



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Inquiry into Maximising the Potential of the  
Creative Industries in Northern Ireland:  
Arts and Business NI

7 June 2012

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

## Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

Inquiry into Maximising the Potential of the Creative Industries in Northern Ireland:  
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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Miss Michelle McIlveen (Chairperson)  
Mr William Irwin (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Dominic Bradley  
Mrs Brenda Hale  
Mr David Hilditch  
Mrs Karen McKeivitt  
Mr Oliver McMullan  
Mr Robin Swann

**Witnesses:**

Ms Joanne Stuart	Arts and Business NI
Ms Mary Trainor-Nagele	Arts and Business NI
Ms Brona Whittaker	Arts and Business NI

**The Chairperson:** We welcome the officials from Arts and Business to the meeting. Mary Trainor-Nagele is the chief executive, Joanne Stuart is the chair and Brona Whittaker is the arts manager. Members will note that we were to expect a fourth representative, but, unfortunately, she has been called away to jury service at the last minute. I welcome all of you. Thank you very much for your response to the inquiry; it is very detailed and very welcome. Mary, would you like to introduce your team and give your opening statement? We will then follow up with some questions.

**Ms Mary Trainor-Nagele (Arts and Business NI):** Thank you very much for inviting Arts and Business along. We are really delighted to meet the Committee, and we commend the Committee on undertaking such an extensive inquiry — you have seen quite a lot of people. I am the chief executive of Arts and Business. I have worked in the sector for over 24 years, and that includes some time working in the private sector. Arts and Business has been in Northern Ireland for 25 years. Ours is the only organisation that bridges the cultural sector and the commercial sector, and our aim is to advocate and facilitate partnership between those two worlds. That is what we are about. Our growing Arts and Business membership ensures that we are deeply rooted in those two sectors, and it is interesting to note that we engage with all art forms and cultural organisations of all sizes, from the likes of the Grand Opera House to smaller organisations that maybe do not have any full-time staff. Our business membership also spans an array of business sectors, again including small and large organisations. We work on areas such as placing businesspeople on cultural boards. We run training programmes to help the arts to secure private investment, and we connect both worlds through a lot of our events and our advocacy activity.

I am joined by two colleagues. Brona Whittaker is our arts manager, and, in her daily role, she connects with cultural practitioners. As you mentioned, Tania Carlisle has been called to jury service, and she gives her apologies. Joanne Stuart is the chair of Arts and Business. As you will be well aware, Joanne was chair of the Institute of Directors (IoD) for many years, and she acts as an IoD mentor to the creative industries through one of its programmes. She was also integral to the Chief Executives' Forum/IoD report on the creative industries, entitled 'Nurturing talent and harnessing ideas'. As well as being our chair, Joanne is here as a credible business voice. She has a real passion for the creative industries.

I will lead on our opening remarks. You have had our written evidence, so I would like to go straight in to focusing on our recommendations to the Committee. We see three key areas for the maximisation of the creative industries: maximising the economic benefits; maximising skills and capacity; and maximising opportunities around education and professional development.

Taking the first area, maximising economic benefits, it is really encouraging that the Programme for Government, the investment strategy and the economic strategy have all recognised the valuable role that the creative industries can play, both economically and socially. Arts and Business has encountered that in our dealings with the business community and with various Departments. In addition to the work that we do with the Arts Council and with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), we have built a really valuable relationship with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Invest Northern Ireland. They are helping us advocate to business that engagement with the arts delivers business results and speak publicly about the fact that the creative industries attract foreign direct investment and encourage people to work and live in Northern Ireland. A really nice example of cross-departmental working with us on this topic is an in camera dinner that we run annually, where the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment work together on facilitating a discussion around the benefits of and barriers to partnership.

We have four recommendations on maximising economic benefits. First, please remember the valuable role of arts and culture as a bedrock for the wider creative industries. If it is to reach its full potential as an economic driver, investment in its people and skills are absolutely critical.

Secondly, a vibrant arts and cultural sector is critical to helping government achieve the targets around cultural tourism. Kabosh's Belfast Bred product is a really nice example of that.

