

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Thursday 11 September 2025
22nd Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2026-27

1. The Committee will take evidence in relation to its [Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2026-27](#).
2. The Committee agreed to take a cumulative approach to budget scrutiny over Session 6, focusing primarily on the culture spending portfolio.
3. The Committee ran a pre-budget call for views from 25 June to 15 August 2025. The call for views received 38 responses, which are available to view [online](#). The Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) has produced a summary of the evidence received, which is attached at Annexe A.
4. SPICe has also produced a briefing paper for this meeting, which is attached at Annexe B.
5. The Committee will take evidence from—
 - Tony Lankester, Chief Executive, Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society
 - Anne Lyden, Director-General, National Galleries Scotland
 - Alistair Mackie, Chief Executive Officer, Royal Scottish National Orchestra
 - Alison Turnbull, Director of External Relations and Partnerships, Historic Environment Scotland
6. The responses received to the call for views from the [Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society](#), [National Galleries Scotland](#), [Royal Scottish National Orchestra](#) and Historic Environment Scotland are located [here](#).

Clerks, September 2025

Annexe A

SPICe

The Information Centre
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

Scrutiny prior to the 2026-27 Scottish Government Budget

Summary of Submissions to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Introduction

The Committee issued a call for views to support its prebudget scrutiny of the 2026-27. The call for views was opened on 25 June 2025 and it closed on 15 August 2025. The Committee received [37 responses which can be found on line](#).

The Committee has taken a “cumulative approach” to budget scrutiny this session. The Committee’s questions therefore followed up on the themes from the scrutiny of previous years’ budgets. In addition, the Committee sought views on the sector’s approach to supporting Net Zero.

The Committee asked the following questions:

- Have budget increases over the course of this Parliamentary session been effectively prioritised to generate improved cultural outcomes, and what lessons can be learned to ensure further planned budget increases maximise outcomes?
- What progress has been made towards implementing alternative funding models to support the culture sector?
- Going forward, what alternative funding models should the Scottish Government consider to provide support to the culture sector? How could these models be implemented, and what barriers may exist to implementing them?
- Has progress been made towards mainstreaming culture across the Scottish Government, and if so, what impact has this had on Scottish Government priorities and outcomes? How should the Scottish Government prioritise preventative spending in its 2026-27 Budget?
- How is the culture and heritage sector addressing its own operational emissions in line with the Scottish Government’s net zero ambitions?
- What is the role of the culture and heritage sector in shaping and informing public attitudes on climate and sustainability, and in scrutinising and challenging the political response?

- What impact might the Climate Change Plan have on the culture and heritage sector, and how could funding streams better support culture and heritage organisations to contribute towards net zero outcomes?

This paper summarises some of the key observations of respondents to the Committee. The purpose this paper is to assist members of the Committee in their work. The focus is on highlighting the variety of views and associated issues expressed in the responses to the CfV. SPICe has not undertaken a detailed quantitative analysis of the responses.

Increased funding, prioritisation, impact, lessons learned

Welcome for additional funding

Across the submissions, there was a broad and consistent welcome for the Scottish Government's commitment to increase investment in culture by £100 million by 2028–29. A number of organisations acknowledged that this uplift represents a recognition of the value of culture to Scotland's national life. Creative Scotland said—

“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.”

The Royal Scottish National Orchestra described the First Minister's pledge as “encouraging for arts organisations,” while Scottish Ballet noted that the commitment “gives a huge injection of confidence to the culture sector and represents significant progress, to which the [Scottish Government] should rightly be proud.” Similarly, the Museums Association “warmly welcomed the Scottish Government's uplift to the arts and culture budget,” and the Art Fund called the investment “vital.”

Examples of new funding

Creative Scotland explained how it is expanding its support to the sector through additional funding. It said:

“In 2025/26, Creative Scotland's draft Grant-in-Aid budget from the Scottish Government is £80m, up from £51m in 2024/25. The additional budget allocation comprises:

- £20 million provided to Creative Scotland for Multi-Year funding programme in 2025-26
- £2 million to Screen Scotland to attract international investment
- £375k in uplift to Youth Music Initiative (YMI) funding
- £3m in uplift to Expo funds (announced as part of the £4m to support Scotland's festivals)

- £4m Culture Collective support”

Several organisations welcomed the introduction of new funding streams, which were seen as important steps toward improving sustainability and resilience across the culture sector. The launch of the £4 million Museum Futures programme was widely praised, with Museums Galleries Scotland describing it as “a significant and welcome step in the right direction.” The programme was seen as a response to long-standing financial insecurity and a means to support capacity-building and innovation.

Other new initiatives included the MGS’ capital Repair and Adaptation Fund for museums, which received a substantial uplift from £200,000 to £1.6 million.

The Music Venue Trust highlighted the introduction of 40% business rates relief for hospitality premises as “a huge win for grassroots music venues in Scotland.” However, it also noted that some grass roots music venues will be “excluded by the condition that venues must have a rateable value below £51,000 to qualify”.

Continuing Pressures Faced by the Sector

Despite the welcome increase in cultural funding, many organisations emphasised that the sector remains under significant financial pressure. Respondents highlighted years of standstill budgets, rising inflation, and increased statutory costs—such as National Insurance Contributions and meeting Fair Work commitments—have eroded the real value of funding. Scottish Ballet reported that its core grant has “devalued by 36% or £2.36m” since 2010, while National Museums Scotland noted that a 5.9% uplift was “entirely consumed in delivering Scottish Government Pay Policy.”

Local authorities and ALEOs described a landscape of declining budgets and increasing deficits. Community Leisure UK reported that “77% of our members anticipate a deficit or breakeven outturn position,” with many unable to reinvest in services.

Infrastructure needs were also a recurring concern. National Galleries Scotland reported £17.4 million in high-risk backlog maintenance, while Museums Galleries Scotland estimated tens of millions in capital maintenance backlog across the sector. These pressures are compounded by rising energy costs, rent, and the cost of materials, which many organisations described as unsustainable.

Historic Environment Scotland reported that the historic environment sector continues to face skills shortage, particularly in traditional building crafts such as stonemasonry, lime plastering, and timber conservation. HES estimated that 10,000 new jobs will be needed over the next decade to maintain and adapt Scotland’s traditional building stock. 68% of employers it surveyed expect a heritage skills shortage within five years. Along with Scottish Canals, HES launched the Lock 16 Centre in April 2025—a new national centre for excellence in canals and traditional skills, based at the former Irn Bru factory on the Forth and Clyde Canal. Lock 16 is expected to provide specialist training, foster innovation, and support the maintenance of Scotland’s historic infrastructure. The National Lottery Heritage Fund supported this project and it said:

“Lock 16 is designed to transform the landscape for heritage skills, supporting the maintenance of 450,000 traditionally constructed buildings at risk.”

