



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

**Inquiry into the Creative Industries:
Departmental Briefing**

2 February 2012

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

Inquiry into the Creative Industries: Departmental Briefing

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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 Cathal Ó hOisín

Mr Robin Swann

Witnesses:

Ms Joanna McConway

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr Stephen McGowan

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

The Chairperson: Mr Scott is unable to attend this morning's briefing, but we have Joanna McConway, the head of the arts branch and Stephen McGowan, the head of creative industries. Both officials have been with us before and are most welcome.

Ms Joanna McConway (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Good morning.

The Chairperson: Good morning. The Assembly's communications team is taking some footage of this morning's session. We are the first Committee to have witnesses giving evidence to an inquiry in this mandate, and you are the lucky people who have that privilege this morning. I invite you to make your statement, and we will follow that with some questions from members.

Mr Stephen McGowan (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure): On behalf of the Department, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into maximising the potential of the creative industries. You will recall that we were before you in December. At that meeting, we discussed the Department's partnership approach and our ongoing work with other Departments and agencies, such as the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and Invest NI, to develop a collaborative framework to stimulate and support the growth of our creative industries. At that time, we said that we believed:

"The Committee's inquiry will act as a crucial catalyst in focusing attention on this very important sector, and will stimulate debate and the sharing of ideas and opinions."

By doing so, the inquiry will support our work to establish a real, meaningful and beneficial partnership between government, industry and academia that will enable our creative industries to play a key role in helping to rebuild and rebalance our economy.

You are aware of our framework approach and the tone and direction of our efforts to support the creative industries. You have received further written evidence from the Department that addresses the terms of reference of the inquiry. In summary, the Executive's draft economic strategy identifies the importance of "stimulating innovation, R&D and creativity" and supporting export-focused growth. That highlights the economic potential and importance of the creative industries, as the sector is known globally for its contribution to job and wealth creation.

The importance of the sector and its role in driving wider innovation are increasingly recognised by leading economies throughout the world. However, local challenges remain. Those include a fragmented industry with insufficient scale, insufficient collaboration between sub-sectors and other business sectors and insufficient engagement in international markets. Furthermore, a range of government programmes and interventions is supportive of the sector, but they often lack effective co-ordination and a joined-up approach. The diversity within the sector means that no one Department, agency or representative body can, in isolation, fully realise the sector's potential.

The draft economic strategy reinforces the point that to rebuild and rebalance our economy, steps need to be taken to strengthen collaboration and the commercialisation of knowledge, new ideas and new ways of doing things. Countries across the world with advanced innovation systems achieve that success through a triple helix model that stresses the importance of interactions, networks and collaborations between industry, government and academia. At EU level, the concept of smart specialisation encourages regions to identify and develop their most promising areas of comparative advantage. That concept also recognises that creativity and innovation have a strong and distinctive regional dimension. Therefore, a place-based development approach should inform local policies by building on local assets.

What are the comparative advantages and local assets of our region? The answer to that highlights the crucial role of the Committee and its inquiry in highlighting and promoting an engine for economic and social innovation. This region and island are renowned throughout the world for their arts and culture. That is a comparative advantage and the global calling card for our region. The Committee and the Department oversee and support a vast, creative cultural infrastructure across Northern Ireland. That includes national and local museums, libraries, sport, art venues, art festivals, languages and even a planetarium and observatory. Those are creative and cultural assets that can fuel the emergence of creative people and enterprises. They, in turn, can inspire the development of new creative content, products, services and experiences that will attract interest and investment to our shores and help local companies to compete and succeed on the world stage.

Other Departments and agencies have a major, and perhaps the dominant, role to play in the provision of public funding and investment in local companies and the creative industries at large. However, creative businesses and creative entrepreneurs do not necessarily combust into being. A catalyst for maximising the potential of our creative industries can be the harnessing of the innovative and entrepreneurial potential of our culture, arts and leisure base. That will be achieved only by bringing about a meaningful commitment to, and demonstration of, collaboration within and between government, industry and academia. That is the other key role that we can all play.