Thirdly, arts and culture has a role in stimulating innovation, which is so critical to the government agenda, and fostering a culture of imagineers. We advocate the role that the arts play in the STEM subjects. I know that you have heard the term STEAM, which stands for science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics, and we really support that. Creative businesses such as advertising and film should be encouraged to use indigenous artistic talent.

Our fourth recommendation on this topic is around exporting. How can we develop our links with business, for example, to facilitate an exchange of information between the two sectors on how to export? Joanne is very passionate about this point. A lot of advice is already out there cross-sectorally, so we need better signposting to what support is there, particularly around general business support and in relation to export. One of the challenges for our sector around exports is funding for international touring. It is really encouraging that the Arts Council ran a seminar last week on how to access EU funding. That is an area in which there are more opportunities.

Our second theme of maximisation is around skills and capacity. If we are to maximise the full potential of the sector, it really needs investment in the people who work in it now as well as the people who are going to work in it in the future. We are all aware that the economic and public-funding environment that we are in requires all businesses to look at different models of operating and different funding models. A key challenge that we are finding in diversifying income in the sector is around skills, but particularly relates to stretched resources. It is interesting to note that very few organisations in our sector have full-time fundraising and development staff. Particularly in these times, planned strategic fundraising takes time.

Another issue is that, when resources are stretched, training budgets are sometimes the first things to be cut. We also know from our research that private investment in culture is falling, and business investment has fallen over the past four years. Having said that, there are still many good news stories of new and sustained arts sponsorships. What we are finding is that, because of the business environment, businesses are being a lot more strategic about what they are sponsoring and are looking for a lot more business results from that. So, the impact of that for the sector is that it has to

work harder to find the relationships and work harder to keep them and cultivate them. Also, the need for business results can sometimes lead to a more risk-averse approach to sponsorship, so that might affect the types of activities and organisations that are being sponsored.

On a positive note, we are finding that businesses that might not be able to give cash are very willing to give their time through in-kind support, such as services and, in particular, mentoring. For example, last year, through our many programmes such as our Board Bank and Young Professionals programmes, Arts and Business facilitated pro bono support from 42 businesspeople throughout the year for the cultural sector.

We have four recommendations around skills and capacity. The first is on the model of business skills mentoring. We know it works, so how can we scale it up for the wider creative industries?

Secondly, there are opportunities to diversify through trusts, sponsorship and philanthropy, but, if organisations are going to maximise those opportunities, they need the investment to ensure that they have the capacity to go after that. Also, in our fast-moving industry, we need a more strategic approach to continuous professional development in the sector, so that people are encouraged throughout their careers.

Thirdly, how can we get people in the sector to help each other through peer-to-peer mentoring? We have worked with the Arts Council, Creative and Cultural Skills (CCS) and Audiences Northern Ireland on a peer-to-peer mentoring programme, where we got senior fundraisers mentoring junior fundraisers, which worked really well. Could we apply that to the more senior creative industry professionals helping younger start-ups?

Fourthly, with regard to encouraging cross-sectoral partnership, Joanne is working with others on a potential cross-sectoral young leaders Northern Ireland forum. Arts and Business is really keen on looking at an arts young leaders forum, which could feed into that wider cross-sectoral group.

Our third theme of maximisation relates to education and professional development. There is real concern about the young leaders who are coming into the sector. How do we ensure that we are inspiring young people to think about careers in the creative industries? How do we ensure that they come out of college with qualifications that are industry-led? How do we ensure that they have the business skills, the confidence and the entrepreneurial spirit that they will need for the environment that they are coming into?

So, the first of our four recommendations is the use of inspirational Northern Ireland heroes who have been successful in the creative industries and looking at how we can use them to excite and inspire career choices in the sector. Initiatives like CCS's Creative Choices website are really valuable.

Secondly, we support the plea to encourage more focus in the school curriculum on creativity and entrepreneurship.

Thirdly, having more mandatory business skills training in creative qualifications would help graduates adopt a more commercial approach to driving their future businesses, and the placements in industry are a real way to help students strengthen that commercial offering.

