



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

UK City of Culture 2013: Progress Report

26 June 2012

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Miss Michelle McIlveen (Chairperson)
Mr William Irwin (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr David Hilditch
Mr Michael McGimpsey
Mrs Karen McKeivitt
Mr Oliver McMullan
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín
Mr Robin Swann

Witnesses:

Mr Graeme Farrow	Culture Company 2013 Ltd
Ms Shona McCarthy	Culture Company 2013 Ltd
Ms Mary McNamee	Culture Company 2013 Ltd

The Chairperson: I welcome Shona McCarthy, the chief executive of the Culture Company 2013, and her accompanying officials. Please introduce your team and make an opening statement, after which members will follow up with some questions.

Ms Shona McCarthy (Culture Company 2013 Ltd): I will be delighted to. Thank you very much for the invitation to come today. I know that you had a briefing from Joanna McConway from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) last week, so we tried to slightly adjust our presentation so that you do not get exactly the same information all over again.

Graeme Farrow is our executive programmer and leads on the programming side. Mary McNamee is our board business manager/diaspora manager/London event co-ordinator. She will debrief members on a presentation that we gave in Westminster recently.

I will concentrate on the seven months to go until the opening in January 2013 and the big outstanding challenges for us. One of the big issues was the two core venues in the city. As you know, we are the first residents of the former Ebrington Barracks site. The Culture Company is located in building 71 on the site. Of the two core venues for 2013, buildings 80 and 81 will be the hosting venues for the Turner Prize, which is one of the major achievements of 2013. It will attract to Derry/Londonderry the biggest contemporary visual art event coming out of England for the first time ever, sponsored by the Tate Gallery.

There was some concern about whether that venue would be ready in time, and we are delighted to report that that venue, and the one that we commonly call the Vital Venue — the temporary pavilion

that will house 45 elements of our programme — have both been approved by the Minister for Social Development for progress. A project manager has been recruited to lead specifically on those two projects. I am very happy to report to this Committee that we are happy with progress on those venues, both of which are set to be delivered on time, on target and within budget. That had been something of a concern for us up until now, but it is very much on track.

There have been other challenges. Although the significant investment of £12.6 million, through DCAL, from the Northern Executive, has been hugely celebrated and appreciated, we still have a very real fundraising challenge in order to meet the overall targets for the project. In real terms, for us as a team, it probably works out at around £5 million. We can account for some of it through ticket sales and merchandising, but, for us, the direct fundraising target through trusts, foundations, other non-departmental public bodies and sponsorship is around £5 million. That is going to be a major focus for this team. It already is a major focus, but raising the rest of the money will be the absolute number one priority for us over the next six months.

Another challenge is unforeseen costs. Liverpool was the City of Culture in 2008 and Glasgow was City of Culture in 1990, but they are very different cities. We are doing our own unique programme in our own unique city. Undoubtedly, there will be unforeseen costs: there will be elements that have not been accounted for; or the unpredictable could come at us. Among the challenges for us as a team is to make sure that we build in contingency; to make sure that we prioritise; and to make sure that we know, from the outset, what elements of the programme we might lose if something else comes at us. That is an ongoing challenge.

There has been an integration of the various marketing strategies. Northern Ireland 2012 did a very good job — particularly focused around Belfast, the Causeway and the NI 2012 initiatives — in integrating a marketing strategy that involved Tourism Ireland, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, the local authorities and the cultural institutions. We have asked that that NI 2012 high-level stakeholder group morph into a responsibility now for 2013. That has been agreed by that group. I am really happy with progress in that and that we now have a structure and mechanism that integrates Tourism Ireland, the Tourist Board, the Derry Visitor and Convention Bureau, Derry City Council and ourselves around an integrated marketing strategy that will work for not only the cultural programme and 2013 but for the city, the year and the region.

Another ongoing challenge for us, which we are always very sensitive about, is the issue of media leaks. It is no secret that an early and incomplete draft of the programme was leaked to the press two or three weeks before our preview programme launch and that it was published in full in the 'Londonderry Sentinel'. Our reaction to that has been to have very robust procedures around how we share the programme. It is not that we want to be overly protective about it, but, as you will know, when you are negotiating work with artists and music groups, there is contract-sensitive information, and it is in the interests of no one to have it in the public domain until you have the contracts tied down and sealed. Therefore, we have had to be a lot more robust in our procedures for keeping issues, particularly the programme, private until such times as we are ready to launch more details in September.