The support and advocacy of the Committee and the wider Assembly will be pivotal in harnessing the creative strengths of our regions and in putting in place the right enablers to establish and sustain a creative pipeline from which creative people, ideas and enterprises can emerge. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide evidence today. We are happy to elaborate or answer any questions.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much. Joanna, do you have anything to say at this stage?

Ms McConway: No, I am fine. If you want to ask us some questions about the areas that particularly interest you, we can talk about those.

The Chairperson: OK. Thank you. First, thank you for massaging the Committee's ego. Your comments are most welcome. I think that we are all greatly engaged in the issue and recognise the opportunities that exist in the creative industries. The inquiry will be an important aspect of the Committee's work for the next number of months.

Your framework document identified issues in the sector, such as its fragmented nature and the diversity of the sector, the Departments and their roles. How do you see the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) being pivotal in this?

Mr McGowan: Mr McGimpsey is not here today, but he said, during our last meeting, that DCAL was the "golden thread" that would pull the different Departments together. It comes back to the core point that DCAL is the government lead on the creative industries. Other Departments and bodies, such as DETI and Invest NI, have a vast amount of public funding support to give to the sector, and the Department of Education (DE), the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and other Departments also have an important role in supporting the creative industries.

Our core point is that we feel that we can harness the creative and cultural infrastructure that we support. I think that I gave an example at our previous meeting. We want local businesses to work with museums, libraries and art festivals to develop new products and services. The thinking behind that is that there are museums and libraries and planetariums all across the world, and by developing a product, service or creative experience here, you prototype that product here. You can then go to museums and libraries throughout the world and tell them that we have tested this in Northern Ireland and it works. I referred earlier to the Department's support for export-focused growth. That is about getting all the ships in the fleet sailing in the same direction and harnessing the innovation potential of the culture, arts and leisure base.

The Chairperson: How do you view the role of local councils? At times, they are the first point of contact for local groups or individuals who want to start a business and are, perhaps, asking for support in trying to become entrepreneurs.

Mr McGowan: The role of local government is critical to the process, because, as you said, they are often the first point of contact. When local councils are developing strategies and approaches to develop the creative industries in their areas, they need to ensure that those resonate with what wider government is doing. Those programmes should not only support what Northern Ireland is doing at large but show how local councils can draw on the expertise, funding and resources available from across the region to support that area. That comes back to the core point about organisations, people and companies not working in isolation.

Mr Swann: Thank you very much for your presentation. My question follows on from the Chair's question and what you said earlier, Stephen. Some 31,000 people are employed in the creative industries. In 2008, the local sector's GVA was £727 million. In looking towards an export-focused activity, is Invest NI involved enough? Does it realise the value of the creative industries? Is it giving the sector due recognition?

Mr McGowan: It is. Over the past couple of years, we have been working very closely with Invest NI and DETI. One issue, as you will recall, is that the Institute of Directors (IOD) and the Chief Executives' Forum published a report in 2009 on the creative industries in Northern Ireland. The report stated that a key barrier was the lack of awareness in policy and even in business sectors of the potential and value of the creative industries. Within the past two years, for example, Invest NI and DCAL published a new music industry strategy in November. We work very closely with Invest NI. Joanna works very closely on a day-to-day basis with Invest NI because of our sponsorship role of Northern Ireland Screen and our work with Digital Circle and Craft NI. We have a collaborative approach. The framework approach, which is in draft form at the moment, is a joint document with Invest NI, so I think that we have made significant progress from where we were maybe two years ago. As we approach the outcomes of the Committee inquiry and public consultations on the draft economic strategy and draft

Programme for Government, this is a key period in which to focus the attention of all Departments on the area.

Mr Swann: The creative industries innovation fund (CIIF) is working to a reduced budget. Going forward, could DCAL do more, especially in the economic strategy?

