

Cross-Party Group on Music

7 December, 2021, 18.00

Minute

Present

MSPs

Michelle Thomson, MSP (Chair)

Claire Baker, MSP

Clare Adamson, MSP

Invited guests

Søs Nyengaard, Dansk Musiker Vorbund

Non-MSP Group Members

David Francis (Secretary)

John Wallace (MEPG)

Adam Behr (University of Newcastle)

Alan Morrison (Creative Scotland)

Carol Main (Live Music Now Scotland)

David Nicholson

Diane McIntyre

Hilary Brooks (Scottish Women Inventing Music)

Kenneth Taylor (St Mary's Music School)

Kirk Richardson (EIS)

Luke McCullough (BBC)

Mae Murray (MEPG)

Matthew Whiteside (The Night With)

Karen Dufour (New Music Scotland)

Raymond Black (Craft Management)

Shonagh Stevenson (HITS)

Apologies

Jason Edwards (SMIA)

Lois Fitch (RCS)

Paul MacAlinden (Glasgow Barons)

Stuart Fleming (PRS for Music)

Alison Reeves (Making Music)

Agenda item 1: Søs Nyengaard, Dansk Musiker Verbund

The Chair welcomed Søs Nyengaard, President of the Dansk Musiker Verbund, the Danish musicians' union.

Søs Nyengaard: On the Danish experience of re-opening the music sector, post-Covid, things started to gain a semblance of normality in Spring of 2021. Orchestras and large ensembles were allowed to reconvene, but for self-employed musicians there were two main challenges. First, the gigs available tended to go to the well-known acts in the first instance leaving little room for others in a saturated market. In addition the number of gigs available was still restricted as promoters hedged their bets on a resurgence of Covid. We still can't talk about a post-Covid industry, and night-life is again coming under scrutiny. Musicians did get Covid relief previously, but there doesn't seem to be anything on offer this time, as the situation looks like worsening again. The entertainment unions are lobbying hard for renewed Covid relief. It's hard to tell how many musicians have left the profession as a result of Covid.

On Brexit, the post-Brexit situation is a shambles both for British and EU musicians. British musicians have been used to touring unrestricted, and are now facing huge bureaucratic challenges, especially as every country has its own rules on work permits and visas. Danish rules are very lenient and even British musicians can perform without work permits as long as the performances are public. British artists are still popular. The main change is that it's no longer possible for individual musicians, who are not part of an ensemble or group, to perform with Danish musicians, e.g. in an orchestra, without a work permit (unless they are billed as a separate part of a programme). Danish musicians who want to perform in the UK face enormous challenges, however.

On Danish government support for music export, this has something that has been on the agenda for several years. There is an independent organisation, Music Export Denmark, set up as a membership organisation, including rights and distribution bodies. MXD is funded by its members and by annual grants from the Ministry of Culture. It aims to promote Danish music abroad commercially and culturally, through trade missions, for example, provides professional support and expertise to musicians touring abroad, and represents Danish music at international expos.

Michelle Thomson: What policy interventions has the Danish government made to support newly emerging artists who are coming into a scene that is largely closed to them?

SN: The problem is not being dealt with. In lobbying the government the DMV has found a great deal of surprise in official circles at just how little many musicians earn, and denying aid packages because the amounts being asked for were so low. The union was able to rectify this and get some money to new and emerging artists, although if the aid packages are not forthcoming this time, the prospects for these artists are not good.

Carol Main: Live Music Now supports young artists, many of whom didn't qualify for government support, although Creative Scotland was able to help. However, despite

it all, more people than ever before are applying for LMN schemes. We have found through our own surveys a crisis of confidence on the one hand, and overloaded diaries on the other as rescheduled gigs jam up their schedules.

Live Music Now does work in Denmark, so are LMN performances in care homes or prisons counted as public performance under the terms of the work permit requirements?

SN: Would need to check that.

David Francis: Re the MXD what is the balance of funding between members' subscriptions and government subsidy? It's of interest because there is talk of a Music Export Office here in Scotland, but the model for that is yet to be determined.

SN: Will find out and pass on the information.

Alan Morrison: Also found that emerging musicians in particular needed help, those whose careers have stalled because of the pandemic. They're now coming to Creative Scotland for help with recording especially as live work remains precarious. The problem of the calendar being filled with re-arranged, postponed gigs is being addressed through the Scotland on Tour scheme, which encourages new promoters, particularly at community level, to find additional gigs, a kind of alternative touring circuit. Creative Scotland is in negotiation with Tønder Festival in Denmark to have a dedicated Scottish stage at next year's festival.

Agenda item 2: Music Education

Main points from attached PowerPoint presentation

- The Government's Improvement Services reported that over 41,000 young people were provided with music tuition through local authority music services (a 26% decrease due to Covid restrictions)
- Music education will be affected by reviews of SQA, Education Scotland, the Inspectorate, and initial teaching education.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are among the biggest challenges
- MEPG is currently working on a new strategy with a new initiative We Make Music
- We can learn from the Music Education Council's recent report 'Retuning our Ambitions for Music Education' – but beware of the implementation gap
- A new report: Music Education in the Primary Classroom in Scotland showing that music education is practically non-existent. Its first recommendation is a national campaign to raise the status of music in primary schools

Michelle Thomson: Successfully approaching the diversity question through various creative and adaptive processes suggests a role for Government and a multitude of other agencies. How do you see that occurring in Scotland?

JW: It's got to be done on the 'tight-loose' principle: tight framework centrally and local autonomy of teachers and head-teachers. We need more resources, like better bandwidth for schools, and exemplar projects. We're still at the beginning, but the emerging network offers lots of possibilities for action at the necessary local level.

