

A Culture Strategy for Scotland - Culture Conversation

Feedback from Making Music to Scottish Government

Note from Scottish Government:

Culture means different things to different people. There are many cultures in Scotland and many ways to create and take part in culture. We also know that not everyone has the same opportunity to take part in or contribute to cultural life in Scotland. That is why it is important that we work together to engage with as many people as possible, so that the voices, views and experiences of many are reflected in the Strategy. To achieve this we are asking individuals, organisations, networks and community groups across Scotland to host their own Culture Conversations.

The purpose of holding Culture Conversations across the country is to gather as many views as possible about what is important about culture in Scotland to enable people to share their ideas about how best to support and contribute to developing a vision for culture in Scotland and to discuss what priorities will support the future development of culture in Scotland.

Each Culture Conversation will use three questions to stimulate discussion:

1. Why is culture important to you?
2. What is good about culture in Scotland and what needs to change?
3. What do you want the future for culture in Scotland to be like?

Note from Making Music:

Making Music currently has 257 members across Scotland, from Stranraer to Shetland. They include choral societies, symphony orchestras, pipe bands, samba bands, fiddle festivals and more, making up a sizeable percentage of the amateur music makers in this country. Holding a conversation event that would be accessible to everyone in our membership was too big a challenge, so instead we surveyed our members online. 61 people responded and their views are represented here.

The main threads observable from the responses are:

- The Making Music member groups are a vibrant and valuable asset to the Scottish cultural picture and they would like their contribution to be better acknowledged.
- Music education is crucial to the sustainability and growth of the amateur sector and they feel the current school system is not providing enough skilled and enthusiastic young people to move into their groups.
- While they are largely self-financing and are supported almost entirely by volunteers, they require a level of public infrastructure (particularly subsidised rehearsal spaces and venues) to continue and grow.
- They require little funding for their core activity, but easy access to small amounts of public funds would allow them to be more accessible and ambitious.

The responses are presented as replies to tick box questions followed by comments from open responses.

1. Why is culture important to you?

Q1 Why is making music in your group important to you?

- 89% I enjoy myself and feel happier
- 82% I meet friends and connect with my community
- 74% I develop my creative skills

Personal 'I like challenging my brain; Music is my life; Singing regularly helps me physically as well as mentally; I mix with people of all ages, from teens to 80s; it's a bit of "me" time; It keeps me young; I develop my other skills (memory, peripheral vision, breathing, teamwork, leadership, presentation, financial management); the concentration blocks everything else

Musical 'I enjoy performing to a high standard; I learn more about music and am exposed to more music; We carry our old traditional music through to the next generation.'

Q2 What makes your group valuable to your community?

- 90% We perform and provide cultural experiences
- 70% We support other community groups and charities
- 70% We help make our community an enjoyable place to live
- 66% People can meet and socialise here
- 24% We generate income for businesses and organisations in our community

Whole Community 'We perform without seeking financial reward; We offer volunteering opportunities; We attract both established local residents and new residents helping integration; Involvement with music - both as performer and listener- is good for your health (both physical and mental)'

Musical community 'We teach Scottish Fiddle to young and old, preserving our customs and traditions; A place for up coming professionals to develop their skills; opportunities for young professional conductors, accompanists and composers, giving young musicians experience that will be beneficial to their future careers.'

Q3 What makes your group valuable to culture in Scotland?

- 85% We develop people's creative skills
- 82% We add to the range of work performed in Scotland
- 74% We are self-financing
- 72% We employ professional artists

Extending provision 'We are almost self financing with only a few small grants; provide live music at a nominal cost available to all; bring high quality classical music to rural areas and remote communities; outside central belt; Help to develop a knowledge of classical music that is missing from the school curriculum; promote Gaelic Language and culture; Sustaining and promoting traditional music; We provide a place for adults to return to music-making.'

Supporting professionals 'We perform music by living composers; encourage new/young/student musicians by inviting them to perform as soloists; provide a high profile performance platform for young emerging Scottish musicians, and opportunity to engage with established artists; commission work for the choir to perform through open competition.'

2. What is good about culture in Scotland and what needs to change?

Q4 What is currently enabling your group to be successful?

- 89% Volunteers
- 77% Skilled and available professional musicians
- 75% Affordable rehearsal space
- 43% Support from Making Music
- 29% Connections with education music departments
- 27% Funding
- 18% Community and music festivals

Work of voluntary participants 'Dedication; great leadership, dedicated committee; Enthusiastic singers; skilled and available amateur musicians; Very committed Board, Conductor and Members;

Commitment to excellence 'Our reputation, built up through successful performances over 25 years, attracts new singers and professional soloists... a committed audience base who will travel to hear our performances; excellent performance standard; A very good tutor'

Funding 'External funding rarely important but has sometimes enabled us to perform free when we would otherwise have had to charge at least a small amount, so enabling a wider audience; Support from MM (including cheap insurance) can be very useful'

Q5 What needs to change for your group to be more successful?