Fourthly, there are currently no formal paid internships for the cultural sector, and such internships, maybe coupled with business skills mentoring, could prove useful in driving inspiration for school leavers and young start-ups. As I said before, developing more strategic learning pathways for people in the sector is really important.

In summary, let us remember the important role that arts and culture plays in the wider creative industries. To reach its full potential as an economic driver, the sector, particularly the arts and cultural side, needs investment in its people and their skills, and we have heard about the challenges around capacity. Let us forge more links between business, arts and culture and the wider creative industries, and maybe look at some Arts and Business models, such as the mentorship, to see how we can use that. Let us strengthen links between education, industry and business to grow and inspire the creative industry leaders of the future. I have a little Venn diagram that I will pass around that summarises those recommendations. You can have that as a reference point.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. The Department has developed a creative industries framework, the main focus of which is collaboration between industry, government and academia.

What are your views on the framework? Do you think it is the right focus for government at the present time?

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** There absolutely has to be cross-sector collaboration, and we advocate that. In Arts and Business we see the benefit of that, and I have talked about some of our recommendations on getting the business skills to come in to the sector. Practitioners in our sector absolutely have to have those business skills. The models in which they have all collaborated are completely critical.

**The Chairperson:** I have been at a number of your organisation's events, and it is fantastic how you can bring very large businesses together and engage them in the arts right across the workforce, including in many factory situations and so on. That gives people access to culture that they would never have had, and that is incredibly impressive. However, how can you reach out to smaller businesses and get them engaged with local artists who are one-man bands, such as very small studios, small theatre companies, and so on? It is much easier to go for the Grand Opera House and the Ulster Orchestra or collaboration with Patton Group or JTI. How can that be passed down to much lower in the community?

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** Quite a lot of our programmes have worked right across the board, and Brona probably has some great examples of how we have worked with smaller organisations.

**Ms Brona Whittaker (Arts and Business NI):** Absolutely. Within the last year, we have worked with Seacourt Print Workshop in Bangor, which is a really good example of a collective of artists who come together to practise and use the space to produce their work. It receives sponsorship, which is modest but very meaningful to them, from Dunlop Homes, which is a local company. That is about collaboration, and the work produced in the print workshop went into Dunlop Homes, and a cash investment was made. Our work helped Dunlop Homes to take a legacy of the work produced in the Seacourt Print Workshop. That relationship has continued to build, and, although, as you point out, the cash investment is modest compared with that for larger arts organisations, it is very meaningful for Seacourt and enables its artists to make contact with the network that Dunlop Homes has and brings customers and that wider network to see the work produced by Seacourt Print Workshop. As you point out, smaller, individual artists find it very difficult to widen their networks and expand the groups with which they work. A comparable example is the Belfast Print Workshop and A V Browne Advertising, in which there was a very large in-kind investment.

A V Browne brought its creative team to engage with the artists in the Belfast Print Workshop and, in return, gave the Belfast Print Workshop a large brand and website redevelopment and engagement. One of A V Browne's studio staff got a residency in the Belfast Print Workshop to improve their skills. There is a real skills exchange between the artists and the commercial sector. In that example, the exchange was probably much more meaningful than cash because both organisations got a lasting legacy from it.

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** The trend of in-kind investments is really important. We are also seeing that businesses' engagement at community level is very important. A lot of smaller organisations are deeply rooted in the community, so there are real opportunities to be had.

**Ms Whittaker:** I will offer one more example. I do not know whether you are aware of the Weavers Court development just off Sandy Row, where the Moving on Music production and touring company is based. Weavers Court wanted to get in touch with the local community and show that it is embedded in the community. It produced a project called New Songs from Sandy Row, which we invested in. Having sponsored Moving on Music, the Weavers Court development agency held songwriting workshops at which local children could produce songs and music reflecting the issues that were important to them. They recorded a CD and brought their parents along to the local community centre for a performance of it. It is about more than just sponsorship; it is about touching the community. It is about the arts organisation making wider contacts and businesses having roots in the community in which they are based.