Graeme will tell you a little bit about the Peace One Day concert, which, for us, was a major experiment to see how the Ebrington site works for a major event and how the city works in delivering such an event.

One of the ongoing issues, of course, is security. We have really tested that, and I think that we have a very robust system. We work with Derry City Council, the safety advisory group there, all the blue-light services, the infrastructure group within the council and the PSNI. The PSNI has recruited what we call the culture cops, who are four of its members who are focused specifically on working with us to ensure the safety and security not only of the citizens of the city, but of the tourists and people who will visit the city for the programme in 2013. We have an excellent relationship there, and there are very serious event management, planning and project planning procedures in place with them.

The other big challenge set out is that the bid committed to working with every single citizen in the city to ensure that there was 100% participation. I think we have briefed you on that, Michelle. That is not easy in any setting, but we took that challenge extremely seriously. That is even demonstrated by the way in which we shaped our programming team. Half our team is focused on education and communities and the other half on international and national connections and major events. All that has legacy written into it. The team has had over 1,200 engagements with different communities across the city, and we have a programme that is so of and from those local communities. We are really very proud of it. A huge amount of work has been done in that area.

I am going to return quickly to how we will address the fundraising shortfall. As I said, that is the single biggest priority for us over the next few months. We have done an awful lot of groundwork with various trusts and foundations. We have also done a huge amount of work with potential corporate partners, about six of which are at contractual stage. I am really heartened with how that is going forward. I do not understate the challenge, but we have a strategy and an approach. I think we will get very close. If we do not make up the full amount of the shortfall, we will get very close to doing so.

You all have a copy of the preview programme. Graeme will talk to that, and Mary will give you some background on what we were doing in Westminster last week and how that went. I ask Mary to brief you on that.

Ms Mary McNamee (Culture Company 2013 Ltd): Thank you, Shona. Given that we have secured the very significant underpinning funding from local government, the next delivery phase of our strategy was to look to the UK and our friends there. We worked with the support of the Northern Ireland Office. The Minister of State for Northern Ireland, Hugo Swire, offered to support an event in the Houses of Parliament, which we called fundraising and friend-raising. We had a two-part event. We started off with a pitch to a group of corporate interested parties and selected a number of elements of the programme that we felt corporate companies would be interested in supporting. We had a hand-picked group of corporates in the room, and three local chief executives and the chief executive, accompanied by the First Minister and the deputy First Minister, and we made a pitch seeking support to underpin the programme. That was a very successful engagement, although we need to harvest it. It was an initial step, but we had a lot of interest and were heartened by the companies that came forward, which included JTI, Sainsbury's UK and Flybe. British Airways was unable to send a representative but expressed interest, and we have had a further meeting with it. There were about 20 in the room and we were very heartened by the response we got.

That was followed by a reception for about 200 people in the Cholmondeley Room on the banks of the Thames. At that reception were a range of cultural champions and cultural organisation, such as, notably, Arts Council England, which happily took the opportunity to make a funding announcement of £750,000. That was very welcome news and was well received. Also present were a number of corporates, representatives of the City of London Corporation, the City of London Guilds, political representatives from across the water and Northern Ireland MPs and Lords who were in London on business that day. We had a very successful evening, and there was a really nice feel-good atmosphere in the room. We also had entertainment supplied by two of our local cultural champions, the young and upcoming singer Ben Kelly, a contestant on the BBC's 'The Voice', and another relative newcomer called Phil Coulter. They entertained us with a baby grand piano, which also made a great prop for photographs at the end of the evening.

We received a lot of feedback from the attendees at both events, and they were really pleased that we took the project to them and made them aware of progress to date. It was heartening to hear that, although the project is happening in the north-west of Northern Ireland, there is fundamental and widespread recognition of the fact that it is a UK title and of the elements that we are going to incorporate to make sure that it is fully represented and that we are engaging and seeking to engage further with UK representatives. That is one example of a roadshow event that we have had. We also had others in the USA, so we are not parochial or local in what we are doing.

Mr Graeme Farrow (Culture Company 2013 Ltd): I will update you on the programme. Obviously, we had two major events recently: the launch of the preview programme, a copy of which I can see everybody has; and the Peace One Day concert, which was delivered in partnership with London 2012. There were over 700 attendees at the launch of the preview programme and 8,000 at the concert. That demonstrated that the city is behind us fully. There were no incidents to report from the Peace One Day concert; in fact, we had nothing but glowing reports the following day from local residents about how it had been managed from an event management and security perspective, how disruption had been minimised with traffic, and so on. It was a milestone for us just to prove that the Ebrington site works and is an excellent live venue proposition. We are looking forward to welcoming a lot of major events to that site.