- 54% Increased income
- 49% Better school and continuing music education
- 47% More members
- 46% More affordable rehearsal and performance space
- 32% Better access to sheet music
- 25% More support to deal with bureaucracy
- 21% Better skilled volunteers
- 21% Greater ability to engage professional musicians

Income 'As a smaller group everything costs more per person; Gift Aid; Sponsorship from local organisations; Not all performance venues have a piano and cost to hire is prohibitive; Acknowledgement from funding bodies that small amateur organisations have very few resources...yet are required to jump through the same hoops as much larger organisations who have full-time staff members to assist with writing funding applications'

Increased participation 'More volunteers to share the admin load, particularly those with IT skills; much greater public awareness, particularly amongst potential audiences; Difficult to find office bearers who can ensure insurance, fire safety, charity returns etc etc'

Music Education '...musical development of schoolchildren ...the peripatetic provision is so appalling'

2. RESPONSE CONTINUES

2. What is good about culture in Scotland and what needs to change?

Q6 What might stop people being able to take part in a music group like yours?

54% Affordability

54% Transport

54% Lack of music education

46% Health

Music Education 'Members have to be able to read dots...and it helps to have a sense of harmony; Apathy to our traditional music though a lack of teaching music in schools; Perceived social barrier to classical music through lack of education; little or no access from an early age'

Other 'Accessibility of rehearsal rooms - on bus route, parking facilities nearby; Poor publicity; Hard to engage younger people - most of our audience is over 60; Continued perception by the media that classical music is only for the rich and well-educated'

Q7 What would help remove these barriers?

Financial Support 'Funding would make it easier for us to provide more free spaces; Continued Funding and sponsorship would lower our membership fee; Subsidised use of more visiting professional singers and musicians; Increased financial support to take music much more into local communities.'

Infrastructure 'More affordable rehearsal premises; More affordable performance venues Subsidised rehearsal rooms; Better transport links in the city, more suitable parking; More local singing groups; More volunteers to attend to publicity.'

Music Education 'Music education in schools (x5) - instrumental teaching & singing, school orchestras and choirs, classical choral music; improving the status of the arts within the national curriculum; Instrumental Service to sort themselves out'

Higher Profile for Amateur Music 'More coverage outside London, and in particular, north of the Humber; Support from local press; The media reporting more responsibly on the very good work in widening participation that lots of arts organisations do rather than the perceived barriers of access.'

3. What do you want the future for culture in Scotland to be like?

Q8 What would the ideal future for culture in Scotland be like from your group's perspective?

93% Anyone who wants to make music in their leisure time can find a group in their community to join

93% Any group making music can access affordable space to rehearse and perform

80% There are regular music performances in communities that anyone living in that area can easily attend

64% There is practical and financial support for any group making music

Education and Development 'The performing arts are valued by the education system...singing is part of the core curriculum from P1; Development of young singers and musicians in performance arts; Classical music should be encouraged'

Access to Funding for Amateur Groups 'Greater access for music charities to arts / community / health funding; There is no hierarchy ... if they are producing work that an audience wants to pay to hear, they can apply for funding'

Access 'Easy access - evening bus service is almost non-existent to rural communities; (amateur groups supported to continue to) take music to venues in the region where professional orchestras never play; Open to all, regardless of circumstances; The arts are seen for and promoted as having the value they do have to individuals and communities.'

Q9 What is the one thing you think a cultural strategy should include that would help your group to flourish?

Increased profile of amateur music sector 'More awareness of traditional music; Promoting the great musical experience and fun (had) belonging to a musical group to a younger population; Acknowledgment by government that music consists of more than pop and traditional music and consequently better support for all genres; Greater recognition of the role of musical excellence, and pathways and opportunities both to achieve it and to take part as live audience; Better co-operation from papers'

Music Education 'Core music education (x9); Music education in schools right through the compulsory curriculum period and fostering school choirs and instrument learning at affordable or no cost; Music lessons for all ages and abilities; Encouragement of choral music in schools; Encouraging schools to join in with local choirs (supported by volunteers); A national/local "Instrument Lending Library" or funding to enable young musicians to purchase instruments (they have been using) at school; Team schools and churches together for singing all types of music; Audience education; Broad-based initiatives to help people read music.'

Infrastructure 'Suitable and affordable rehearsal space and concert space (x 3); Council spaces (e.g. Schools) at a lower rate for community groups; Availability of public transport; Networking and associations with other music groups.'

Funding for 'some costs to be covered ... professional musicians for concerts ...venue rental costs to allow for more accessible venues to be used; community groups; rehearsal space and development; engagement of younger people with choir performance; new musical groups to form so they can then become self-financing; not purely focused on "High" culture, and properly reflects the tastes of all levels of society.'

Access 'Funding to extend inclusive practice and appreciation of mental and physical health issues in relation to choral singing; Provision of 'open door' facilities for all regardless of status, education, ethnicity etc; Every citizen's right to both attend & participate in cultural activity based upon a compulsory education for all; The arts are for all, not just the privileged.'