Individual Artists and Freelancers

Freelancers and individual artists expressed deep concern about their position within the funding landscape. The reduced cap of the Open Fund for Individuals—from £100,000 to £50,000—was widely criticised. Creative Scotland noted that demand for the Open Fund for Individuals is high saying “35% success rate for applications to our National Lottery Open Fund for Individuals in Q1 of 2025/26”. The Scottish Artists Union described the fund as “an even more demoralising lottery for artists,” with many strong applications rejected due to oversubscription.

The Work Room warned that “the precarity of building an effective, long-term career in the arts based in Scotland is increasingly unviable.” Freelancers reported declining work opportunities, pay cuts, and increasing competition for limited funds. Several organisations challenged the assumption that increased funding for institutions would automatically benefit freelancers, with SCAN stating: “Trickle-down economics doesn’t work.”

Balance of additional funding

While the expansion of Creative Scotland’s Multi-Year Funding programme was widely welcomed, several submissions raised concerns about the overall balance of new investment. Aberdeen City Council highlighted regional disparities, saying that “66% (£133m) of the funding was distributed to the 2 central belt authority areas making up 24% of the population.”

Local authorities, heritage bodies, and national collections expressed frustration at being excluded from additional funds.

Historic Environment Scotland noted that the increased funding “has not been evenly distributed across the culture portfolio”. It said its core resource budget “has remained flat in cash terms,” and that its grants budget “has not increased since before the pandemic.” National Museums Scotland and the Scottish Library and Information Council similarly called for more even distribution across sectors and geographies.

COSLA and SOLACE’s joint submission said, “a lack of sustainable funding for Local Government has impacted on availability of local Council and ALEO run services which may then have a knock on effect of availability of appropriate facilities and venues for the funded cultural organisations.”

Link between funding and strategy

Several organisations expressed concern about the lack of strategic clarity in funding decisions. Glasgow Life noted that “there has been limited wider support for other parts of the cultural sector, such as museums, heritage and public libraries.” Others highlighted the need for better alignment between funding and the ambitions of the Culture Strategy.

There was also a call for clearer articulation of cultural outcomes and how funding decisions support them. An individual respondent suggested that “funding decisions should be clearly tied to long-term outcomes—whether that’s improving fair work, addressing regional inequality, advancing net-zero goals, or strengthening cultural infrastructure.”

The delay in confirming Creative Scotland’s budget was cited as a destabilising moment. SCAN reported that it “impacted on staff mental health and eroded trust between cultural organisations and government funding.” Festivals Edinburgh called for “a clear framework developed to set out how the Grant in Aid and Lottery funds are allocated.”

Historic Environment Scotland noted that it plays a central role in leading the sector’s response to climate, skills, and conservation challenges. Through its strategy “Our Past, Our Future,” HES sets out priorities for net zero transition, climate resilience, and skills development. It provides technical guidance, sectoral support, and grant funding—administering around £13.5 million annually. MGS and SLIC also lead on strategies in their respective sectors.

There was strong support across the museums sector for continued funding of the Empire, Slavery and Scotland’s Museums programme.

The National Library of Scotland suggested that “Future funding should be more explicitly aligned with National Performance Framework outcomes, particularly around wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability.” It 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).” Festivals Edinburgh said—

“Funding criteria should be responsive to sector needs and not driven by the agendas of Government to deliver non-core activity.”

Call for more multi-year funding

There was near-universal support for expanding multi-year funding across the sector. Organisations described it as essential for strategic planning, workforce retention, and organisational resilience. The recent expansion of Creative Scotland’s Multi-Year Funding (MYF) was welcomed, but concerns remain about sustainability, adequacy, and extension to all sectors.

Some organisations reported that they received only 70–80% of requested MYF amounts, leading to standstill or cuts when adjusted for inflation. Delays in announcements were reported to be stressful and increased uncertainty.

Calls for multi-year funding extended to museums, libraries, heritage, and local authority services, not just arts organisations. National Galleries Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland both argued that multi-year settlements would enable long-term investment and efficiency. Historic Environment Scotland said:

“Multi-year, flexible funding settlements would give organisations the stability needed to plan effectively, innovate, and align with long-term national goals.”

The Museums Association said:

“Short-term funding often leads to fixed term roles which means that relationships between the museum and communities are lost when a projects end.”

Processes to access funding

Several submissions criticised the complexity and administrative burden of funding applications. Sistema Scotland described the Creative Scotland multi-year process as “resource-intensive,” requiring “considerable amounts of staff hours.” Festivals Edinburgh recommended that “future application processes for funding should be proportionate to the funding award and/or the applicant.”

Community Leisure UK highlighted the exclusion of ALEOs from key funding pots, calling it “arbitrary” and damaging to innovation. SCAN urged that new or expanded funds “do not become overly complicated and ‘trying to do too much’,” while others called for streamlined reporting and clearer eligibility criteria.

Smaller organisations and freelancers were reported to be particularly disadvantaged by complex processes and short application windows. The Scottish Artists Union said:

“Application processes are arduous and time consuming, and it is a kick in the teeth to be rejected while at the same time told that you have a great application and promising project.”

Alternative funding models

The importance of core funding

Across the sector, organisations consistently emphasised that core funding remains the bedrock of sustainability. It enables cultural institutions to maintain essential services, retain skilled staff, care for collections, and deliver long-term programmes in education, health, and community engagement. National Museums Scotland, National Galleries Scotland, and Museums Galleries Scotland all stressed that core funding is a prerequisite for leveraging additional investment and for maintaining the infrastructure upon which project-based activities depend.

The Museums Association said that core funding is “fundamentally important to give museums the infrastructure to be able to do impactful work with communities that delivers the actions in the culture and museum strategies.” Similarly, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society argued that multi-year core and programme funding is needed for sustained planning, workforce development, and organisational resilience, rather than reliance on one-off project funds.

Community Leisure UK and Historic Environment Scotland both highlighted the limitations of annualised budgets, which restrict long-term planning and innovation.