I have been involved in lots of launch events in the past, but I do not think that I have been to many that were embraced by a city as much as our preview launch was. The launch went on for quite a long time — it lasted for about two hours and everybody stayed to the end to hear Phil playing 'The Town I Loved So Well'. There was also very positive feedback for the content of the programme.

Shona talked about the level of community engagement that we have had so far. The Turner Prize is coming; the fleadh is coming; there is a major weekend rock festival in May; the Royal Ballet is coming; and all sorts of things. The two programming elements that really underpin most of what we are doing are the Portrait of a City project and the Music Promise. Portrait of a City is a call to the community to collect photographs from citizens and to display them in the public domain to tell a story about various aspects of the city. The best example I usually give is that, when you walk into any of the main churches in the city in 2013, you will be met by a sea of wedding photographs as a portrait of love in the city. People will donate copies of their wedding photographs to the Culture Company. Similarly, Austins department store will be a gallery of the life and times of Austins. The gay community is involved in a project called the Bands Forum, which involves a photographic history of band culture in the city. So, it is an all-encompassing project, which everybody in the city has access to and everybody can be involved in. You could say that it is curated by the people of the city.

I also mentioned the Music Promise. There are 8,000 children in the city between the ages of three and eight. Every single one of those children will receive a minimum of 10 hours' free music tuition on an instrument during 2013.

Beyond that, we are setting up recording facilities with the Nerve Centre throughout the city where bands, school choirs, orchestras and groups can book in and come out with a piece of music that they recorded during 2013. Again, that offers huge opportunities for participation.

Other parts of the Music Promise offer opportunities to perform and opportunities to be inspired. So, throughout the programme, there are opportunities for school choirs to be involved in our opening concert and for local rock musicians to play with Hofesh Shechter, who is an international choreographer. Participation and diversity are writ large throughout everything that we are doing.

Ms S McCarthy: In closing on that, we are already placing Apple Mac suites in schools and community centres as part of the Portrait of a City project. This project is also about skilling up, and we have people there who are being trained in digital technology and archiving. Local communities are, literally, being trained in how to do this for themselves.

The legacy of that will be the biggest public archive that any city has ever held on its own story. It will be able to be used and drawn on time and time again. It is not just about photography, but about moving images. It is a huge project, as is the Music Promise. The three- to eight-year-olds element of the Music Promise is just the start. There are three other elements of that project, one of which is about young people with special needs.

Another element is about young people who are already excellent in the field of music, because we want to support them, take them to the next level and introduce them to some of the incredible artists who are going to be in the city over the course of the year, so that they can up their game.

The fourth element is about young people who are at the greatest disadvantage. We do not say these things lightly. These are things that we are working on as challenges as well. It is easy to say that we are going to reach young people who are at most disadvantage, but they really need to work with partners across the city, with the education and library board and community groups to make anything like that real.

That is a flavour of what we are doing. We prefer to answer any questions that you may have, because we know that you have seen the preview programme and you heard from Joanna last week.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much. I apologise for members running in and out. It is Question Time in the Chamber, and a number of members are scheduled to ask questions of the Minister for Social Development and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Thank you for coming and giving us this update. It is clear that your biggest challenge is the £5 million fundraising issue. It is a challenging time at which to try to get corporate sponsorship. This is the second presentation that we have received in recent days with the same issue. The World Police and Fire Games, which are taking place at the same time, may or may not be chasing the same pots of money. I am not sure whether that also presents a challenge.

What percentage of your events will be free to the public?

Mr Farrow: The guiding principle is that 75% of the events will be free. Of those that we have launched so far, the Turner Prize event is free, as are the Portrait of a City and the Music Promise events. The Music City project is a community music participation project that encourages anyone who plays music to get out onto the streets and play for a day on the longest day of the year.

Most of the events are free, and we are conscious of how hard it is in the market to sell tickets for events. I am aware of the difficulties that are being faced by commercial music industry promoters, but that is not why we are doing this. We made a commitment to make the majority of the events free right from the off.

We are trying to take culture out onto the streets here so that everybody can enjoy it. That is why the Portrait of a City programme will be everywhere in the public realm. Void gallery, for example, is creating four new gardens for the city, which will be there for good. A project called 72 Hour Urban Action aims to transform 10 locations in 72 hours with a team of community volunteers and architects as part of an international competition.

