

Cross-Party Group Annual Return

Name of Cross-Party Group

Cross-Party Group on Culture and Communities

Date Group Established (the date of establishment is the date in this parliamentary session that the Group held its initial meeting, where the office bearers were elected and not the date that the Group was accorded recognition. All Groups should hold their AGMs on, or before, the anniversary of this date.)

Established 01/09/2021 This session 1/11/2023

Date of Most Recent Annual General Meeting (AGM)

08/12/2025

Date Annual Return Submitted

10/12/2025

Date of Preceding AGM [this date is required to aid clerks in verifying that the most recent AGM has taken place within 11 to 13 months of the previous AGM]

18/09/2024

Group Meetings and Activities

Please provide details of each meeting of the Group including the date of the meeting, a brief description of the main subjects discussed and the MSP and non-MSP attendance figures.

Details of any other activities, such as visits undertaken by the Group or papers/report published by the Group should also be provided.

Between September 2024 and October 2025 this group undertook a focussed programme of enquiry titled 'Big ambitions for culture and

communities'. This took the form of two meetings in this period, and will conclude with one further meeting and a written report in the early part of 2026. The meetings held this year were as follows:

25 February 2025 (online)

MSP member attendees: 2

Non MSP member attendees: 37

Topic: "Big ideas for culture and communities"

Scotland's new Makar - Pàdraig MacAoidh opened the meeting by reading two poems in both Gàidhlig and English - Deireadh an t-Samhraidh/The End of Summer and An Tonn/The Wave. Pàdraig also shared his observations that culture is a mix of the learned and the accidental, that it allows us to fail better and in unexpected ways, and that it lies at the heart of our communities and connections, forming the basis of our jokes, whisper and earworms.

The meeting then moved to the main portion, for which attendees were each invited to speak for one minute about their 'big ideas' for an aspirational, effective and ambitious vision of how culture and communities might work together as we look to the future. The ensuing discussion was wide-ranging, forward looking and aspirational, with 25 attendees sharing a fascinating range of ideas – from the visionary to the practical. In the discussion a number of key themes arose, including:

- Scotland's rich diversity of black and global majority artists and creative practice, and the importance of celebrating, connecting and profiling that.
- The work required to make equal access to performing arts for marginalised and disabled people a reality.
- The presence of culture already within all communities, and the role of artists and culture as 'social glue' and as essential catalysts for innovation, equity and resilience.
- Culture's transformative role and potential in health and education, and the importance of embedding culture in public health, education and place frameworks.
- The work required to ensure that arts and culture are available to all children, regardless of background.
- The possibilities in terms of forging better links between culture and other areas of the policy agenda.
- The practicalities of enabling and supporting cultural lives (through funding, infrastructure and pathways)

Further analysis of these themes and the input shared was used to inform the structure of the coming meetings of the CPG, and to define key areas of exploration for the group's discussions.

04 June 2025 (in person and online)

MSP member attendees: 2

Non MSP member attendees: 99

Topic: Culture as “social glue”

Poet Katharine Macfarlane opened with a reading of *The Library*, celebrating the multiple roles Libraries serve for people and communities.

An opening address was offered by Richard Bellingham, Director of Institute for Future Cities, University of Strathclyde. Key points included:

- The role, ecosystems and projected growth of cities (now and in the future)
- Different understandings of what makes a good city, considering both basic needs and values. Ideas of a good city vary according to who, and where, you are.
- Looking ahead, we can expect demographic change, social change, economic change (including to high streets and retail habits), as well as unanticipated shocks (like Covid).
- Common ambitions for city living include them being easy, equitable, flexible, sustainable and distinctive

A panel discussion then took place with:

- Giulia Gregnanin, Director of Timespan, Helmsdale (Sutherland)

Giulia introduced the role of a contemporary arts and heritage centre within a rural area, serving both a small local population and a large transient visitor audience. She shared Timespan’s roots in exploring the local heritage of the area (and the Scottish Clearances) and linked that to their global perspective and to international discussions around climate change, the legacies of empire, and social justice. She shared the importance of coproduction and cocreation in making work that belongs to ‘the commons’, including logistically - e.g. via the ‘people’s mobile archive’. She noted that this was a constant process of “learning and unlearning, doing and undoing”, toward reconfiguring the idea of a museum as a “non neutral place”, working toward social justice

- Éadaoín Lynch, Research and Evaluation Manager, Scottish Book Trust

Éadaoín introduced *The value and impact of Scotland's libraries* report by the Scottish Book Trust, launched June 2025, which spoke to 300 librarians and 2000 library users across every Local Authority in Scotland. They looked at the challenges facing libraries, with 53

libraries closed since 2015. And the opportunities, with librarians as trusted professionals, as a key signposting point for all kinds of local services, and as a space for connection across socio-economic groups. We heard about the role of libraries in engendering social conscious and collective responsibility, and the interconnectedness of social cohesion and deprivation - with the risk (or conversely, the opportunity) of one dismantling the other.