HES warned that “most funding continues to be delivered via centralised grant-in-aid and competitive project-based grant streams,” resulting in often short-term allocations with “limited scope for long-term investment or the development of resilience”.

Pressure on private or charitable funding sources

Many organisations reported increasing competition and volatility in private and charitable funding. Philanthropic and corporate giving was described as stretched, unpredictable, and often resource-intensive to secure. National Galleries Scotland, Scottish Ballet, and Scottish Opera all noted that activism around sponsorship—particularly in relation to fossil fuels and ethical investment—has created reputational risks and reduced donor confidence.

Aberdeen City Council and Glasgow Life highlighted geographic disparities, with philanthropic ecosystems concentrated in the Central Belt, making it harder for organisations in other regions to access alternative funding. Several respondents, including Sistema Scotland, stressed that public sector investment is crucial for leveraging private and charitable support, especially in communities of greatest need.

Art Fund and the Museums Association pointed out that private donors are typically more interested in supporting new or high-profile initiatives, rather than core operational costs. This potentially creates a funding gap for essential services and infrastructure.

Proposed models and examples

A wide range of alternative funding models were proposed or endorsed in the submissions:

- **Visitor Levy:** Widely referenced as a potential mechanism to generate sustainable, locally managed revenue streams for cultural and heritage assets. Respondents suggested cultural organisations could be included in the allocation of levy funds, with transparent criteria and community involvement.
- **Percentage for Culture:** There was support for a national scheme allocating a fixed percentage (often 1%) of public infrastructure project budgets to arts and culture. This was backed by Aberdeen City Council, Museums Association, SCAN, and others.
- **Matched Funding and Challenge Funds:** Noted by Historic Environment Scotland, 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.

HES has also adopted a new funding model, trading a £2 million annual reduction in Government grant-in-aid for the ability to retain surplus commercial income. HES said that this shift supports long-term planning but increases exposure to market volatility. Other directly funding organisations sought similar flexibility.

COSLA and SOLACE's joint submission said:

“When considering funding models to support the culture and leisure sector there must be real consideration of the need for a whole systems approach and investment in social determinants of health, with funding focused on prevention and early intervention. Not enough progress has been made on this shift. A whole systems approach requires the right investment in the right places. This means adequate and sustainable funding for Local Government, rather than continuing the trend of increasing investment for health and social security while Local Government continues to see real terms cuts to funding.”

The Equal Media and Culture Centre (Engender) argued that “budgetary planning for the culture portfolio must actively address the inequality experienced by women and marginalised people in Scotland when participating in creative and cultural life.”

Mainstreaming culture-funding and prevention

Progress

There is widespread support across the sector for mainstreaming culture funding across government portfolios, but progress has been described as uneven. While culture's cross-cutting value is acknowledged in national strategies such as the National Performance Framework, this recognition has not yet translated into sustained, systemic funding or embedded policy frameworks. Glasgow Life noted that “little progress has been made towards mainstreaming culture across Scottish Government portfolios. The Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society called for “embedding culture KPIs across portfolios,” while Historic Environment Scotland urged a “whole-of-government approach” to maximise return on investment. COSLA/SOLACE stated—

“Whilst there are great examples of specific early intervention activity within the culture and leisure sector, such as social prescribing, there is no consistent funding or ability to scale-up, is often time consuming and activity is largely at a very local level.”

Some positive developments were noted, such as the integration of heritage into the Scottish National Adaptation Plan and the use of museums in social prescribing pilots. Culture for Climate Scotland suggested that it is difficult to comment as the Scottish Government “inner workings are opaque”; nevertheless, its experience working with civil servants covering culture and Energy & Climate Change is “that they are actively pursuing cross-portfolio working”.

Art27 Scotland argued that the right to culture in of itself should be protected; it said:

“Culture should not be seen as a tool for the prevention of social problems. Culture is a human right, and recognising the role cultural rights play in respecting, protecting and fulfilling other rights would naturally intersect with many cross-portfolio areas of public responsibility. However it is important to retain a defined cultural rights dimension that includes and respects artistic freedom, and freedom of expression.”

Contribution of culture and heritage to a range of outcomes

Submissions consistently highlighted the role of culture and heritage in delivering outcomes across health, education, climate, and economic development.

Museums, libraries, and arts organisations reported that they are increasingly involved in social prescribing, mental health support, early years literacy, and lifelong learning. The Museums Association cited evidence that museum visits are linked to reduced depression, increased longevity, and lower dementia risk. The MA reported that Art Fund’s Calm and Collected report found that 63% of UK adults have visited museums or galleries to de-stress.

In education, organisations such as Sistema Scotland, SLIC, and RSNO described programmes that support attainment, confidence, and skills development. Museums Galleries Scotland reported that 88% of museums provide formal education sessions aligned with the Curriculum for Excellence.

Libraries, museums and other cultural assets were highlighted as having a wider impact and value for communities. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s Heritage Service said:

“The 2026/27 Budget should invest in museums, archives and archaeology not only as cultural sites but as multipurpose community assets.”

Economically, Historic Environment Scotland said that its sector contributed £6 billion to the Scottish economy in 2023 and supported around 80,000 FTE jobs. HES said that cultural tourism is a key motivator for international visitors, and investment in cultural infrastructure is linked to regeneration and local pride.

A number of respondents advocated for embedding culture in mainstream delivery frameworks in health, education, justice, and local government. National Museums Scotland said:

“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.”

The Equal Media and Culture Centre (Engender) called for intersectional gender budgeting and for cultural funding to be scrutinised for its equalities impact.

There was also a call for better data collection and evaluation to demonstrate culture’s long-term impact across different outcomes. National Museums Scotland suggested that there should be investment “in longitudinal evaluation and evidence”.

Contribution of other sectors to culture and heritage outcomes

Several organisations called for cross-portfolio or ring-fenced funds to support culture’s preventative and cross-sectoral work. The Scottish Library and Information Council recommended a “Culture and Wellbeing Fund” aligned with the Population Health Framework, while the Museums Association urged co-commissioning with health and social care partnerships.

Public transport and access to venues was highlighted as a critical enabler of cultural participation. SCAN’s submission stated:

“Recent member discussions around the Strategic Partnership for Festivals show that festivals and cultural organisations require greater infrastructure support at a national and local level. General challenges include finding and maintaining suitable venues including accessible ones, lack of affordable accommodation for artists/audiences/staff, poor transport links including late night travel and rural provision, lack of joined up services and communication between key players including local authorities, transport, commercial event promoters.”