There is, obviously, an imperative to generate income from ticket sales, and we have rock concerts, folk concerts and all sorts throughout the year as well, but the majority of our focus is on free events.

The Chairperson: You have obviously made assumptions on sales for those events where there are tickets to be sold. What percentage of capacity have you based your figures on?

Mr Farrow: We did not do an event capacity mean; we worked on an event-by-event basis and went by the experience in the team and out there within the industry as to what we thought each event would sell. We are conscious that it is Derry and we are not going to sell out every event. In the Vital Venue, for example, we are working on an average of around 60% capacity.

The Chairperson: The last time we spoke, there were discussions around accommodation and the challenges that there may be, particularly around the time of the fleadh. Have you sought to secure additional accommodation elsewhere? I know that, at that time, there was also talk of cruise ships coming in for the World Police and Fire Games, and our understanding is that that may not be happening now. How do you think you will be able to meet that challenge?

Ms S McCarthy: I am always keen to point out that the Culture Company's brief is to deliver on the cultural programme for 2013, and it is really our partners in Derry City Council and Ilex who are leading on the infrastructure development. However, we liaise with them on a weekly basis and there is an infrastructure group within council that we are all part of. I am really happy to report that there is a Premier Inn half-built as we speak. It is very encouraging to see a new hotel already being developed in the city. Three of the existing hotels are putting on extensions, and there is an accommodation committee lined up in association with the All-Ireland Fleadh as well, so the council is very actively looking at the options around camping and temporary accommodation facilities.

This is where I think the whole region seeks to benefit, because we have colleagues in Limavady, Omagh and Strabane and in the surrounding hinterland as far out as Coleraine. There are people staying in the city at the minute who are there for the Irish Open. When you go to any other place, it is not a big deal if you have to travel for an hour to go to something, so this is where I think the whole region seeks to benefit from the opportunities to accommodate the visitors who will undoubtedly come to the city in 2013.

Mr Farrow: I present to the infrastructure group on a regular basis — in fact, we have a meeting tomorrow morning — but we are taking the likes of the fleadh and other major events, such as the project called Lumiere, on a case-by-case basis and looking at what bespoke activity needs to take place. We are looking at that from a transport perspective because we have identified the need for probably four park-and-ride facilities that need to be developed in time for the end of spring next year. We are also looking at boutique campsite opportunities and so on. Everybody is around the table looking at the solutions. We have got the big flashpoints, as it were, where over 100,000 people will converge on the city over a period. We really need bespoke solutions as the hotel infrastructure could never cater for that. You can get flat-pack hotels these days.

Ms S McCarthy: The World Police and Fire Games are looking at those as well.

Mr Farrow: There are solutions out there.

Ms S McCarthy: We are talking on a regular basis to John and Alistair and the team from the World Police and Fire Games. We are facing some similar challenges, so we are just sharing potential solutions.

Mr Swann: Thank you for your presentation. What has been very evident through any presentation that we have is the possibility of a funding shortfall. How is that being hampered by the security threats that you mentioned? There are ongoing attacks within the city, even in your own premises; are you finding that that affects feedback when you go out to raise further sponsorship?

Ms S McCarthy: It is not something that has been raised as an obstacle directly in that way by anyone at all. We have really noticed in the past month that corporates have come to us and said that they are ready to commit. That has absolutely without a doubt been unlocked by the £12.6 million investment from the Executive. I genuinely believe that a lot of the organisations and companies we have been working with over the past eight or nine months thought that they were interested in the concept, but the public sector investment has given them the confidence that this is now a viable project. It is no longer an aspiration, it is a reality. That has undoubtedly unlocked other support for us. It is no coincidence that the Arts Council of England made its commitment last week. The BBC was also there last week, and really outlined the benefits. It is sort of an in-kind backing that it is giving is over the year. If you tried to put an estimate on the value of that, it would go into the tens of millions. I again thank the Northern Ireland Executive, because that support has really helped to unlock other backing.

Mr Swann: During the presentation last week, the £4.6 million from the Department for Social Development for a temporary facility was mentioned. Is that the best use of that money, or could it have been used for a better development, possibly in another location in the city, to leave a further legacy?

Ms S McCarthy: All options were considered. The reality is that the city does not have an indoor venue that can cater for more than 1,000 at the moment. Our biggest venue is the Millennium Forum, and, as fabulous as that is, the new facility was actually a commitment that was made in the bid, and it was a condition upon which the city was given the title. There needed to be a bigger venue that would cater for larger-scale international-style events. The required capacity was identified at 4,500 standing and 2,500 seated. We already have 45 substantive events programmed for that venue, which stands to generate a large percentage of the income that we are hoping to get through ticket sales. So, it will be value for money. We also costed what it would take to start with a new venue from scratch — you would be talking about £30 million or £40 million.