**Ms Joanne Stuart (Arts and Business NI):** One of the important things is how we can communicate the benefits to both sectors. The relationship with business organisations is important; the Institute of Directors (IOD) deals with individual directors, and when I was chairperson, we had a real focus on the creative industries, which has continued. Arts and Business continues to have a relationship with the IOD. We have a mentoring programme where individual directors can work with a range of different companies in the creative industries comprising very small organisations — I was basically working with a one-man band — and larger organisations.

Arts and Business has also developed a relationship with the CBI. At the CBI's most recent dinner, we had a platform and were able to showcase artists' work to over 550 different business people. Again, it is about raising awareness. It is about providing cross-sectoral networking through events such as Business Thinking Rewired, in which we get case studies to show the benefits for businesses as well as artists.

I am a director of the Science Park. Obviously, the design process is really important when you are developing a business idea. Arts and Business is exploring ways to link artists with scientists and technologists at an early stage to help them in the design process. No matter how great your ideas are, if your design is not right, it will be very difficult to realise their potential. We are trying to bring that creative thinking into very small and start-up businesses as well.

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** One nice example is a programme that we ran with our young artists who had just graduated. We mentored them, paired them with businesses and put them through key business training, which looked at all aspects of business including finance and marketing. A business mentor worked with them on commissioning a piece of art for the business. That was about getting young artists to work with a business, helping them to think about commercialising their offer, giving them business training and then hand-holding them through the commissioning process. Quite a lot of the businesses recommissioned them afterwards. That is quite a nice model of a programme that was geared purely at young artists who had just graduated.

**The Chairperson:** I congratulate you on the appointment of Joanne as chair of Arts and Business. It is a very clever appointment.

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** We were lucky to get in quick.

**Ms Stuart:** Thanks very much.

**The Chairperson:** Due to your links with the IOD, science and business, Joanne, it is a very appropriate appointment, and you will bring a lot to your role. Will you outline what you are doing to promote mentoring in the creative industries?

**Ms Stuart:** The Institute of Directors and the Arts Council have put together a programme that allows business leaders and directors to work with the creative industries. I am working with a digital media company that is in start-up mode and has some great ideas to develop iPhone and iPad applications. It has been quite interesting, because I have seen some really great ideas, and I am able to bring some focus on the business side. I can help the person that I am mentoring understand what needs to be in place from a business perspective so that he can realise the potential of the applications he is developing.

He sees all the new creative ideas and the different ways in which they can be used, which is great, but this is about prioritising and controlling things without losing the creative spirit. When I am mentoring him in our sessions, I can feel that creative buzz. I am learning from him on the creative side, so it is definitely a two-way relationship, which we have both found very useful. I am not sure how many people are in the programme, but in the phase in which I was working, about 50 different business directors were working with different companies in the creative industries sector. It seems to be a very successful programme.

The IOD sees the creative industries as one of the key elements in growing our economy. I believe that we have a cultural product that is second-to-none globally, but we have to be better at selling it outside Northern Ireland. I am keen to build export capacity so that arts and cultural organisations understand how they can sell their products outside Northern Ireland. We hope to develop that programme over the next 12 months.

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** The links that we have built with Invest Northern Ireland through our work with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) have been really interesting. We have the breakfast series. We are considering whether we could do a breakfast series to bring in businesses and cultural organisations that have exported so that we could have some facilitated sharing of information. Yesterday, I attended an EU funding promotion which was launched by Diane Dodds MEP and which linked in nicely with the Arts Council's EU programme launch last week. So, there are already opportunities to join the dots.

**Mr D Bradley:** Good morning. In your findings, you say that the sector, because of its disparate nature, does not have a strong, cohesive voice. Is that damaging to the sector, and if so, in what way?

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** The sector is very diverse, which makes it hard to get it to come together to lobby about its value. That is damaging, but there are opportunities in a cross-departmental working group, for instance, or something along those lines. Even in the arts and cultural sector we could do better at having a collective voice. We are very good at being reactive when we need to respond and come together for a campaign such as I Value the Arts, but there is more that we could do to be proactive. There are challenges in the arts and culture sector, never mind in the broader creative industries.