Claire Baker: Did the pandemic cause the decrease? Classes were being offered, but was it not working online?

JW: It does work online, but there were too many restrictions in place.

Shonagh Stevenson: Although figures were down it has to be remembered that, for example, it was difficult to recruit new-start pupils. There was also the digital poverty issue. We're now in a very different place. Thanks to free tuition, for example, the numbers are booming. In South Ayrshire there are three times as many applications as there are places. Pupils who missed out two years ago can still apply to take up tuition.

Kenneth Taylor: The hope is that we're not going to regress in what we're able to do, as music took a disproportionate hit during pandemic restrictions. Re the primary situation, what applies to music also applies to other subjects like science, but music, especially singing, is not resource intensive. It just requires a bit of energy.

JW: There are tremendous opportunities in digital and blended (although the young people are thoroughly scunnered with online at the moment).

Karen Dufour: As an instrumental instructor in schools can vouch for the fact that the introduction of free tuition is already having a positive effect.

Agenda item 3: Carol Main, Green Touring

Carol Main: The Green Guide for Classical Music is very much about individual musicians, ensembles, managers. It's highly recommended (<https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/SCSGG-2021-FINAL.pdf>)

Travel is the biggest issue, particularly air travel versus rail travel. The problem is that air travel at the moment seems to be cheaper and quicker. Can this group lobby to have those discrepancies addressed? It's a tough call for organisations which might have an environmental policy but also tight budgets. International touring is seen as prestigious, a marker of success. Are there other ways of tackling international touring, or of measuring what is seen as success in a music career?

Some examples from the national companies: The RSNO is starting a salary sacrifice scheme for electric cars and is lobbying the Government about providing a car-charge point at every cultural venue in Scotland. The SCO is also looking at hybrid and electric cars for their fleet. They have a policy of no domestic air travel for staff and encourage train travel for their freelancers. Scottish Opera is looking at further recycling scenery and costumes and actively promoting the rental of these for international productions.

CB: Has there been any work done on where the biggest areas of carbon footprint occur and where interventions would have the biggest impact?

CM: Air travel and international touring are the areas with the biggest impact. Creative Carbon Scotland has a lot of the information (although it's not necessarily that easy to understand and interpret). No one's advocating abandoning touring but there are responses such as touring less frequently, for longer.

KD: There are wider issues that need to be tackled before cycling, for example, becomes a practical solution: road safety, cycling at night, quite apart from the challenges of carrying instruments.

AM: There are contradictory policy imperatives. Music is an important feature of cultural diplomacy, for example. At a local level, we're seeing car-sharing being proposed as an environmental mitigation, but with Covid guidelines that becomes

restricted. The real challenge is how to deliver several contradictory policy aims at the same time.

DF: The European Folk Network has also been looking at this issue, with proposals for example of package tours by train. One of the restrictions there is that not every country has a good rail network. The other solution is to organise tours that don't require so much travelling. There used to be a tour in Berlin where all the gigs were in a 25-mile radius of the city or in the city itself.

JW: Do musicians use cargo-bikes to get around?

SN: Denmark is a bike-nation with widespread and innovative use of bikes.

Agenda item 4: Other Business

a) The Cross Party Group on Mental Health is holding an enquiry into the impact of the pandemic on mental health. They're inviting other CPGs to contribute. Will circulate their call for evidence to CPG Music members.

b) Ray Black (Scottish Commercial Music Industry Taskforce): Artists at mid-level touring range are on their knees, as gigs and tours are still being cancelled. Something that has come to light is that when the UK Government set its budget back in March, Rishi Sunak topped up the English recovery fund by £300m, which resulted in a consequential for Scotland of about £40m. The First Minister announced in May that this would be made available for culture, but it has come to light that from that £40m only £9m has been spent. There is, therefore, some £31m 'in the Barnett aether'. Kate Forbes made £25m available in the summer, but only received £9m, so the Task Force has written to the UK Chancellor to address this. Recovery funds are running in England until next year, but in Scotland stopped at the end of September. We're being disproportionately disadvantaged. Can this group do anything?

MT: There will be a statement in Parliament on Thursday 9th December by the Cab Sec for Culture, Angus Robertson. MT has submitted a question.

CB: The matter had some profile at Culture Questions two weeks previously. CB has written to Jenny Gilruth, the Culture Minister. There's a lack of clarity about whether the £25m announced in the summer is separate from the £31m still to be received or separate. It is unacceptable that the payments have been delayed.

c) Matthew Whiteside: Unfortunate that Kevin Brennan's Bill in the UK Parliament in the previous week had not been passed. Is there anything from the Scottish side that can put pressure on the UK Government.

Soundcloud is moving to a user-centric model, which allows for payment to musicians for music actually listened to. User-centric promotes a direct relationship between fans and musicians.

MT: where are we around issues connected with streaming?

DF: The Musicians Union has a campaign #FixStreaming. It's the record labels that take the lion's share of the proceeds and what the musicians get is dependent on the relationship they have with their label. For people still working on old contracts the royalty share can be particularly poor. Kevin Brennan was asking for re-negotiation of pre-streaming contracts.

MW: The other key part of the Brennan Bill was to enshrine Equitable Remuneration in law, and have it applied to streaming as well as radio play. That plus a move to a user-centric system would make the whole thing much

fairer. These issues are UK-level rather than Scottish-level but any pressure that can be brought to bear would be welcome.

Agenda item 5: Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting will be Tuesday, 1st of March.