The city has not yet proved, in its regular lifetime, the need for a venue of that scale and size to be permanent. This is a fabulous one-off opportunity for a year-long programme to really demonstrate that the city could actually cater, in the longer term, for a permanent facility. That is the ambition behind it.

Mr Farrow: It has opened the door for financial promoters such as MCD Productions and Aiken PR, who have already been banging on the door pointing out that Derry has never had such a facility and asking whether they can look at how they might be able to do business with us. They are not touring product into the city at all at the minute. What we can do is establish the city as a place in which people can do business and people can tour work to. We can make the case for that infrastructure if we can prove that it is sustainable and that, the commercial sector in particular, can come to the city to make money.

Shona is right: it is an opportunity to demonstrate what capacity Derry has and to see whether there is an identifiable gap that needs to be filled.

Ms S McCarthy: There was an interesting scenario last week during the Peace One Day concert. There were 8,000 people in Ebrington square for this fabulous outdoor event, but the Millennium Forum was also booked out both nights. That illustrated to me that the city can have multiple large-scale events going on and still attract the audiences for both. There is a real hunger there for more opportunities.

Mr Ó hOisín: I apologise for coming in late; it is busy today.

Thanks, Shona. You do not have to convince me about Derry's status as the City of Culture; I always say that it is the capital of culture on this island, indeed, on these islands. I attended a number of the events that you mentioned. It was an excellent showcasing not only of the big names but right down to community level, which will deliver during 2013. The Peace One Day concert last week was absolutely brilliant as well, not least because my wife got her picture taken with Jude Law, which got me a few brownie points that I will be cashing in very shortly.

Probably my only criticism, which is one I heard of on the night, is about the surface at Ebrington. There are some questions over it. Maybe that is something you might want to look at at some point.

Quite a number of the events that are coming up are organised by other bodies, such as the GAA, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Turner Prize. We had the Department's assessment of what percentage of those events will be stand-alone events, which I thought was very low. What is your assessment of that? Which ones will be put together by the Culture Company? Do you have a ballpark figure?

Mr Farrow: I can give you a rough idea. On the chart, there are about 136 projects, and we have responsibility for delivering about 50 of those internally. The Turner Prize is one of those events, and it will run for two days. Most of the projects that we are responsible for involve partnerships. For example, the live broadcast of the opening concert is a co-production between us and BBC Northern Ireland. We will take all the help that we can get.

Mr Ó hOisín: Fair enough. You touched on the accommodation issue. I was glad that you did that, and I have touched base with you before on that, Shona. You mentioned that you are co-operating with other local authorities. How is that panning out? Has there been any more success in recent times than there was previously?

Ms S McCarthy: We have given a whole series of presentations. We were in Limavady with Arlene about six weeks ago to give a presentation to the business community in the area. We have also been to Strabane and Omagh, and the team were in Buncrana last night. We have also asked Derry City Council to lead on hosting an event for all the local authorities. That will allow us to do one overall presentation on where we are on all the issues that you have asked about today, such as the programme, the accommodation, the projected tourist numbers, and to detail when we expect very large-scale crowds. That event will allow everyone to respond and to benefit from the opportunity.

Mr Ó hOisín: When will that event be?

Ms S McCarthy: I do not know yet. However, we will be back in Limavady in a couple of weeks.

Mr Irwin: I see that there has been a bit of problem with media leaks. Procedures have been put in place to try to militate against that. Have they worked?

Ms S McCarthy: I think so. As well as our internal procedures, we have set up what we call a culture media forum, which includes the editors of the local newspapers. The BBC has appointed a producer from Radio Foyle called Larry Deeny as their liaison person with the Culture Company, and we are doing an awful lot more talking with the media to give them private briefings. We have told them that the information is sensitive and that it is in all our interests for the initiative to work for the city. That, together with our passwords and coding for everything, seems to have had a very positive effect.

We have to take it on the chin. For the past nine months, people have been desperate for knowledge and that vacuum will be filled with whatever people can get hold of. The preview launch was a key moment for us and our approach has increased confidence in the city and among the media. Through a combination of those factors, we have managed —

Mr Irwin: So, you gave them the information that they need.

Ms S McCarthy: Yes. That has worked for us.