**Ms Stuart:** When the IOD was developing its creative industries paper, it got representatives from every part of the creative industries to come to the table. The IOD was surprised to discover how many of them had not met, yet they were leaders in their particular sectors. The film industry was not talking to the music industry or the advertising industry, and they were not working together. This highlighted to a number of people that we needed to provide more facilities for networking, not only within the creative industries but across all sectors. There is a role for the sector skills council in bringing together all of the different arts and cultural organisations to look at the skills side. We also need to look at more networking opportunities to bring everybody together. When you get everybody around the table, there is so much commonality, but it is also about how they can work together much more effectively.

We have just had the second creativity month: I worked on the first. It was developed by DCAL and is starting to provide a bit of a brand and a platform.

There is more that we could be doing around a creative Northern Ireland. We looked at it a couple of years ago. Creative industries need to have one place to go, and we need to provide a way for them to share what is going on and share knowledge and information. Something could be developed around creativity month that could help cross-fertilisation across the industry and beyond.

**Mr D Bradley:** Are you saying that if we want to maximise the potential of the industry, we need to have a strong, identifiable voice that represents the broad sweep of it?

**Ms Whittaker:** There is also a capacity issue as regards resources and the time taken to lobby. As Mary said, the sector is very good at reacting to particular causes. When something is given to the sector to react to, it will unite in a very clear and cohesive manner. It is a case of giving direction. Joanne is right: if there were a particular vehicle to use, or umbrella for people to come under, they would take the lead offered. However, until form is given to that, or parameters are laid out, people will prioritise things such as fundraising or company direction.

**Mr D Bradley:** Joanne, you said that when you mentor groups you emphasise exports. Does Northern Ireland have an identifiable cultural product yet, or is there, once again, a sort of broad sweep? Someone might associate Northern Ireland with a literary figure; someone else might associate it with music or whatever. Is there a need to get a more rounded cultural product?

**Ms Stuart:** We are very fortunate because we have a very strong and diverse cultural product in Northern Ireland. It is very attractive. Certainly, it is recognised as an important aspect when companies decide whether to invest in Northern Ireland. It is about the whole cultural environment that we have.

As far as exporting is concerned, sometimes the issue is terminology. When I started to look into exporting, which was also driven around social enterprises because, obviously, a lot of the arts organisations are social enterprises, I discovered that they are doing it without realising that it is exporting as such; that they are taking their products overseas. So, it is about showing a lot of the other organisations that this is the case, having case studies and exemplars, and guiding them in how they can do it and the capacity that needs to be built into their organisations. We have a product that we can take abroad. The fact that it is so diverse is a real positive for Northern Ireland.

When I was working on the creative industries, one of the areas that we looked at was Austin, Texas — I think it was called Wired Austin. That is the sort of thing that we have. We have a really high quality product and lots of different types. We have something for everybody. We want to try to create that whole creative buzz, and we need to get it into all of our businesses. We know how global

the economies are now; we have to remain competitive and continually innovate and adapt our business models. We need to have more of a creative mindset in our businesses as well. If we can create it as part of our culture, which we are doing very successfully, it will benefit the rest of our society and economy.

**Ms Whittaker:** Joanne is right about exemplars. Two companies stand out among our membership: one is Cinemagic, which is the film festival for young people. It has exported to France and is making massive waves in New York and Boston. It has been invited all round the world. If we could go to our other creative industries organisations and say that Cinemagic has done this — and it is not, as Joanne said, necessarily calling it "export" — it would show them that their work has relevance on an international platform and that people will want to see it.

Young at Art, another of our members, has taken a very small niche product called Baby Rave, which is literally a baby rave, and exported that, under a trading arm, to Australia. Again, going back to the signposting issue, it is about signposting the terminology and the trading arms, helping people to see that there are mechanisms for them to take their work elsewhere and showing them the benefits of export.

**Ms Stuart:** The other things that we have to look at are the mechanisms for people to do that. Sometimes, it is a challenge to get funding in order to be able to take something that they have done here and bring it overseas. Also, they may need to look at how their company is structured in order to be able to trade in a different way. That is where capacity building, governance and business skills become much more important as well.

