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# Consultation Response

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## Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2023-24: Funding for Culture

August 2022



# About Us

Volunteer Scotland is Scotland's National Centre for Volunteering. We believe that volunteering should be an enjoyable, rewarding and fulfilling experience for the volunteer; that volunteers have the right to be safe and protected in delivering their volunteering roles; and that to derive health and well-being benefits from volunteering requires regular and meaningful contributions of time.

Should any queries arise from our response, please contact our Policy Officer by emailing **[sarah.latto@volunteerscotland.org.uk](mailto:sarah.latto@volunteerscotland.org.uk)**

## Introduction

The culture sector in Scotland relies upon volunteers to thrive, from grassroots community-based activities to our national cultural institutions. This sector faced significant challenges as a result of the pandemic and is now threatened by the cost of living crisis. The role of volunteering in Scotland's culture sector is often underrepresented in policy, making it challenging to leverage sufficient resource.

The Scottish Government launched the national Volunteering Action Plan in June this year, creating a clear roadmap to improve volunteer participation in Scotland. We believe that the commitment to volunteering made in the action plan should be reflected in the budget, particularly in funding for culture.

## Policy Context

The Scottish Government have acknowledged on many occasions that volunteering has an important role in the successful delivery of many policy priorities. In 2019 Aileen Campbell MSP, then Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Communities, stated that:

*“volunteering is key to us achieving our shared ambition of a fairer and more prosperous country with equality of opportunity for all – a country where everyone has the chance to participate and make a difference.”<sup>1</sup>*

Similarly, the 2020-21 Programme for Government stated that:

*“[The Scottish Government’s] role must be to create the best conditions for the third sector and volunteering to thrive and contribute to a recovering economy and society.”<sup>2</sup>*

Despite this commitment, volunteering remains elusive in wider relevant policy areas. This was reflected in the recent Resource Spending Review where volunteering is not mentioned, and where it is stated that funding for the third sector is due to be reduced in 2023-24.

Scotland's national Volunteering Action Plan was launched by the Scottish Government, Volunteer Scotland, and partners in June 2022<sup>3</sup> and builds upon outcomes identified in the Volunteering for All framework published in 2019.<sup>4</sup> Both acknowledge the vital role of volunteering in Scotland and create a clear blueprint for improving volunteer participation with a particular focus on addressing inequality. The Volunteering for All framework is mapped to four of the outcomes in the National Performance Framework, specifically those related to education, health,

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<sup>1</sup> [‘Volunteering for All: National Framework’](#), 2019, Scottish Government

<sup>2</sup> [‘Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland: The Government’s Programme for Scotland 2020-2021’](#), 2020, Scottish Government

<sup>3</sup> [‘Volunteering Action Plan’](#), 2022, Scottish Government and Volunteer Scotland

<sup>4</sup> [‘Volunteering for All: National Framework’](#), 2019, Scottish Government

communities, and inequality.<sup>5</sup> We would argue, however, that volunteering contributes to all of the National Outcomes, including culture. Indeed, without the support of volunteers many cultural activities would cease to exist.

## Volunteering in Culture

Scotland's culture is diverse, covering arts, theatre and heritage as well as community based cultural activities. In the Scottish Household Survey results for 2020, 7% of Scotland's formal volunteers helped within culture or heritage organisations – a 2% rise on the 2018 figure.<sup>6</sup> This equates to 82,796 people supporting Scotland's culture sector, which is comparable to the total number of paid staff working in Arts and Culture<sup>7</sup> (87,000).<sup>8</sup>

In particular, grassroots community-based cultural activity has an existential reliance on volunteers for governance, coordination and stewardship. Creative Lives exists to champion community and volunteer-led activity, and work to improve opportunities for people to be creative. They refer to volunteers as the 'unsung heroes' of many events and state that:

*'It's no secret that the voluntary/amateur arts sector is populated by thousands of participants – the singers, dancers, painters, crafters and more who get creative purely for the love and fun of it. But none of those activities happen without volunteer time and effort.'*<sup>9</sup>