Mr McGowan: It is a reduced budget, but it is important to remember that the first creative industries innovation fund, which ran from 2008 to 2011, was allocated £5 million from Northern Ireland's innovation fund. That was a £90 million package that, if I recall correctly, came out of the St Andrews Agreement; I think that it was called the Chancellor's Fund for Innovation. That was a distinct package of funding from which we got a small section for the inaugural fund, but that is no longer in existence. The Department has prioritised £4 million in its core funding over the next financial period.

Mr Swann: What about marrying that with the money that Invest NI gave back? Is there any way in which you can encourage it to target more at the creative industries through the CIIF?

Ms McConway: The funding that Invest NI gave back related to this financial year. Therefore, our scope for spending that would be limited without further end-year flexibility, which is a difficult accounting treatment. However, we always look for opportunities to boost the amount of creative industries funding that we can spend and get out to the sector. We are not saying that chances will not come over the next three-year period of the Programme for Government, and we will maximise what we can do.

Mr Swann: Do you have the sort of relationship with Invest NI that would allow you to put a wee bit of pressure on it to divert more funding to you?

Mr McGowan: The creative industries innovation fund is but one tool in the arsenal, so to speak. Through the framework approach, for example, we want to ensure that other Departments are fully clued in as to why they should support the sector. We want to ensure that they have the opportunity not only to invest in specific programmes but to look at their own initiatives and how those can be focused on the sector. We work very closely with DETI and Invest NI. The framework approach that we want to move forward will enable other Departments to be part of that close collaboration.

The Chairperson: The innovation fund prioritises digital content. What is being done for the other aspects of the creative industries, including craft, and so on?

Mr McGowan: Digital content is recognised and prioritised in the current fund. That recognises that a great amount — 70%, I think — of the growth potential and value of the creative industries lies within that space. When we look at prioritising which areas to focus on, it is right that we look at the areas that give the best economic return. That said, particularly from DCAL's perspective, the creative industries are very diverse. The value lies in collaborations and musicians working with craftspeople and animators. It is about providing the content. You could have the best app designers and the best technical expertise, but it is the content of, and stories behind, the digital products that will sell to local and international markets.

Although we encourage the likes of the craft sector and performing arts to look at digital content projects, the prioritisation of digital content does not exclude those sectors. We encourage them to look at digital content and collaborate with other digital projects.

Mr McMullan: I was interested in what you said about local government being the first port of call. The framework does not have a terrible lot on the rural dimension; the rural economy is mentioned on only one page. There are problems with the rural versus urban context. Given that we talk about small and medium-sized enterprises getting their fair share of collaboration, how do we try to get round those problems? It will be harder for them to meet up with bigger sectors in the towns or cities.

Mr McGowan: The culture and arts base that we support can bring benefits to a collaborative approach across the region. There are libraries and museums, local and national, and other artistic venues right across the region. In local areas, including rural areas, those can be a catalyst and act as a gravitational pull around which activity focusing on creativity and innovation can take place. Again, it is

about local councils and other organisations recognising that they have those assets and that a library or museum is not there just to sit in isolation. Councils can drive and inspire. They can network with local enterprises and local arts organisations. It goes back to my reference to all the ships in the fleet sailing in the same direction.

In answer to your specific question about the rural and urban dimension, the creative industries innovation fund will and should support projects of the highest quality. In my view, it is not about dispersing the fund on a geographical basis but about supporting quality projects regardless of geography. That said, through the fund, we want to encourage more applications and more collaborations across the region, but a simple divvying out would not provide the long-term stimulus that we need.

Mr McMullan: That is very interesting. Sometimes, however, because of how rural areas are dispersed geographically, it costs more to vie with products that come from an urban area. That is the bit that worries me. Invest NI does a wonderful job, but is it the vehicle to drive this? Given its ethos, should someone else not be involved in driving the small and medium-sized enterprises hoping to vie for the internal market, as opposed to the export market on which Invest NI has a good track record? That is one thing that holds back small and medium-sized enterprises, which are the backbone of the business sector here.

Ms McConway: I understand what you are saying. You are talking about smaller organisations that tend to be geographically more diverse. It is important to make the point that pretty much all of DCAL's budget funds the creative industries. The Arts Council's £10 million-plus Annual Support for Organisations Programme (ASOP) funds the creative industries, including many of those smaller organisations across the country. That funding supports them in carrying out their core business. The creative industries innovation fund offers a bit of funding to enable them to start thinking about additional things.