Follow up discussion from the panel presentations explored the importance of open and free access to information for democracy and fostering opportunities. We discussed inequities of access to cultural spaces, in terms of resources, economics and cultural capital. In the UK, 7% of libraries in the most deprived areas have closed, compared to 3% in the least deprived. We considered the risk of burnout for key individuals who are leading activity (in a range of roles as volunteers, leaders of institutions, librarians etc), and the importance of supporting and enabling partnership working as a buffer to that (via an 'infrastructure of leadership').

Our lively Q&A then explored:

- Learning from failure, and what could be done better in this work (especially in improving access, and around learning from those who don't engage, or who no longer have access to local services).
- Understanding the opportunities and costs of preventative spend (for example, in the cost of library closures).
- The opportunities for collaboration between physical spaces and individuals and community leaders.
- The opportunities of promoting the value of culture for health and wellbeing.
- Different generational patterns to using libraries, in particular, with a quote from a young person that "social media is where we spend our Saturdays".
- The risk of not seeing the value (of the "social glue" role of cultural institutions) until it is eroded or eradicated.
- Re-thinking measurement of impact, and 'what counts' as evidence.

This meeting also welcomed Peter Beresford OBE, who was invited to attend the meeting as an active listener, and subsequently to write a reflective blog linking our discussions to his wider work on people-powered movements in politics, policy and practice. The resulting piece can be viewed here:

<https://culturecounts.scot/news/2025/6/16/cross-party-group-culture-amp-communities-reflective-blog-on-the-role-of-culture-as-social-glue>

A planned CPG meeting for 08 October 2025 was postponed.

MSP Members of The Group

Please provide names and party designation of all MSP members of the Group.

- Foyso Choudhury MSP – Labour
- Clare Adamson MSP – SNP
- Sarah Boyack MSP – Labour
- Michael Marra MSP – Labour
- Claire Baker MSP – Labour
- Sharon Dowey MSP – Conservative

Non-MSP Members of The Group

For organisational members please provide only the name of the organisation, it is not necessary to provide the name(s) of individuals who may represent the organisation at meetings of the Group.

Individuals

Saoirse Sweeney
Alice Black
Alishia Farnan
Amanda Catto
Amanda Forster
Amy McNeese-Mechan
Andrew Eaton-Lewis
Andy Henry
Andy Robertson
Ann Packard
Anna Stapleton
Ariel Killick
Arusa Qureshi
Barbie Lyon
Brendan Moon
Brian Ó hEadhra

	Bronwen Nixon
	Bryan McDowall
	Callum Beesley
	Camilla Irvine-Fortescue
	Caroline Adam
	Caroline Brown
	Catherine Cartmell
	Catherine Middleton Findlay
	Catriona Patterson
	Chantal Guevara
	Charles Dundas
	Christabel Anderson
	Claire Dow
	Clare Gunn
	Claricia Parinussa
	Conor Joseph
	David Culbert
	David Francis
	David Nicholson
	David Stevenson
	Diane Henderson
	Donna Heddle
	Duncan Bremner
	Eleanor Styles
	Elke Finkenauer
	Emma Ainsley
	Eona Craig
	Erin Mantle
	Erinna McElhinney
	Eve Nicol
	Frances Davis

	Freya Taylor
	Gary Kerr
	Hajra Ilyas
	Helen Voce
	Hester Parr
	Hope London
	Ian Baxter
	Isobel MacRae
	Jane Ali-Knight
	Jane Humphries
	Janie Nicoll
	Jean Cameron
	Jean Urquhart
	Jen McGregor
	Jennifer Hunter
	Jo Gurney
	John Cairns
	Julien Pierrefeu
	Karen Pritchard
	Kate Seiler
	Katharine Wheeler
	Katherine Champion
	Katherine Wilkinson
	Kathryn Oakley
	Kathryn Welch
	Kirsten Carter mckee
	Kirstie Jamieson
	Kirsty Anne Watters
	Kirsty Keay
	Kirsty Miller
	Lesley McDonald