The Bridgend Eco-Bothy is an example of volunteer-led community based arts activity.<sup>10</sup> A team of volunteers have been converting a derelict farm building into a community-owned centre for creating, learning, eating and exercising. The build process itself involved bottom-up consultation and decision-making, and people from the local community being trained in the skills required to support the build itself. Now the space is used for a range of creative activities for the local community, including drumming groups and photography exhibitions.<sup>11</sup>

**Given that culture is one of the Scottish Government's eleven National Outcomes, it is vital that the contribution of volunteering to Scotland's culture is acknowledged in the budget.**

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Comparative analysis of SHS 2018 and 2020 data, 2021, Volunteer Scotland

<sup>7</sup> This is drawn from an interim measure for Jobs in the Creative Industries Growth Sector - Note that this is a temporary source for People working in Arts and Culture. The intention is to explore a new methodology or source for Arts and Culture employment (rather than Creative Industries jobs) working with stakeholders.

<sup>8</sup> ['National Indicator Performance'](#), 2022, Scottish Government

<sup>9</sup> ['Volunteers – the unsung heroes of so many events'](#), 2018, Creative Lives

<sup>10</sup> 'Building the Bridgend Eco-Bothy', 2022, Creative Lives

<sup>11</sup> [Bridgend Farmhouse Facebook Page](#), 2022, Bridgend Farmhouse

## Health and Wellbeing Benefits: Volunteering and Culture

Research suggests that participation in arts/culture and participation in volunteering can have similar positive impacts on health and wellbeing. Research undertaken by University College London during the Covid-19 pandemic found that:

*“Engaging in art, nature, exercise, music, creative, expressive, social or philosophical activities can elicit stimulatory benefits such as heightened emotional, cognitive and sensory processing, increased social interaction, adoption of healthy behaviours, promotion of physical movement and activity, and decreased stress hormone responses.”<sup>12</sup>*

Participation in volunteering also has tangible health and wellbeing benefits. In a report published by Volunteer Scotland in December 2018 we found that regular volunteering can alleviate depression, anxiety and stress, and reduce loneliness and social isolation.<sup>13</sup> Volunteering can also have a significant impact on physical health by promoting healthy behaviours, helping to maintain a level of physical activity that promotes independence and improves volunteers’ ability to cope with illness.<sup>14</sup>

**Given that health and wellbeing was identified as one of the Scottish Government’s key priorities in the Spending Review, we believe that the mutual benefits of both volunteering and participating in cultural activities should be acknowledged in the budget.<sup>15</sup>**

## Whole System Approach and Multi-Year Funding

The Scottish Government’s commitment to a ‘whole system’, outcomes focused and collaborative approach in the spending review is commendable.<sup>16</sup> A similar approach was adopted in the development of the Volunteering Action Plan, recognising that ‘volunteering is complex and its outcomes are determined by inter-relationships within a system’.<sup>17</sup> As such, the Volunteering Action Plan has a vital role in asserting the relevance of volunteering to a broad range of policy areas, including culture.

However, the lack of commitment to multi-year funding in the Spending Review is at odds with the commitment to a ‘whole-system’ collaborative approach, particularly with voluntary sector organisations involved in supporting Scotland’s culture. We welcome the recent announcement from the Scottish Government that it has committed a further £100,000 to the Make Your Mark heritage volunteering campaign, which will support greater inclusion in heritage organisations which

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<sup>12</sup> [‘Community COVID: How can community assets address health inequities?’](#), 2021, Mughal R., Thomson, L.J., Chatterjee, H.J et al., London: University College London

<sup>13</sup> [‘Volunteering, Health and Wellbeing’](#), 2018, Volunteer Scotland

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> [‘Resource Spending Review 2022’](#), 2022, Scottish Government

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> [‘Volunteering Action Plan’](#), 2022, Scottish Government and Volunteer Scotland

involve volunteers. However, evidence suggests that the wider culture and volunteering sector is also in need of significant investment.

The third sector is incredibly diverse with over 40,000 voluntary organisations estimated to exist, including 24,832 registered charities.<sup>18</sup> Meaningful collaboration with the voluntary sector is challenging, particularly given it is estimated that half of voluntary organisations are community groups who will likely be largely or wholly operated by volunteers.<sup>19</sup> As a result of significant restrictions on time and resource, many voluntary organisations find it difficult to engage with collaborative decision-making processes.