The Music Venue Trust described how early public transport cut-offs and poorly implemented low-emission zones (LEZs) in Glasgow and Edinburgh have led to gig cancellations, reduced footfall, and access issues.

Local authority funding was also identified as a key determinant of cultural outcomes. Aberdeen City Council noted that “this limited allocation has constrained the ability of local organisations to plan sustainably, attract talent, and deliver high-quality cultural programming.” Community Leisure UK reported that 77% of its members anticipate a deficit or breakeven position, with many unable to reinvest in services. Glasgow Life said:

“Local government continues to be a key funder of local cultural ‘eco-systems’... but long-term structural issues mean the cultural sector remains vulnerable.”

Climate Change and net zero

Examples of measures

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 noted that 46% of cultural organisations (reporting to it) were on track to be net zero by 2045.

Some of the specific actions highlighted in submissions included:

- **Energy efficiency upgrades** such as LED lighting, improved insulation, and Building Management Systems (e.g. National Museums Scotland, 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 Culture for Climate Scotland.

Scottish Ballet has a Green Action Plan and it said:

"Having learned more about realistic timeframes and areas of influence, Scottish Ballet has (like many organisations) refreshed this ambition to instead conduct an extensive review on progress in 2030. The journey to net zero remains a commitment from the whole company to incorporate changes, big and small, in every area that Scottish Ballet (SB) operates in order to reduce their impact on the environment asking their people, partners and stakeholders to help them achieve longer term sustainability ambitions."

The historic environment

HES noted that the historic environment is diverse. HES stated:

“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.”

Built Environment Forum Scotland said that “Scotland's proportion of pre-1946 housing stock - 52% - is the highest in the world and therefore the need for maintenance will only grow.” BEFS suggested that the Scottish Government should lobby the UK government to change the VAT rules, it said “the current 0% on new build and 20% on refurbishment and repair does not help the re-use and adaptation of buildings”.

Capital funding

A theme of organisations’ responses was 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.

National Galleries Scotland reported a £17.4 million backlog in high-risk maintenance, while National Museums Scotland 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.”

Museums Galleries Scotland, Art Fund and the Museums Association called for a Scottish equivalent to England’s Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND), which has disbursed over £130 million.

There was strong support for multi-year capital funding to enable strategic planning and long-term infrastructure upgrades. Creative Scotland’s submission stated:

“Creative Scotland does not currently have any budget to operate a Capital funding programme. The identification of dedicated funding streams to support cultural and creative organisations to develop a net zero estate, addressing the challenges highlighted in our annual environmental reporting and estate research, would advance the sector’s ability to contribute towards the Scottish Government’s climate outcomes. This year, in partnership with the Scottish Futures Trust, we have begun important work to better understand the net-zero readiness of Scotland’s cultural assets and investigate potential route maps to an adapted cultural estate.”

Shaping public attitudes

Creatiev Scotland said, “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.”

Respondents said that museums, galleries, libraries, and performing arts venues are trusted civic spaces that connect global issues to local stories and lived experiences. The Museums Association said:

“Museums are ideal places for people to have big conversations about complex issues.”

Exhibitions such as “Rewrite the Future” at the Wardlaw Museum (see MGS’ submission) and “Waters Rising” at Perth Museum (see Museums Association) were said to have engaged audiences with climate themes. Participatory projects like “Sewing Hope: Quilts for Climate Change” (Museums Association) and RSNO’s “Sounds of the Deep” schools initiative were said to demonstrate how creative programming can foster climate literacy and intergenerational dialogue.

Respondents argued that artists and cultural organisations also use creative expression to interrogate policy, amplify marginalised voices, and inspire civic participation. Festivals Edinburgh said that “festival goers are increasingly climate-conscious” and in response, festivals have responded by “curating content that reflects these concerns, helping to educate and mobilise public interest”. It said:

- “Festivals are platforms for debate hosting panels, talks, and performances that challenge government policies and amplify activist voices.
- Through programming and aligning with net zero goals festivals act as cultural advocates for climate policy.
- Partnerships with universities, climate institutes, and tourism bodies help festivals engage in evidence-based dialogue about policy.”

Glasgow Life cautioned that while “art and cultural expression have always been spheres which influence and challenge views, perspectives and ultimately behaviour ... it is important to also recognise the limits of culture and heritage, and not to overstate their influence.”

Ned Sharratt, SPICe

Date: 01/09/2025

Note: Committee briefing papers are provided by SPICe for the use of Scottish Parliament committees and clerking staff. They provide focused information or respond to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP www.parliament.scot

Annexe B



Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Thursday 11 September 2025

Prebudget Scrutiny

Introduction

This session the Committee has taken a consistent and cumulative approach to its scrutiny of the Scottish Government's budgets. The focus of the Committee's work has been on the culture aspects of the budget with a particular focus on the arts.

Themes from previous years' reports

The Committee has published four prebudget scrutiny reports this session.¹ Key themes of this work over the course of this session have included:

- Financial pressures and sector fragility.
E.g. the recovery from the pandemic, inflationary pressures, tight funding settlements.
- Strategic investment and long-term planning.
E.g. multi-year funding settlements, using strategic documents, such as the Culture Strategy Action Plan, as a framework for strategic investment.
- Confidence and communication.
E.g. reflecting views of stakeholders that there is a lack of clarity and consistency in communication and funding decisions.
- Innovative and alternative funding models.
E.g. the establishment of a "Percentage for the Arts" scheme, exploring public-private partnerships, and mainstreaming culture across government portfolios.
- Cultural contribution to a range of outcomes.
E.g.: the role of culture in supporting mental health, community cohesion, and education; advocating for preventative spending; and a focus on
- Response to Government commitment to additional funding.
How the pledged additional funding will be spent and support outcomes.

The Committee issued a call for views over the summer. The questions in that call for views reflected the themes above; in addition, the Committee asked for views on the culture sectors' contribution to Net Zero and the Climate Change Plan. Members

¹ The individual reports can be found online: [2022-23](#); [2023-24](#); [2024-25](#); and [2025-26](#).

will have a separate paper summarising the responses to the call for views. The summary of the call for views covers a wide range of topics that the Committee may wish to explore in more detail with witnesses. This paper focuses more on developments in funding this year and a description of some of the main strategies and policy development activities this session. The Committee may wish to explore with witnesses the progress Government and its agencies' have made on the themes of the Committee's work this session.