The point about rural spread — particularly in Northern Ireland, where we tend to be Belfast-centric — is a good one. However, the creative industries innovation fund and the focus on digital content seek to take away some of that geographical disadvantage, because we are talking about digital networks. We have the advantage of super-fast broadband, and so on, here. It does not matter whether you are in Limavady, where I am from, or Belfast: you can still connect with America or Europe. That is where the creative industries innovation fund is giving those smaller organisations the opportunity to do some additional things that their core support, which they might receive from the Department, would not normally allow them to do.

Mr McGowan: I referred to a creative pipeline, and Joanna makes a correct and very important point. Creative entrepreneurs do not necessarily just come into being. Broader DCAL support, encouraging creativity, and supporting artists and creative endeavour, move along that pipeline. Should something become a commercially viable opportunity, other programmes, initiatives and Departments can then come in and support it.

Mr McMullan: Have you thought about building in a more protective measure for the creative industries? I think that I am right in saying that 60% of those working in the creative industries are self-employed. That is a very shaky market to be in, especially for younger people breaking into that market. For example, if a very good entrepreneur comes up with a very good idea, it could be easily taken off them by the global markets, which means that the entrepreneur would lose out. We have to think about building in some kind of legal framework. If we are to encourage entrepreneurship, we should encourage people to be able to hold on to their idea so that they can develop it. Perhaps entrepreneurs could go into partnership with a bigger corporation, but, at present, an idea can be stripped off them completely because they have no protection, and 60% or 70% of people in the creative industries are self-employed.

Mr McGowan: The Westminster Government have been looking at issues to do with intellectual property. From a basic entrepreneurial and commercial perspective, that sense of potential security, or strengthening the resolve of those companies, can come through collaboration and encouraging creative entrepreneurs to consider how else they can collaborate. Musicians, for example, who earn

their trade by playing music could consider working with an animator or games designer to get their music on to different products.

Mr McMullan: It is about partnership.

Mr McGowan: Exactly. Eventually, looking at collaborations with other creative entrepreneurs in different sectors will strengthen not only the growth potential but the security of that company. That is their value. Look at the guiding philosophy of Apple, for example. That globally successful company has changed the way we live. It is focused on the intersection between the arts and humanities and technology. The growth of the global economy is heading towards that blending of musicians, different providers of content and technology, and collaborative initiatives will fuel that.

Ms McConway: The best protection that you can give self-employed people in the creative industries is having a strong creative sector. I want to refer back to Northern Ireland Screen's work in the film industry. A local joiner, for example, who may not be getting much work, particularly in the rural economy in Northern Ireland, now has the opportunity to work on film sets, as opposed to shopfitting. The more we build that economy, the more protection there will be. We want to build that collaboration and strength so that Northern Ireland is seen as a place with lots of opportunities for people to be self-employed. We want to show how much is out there.

Mr McGowan: That is an excellent example. I am sure that the Committee has visited the Paint Hall. The props department is in the back rooms. Those props are all designed and crafted by craft artists; they are not something that you can buy in B&Q. As Joanna says, it is about people working in the craft sectors, make-up, joinery and the non-creative industries recognising that collaboration with the creative industries offers opportunities for growth.

Mr Irwin: Thank you for your presentation. A couple of my questions have already been answered. Creative industries have great potential. It has been noted that councils can play a very important part. Is there any contact between you and councils on local issues when you feel that it is relevant? There are 26 councils in Northern Ireland, but their number could change in a couple of years. Are councils fully aware of the potential? Councils can play an important part because they are local in nature. As you said, there are museums and libraries, for instance, in each area. Do they liaise with you?

Mr McGowan: Yes, and increasingly so, but we can do much more. In the framework approach that we hope to take forward, councils, information flow and collaborative networks will only get stronger. Councils have a natural tendency to be interested in their locality, but they and Northern Ireland will grow stronger through wider networks and collaboration.