Mrs McKevitt: Thanks very much for your presentation. I also apologise for having left in the middle of the meeting. However, as the Chair explained, Question Time has been on. You said that community engagement was your top priority. Have any of the 1,200 meetings and briefings been

with community organisations that will be able to input into the process during 2013 by volunteering and stewarding?

You touched on the transport issue and said that there would be a briefing for all the councils that surround Derry — probably 26. Have you had any discussions with local bus operators about day tours and transport between Derry and other cities and towns that would bring in revenue for you?

Mr Farrow: We have had several detailed discussions with Translink. Translink is represented on the infrastructure group as well. Most of the likes of the commercial tour operators, for instance, have been handled by the Derry Visitor and Convention Bureau, because they are generic city tours rather than programme-focused tours.

You mentioned discussions with the community around volunteering. We have a volunteering steering group, which is made up of all of the neighbourhood renewal partners, such as the Waterside, Triax, Fountain and Bogside. We are aiming to recruit around 2,000 volunteers for the year. Stewarding and so on are emphatically part of what those volunteers will be expected to contribute towards. A lot of projects require volunteers as part of the actual artistic process. I mentioned the 72 Hour Urban Action, in which architects need volunteers to transform 10 physical spaces in their communities. They are identified by discussions with community groups and staffed by company volunteers. It is incredible what happens in the space of 72 hours; furthermore, most of it is permanent. We need people to pick people up and make sure that they are well catered for, and we need people to steward crowds. There are also opportunities for volunteers to participate in events. They are not merely the people with yellow vests.

The Chairperson: Shona, you will recall that the Committee corresponded with you in relation to the Association of Ulster Drama Festivals. We had requested that Londonderry host the British one-act finals during 2013. In your response, you said that you had a mammoth task in looking at thousands of projects that were seeking support from you. What criteria are you using to decide on which community projects and events will be included in the overall programme? When will groups be made aware of your final decision?

Ms S McCarthy: We have had a robust set of criteria from the outset, which derived from the bid and the One Plan. There has to be serious ownership and participation at a local level; there has to be a legacy from the project; and there are equality criteria, which state that the project must be of a very high quality and standard, regardless of whether it is community-based or a major international event. I cannot remember all of the criteria off the top of my head, but we have a very robust set of criteria and guidelines around which every project is considered.

One of the major elements of the programme is an initiative called What's the Big Idea? It is the main vehicle for community-based organisations to present their individual proposals and propositions. There is an application form and a process for that, and a team will consider those proposals and assess them against the guidelines and criteria that Culture Company has had from the outset.

Mr Farrow: We will be letting people know within the next month. We had well over 500 proposals in all shapes and sizes, and we are having to parcel them up into different types of events against the criteria. One criterion is tourism generation, and one is about participation and ownership. We call them the step-change principles. We are looking for additionality here; we are not looking for funding the state's own city. We are looking for ideas that take us to the next level and that are additional to what is there annually, as it stands. Those are the main criteria to be looked at in respect of the proposals, and we asked about the step-change.

Ms S McCarthy: We had to be really careful, because a lot of organisations are losing their funding, particularly in the current climate. Furthermore, smaller-scale projects, in particular, are not being supported where they had traditionally been supported. I think, in some people's eyes, it is like, "These guys have the money now, they're the catch-all for everything." We have been really clear, and have had to stay really clear and focused, about what the vision for this whole thing was, and to make absolutely certain that the Culture Company did not become some alternative Arts Council or community foundation, handing out grants to just every project that came from everywhere. What we have done — and I am really proud of this — is leveraged support from other organisations, such as the Big Lottery Fund, for example, and it will open its application process in August. That is for £1.1 million that Big Lottery has set aside —

Mr Farrow: I think they have just added another £250,000 on to that, so it is £1.3 million.

Ms S McCarthy: So, there will be an open application process by an organisation that has been set up to do just that, where people can apply for grants of up to £10,000 for any individual project. Again, we have levered the Arts Council of England money. We have levered other resources from UnLtd and from other sources, and we will definitely be encouraging people to apply to those sources. We have a curated programme that is supposed to be the benchmark for the first ever UK City of Culture that has to meet certain criteria.

The Chairperson: Obviously, then, when you are responding to those groups you will be very clear as to where they did not meet the criteria, because we may find that we are corresponded with. And as a result, we will then correspond with you. *[Laughter.]* Thank you very much for your time and for coming this afternoon. You have a huge challenge still ahead, and the Committee will be keeping an eye on what is going on.