum-led activities have stayed in contact after the project was finished via What's-app groups. This is important, particularly for those who are socially isolated.

NMS are now working on an evidence bank which will support people in how to demonstrate social impact.

Sarah Boyack MSP introduced Chris Kelly from Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust (THAT).

Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust offer a range of activities to improve health and wellbeing in the community, for example they currently run: an eight-session textile programme, a photography group who meet on zoom and print workshops in partnership with DCA. During Covid-19 THAT delivered twenty-two programs to two-hundred and twenty-five participants.

Participants work with professional artists throughout the process, and they relish the experience of making work.

THAT see people transform from stroke survivor to photographer, wheelchair user to choir-member, from cared for to admired. The transformation of identity that taking part in creative making can offer is very important, it can change how people feel about themselves and how they view the present and the future. It can also change how others see them too.

Sustainability is an issue, we see people learn, grow and improve and then their eight-week session comes to an end with no guaranteed follow up. We need to have options for people to keep attending and to try out different things.

The Culture Strategy makes sense in terms of the Cross Policy Working though we're not seeing evidence of that on the ground, particularly in terms of investment and resources.

We need more attention paid to the research evidence and the impact of arts in health. At the moment most people are working with short term funding, project to project, off the back of individual connections and passions and this is not a sustainable model.

## 6. Discussion

Sarah Boyack MPS asked about initiatives to support young people's mental health. Caroline Brown suggested that there is a need for networks, the archives need to be able to let people know that they are there, and there is a need for funding assistance.

Chris Kelly mentioned that THAT has remained in a creative relationship with some participants for twenty years since the first programmes that they were involved in. However, this important avenue for connection and belonging that's happening, is intermittent, and not supported by short term funding streams.

Robert from Arts 27 suggested that community work should be community-led, Chris agreed that this makes sense in many instances, though not when it comes to health services, for example for stroke recovery. Some opportunities for participation need to be a managed sustainable service, and one that requires no time or expertise from the attendee in advance. Caroline agreed that there is a need to tread very carefully when supporting people as a health intervention.

Lewis Hou mentioned that there are networks held by local libraries, which are important cultural agents and that there is Community Led funds available from the Ideas Fund (National Lottery) which is to support wellbeing.

Alison Reeves was concerned that opportunities for community arts were diminishing at speed due to the crisis of and the general collapse of community infrastructure. Many groups are unable to access community space to run their groups from. There is a huge amount of work carried out by volunteers and there is not enough recognition of this role.

Jennifer Hunter reported that the Church of Scotland has announced that it will be closing 750 of its 1500 churches in Scotland as part of a new radical action plan.

## 7. Actions

Sarah Boyack MSP asked the guest speakers to highlight in summary what needs to change.

- Caroline Brown  
Long-term sustainable investment
- Jane Miller  
Evidence of impact  
Advocacy
- Chris Kelly  
We need to work in partnership  
We need to define how the cross policy working as outlined in the culture strategy is going to work in practice

## 8. Join the CPG

Skipped item

## 9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place in approx. February 2023.

## Annex 1 Chat Box Links (below)

**19:26:41 From HParr to Everyone:**

There's also amazing work going on in Glasgow University's Cheryl McGeachan who have worked with mental health communities to produce a new exhibition for KelvinGrove Museum  
<https://www.parliament.scot/msps/current-and-previous-msps/sarah-boyack>

**19:28:58 From HParr to Everyone:**

[https://www.gla.ac.uk/news/headline\\_860683\\_en.html](https://www.gla.ac.uk/news/headline_860683_en.html)

**19:39:11 From HParr to Everyone:**

Thank you - <https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-herald-1130/20220720/281775632889813> - The Glasgow archive-exhibition mental health example by Dr Cheryl McGeachan - one other excellent example of evidence/ connection to the wonderful work presented tonight.

**19:53:43 From Morvern Cunningham (she/they) | Culture Collective to Everyone:**

Some folk in the room might be interested in Leah Black's current work on the Regenerative Futures Fund, a prototype of 10yr unrestricted funding for community based organisations in Edinburgh: <https://www.evoc.org.uk/partnership/regenerative-futures-fund/>

**19:57:21 From Andy Robertson to Everyone:**

On evidence, our Useful Facts site is an index of research on the value and impact of culture. ...  
<https://culturecounts.scot/useful-facts>

**20:11:38 From Morvern Cunningham (she/they) | Culture Collective to Everyone:**

On the subject of co-creation, a new piece from Stephen Welsh:  
<https://www.thestateofthearts.co.uk/features/the-dawn-of-co-creation/>

**20:17:00 From Lewis Hou to Everyone:**

For those interested in the community-researcher partnerships and evidence development around the role of culture and wellbeing across the Highlands and Islands:  
<https://www.scienceceilidh.com/ideasfund>

**20:18:55 From Amy to Everyone:**

Have people seen the Culture Map produced by CEC? <https://www.edinburghculturalmap.org/>

**20:19:05 From Lewis Hou to Everyone:**

Here's the culture & wellbeing community network we support with Scottish libraries and our last conversations have focused on the cost of living crisis and rising social inequalities  
<https://www.scienceceilidh.com/culturewellbeing>

**20:19:48 From Moira Jeffrey SCAN to Everyone:**

More info on church restructuring here <https://churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/radical-action-plan>

**20:20:12 From Amy to Everyone:**

It's a great place for community organisations to highlight themselves and what they're doing.  
<https://www.edinburghculturalmap.org/>

**20:22:10 From Catherine Middleton Findlay to Everyone:**

Caroline you may like this exhibition which was a joint project with NHS Forth Valley, Stirling University Archives and Art Collection, Artlink Central and the participants from Bellsdyke and artist Sharon Quigley <https://staringattheceilinglookingatthestars.wordpress.com/>

ENDS