	Lisa Cowan
	Lizzie Smith
	Lubna Kerr
	Lucrezia Gigante
	Lynda Graham
	Lyndsay Mesjar
	Lyndsey McLean
	Maggie Aitken
	Mairead Nic Craith
	Martin Aitken
	Matthew Ward
	Matthew Whiteside
	Megan Leckie
	Mhora Samuel
	Miki Lee Dale
	Miriam Nelken
	Morvern Cunningham
	Navid Foroutan
	Neil Gilmour
	Nicola Walls
	Nicole Smith
	Nikki Kane
	Olga Niekrasova
	Orchid Liu
	Padraig MacAoidh
	Patricia O'Grady
	Paula Sledzinska
	Pooja Shah
	Rachel Kareem
	Rebecca Finkel
	Robert Rae

	Robin Patel Rosie Al-Mulla Samar Ziadat Sarah Harbison Saskia Maxwell Sheelagh Dornan Sophie McCarthy Susan Garnsworthy Suzanne Lofthus Tess Henderson Tracey Largue Trudi Collier Victoria Darbyshire
Organisations	Active Inquiry All or Nothing Aerial Dance Theatre Applied Arts Scotland Arika Art27 Scotland Articulation Artlink Central Artlink Edinburgh and Lothians ArtMovesFife Arts & Business Scotland Arts Culture Health and Wellbeing Scotland Association of British Orchestras ATLAS Arts Bòrd na Gàidhlig Beacon Arts Centre Beautify Earth Belmont Community Cinema Black Butterfly

	Bunbury Banter Campaign for the Arts Capital Theatres (Edinburgh) Carey Tourism Ceangail Citizens Theatre Coaching for Creatives CollinsandGoto Studio Community Archives Heritage Group Scotland Network & Scottish Council on Archives Community Enterprise Community Leisure UK Community Policy Forum Corps Consulaire Craft Scotland Creative & Cultural Skills Creative Carbon Scotland Creative Dundee Creative Edinburgh Creative Glasgow Creative Lives Creative Scotland Creative Services Scotland Culture Commons Culture Counts Culture Perth and Kinross Culture Radar Culture, Heritage and Arts Assembly, Argyll and Isles (CHARTS) Dance Base DC Research Ltd Director, V&A Dundee
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	<p>Dogstar Theatre Company</p> <p>Drew Wylie</p> <p>Dundee Contemporary Arts</p> <p>Dunfermline & West Fife</p> <p>Edinburgh College</p> <p>Edinburgh Council</p> <p>Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society</p> <p>Edinburgh International Festival</p> <p>Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop</p> <p>Engage Scotland</p> <p>Equal Media & Culture Centre for Scotland</p> <p>Equity</p> <p>Expressing Scotland CIC</p> <p>Federation of Scottish Theatre</p> <p>Feis Rois</p> <p>Festivals Edinburgh</p> <p>Film Access Scotland</p> <p>Film and TV Charity</p> <p>Glasgow Film</p> <p>Glasgow Film Theatre</p> <p>Glasgow Life</p> <p>Glasgow University</p> <p>Glenkens Community & Arts Trust (CatStrand)</p> <p>Graft</p> <p>Grampian Hospitals Art Trust</p> <p>Hammond Associates (Scotland) Ltd</p> <p>HES</p> <p>Historic Environment Scotland</p> <p>Horsecross Arts (Perth Theatre & Concert Hall)</p> <p>ID.Y CIC</p>
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Imagine
Impact Arts
Independent Arts Projects Ltd
Industrial Museums Scotland
Inspiring Scotland
Jim Hollington Arts and Culture
Journeys in Design
Leisure and Culture Dundee
Leith Theatre
LIBERIA CULTURE ATTACHÉ (Scotland),
LIBERIAN EMBASSY, LONDON
Licketyspit Theatre & Play/ Home of Storyplay
Scotland
Literature Alliance Scotland
Live Music Now Scotland
Luminate
Lyra
Lyth Arts Centre
Making Music
Mamba Sounds
Matchbox Cine
Mothadaka Foundation
Museums and Heritage Highland
Museums Galleries Scotland
Narture CIC
National Library of Scotland
National Theatre of Scotland
National Trust for Scotland
New Media Scotland
Newcastle University, Live Music Exchange
North Edinburgh Arts
Northumbria University