This paper, along with the summary of the call for views, is intended to support the Committee for its evidence sessions with stakeholders on 11 and 18 September.

2025-26 Budget and expected increases in 2026-27

During the [statement introducing the 2024-25 Scottish Budget](#) on December 19 2023, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance Shona Robison confirmed the Scottish Government commitment of “investing at least £100 million more in the arts and culture by 2028-29.”

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 this 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.”

The majority of the additional funding has been provided to Creative Scotland (including Screen Scotland). Of the £34.9m of additional funding in 2025-26, £26.6m² is intended for Creative Scotland's multi-year funding, £2m for Screen Scotland. The National Collections received a £4.7m uplift and the National Performing Companies, £1.0m.

The additional funding has, largely been aimed at supporting organisations (rather than individuals) within the arts and screen sectors. The Scottish Government has confirmed to SPICe that the commitment to increase funding by £100m by 2028-29 is based on the overall Culture line. This line includes the Creative Scotland, Other Arts, Cultural Collections and National Performing Companies budget lines.

Historic Environment Scotland saw a c£2m reduction in its grant in aid from the Scottish Government in 2025-26. The Scottish Government agreed to allow HES more flexibility in carrying balances of earned income into future financial years. HES also received a £2m increase in its capital budget.

The Cabinet Secretary's December 2024 letter also highlighted some increases in areas of spend that would not be immediately obvious from looking at the budget documents. This included £4m to support festivals and the EXPO fund, £4m to restart the Culture Collective programme. The Government also announced £4m for

² £26.6m includes £20m of new money and a “baselined £6.6m lottery shortfall”.

a new Scottish Culture & Heritage Capacity Fund (launched under the name “Museum Futures programme”).

In February 2025, [SPICe published a blog looking at the additional funding for the sector, outcomes and its strategic intent.](#)

Responses to the Committee’s call for views welcomed the increased funding to the sector. Witnesses may be able to expand on how the prospect of increasing expenditure is impacting the sectors.

New and increased funds

This year, there have been a number of new or increased funds. These are described below along with any relevant commentary from the submissions the Committee has received over the summer. This is not an exhaustive list of all the new/increased funds in the sector.

One of the themes of the Committee’s work this session and in the responses to the Committee’s call for views was that there could be a clearer link between strategic outcomes and funding decisions. Witnesses will have different roles and perspectives in this regard. For example, HES developed the strategy for its sector and issues grants, while other will be recipients of funding and may be involved in sector working groups etc..

Creative Scotland multi-year funding

The Scottish Government increased funding for Creative Scotland’s multi-year funding by £20m this year and the indicated that it would increase this budget by another £20m next year. This assurance enabled Creative Scotland to conclude the funding programme in January 2025, allocating over £200 million to 251 cultural organisations for the next three years. This is 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 54% from 2026/27.

A wide range of organisations who responded to the Committees call for views expressed support for the Scottish Government’s increased investment in Creative Scotland’s Multi-Year Funding programme, and the additional investment in culture more broadly.

Nevertheless, some respondents indicated that many organisations received less than they applied for and raising concerns about sustainability in the face of rising costs. The Federation of Scottish Theatre (FST) reported:

“Many of our members were funded to 70-80% of what they had applied for, having already only applied for what they saw as the essential funding required over the next three years. This is unsustainable, and negatively impacts other aims such as Fair Work. Although it is a significant increase in funding and growth to the portfolio overall, for many previously-funded organisations it amounts to another three years of standstill funding or even cuts when adjusted for inflation.”

Some organisations were disappointed that Creative Scotland appeared to prioritise the number of organisations funded over the depth of support. SCAN commented:

“The increases emerged after decades of chronic underfunding for Scottish arts organisations. Whilst the uplift to Creative Scotland was positive, unfortunately the governmental indication to increase the organisational portfolio for Creative Scotland’s Multi-Year Funding Programme (MYF) has resulted in many organisations receiving less than they ‘asked for’ in a difficult economic environment. This larger cohort has also been impacted on Creative Scotland’s capacity to support its MYF organisations as Creative Scotland itself as an organisation did not receive additional resource.”

Several organisations who responded to the Committee’s call for views expressed frustration at the delay in announcing MYF decisions, which, they argued, created uncertainty across the sector.

The application process was described by some as resource-intensive and stressful, particularly for smaller organisations. The Work Room highlighted the emotional and administrative toll saying that the process “was extremely depleting.”

In terms of the outcomes anticipated from this fund, Creative Scotland said—

“Together, the organisations in this portfolio deliver cultural and creative work of quality, breadth and depth to audiences across Scotland and internationally and the portfolio is more representative of Scotland’s geography, diversity, people and communities than ever before. All this underlines Scotland’s reputation as a thriving creative nation where culture is valued and developed for all.

“Importantly, the portfolio also provides significant support to Scotland’s local and national economy, through direct employment, by creating opportunities for freelancers, and by supporting individual artists and creative practitioners of all types who are so vital to the success of the sector.”

Additional £2m for Screen Scotland

The budget this year included an addition £2m ringfenced funding for Screen Scotland. Creative Scotland’s submission explained:

“The additional £2m for Screen has strengthened Screen Scotland’s £2.5m Production Growth Fund... [which] aims to deliver a direct and significant economic benefit to the screen production sector in Scotland, by:

- Creating inclusive employment opportunities for crews in Scotland
- Encouraging the use of production facilities in Scotland
- Supporting diversified skills development and progression.”

Culture Collective

The Scottish Budget in 2025-26 included funding to support the Culture Collective. The [Cabinet Secretary's December letter to the Committee said](#)—

“Culture Collective was a 3-year programme funded through covid consequential and funding was due to conclude in 2022/23; however, a small amount of bridge funding was provided in 2023/24 to further support the sustainability of the partnerships developed under the programme. The Government intends to relaunch this programme with £4 million in 2025/26.”

The Culture Collective is a Creative Scotland programme designed to support a network of creative practitioners, organisations, and communities working collaboratively across Scotland. It was launched in response to the pandemic, and it focused on community-engaged and participative creative activity.

Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN) described the renewed funding as: “welcome recognition for this participatory arts project... directly funding participating artists and acting as a beacon of best practice.” SCAN continued:

“There has been no public news about its return since the announcement, but it appears that it will become a ‘targeted fund’ at Creative Scotland – rather than its own entity with autonomy, and the much-needed specialist knowledge and keen direction of a Programme Lead team.”

