

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure End of Session Report 1st September 2014 – 31st August 2015

Remit and Powers

The Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure (The Committee) is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraph 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, Section 29 of the NI Act 1998 and under Assembly Standing Order 48. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role in respect of the Minister of Culture, Arts & Leisure and has a role to play in the initiation, consideration and development of legislation.

The Committee has the power to:

- Consider and advise on Departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- Approve relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee stage of primary legislation;
- Call for persons and papers;
- Initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- Consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

The Committee has 11 members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, with a quorum of 5 members.

The membership of the Committee is as follows:

Mr. Nelson McCausland⁵ (Chairperson)
Mr. Gordon Dunne (Deputy⁶ Chairperson)

Mr. Dominic Bradley
Mr. David Hilditch
Mr. William Humphrey³
Mr. Basil McCrea⁴
Mrs. Rosaleen McCorley²
Mr. Leslie Cree⁷
Mrs Karen McKeivitt
Mr. Oliver McMullan¹
Mr. Cathal Ó hOisín

¹ With effect from 12 September 2011 Mr Oliver McMullan replaced Mr Gerry Kelly

² With effect from 10 September 2012 Ms Rosie McCorley replaced Mr Pat Sheehan

³ With effect from 01 October 2012 Mr William Humphrey replaced Ms Brenda Hale

⁴ With effect from 04 March 2013 Mr Basil McCrea replaced Mr Robin Swann

⁵ With effect from 23 September 2014 Mr Nelson McCausland replaced Ms Michelle McIlveen as Chairperson

⁶ With effect from 23 September 2014 Mr Gordon Dunne replaced Mr William Irwin as Deputy Chairperson

⁷ With effect from 06 October 2014 Mr Leslie Cree replaced Mr Michael McGimpsey

This report covers the work of the Committee from 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015.

Key activities, outputs and achievements

Introduction

During the 2014-15 session, the Committee fulfilled its scrutiny role through consideration of the following key issues:

- The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure's (the Department) expenditure, Business Plan and Promoting Equality and Tackling Social Exclusion (PETPSE) and Building a United Community (T:BUC) initiatives.
- The annual reports and accounts of DCAL's Arms' Length Bodies (ALBs) and the impact that the significant financial pressures faced by these ALBs. The Committee acted as a super consultee and offered comprehensive views on these reports and the impact that budget cuts will have on the these organisations;
- The Executive's EU Priorities including Departmental targets within the document. Specifically, the Committee focused on how ALBs and the Department could best utilise the EU Funding Streams, networking opportunities and programmes.
- Decision making processes employed in relation to strategies and ad-hoc projects supported by the Department; specifically the criteria used by the Department when awarding funding to organisations across NI.

The Committee continued its Inquiry into Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities with additional written and oral submissions taken during the session. The Inquiry is ongoing as other Committee priorities emerged; including the commencement a new Inquiry into issues around Emergency Exiting Plans, including their impact on stadium capacity, for the redeveloped Casement Park Stadium.

The Committee commissioned a broad range of research papers from the Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) to assist in its work. The subjects included Waterways registration and licensing fees, European Funding streams available to ALBs, Orchestra Funding models, Community Festivals and safety regulations associated with sporting grounds.

The Committee has continued to successfully use Twitter ([@niacalcommittee](https://twitter.com/niacalcommittee)) to notify interested parties of its meeting topics, upcoming events and consultations. The Committee has also had increased interest in the live streaming of their meetings in this session mainly due to the inquiries being undertaken by the Committee.

LEGISLATION

Primary Legislation

The Committee has responsibility to consider primary legislation that originates from the Department; however, the Department did not introduce any primary legislation during this period.

Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered and supported the approval of The Fisheries (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (SR 2015/239). This amendment allowed loughs that were able to maintain sustainable stock levels to be opened for the 2015 fishing season. The Department provided the Committee with a written submission on this issue and the Committee agreed to support the introduction of this Statutory Rule.

Legislative Consent Motions

The Committee was not required to consider any Legislative Consent Motions during this session.

INQUIRIES AND INVESTIGATIONS

Inquiry into Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities

During 2013-2014 session the Committee launched an inquiry into Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities which continued into the 2014-2015 session. The key objective of the inquiry is to examine the accessibility and outreach activity of arts venues and bodies. The inquiry will further seek to establish the impact of these on the inclusion in the arts of working class communities. Overall, the aim of the inquiry is to pinpoint and understand barriers to inclusion in the arts faced by members of working class communities and to make recommendations as to how these might be overcome. The Committee's findings will also feed into the Department's Culture and Arts Strategy (expected in the 2015-16 session) which will outline how the functions of DCAL will be strategically absorbed into the new Departments in 2016.