	<p>Nutshell Theatre</p> <p>One Dance UK</p> <p>OnFife</p> <p>Open Road</p> <p>Out of the Blue Arts and Educational Trust</p> <p>Outpost Arts</p> <p>QMU</p> <p>Quantum Communications</p> <p>Regional Screen Scotland</p> <p>Resonate Together</p> <p>RIG Arts</p> <p>Rothesay Pavilion</p> <p>Royal Incorporation of Architects Scotland</p> <p>Royal Society of Edinburgh</p> <p>SCAN</p> <p>Scene Stirling (Place Partnership)</p> <p>Science Ceilidh</p> <p>Scottish Artists Union</p> <p>Scottish Ballet</p> <p>Scottish Book Trust</p> <p>Scottish Chamber Orchestra</p> <p>Scottish Civic Trust</p> <p>Scottish Contemporary Art Network</p> <p>Scottish Council on Archives</p> <p>Scottish Documentary Institute</p> <p>Scottish Games Network Ltd.</p> <p>Scottish Opera</p> <p>Scottish Poetry Library</p> <p>Scottish Schools Pipes and Drums Trust</p> <p>Scottish Society of Playwrights</p> <p>Scottish Youth Theatre</p>
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	<p>SENScot</p> <p>Sense Scotland</p> <p>Shetland Arts</p> <p>Sistema Scotland</p> <p>Skills Development Scotland</p> <p>Society of London Theatre / UK Theatre</p> <p>South of Scotland Enterprise</p> <p>Stellar Quines Theatre Company</p> <p>Stills centre for photography</p> <p>Stirling Council</p> <p>SURF - Scotland's Regeneration Forum</p> <p>Techne Independent Artist</p> <p>The Birks Cinema Trust</p> <p>The CATERAN Ecomuseum</p> <p>THE GLASGOW BARONS</p> <p>The Glasgow Review of Books</p> <p>The Glasgow School of Art</p> <p>The National Lottery Heritage Fund</p> <p>The Necessary Space</p> <p>The Queen's Hall</p> <p>The Scottish Stained Glass Trust</p> <p>The Stove Network</p> <p>The Village Storytelling Centre</p> <p>The Work Room</p> <p>There Is An Alternative</p> <p>Townsend Theatre Productions</p> <p>Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland</p> <p>Traditional Music Forum</p> <p>UK Theatre</p> <p>UNESCO City of Design Dundee</p> <p>uniformnovember.com</p>
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	University of Glasgow University of Glasgow - College of Arts & Humanities University of the Highlands and Islands VisitScotland Vocal We Are Here Scotland WHALE Arts YDance Young Women's Movement Youth Theatre Arts Scotland
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Group Office Bearers

Please provide names for all office bearers. The minimum requirement is that two of the office bearers are MSPs and one of these is Convener – beyond this it is a matter for the Group to decide upon the office bearers it wishes to have. It is permissible to have more than one individual elected to each office, for example, co-conveners or multiple deputy conveners.

Convener	Claire Baker MSP
Deputy Convener	Clare Adamson MSP
Secretary	Culture Counts
Treasurer	

Financial Benefits or Other Benefits

Please provide details of any financial or material benefit(s) the Group anticipates receiving from a single source in a calendar year which has a value, either singly or cumulatively, of more than £500. This includes donations, gifts, hospitality or visits and material assistance such as secretariat support.

The group receives in-kind support from Culture Counts to the value of £1,615 in secretariat time, organizing meetings, managing Eventbrite, mailing lists and guest speakers.

The group also receives financial support from Culture Counts who pay freelancers who speak at events for their time, and covers the costs of access provision (e.g. captioning) to a value of approx. £1,000 annually.

One meetings has been held at the Scottish Parliament with additional catering costs. Total for 2024/25: £229

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CONVENER

COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 6 OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT **(Please tick all boxes that apply)**

I, Convener of the Cross-Party Group on Culture and Communities, hereby declare that, in line with the requirements of Section 6 of the Code of Conduct, this CPG has:

5 MSP Members from 3 different political parties

X

Held at least 2 quorate meetings in the last 12 months

X

Held an AGM within 11-13months of the date of registration or the last AGM

See previous correspondence with Secretariat – delayed in this case to 14.5 months

Submitted an annual return form within 30 calendar days of the AGM

X

Provided Standards Clerks with 10 calendar days' notice of all meetings

X

Provided minutes of all meetings		X
Signed	Claine Baker	
Date	16/12/2025	