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** On that very point about governance, what we are finding on the mentoring side is that there is still a need to skill up on governance and strategic business planning. Those things, as stage one, are so critical to the sustainability of any organisation. So, there is still a lot of work to be done in that area.

**Ms Stuart:** Through Arts and Business, we recently started a forum for chairpersons of arts and cultural organisations. Personally speaking, as a chairperson from the private sector, it has been very useful to meet others from a culture background, because we can really start to help one other. As that network grows, it will be very helpful and supportive to organisations.

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** When I met the Northern Ireland Tourist Board recently, it said that it sees culture as a critical driver for "Brand NI", as it calls it. It is really exciting that the Tourist Board sees the need to bring us in as well. We are really pushing that.

**Mr Irwin:** I apologise for not being here for all of your presentation. Will it be difficult to move away from the grant mentality and that mindset, given that resources are already stretched and that there is a skills gap? Will it not be difficult to arrive at that situation? Other groups feel that more grant aid is needed, not less. I think that this is all very good, and it would be great to see groups moving away from that mindset, but will it not be very difficult for them to do so?

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** Yes. The key thing that Arts and Business has always advocated is that private investment should never replace public investment. The two have to go hand in hand. We are very aware, particularly Brona who works daily with arts members, that there is a capacity issue. Brona and I have worked in those areas in the past and we know that capacity is a critical issue. That is why we are feeding our support to the sector. There are opportunities, so our support is very valuable in helping and guiding the sector.

A lot of things can be done in simple ways. For example, philanthropy through individual giving is still really untapped by the cultural sector.

Sometimes, it is just a matter of asking an audience for support; but people are very nervous about doing that in case they alienate their audience base. Through surgeries, we have guided organisations through the process. Brona gives one-to-one surgeries with organisations of all sizes.

You can get quite big wins without a huge amount of work. Bruiser Theatre Company — and I think that you had Stephen Beggs here — is a really nice example. We worked with them by placing three people on their board. Stephen came through our link training programme, which was a strategic development programme. The board came to a lot of our masterclasses and went through our individual-giving programme. We had a full day's training with the board on fundraising. As a result, it



did a very simple individual campaign and got quite big wins from it. So, there are opportunities. Without investment in the sector and the capacity, it is difficult, but not impossible.

**Mr McMullan:** Who do you see as being responsible for driving all this? It seems to be going to and fro between Departments. Who are the main drivers? Who co-ordinates things, because co-ordination is the big issue here? We talk about funding and different things, but there has to be someone driving it. You do your bit, and then you tell me that it has to go somewhere else. Where does it go to?

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** I feel that DCAL is the obvious Department in which so much of this fits at the minute. We work through the Arts Council, so my personal opinion is that the leadership role needs to come from DCAL. However, DCAL has to engage with the other Departments that we talked about. I do not know if my colleagues agree with that statement, but I think that DCAL has to engage with the other relevant Departments. We talked about DETI and the economic drivers there.

**Ms Stuart:** This is a common challenge and is not just for the creative industries. Responsibility for the tourism industry lies across two Departments; DCAL and DETI. We find it reassuring that there is a good relationship between DCAL and DETI and their two Ministers with regard to the arts and the cultural and creative industries. There is a recognition of how important the creative industries are to our economy. Also, from a cultural and societal perspective, having a vibrant arts and culture sector is so important to our well-being. For me, responsibility does not rest in one place; it rests across both Departments, and there is a good working relationship between them on the ground.

**Mr McMullan:** When we talk about the use of indigenous talent in the film industry here, is the film industry holding us over a barrel? To me, we cannot seem to use our indigenous talent as other countries do.

**Ms Stuart:** The film industry in Northern Ireland is growing, and we have seen more development in skills locally. Initially, we did not have the skills that we needed because we did not have the critical mass of the industry. I have been talking to a couple of the local production companies, and I think that the idea of internships needs to be explored because they are finding it difficult to get the skills needed in their industry. After that, keeping them here will always be a challenge, which is why it is important that, as our film and creative industries grow, we provide more opportunities for our young people — as they develop their skills — to have a career in Northern Ireland. We still have problems in that area, but there are things that we can do. We are now starting to create the critical mass for the industry.