Creative Scotland’s submission gave more detail on how this fund will be administered. It said—

“The £3m Open Programme Fund is due to launch in October 2025, with decisions expected in early 2026. We will also fund £500k of targeted projects in areas of identified need, with the balance of funding allocated to the Network programme for participants and wider support, training and development.”

Museum Futures programme

The [Museum Futures programme](#) is a £4 million initiative launched by the Scottish Government in partnership with Museums Galleries Scotland and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It is designed to support the sustainability, innovation, and resilience of Scotland’s museum sector, particularly in response to long-standing financial insecurity, short-term funding cycles, and rising operational costs.

All of the funding is from the Scottish Government. The National Lottery Heritage Fund’s submission said that its role was to assist with the “design and development of the fund” and that it had awarded £250K to Museums Galleries Scotland “to provide further wrap around support as a contribution towards a complementary programme of support for Scotland’s museums”. The National Lottery Heritage Fund said—

“It is our hope that the Museums Futures programme will help to build resilience, leadership, skills, and develop new business models and

approaches so museums can increase their resilience. We believe we are well positioned to be a part of any ambitions to replicate this approach across different heritage and culture areas. This programme has been developed in recognition of the fact that developing and implementing innovative alternative and innovative funding solutions is difficult when many culture and heritage organisations are facing immediate external pressures as testing new approaches requires dedicated time, resource, and leadership to implement.”

Museums Galleries Scotland reported:

“Early engagement by the sector has been encouraging and organisations have been swift to respond to the opportunity to access funding to grow their capacity, alongside expert advice, coaching, peer-to-peer learning, and skills development opportunities.”

This fund was previously referred to in correspondence to the Committee from the Cabinet Secretary as the “Culture and Heritage Capacity fund”. Historic Environment Scotland’s submission identified a similar need for this type of fund in its sector. Its submission noted that many organisations in its sector were ineligible for this fund and it stated “critical capacity and structural challenges remain unaddressed”.

Festivals Fund and EXPO

The Cabinet Secretary’s letter to the Committee in December said:

“The budget for 2025/2026 includes a further £4 million funding for Scottish Festivals. This funding will allow the doubling of the EXPO Festival Fund to expand its reach beyond festivals in Edinburgh and Glasgow; recognising the importance of festivals across Scotland in providing opportunities for the wider culture sector, along with funding to develop and deliver work under the Strategic Partnership for Scotland’s Festivals. This will support festivals’ sustainability while upholding the vital role they have in the wider culture sector.”

EXPO

The EXPO fund was established in 2007 and is managed by Creative Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government. This year, the fund has awarded a total of £2.8m across 14 festivals, up from £1.7 million the previous year.

The 14 festivals which receive funding are in Glasgow and Edinburgh. [The Cabinet Secretary has said](#) that in the future he intends to “expand the reach of the EXPO fund across the whole of Scotland”.

Aberdeen City Council’s submission criticised the Expo Fund for being too concentrated, noting that it remains inaccessible to festivals outside Glasgow and Edinburgh, despite the presence of high-quality events elsewhere in Scotland. It argued for a more regionally balanced approach to national festival support.

Festivals Edinburgh highlighted the value of the EXPO fund and its contribution to a range of outcomes such as “cultural tourism, skill development, global positioning,

cultural diplomacy, cultural trade/exports”. It welcomed the uplift in EXPO funding and the plan to expand its reach beyond Edinburgh and Glasgow. However, it said—

“The value of the current Expo Fund could be unintentionally undermined in the switch to the new funding programme through increasing eligibility and expanding the numbers who can access the funds. We therefore recommend that an increased budget is ring-fenced for the current cohort, in order to ensure that the impact of their vital work is not lost but rather evolved otherwise they may miss out on funding or not be able to take advantage of an increase in investment.”

Expanded Festivals Fund

In August, the Government announced a new fund: [the Expanded Festivals Fund](#). This is a £1.8m fund which can be used for the purposes of: supporting international opportunities; innovative programming; and professional development opportunities and building industry connections.

Historic Environment Scotland Grants

HES’ grant programme to the sector is approximately £13.5m a year. The grants programme supports a range of activities such as repairs, archaeological work, and intermediary bodies within the sector through the Partnership Fund. HES’ submission stated—

“The funding we deliver enables our grantees to leverage additional support, with one pound of investment of HES grant funding delivering £5.24 more in additional support for the sector. Each year demand for this funding significantly outstrips supply, and we cannot fully meet the scale of need.”

Suggestions from the submissions on strategic and funding approaches

The Committee asked respondents to reflect on some of the key themes of its work over the course of this session and how lessons can be learned in the future. Members have been provided with a summary of the submissions and may wish to explore these issues further with witnesses.

Some of the issues highlighted were:

- A welcome for the additional funding but financial challenges continue
- Insufficient strategic or funding focus on freelancers and individual artists
- Regional and sectoral imbalances of where new resource is being directed
- A lack of strategic clarity and links between funding and outcomes
- Multi-Year Funding

- Alternative funding models, respondents suggested a wider range of different approaches, including:
 - Visitor Levy
 - Percentage for Culture (1%)
 - Matched Funding/Crowdfunding/Community bonds
 - Endowment Funds
 - Admission charges for non-residents
- Mainstreaming culture and preventative spending and embedding culture across government portfolios.

Strategies and reviews

A key theme of the Committee's work this session has been the extent to which the distribution of resources are matched to strategic aims and prioritised to maximise desired outcomes. In the first half of the parliamentary session, the context for the sector was a tight financial settlement, continuing pressures from the pandemic and then high levels of inflation. With the Government's increased budget for culture, this context has changed. However, the Committee's report last year and its work this year remain focused on how spending decisions are related to strategic aims and contributing to identified outcomes.

The First Minister gave a [speech at the Edinburgh International Festival Hub on 31 July 2025](#). In it, he expressed support for the cultural sector and highlighted its contribution to society. He said that he would like to see cultural organisations, large and small and from across Scotland succeed. He spoke about innovation in funding models, including philanthropy and local authority support. Mr Swinney invited stakeholders to share ideas on how to better support emerging artists and creative businesses.

The cultural and heritage sectors have a range of strategies, action plans and so on. Annexe A very briefly lists and summarises the current sector strategies in: culture; the historic environment; museums and galleries; and libraries.