The recent evaluation of the Volunteering Action Plan development process found that many organisations struggled to maintain engagement due to time constraints, particularly given funding challenges and the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>20</sup> In Volunteer Scotland's recent research exploring the impact of Covid-19 on volunteering, 48% of volunteer involving organisations identified dedicated funding for their volunteer programmes as a priority for their medium or long term recovery.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, OSCR's survey exploring the impact of Covid-19 on Scottish Charities exposed a particularly acute issue related to fatigue and burnout experienced by trustees, who are volunteers, particularly in smaller organisations with no paid staff.<sup>22</sup>

Cost of living increases are also affecting the balance sheets of many voluntary and community organisations. Demand for services is increasing, as are operating costs, yet the money available is decreasing. Those whose core funding comes from the public sector are often subject to either fixed funding (but declining in real terms due to high inflation) or reduced funding. This is compounded by the fact that many people will likely have less disposable income to donate to charities in the months ahead. The Charities Aid Foundation recently found that 12% of individuals are planning to cut back on charity donations.<sup>23</sup>

Similar issues are reported in the culture sector, particularly following the pandemic. In the aforementioned University College London research, participants were asked 'if you could have your voice in our report, what would you say?'.<sup>24</sup> One respondent said:

*"Fund the arts. Fund the arts and humanities. Fund education – fund a universal basic income for weirdos like me who work all the time but not for really any money. Give people time and space in their working lives to rest properly, and to pursue creative things."*<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> ['Sector Stats'](#), 2022, SCVO

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> 'Development of Scotland's Volunteering Action Plan: Evaluation Report' - Volunteer Scotland (publication pending)

<sup>21</sup> ['Road to Recovery'](#), 2021, Volunteer Scotland

<sup>22</sup> ['November COVID-19 survey: Volunteers and Trustees Supplementary'](#), 2020, OSCR

<sup>23</sup> ['Cost-of-living squeeze hits donations to charity sector'](#), 2022, Charities Aid Foundation

<sup>24</sup> ['Community COVID: How can community assets address health inequities?'](#), 2021, Mughal R., Thomson, L.J., Chatterjee, H.J et al., London: University College London

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

This reflects the sense of fatigue in both the arts and volunteering sectors and highlights a key consideration for the Scottish Government in the budget if they wish to ensure meaningful collaboration and participation in achieving key priority areas. As stated by SCVO, a commitment to multi-year funding for the voluntary sector is ‘vital’.<sup>26</sup> In a response to the Spending Review, they stated that:

*‘it is disappointing to see that it contains more warm words on the need for collaboration and partnership with the voluntary sector, yet next to no mention of the fair, long-term funding that voluntary organisations so desperately need.’<sup>27</sup>*

**To meaningfully commit to a ‘whole system’ approach to culture in Scotland, including the voluntary sector, the Scottish Government needs to address the acute funding situation that the sector is currently facing in the budget.**

## Learning from Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on both volunteering and culture in Scotland, but also provided significant opportunities for learning. In particular, two investment priorities have specific resonance for volunteering and culture – digital inclusion and community places and spaces.

The Scottish Government identified digital inclusion as a specific priority in the Spending Review, which we are in full agreement with. We know from research that disabled volunteers are over-represented in digital volunteering roles. NCVO’s Time Well Spent research highlighted that disabled people are more likely to be volunteering online than non-disabled volunteers.<sup>28</sup> The rate of disabled people volunteering exclusively online is more than double the rate of non-disabled volunteers, with rates of 10% and 4% respectively.<sup>29</sup> This would suggest that digital volunteering models are more inclusive for those with disabilities.

However, for many people, digital exclusion remains a significant barrier. In 2018, Citizens Advice Scotland found that 18% of respondents who had sought advice from them in a given period had difficulty using a computer and 16% couldn’t use one at all.<sup>30</sup> It also found that broadband costs were a barrier for 18% of respondents.<sup>31</sup>

During the pandemic most charities adapted to online delivery models. This also had an impact on volunteer deployment, with 56% of volunteer involving organisations reporting that they moved some or all of their volunteering online.<sup>32</sup> Given the Citizens Advice Scotland figures about digital exclusion, many volunteers are likely to have been unable to continue volunteering during the pandemic.