**Mr McMullan:** Finally, are we in danger of relying on corporate sponsorship to the point of sponsors dictating where the arts are held? I am talking about rural areas that do not seem to be getting their fair share of funding to promote the arts. In such areas, a lot of the arts come from community groups or groups that are struggling. The arts are more centred, as I see it, in the cities. Are we being dictated to by corporate sponsors?

**Ms Whittaker:** You are right; the larger sums of money from corporate sponsors go to the bigger cities. However, as Michelle mentioned, JTI sponsors the Ulster Orchestra, and when that money came back it went to more local or regional areas — I will not say "rural" because Ballymena is not rural. When Patton sponsored the orchestra, the direct benefit that it wanted was for Ballymena and the surrounding areas.

To answer another part of your question: this is a capacity issue. When Mary presented evidence to the Committee's inquiry into arts funding, the issue was raised. We offered sponsorship training in specific local councils to rural community groups. We were in Armagh; we met the Causeway Coast arts group, and we went to Craigavon and various other areas. We went to 59 organisations to offer introduction-to-sponsorship training. We said that it was relative to the size of the organisation. It was about trying to engage with the businesses that were on their doorstep to help them to support local arts products.

We are also trying to recommend to the larger corporates with whom we work to work with the smaller arts organisations that do not have support. Although based in Belfast, organisations such as the Belfast Music Society do not have any full-time members of staff but can work with big organisations such as Barclay's Wealth Management and the Radisson hotel group and can attract investment. I think it comes back to a capacity issue in that smaller arts organisations are often run by people with

other full-time jobs or other organisations to work with, and we are trying to help them skill up and bridge that gap in their knowledge.

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** With sponsorship, there is always the danger that you are going to be following the business objective and be dictated to, but we do not really see that as a trend, I have to say. In most businesses, there is now very much a partnership approach to sponsorship. It is not a matter of taking the money and running, nor is it a matter of the business dictating. There are some really nice examples of that.

One lovely example is around Strabane, whereby a department store, Linton and Robinson, worked with the Alley Arts and Conference Centre which was trying to widen its audience for some of its visual arts exhibitions. The department store was having trouble getting people inside so that it could sell contemporary furniture. They linked up, brought an exhibition of contemporary art into the department store and displayed paintings around the furniture, creating a whole event around it. That really helped the small business, and it also helped the arts organisation. There is another nice example involving a restaurant in Strabane.

**Ms Whittaker:** We just had a new sponsorship announced from the Alley Arts and Conference Centre in Strabane. Given the climate that we are in at the moment, it has secured £5,000 from a local café in a big retail park just on the edge of Strabane that has decided it wants to engage more with social media.

It is a really lovely and very innovative project. The staff in Caffé Fresco will be performing a five-part mini-series which will be streamed on social media to try to increase the number of customers who engage with the pre-theatre menu. The aim is that it links with the arts centre and the customers; and the staff will get a chance to engage in an arts project. A big local theatre company, Cahoots NI, is going to train the staff. It will be professionally done and professionally filmed, in connection with Beam, which is a multimedia centre in Donaghmore. There is real partnership and collaboration happening; and I think that this shows that, regionally, there is real innovation happening with sponsorships as well.

The arts organisation came to us with that project off its own back. The business owner said: "I want more Facebook followers; I want to be bigger on Twitter and I want my customers to know that we are as innovative and modern as that, and I think the arts is the way that I can do that". The business chose the Alley Arts and Conference Centre, which is a bit of a beacon when it comes to that side of things.

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** A lot of businesses are seeing that they have to increase their competitiveness and stand out from their competitors. These kinds of projects, as you can imagine, really engage in working with businesses. The projects are helping businesses to position themselves in a different way and are delivering much better results for them. As long as the approach is the collaborative partnership one that we are seeing as a trend, I think that it is really delivering for business. Businesses are seeing that too, which is great.

**Mrs Hale:** Thank you for your presentation this morning. Mary and Joanne talked about paid internships. At the moment, who is able to offer a paid internship, and do you see a role for local businesses in sponsoring a cross-sectoral internship? Perhaps someone in the engineering skills sector could sponsor some of the cultural internship.