To date, the Committee has received almost 50 written submissions and has taken oral evidence from a wide range of organisations and individuals. The Committee expects to report on its findings by the end of the next session.

Inquiry into issues around Emergency Exiting Plans, including their impact on stadium capacity, for the redeveloped Casement Park Stadium

As part of the Committee's scrutiny of DCAL's funding of the construction costs and timetables for the **stadia redevelopment** at Casement, Ravenhill and Windsor Park, Members were made aware of issues raised by the Safety Technical Group (STG) in

relation to emergency exiting at the redeveloped Casement Park. Therefore, the Committee commenced an Inquiry into issues around Emergency Exiting Plans, including their impact on stadium capacity, for the redeveloped Casement Park Stadium, and it was agreed that due to the time sensitive nature of this inquiry, that this report would be the Committee's priority. The Committee have held a number of evidence sessions in the 2014-2015 session and have received a number of written submissions from relevant stakeholders. This inquiry will continue into the 2015-2016 session. The Committee will report in due course.

Further information regarding the Inquiries, including the full terms of reference and written submissions are available to view at [CAL Committee Inquiries](#).

EU Scrutiny

The Committee focused on European matters this session and Members were particularly interested in what funding could be made available to organisations within Northern Ireland from various EU streams such as Horizon 2020 and Creative Europe.

Members received briefings from the Arts Council NI Creative Europe Desk Officer, Belfast City Council Europe and International Office officials and officials from within DCAL. The Committee was impressed by briefing from the Arts Council who had recently appointed a full time Creative Europe Desk Officer to focus on developing relationships across Europe and to better understand how to access funding and networking opportunities. This highlighted to the Committee the importance that the Arts Council had placed on European initiatives and were encouraged to learn that the skills and knowledge being developed by the Creative Europe Desk Officer is being shared with the other ALBs. The Committee wrote to all ALBs highlighting this service and encouraged each body to engage with Europe, highlighting programmes that may be relevant to each one.

Members were impressed by the European Unit based within Belfast City Council and the opportunities that had been developed by the officials within that team. Following the briefing from the Department's European Office, Members expressed concern that the Department was not focusing enough on the European funding streams or maximising the opportunities available, especially in light of the current financial restrictions facing the Department and the ALBs. The Department agreed to take on board the Committee's recommendations and agreed to meet with the European Unit in Belfast City Council to learn from their best practices.

BUDGET SCRUTINY

The Committee has heavily focused on its scrutiny role of the Department's budget and regularly received updates from the Department on the management of its annual budget. The Committee questioned officials on the Department's in-year bids and surrenders arising from the monitoring rounds.

Members queried departmental bids, reduced requirements and surrendered resources and on the underlying policy and budget priorities highlighted. The Committee particularly focused on the spending profile of projects which received Executive investment, administered by the Department including the Stadia Redevelopment Programme and the investment in legacy projects following on from the City of Culture. Members queried the inescapable pressures and Ministerial priorities which received funding throughout the year.

Considerable time was spent examining the Departmental spend on North West projects funded as legacy projects following the UK City of Culture 2013 and the Committee heard briefings from the Minister, Permanent Secretary and North West Office officials relating to this spend. Members are keen to understand the strategy and criteria used by the Department in awarding funding to projects undertaken by the North West Office. Members are still waiting for additional information relating to this spend to be brought forward by the Department and this will be an ongoing issue for the Committee in the next session.

The Committee gave close scrutiny to the funding provided by the Department to language bodies and sought to have parity of spend demonstrated across Irish language and Ulster Scots initiatives, including the Líofo campaign. This issue will continue in the 2015-16 session and is likely to re-examined when consideration is given to the Irish Language Bill.

POLICY SCRUTINY

In November 2013, the Minister committed funding to the legacy of the **Derry /Londonderry UK City of Culture 2013** by setting up a company limited by guarantee to deliver legacy programmes and set up a DCAL North West Office. The Committee visited the North West in March 2015 to visit some projects that had received this funding and learn how the money was being spent. Members then had a briefing from an official in the North West regarding what strategy or policy was being used to ensure funding was accessible to all groups and what transparency was offered by these projects. The Committee was informed that a formalised policy with set criteria had been discounted by DFP on grounds of funding not being available and therefore, funding was allocated on a case by case basis, based on need, the impact that this project would have across the wider community and in line with the Department's PETSPE aims.

Members expressed concern regarding the apparent 'ad-hoc' nature which these projects are selected and funded. This is an on-going issue which the Members will receive briefings updating them on these issues from the Permanent Secretary and other senior officials with responsibility for the North West.

Broadcasting matters were considered by Members through the session. Issues surrounding the upcoming renewal of the BBC Charter have been a major area of work that has been examined by the Committee with this work being one of the

priorities for the Committee in the 2015-2016 session. The Committee contributed to the Future of the BBC Inquiry held by the Select Committee for Culture, Media and Sports at Westminster. The Committee's written evidence to this Inquiry is available [here](#). The Committee hosted the Director General of the BBC at an event in Parliament buildings in October 2014.