There has been ongoing work, particularly in the arts and culture sectors, to develop strategic approaches this session. Witnesses should be able to provide valuable perspectives on how this work is progressing nationally and the extent to which this has impacted on organisations' approaches to delivering work and reporting on the outcomes they achieve. Witnesses have different roles – HES, for example, developed the strategy for its sector and this includes [monitoring and reporting on that strategy nationally](#).

Current reviews

There are currently two reviews underway in relation to the Culture portfolio. One is an independent review of Creative Scotland. The other is a Scottish Government

review which will look at the existing support for the sector and explore new ways the Scottish Government grow the overall funding pot for culture and diversify funding streams. This review will also consider what action can be taken to help the sector to navigate current and future challenges and make the most of opportunities for collaborative working.

Creative Scotland Review

The review of Creative Scotland is currently taking place and being led by Angela Leitch CBE. The review is expected to report in November and will cover:

- Purpose and functions
- Structure and performance
- Governance and leadership
- Finances and distribution of funds
- Collaboration, relationships, and partnerships

Wider review of the sector

In his letter to the Committee in [December 2024](#), the Cabinet Secretary said—

“As set out in Programme for Government, the Government is also carrying out a review of how the culture sector is supported to maximise the impact of this significant 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.”

The Cabinet Secretary gave further details of this work in his letter to the Committee in May—

“The review of how the culture sector is supported will not take the form of a traditional review but will adopt an action-orientated approach to develop thinking from the outset and demonstrate a range of new practices on the ground at pace.

“This ongoing programme of work will initially focus on two key areas: the delivery of [Museums Futures Programme] and the further investigation and development of innovative funding solutions as well as non-financial support for the sector based on existing and developing evidence of impact. ...

“Learning from the first year of the Sector Support Programme will inform how the Scottish Government works to optimise funding approaches and support the sector going forward. The factual evidence from this learning may therefore, inform elements of the Creative Scotland Review around effective approaches to supporting the sector going forward.”

As part of this work, the Government launched a survey in January. The Scottish Government's Culture Sector Support Needs Survey gathered responses from over 754 individuals and organisations working in arts, heritage, libraries, and museums. The [Government published an analysis of those responses](#) in May 2025. The themes from this survey were similar to those found in responses to the Committee's call for views, for example: welcoming public funding but questions over the application process, sufficiency, and project-based nature of public funding.

Respondents to the survey said that while private funding can be helpful, it's often hard to access. Challenges included not meeting eligibility criteria, concerns about ethical sources of funding, and simply not knowing what opportunities exist.

Respondents identified the following areas of support as being most useful: funding and financial support; guidance and feedback (particularly in relation to applying for funds); networking and advocacy; resources and tools and access to specialists.

The Government has not yet set out how the findings of the survey will impact on how the culture sectors will be supported.

Policy development in this area this session

The Committee will be aware that review, consultation and discussion on the strategic direction for culture sectors has been ongoing through the session.

The actions in the 2020 national culture strategy included to establish the National Partnership for Culture (NPC). The NPC's role was "to continue our national culture conversation and advise Scottish Ministers on matters affecting and affected by culture in Scotland". The NPC would also be "tasked with establishing a measuring change group to inform progress towards realising the national outcome for culture and the delivery of the culture strategy."

The NPC published its report in March 2022. It [made recommendations](#) under five workstreams: Education and Learning; Community and Place; Health and Wellbeing; Fair Work and Data and Evidence. The NPC described its recommendations as "a starting point from which to move towards government providing a more strategic and connected approach to supporting culture in Scotland."

The Scottish Government [responded in September 2022](#). The response was broadly supportive of the recommendations. It often sought to link the recommendations to existing programmes of work. The response also noted that (at that time) work was underway to develop a new culture strategy action plan.

In December 2023, after the announcement of additional funding to the culture and arts sectors, the Scottish Government published a [refreshed action plan](#) for the 2020 culture strategy. The action plan is organised under four chapters and three of the chapters relate directly to the three 'ambitions' in the 2020 strategy. The action plan also includes a chapter on 'Resilience' and [a summary of actions](#).

On 20 June 2024, the Cabinet Secretary provided [an update on the action plan in a letter to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee](#). Among other things this highlighted:

- Exploring and developing alternative and additional income streams
- Officials working with colleagues in skills policy to ensure that creative skills are fully considered in the development of new national skills planning processes
- The establishment of a Culture Sector Fair Work Task Force and two cross portfolio groups: Culture and Health Working Group and Culture and Creativity in Learning Groups
- Accepted the recommendations of the Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums group
- Published Inspiring Connections: Scotland's International Culture Strategy 2024-30
- Along with COSLA, ran a Culture Value Summit in May 2024

The Cabinet Secretary concluded:

“The Scottish Government has achieved a significant amount in the first six months since publication of the refreshed Action Plan. Discussions with partners about where our collective priorities lie and how resources should be targeted across the sector in the next five years are underway and will undoubtedly result in the acceleration of some planned actions and, consequently, the deceleration of others to match available resource.”

Direct links between funding and strategy

The Culture Strategy and the Action Plan seldom include references to expenditure. The 2020 Culture Strategy provided some examples of existing funding for the V&A and Screen Scotland. The action plan referenced existing and future funding provided to MGS to support the work on Empire Slavery and Scotland's Museums.

The International Strategy included a section on Resources which set out the context of the expected increase in funding for the sector. The International Strategy included the following two actions under this section:

- The Scottish Government will make the case for international cultural activity and the actions outlined in this strategy in budgetary processes, working to secure resource to support delivery.
- The Scottish Government will review existing funding for international cultural activity in the light of the principles and activity outlined in this strategy to ensure it remains coherent and appropriate to the current context.

The [main Scottish Government Budget 2025-26 paper did not reference](#) the Culture Strategy (nor the aims of the strategy), the Action Plan, nor the International Culture Strategy. The Cabinet Secretary's letter to the Committee in December 2024 did reference these strategies. It said:

“The Government is aware from discussions with culture stakeholders following publication of the draft budget that the significant increase in levels of funding announced for the sector is rightly fuelling debate around priorities for culture; particularly around the delivery of existing action plans and strategic commitments going forward. The Programme for Government 2024 sets out what will be the main focus of the Government’s strategic activity as we seek to place the sector on a more sustainable footing. 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.”