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<sup>26</sup> [“‘Overlooked’: Voluntary sector body reacts to Scottish Government’s four-year spending plans for public services’](#), 2022, SCVO

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> ‘Time Well Spent’, 2019, NCVO

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> [‘Disconnected: Understanding digital inclusion and improving access’](#), 2018, Citizens Advice Scotland

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> [‘Road to Recovery’](#), 2021, Volunteer Scotland

Whilst the overall number of volunteers supporting culture and heritage organisations actually rose during the pandemic from 59,645 in 2018 to 82,796 in 2020 - an increase of 39% - many culture and heritage organisations operating almost entirely in physical spaces had a different experience.<sup>33</sup> In Historic Environment Scotland, for example, volunteer numbers were 28 in 2020-21<sup>34</sup> compared with 999 the previous year<sup>35</sup> – a decrease of 97%. Similarly, National Museums of Scotland witnessed a 75% decrease in volunteer numbers year on year.<sup>36 37</sup> This would suggest that whilst digital models for participation in culture are more inclusive for some, they are not a universal panacea.

This underlines the need for physical places and spaces for community-based culture to take place. In a report published in January 2022, Creative Lives found that the transition back to indoor creative activity following the pandemic is being stifled by a lack of accessible and affordable venues.<sup>38</sup> Prior to the pandemic, creative activity largely took place in community spaces like schools, church halls, libraries and even pubs. The majority of creative groups do not own their own buildings (approximately 90%).<sup>39</sup> Many groups are still trying to practice social distancing, meaning that they are having to source larger venues, and the availability of suitable venues has decreased.

This is an issue that has also been raised related to community-based volunteer activity. Indeed, the lack of affordable and accessible community venues pre-dates the pandemic. In a discussion exploring motivations and barriers to volunteering in 2019, the Scottish Volunteering Forum identified that lack of affordable spaces for grassroots activity was a particular challenge.<sup>40</sup> One volunteer in attendance had set up a peer support group for people with mental health issues but stated that this would not have been possible if he hadn't been donated use of a room in a local college.

The Scottish Government is committed to community ownership of such places and spaces where culture and volunteering could take place and has included an indicator related to community ownership in the National Performance Framework. However, for such places and spaces to be sustainably operated and maintained, the communities that own them require regular income. Given the aforementioned funding challenges facing the voluntary sector currently, many of these community spaces will be forced to raise the rental charges for the community groups that use them.

**For the culture sector to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, specific investment in the places and spaces where the sector operates is required.**

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<sup>33</sup> Comparative analysis of SHS 2018 and 2020 data, 2021, Volunteer Scotland

<sup>34</sup> [‘HES Annual Report 2020-21’](#), 2021, Historic Environment Scotland

<sup>35</sup> [‘HES Annual Report 2019-20’](#), 2020, Historic Environment Scotland

<sup>36</sup> [‘Annual Review 2019-2020’](#), 2020, National Museums of Scotland

<sup>37</sup> [‘Annual Review 2020-2021’](#), 2021, National Museums of Scotland

<sup>38</sup> [‘Spaces for Creativity’](#), 2022, Creative Lives

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> [‘Volunteer Motivations and Barriers Summary Report’](#), 2019, Scottish Volunteering Forum

## Conclusion

Scotland has a rich culture which has a strong relationship with the voluntary sector, and indeed with the many thousands of volunteers who support culture and heritage organisations each year. The culture sector, like the voluntary sector, has survived significant challenges in recent years. Covid-19 and the current cost of living crisis have brought significant logistical and financial challenges which the Scottish Government need to address for both sectors to recover.

Here is a summary of our recommendations:

- In line with commitments made in the Volunteering Action Plan, acknowledge the significant contribution of volunteers in Scotland's culture sector.
- Acknowledge the significant benefits of participation in both culture and volunteering in supporting ambitions related to health and wellbeing.
- Acknowledge and address the current resource challenges within the sector which will impact on the ability of organisations to contribute meaningfully in a 'whole-system' collaborative environment. Reinstating the commitment to multi-year funding would be particularly welcome.
- Whilst we wholeheartedly support the commitment to digital inclusion, this is not a panacea. Investment also needs to be made in physical places and spaces for cultural activity to take place.



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