Committee Members met with the Director General of the BBC, Tony Hall and the BBC NI Director Peter Johnston in October 2014.

In light of the Green Paper produced by the Department for Culture, Media and Sports published in July 2015, the Committee will consider these recommendations before proceeding with their own consultations with local TV producers, the Department and other interested groups.

Under the remit of languages DCAL has responsibility for the promotion of **Sign Language**. The Committee were keen to examine what could be done to make NI more accessible for deaf and hard of hearing people and had presentations to the Committee on this subject including the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill. The Department is also in the process of developing a report on Sign Language taking into account of the Committee's considerations. This report is due to be made available to the Committee at the end of November 2015.



The Committee continued its work looking at **amateur boxing** in Northern Ireland and, in particular, allegations of racism and sectarianism in the sport. The Committee requested heard from the Independent Working Group which was established to examine these issues and was updated on the recommendations produced by this group. The Committee also was updated on the Belfast City Council Boxing Strategy and its work to learn what lessons could be learnt by the Department in developing amateur boxing clubs. The Department is taking forward the Boxing Investment Programme and have taken on board the Committee's views in relation to these issues.

COMMITTEE MOTIONS

During the session, there were no Committee Motions brought to the Chamber; however, the Committee Chair contributed to budget debates on behalf of the Committee.

ENGAGEMENT

Meetings, Informal Meetings and Visits

During this session, the Committee met 41 times. The majority of meeting time was in public session. While the Committee has indicated a preference for meeting in public, there are occasions when it must meet in closed session most notably when considering sensitive or confidential information.

The Committee also held **informal meetings** with a range of cultural and sporting bodies who asked the Committee to champion causes or to provide Members with more information that would be relevant the issues examined by the Committee such as meeting with representatives from the Brain Injury Trust, Disability Sport NI, the Ulster Orchestra, PACT and OFCOM.

The Committee held nine **external meetings** outside Parliament Buildings. These meetings were held at: The Lyric Theatre, Belfast; Waterways Ireland, Fermanagh; Spectrum Centre, Shankill Road, Belfast; DCAL HQ Causeway Exchange, Belfast; Linenhall Library, Belfast; House of Sport, Belfast; NI Science Park, Derry/Londonderry; The South East Regional College, Bangor; and Rostrevor Mountain Bike Trails, Kilbroney.

Visits:



Committee Members at Kilbroney Mountain Bike Trails, Rostrevor

Events

The Committee hosted a number of events within Parliament Buildings promoting local cultural or sporting groups and developing a wider audience for the Committee to engage with including Chinese Cultural Workshops held to mark National China Day 2014; a reception for the Special Olympics team who were representing Ulster at the LA World Games in 2015 and introducing MLAs outside of the Committee to work of the FabLab, especially with young people.



Members of the Special Olympics Ulster Team who were representing Ireland at the Special Olympics World Games 2015 in Los Angeles met with the CAL Committee on 29th January 2015.

PRIORITIES FOR THE 2015-16 SESSION

The Committee aims to direct its attention on a wide and varied range of issues throughout the 2015-16 Session. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Scrutiny of monitoring rounds and departmental budgeting, including the impact of in-year budget reductions and reductions to the budget;
- DCAL's review of the 'Transfer of Functions' that will consider where the functions of the Department and ALBs will be transferred to following the dissolution of DCAL;
- Continuing scrutiny of stadia redevelopment and completion of the Inquiry examining these issues;
- Completion of the Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities Inquiry and examine how this can feed into the Department's 'Arts and Culture Strategy' due this session;
- Broadcasting, including the renewal of the BBC's Charter in 2016 and community broadcasting;
- Consideration of the Fisheries Bill;
- Consideration of the Irish Language Act;
- Monitoring how the management of Sport NI is progressed;
- Monitoring the impact of the proposed reduced hours of libraries across NI; and
- EU Scrutiny, EU networking and funding streams opportunities available to the Department and the ALBs.

ANNEX A

Expenditure for the period 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015

| Budget area | Details | Expenditure |
|---|---|--------------------|
| Committee Travel - committee members and staff travel and subsistence in relation to visits and meetings outside Parliament Buildings | Includes the cost of two committee visits and nine meetings (including visits) held outside Parliament Buildings: | £11,544.53 |
| Printing of committee reports | No reports were printed during this session | Nil |
| General expenses | Cost of refreshments for committee meetings, working lunches, seminars, room hire, witness expenses, gifts provided by the committee during visits and conference fees for members. | £7,843.13 |
| Total Expenditure | | £19,387.66 |