Links with other strategies

There tends to be linkages and common themes across the strategic documents in the culture and heritage sector. Links to cultural strategies from other parts of the Government have proved difficult to identify. Terms searches on the Scottish Government’s website have not surfaced any examples, where there are linkages. This does not necessarily mean that the culture and historic environment sectors have not been involved in the developing strategies or policies across different parts of government, both local and national. The Committee may wish to explore with witnesses their experience of engaging with other policy areas, such as health, education, and transport at both local and national levels.

A key theme of the work of the committee in relation to the contribution of culture to health outcomes. This was also a theme in the Committee’s call for views and a number of respondents referenced the [Scottish Government’s Population Health Framework 2025–2035](#) published in June 2025. This has a focus on prevention and a holistic approach to wellbeing. The First Minister’s foreword said—

“As much as 80% of what affects health happens outside the health and care system. The NHS is just one part of the whole system – local government, public agencies and a range of sectors and organisations – that must have a laser focus on preventing ill health. We will achieve this by tackling its causes to make Scotland a place where more people live longer, healthier lives.”

This framework made some references to culture, including applying “learning from the Fairer Funding pilot” – this pilot included some cultural organisations. The framework also referenced the role of the Community and Voluntary Sector and said that the Government would develop a National Social Prescribing Framework for Scotland, but did not reference culture, heritage or arts organisations directly. These indirect references were under the “Places and Communities” section and the framework referenced 12 relevant policies and strategies in a “non-exhaustive” list. There was no reference to any strategic document in the culture or heritage sectors.

Climate Change/Net Zero

The Climate Change Plan (CCP) is a strategy document which outlines how the Scottish Government intends to meet emissions reduction targets across all portfolio

areas and sectors of the economy. Parliament is currently approaching its scrutiny of the next CCP which will cover the period 2026-2040. [The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee will be leading on this work](#), but other Committees will have the opportunity to feed into this.

The Committee asked three questions on this topic covering, the sector's operational emissions, how funding streams better support culture and heritage organisations to contribute towards net zero outcomes, and the role of the culture and heritage sector in shaping and informing public attitudes on climate and sustainability. Members will find more details in the summary of the Call for Views provided in their papers, and the Committee may wish to explore these areas with witnesses.

Some of the themes in the responses were:

- Sector is actively implementing emissions reduction measures.
- Challenges in retrofitting historic buildings.
- Strong support for greater capital investment to achieve goals.
- Cultural sector is seen as key in shaping public attitudes and policy scrutiny.

SPICe published a blog, [Climate change and the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee – Arts and Culture](#), in April. This looked at both Arts and Culture and the Historic Environment.

The key issues identified in relation to Arts and Culture were the direct and indirect emissions from the sector. This means both the emissions from the sectors own operations as well as audience members' emissions from, in this case travel. The blog noted there is evidence that cultural activities can shape attitudes in relation to the topic and that Creative Scotland is planning to develop an evaluation approach to better understand how the cultural and creative sectors contribute to a "transformational change in society, including climate justice."

Historic Environment Scotland has a strategic leadership role for supporting the Historic Environment. The blog notes "HES' remit includes providing advice and support on all traditional buildings, i.e. those built prior to 1919". This includes a very large number of properties, owned by the public sector, private businesses, the third sector and individuals.

The blog notes that "HES has a current [Climate Action Plan](#) and an [Adaptation Plan](#). Climate change and delivering Net Zero are also a key part of its overall strategy."

HES' current strategy, [Our Past, Our Future](#), covers the period 2023-28. The first of the three strands of this strategy is on delivering the transition to net zero. Under this strand are three outcomes:

1. Reduce emissions from the historic environment
2. The historic environment is more climate resilient

3. Improve pathways for the historic environment skills

HES has a key role to play supporting the reduction of emissions from the built environment and supporting adaptation to a changing environment.

Ned Sharratt, Researcher (Education and Culture), SPICe

Date: 05/09/2025

Note: Committee briefing papers are provided by SPICe for the use of Scottish Parliament committees and clerking staff. They provide focused information or respond to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.

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Annexe A: Sector strategies

While there are a range of strategies for the culture and historic environment sectors, the overarching aims of the public sector in Scotland should relate to the outcome in the National Performance Framework.

The current National Outcome for Culture is:

We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and widely enjoyed.

The [Government is currently reviewing the NPF](#) in order to develop and implement “a more strategic and impactful framework for Scotland.”

Culture

There are a number of strategies in this sector. The overarching strategy is the 2020 [Culture Strategy for Scotland](#). This is organised around three “ambitions”. The ambition of ‘Strengthening Culture’ is largely concerned with how policy can support the creation of culture through funding or in-kind support to the sector. The ambition of ‘Transforming through culture’ is concerned largely with recognising the value culture can have to supporting outcomes in other policy areas – for example, in supporting health, education, and tourism. The ambition of ‘Empowering Through Culture’ addresses participation and supporting culture at community levels.

The ‘[Inspiring Connections: Scotland’s International Culture Strategy 2024–2030](#)’ sets out a vision to strengthen Scotland’s global cultural presence by supporting international collaboration, cultural exchange, and creative innovation. It aims to help the culture and creative sector recover from recent challenges—such as Brexit and the pandemic—by enhancing access to international markets, audiences, and networks.

Historic Environment

In April 2023, HES published a new strategy for the historic environment. [Our Past, Our Future](#) identifies three priorities as the focus for delivery between 2023-2028. The priorities and outcomes are—

- Delivering the transition to net zero
- Empowering resilient and inclusive communities and places
- Building a wellbeing economy.

Museums and Galleries

Museums Galleries Scotland’s [Museums and Galleries Strategy 2023–2030](#) envisions Scotland’s museums and galleries as thriving, connected, and resilient organisations, trusted and valued by diverse communities. It aims to ensure collections and stories are accessible and inclusive, while supporting the sector to adapt to social, environmental, and economic challenges. The strategy seek to align

with national priorities including climate action, fair work, and inclusion, and is structured around three interlinked strands:

- **Connection**
Museums and galleries working within their communities promote inclusivity, wellbeing, and lifelong learning.
- **Resilience**
Museums and galleries build sustainable business models, respond to climate challenges, and collaborate effectively.
- **Workforce**
Museums and galleries support fair work, diversity, and skills development in their sector.

Libraries

[Scotland's Public Library Strategy 2021–2025](#) was developed by SLIC. It positions libraries as central to Scotland's social infrastructure, responding to challenges like digital exclusion and social isolation while embracing innovation and sustainability. It is structured around three key themes: People, Place, and Partnership, each with strategic aims and actions to guide development.