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** We are working very closely with the Arts Council on this as it also feels very passionately about the matter. Arts and Business is willing to lead on a pilot scheme. We put together a potential funding application through the Arts Council just last year. We are still exploring that possibility and we need to raise the funding for it. The opportunities that we have been looking at with the Arts Council are potentially through a trust and foundation; we are examining whether it is something that we can get a trust to fund and whether there is the potential to collaborate with another Department through the learning and education side of things.

On the sponsorship side, many businesses are really focused on that and on growing young talent. There are opportunities, and we are willing to liaise with the Arts Council on piloting some fixed internships if we can do so. It is still in our plan for this year and we are working on it with the Arts Council, so we are keen to do it.

**Ms Stuart:** It is a challenge for business. For example, on the science, technology, engineering and mathematics side, we are looking for businesses to provide some scholarships and work experience placements. You have got me thinking that there is maybe something that we can do to link internships with the STEM agenda to make that more creative, which is something that we have been talking about. I know that, with businesses, we are struggling to get finance to provide scholarships, because of the times that we are in. However, businesses understand that they have a vital role in getting the skills that are needed to grow the businesses. I will certainly take that away and look at creative internships and how we might get both. Taking the example of engineering, we could maybe have an exchange scheme whereby we get people from that area in with the creatives and then get creative offshoots.

**The Chairperson:** Mary, the Committee plans to go to Scotland next week to look at Creative Scotland. What links has your organisation had with Scotland? What are your views on Northern Ireland being branded as a creative hub? Who might take the lead on such a project?

**Ms Trainor-Nagele:** We have an Arts and Business Scotland office, so we have some quite good links there. Brona is leading on a new training programme for senior people in the sector, called Creating Futures. That is looking at the whole issue of strategic business planning, with best practice visits to different parts of the UK. We will take 10 cultural leaders out to Edinburgh to see what the similarities or challenges might be and how they can share information. That is the main way in which we are directly engaging with Scotland at the moment.

A cultural hub is something that we talked about. We saw in the Hansard report that it is coming out as a theme. The key thing about a cultural hub is making sure that it does not become siloed. We talked a lot today about the need to cross-fertilise between sectors. I know that Joanne has some experience of cultural hubs through the likes of the Northern Ireland Science Park, for example.

**Ms Stuart:** The science park has developed from the idea of a hub; we are just about to open the second concourse. It has been very successful in bringing together high-tech, biotech businesses that are a part of our knowledge economy, including the digital media element of creative industries. People get support just from being in the same place. If they go down to the canteen to have a coffee, they bump into people and ideas are talked about. It certainly has a real buzz about it. You get economies of scale, and you can provide support in an easier way when you have everyone together. The important thing for me, though, is that the science park reaches out, to ensure that it is helping networks to develop, and does not become siloed. However, we have studios, Digital Circle and Digital Derry, so we have small creative and cultural hubs that I think are working. For me, it is important to make sure that they do not silo. However, I think Northern Ireland as a creative hub would be good and I think creating that brand around Creative NI would be a real benefit to us.

**The Chairperson:** Who do you envision leading such a project?

**Ms Stuart:** To be honest, I have not really thought of that.

**The Chairperson:** That is part of the difficulty — the lack of collaboration within the sector and in government. Who will take the lead?

**Ms Stuart:** I will give you an example. When the first Creativity Month was being discussed two years ago, I used the new social media stuff to quickly create a platform called Creative NI, just as a way to show how you could provide a platform that everybody could start to link into.

Creating a hub in Northern Ireland does not have to be a big bureaucratic thing. There are ways of doing it within the existing structures, with some funding to help to develop some of that. If you decide that you will have a physical structure and create a physical hub, that is one thing, and it will involve property and management. A virtual hub can be done in a different way and does not need a huge structure around it, but you would still have someone to manage that. Those are my initial thoughts.

**The Chairperson:** That was very useful. Thank you very much for your response and for coming here. No doubt, our paths will meet again.