I recall a comment that Mr Bradley made at our meeting in December, and this provides an example of why I could not go into politics — I thought of the answer after I left. He asked what craftspeople would think of the framework document. To be perfectly honest, they might not think a lot. They might ask: "Is your big idea that we all work together?" That, however, is the big idea. The framework approach is not the solution, but it aims to bring about a mindset and culture change across organisations that can support those individuals.

So in the medium to long term, the framework approach will bring about that change in mindset that we are all working towards together in government, industry and academia. That will provide support and, in time, will bring benefits for Joe or Joanna Bloggs who is working alone in the arts across Northern Ireland.

Mr Hilditch: My questions are along the same lines. From the Committee's submissions, which number 80-odd, to the 26 councils, only four councils have responded, three of which are in the greater Belfast area.

I want to go back to your comment about getting all the ships to sail — you will probably be sorry that you said that by the time this is over. Local government is a linchpin and has an important role in the delivery mechanism. Why has there been such a poor response? Why are your views not shared by others in local government at present? I base those questions on the responses that we have received.

Mr McGowan: It is interesting that there have been only four responses from local government. That is very disappointing, but if you look back at the IOD report from 2009 that I mentioned, there was then and continues to be a lack of awareness about how great the potential could be. The creative industries have been looked upon as a fringe part of the economy. However, the sector on its own can grow and help to rebalance the economy. If local councils look at the draft economic strategy for Northern Ireland and at EU policy, they will clearly see that the issue is the role of the creative industries impacting on other sectors, such as tourism. All councils in Northern Ireland are very focused on tourism. The cultural aspect and the telling of the stories that will drive tourism will come from creativity and the creative industries. We have a lot of work to do with the councils so that the 22 that have not responded, for whatever reason, recognise the potential of the sector.

Mr Hilditch: Oliver commented on the issues of delivery for small and medium-sized enterprises and Invest NI's focus on exporting. You will also be aware of a further sub-level of local government. In my constituency of East Antrim, local economic development is delivered locally by subgroups, such as Larne Enterprise Development Company (LEDCOM) in Larne and Carrickfergus Enterprise. Are you aware of that element?

Ms McConway: The creative industries are not new in the sense of creative people working. Importantly, however, the concept of government regarding them as a real economic driver is fairly new. There are agencies working in quite specific areas in the same way that councils deliver specific services in specific areas. It is a good challenge to level at us that we should be doing more to invigorate those councils so that they become involved. However, I suspect that the councils also need an overall government approach. We can use that kind of umbrella approach to create a framework for the whole region — one council trying to create a framework for Craigavon will not really help the region economically. The framework approach on which Stephen is providing more information will be the catalyst for allowing councils to work out what they need to do in their local areas and to becoming more involved directly in harnessing that potential. The same applies to the enterprise agencies.

Mr McGowan: If the Committee's ego was massaged by my earlier comments, I am, in a way, pleased about that, but I am making a very important point. What can DCAL and the Committee do? We have a government/leadership role. We have neither the massive funding for businesses that the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Invest NI have, nor the massive funding that goes into the education system. Our leadership role is about pushing the agenda across government and getting other Departments to focus their funding streams, programmes and initiatives on the sector and on how they can benefit. That is also an important point: we are not telling other Departments how they can help the creative industries. It is a matter of how the creative industries and the cultural infrastructure, supported by DCAL and overseen by the Committee, can support other government authorities as well. If there is a lack of awareness in business and in policy, the Committee and the Department have a key role to play in raising that agenda.

The Chairperson: The point about the role of councils and enterprise agencies is well made. For the record, the four councils that responded were Fermanagh District Council, Carrickfergus Borough Council, Ards Borough Council and Belfast City Council, and we thank them for that.

Mr D Bradley: Stephen, you said that, after our previous meeting, you thought of the right answer after you left the room. I hope that I am not in the position of thinking of the right question after leaving the room. You use the metaphor of the Large Hadron Collider trying to recreate the Big Bang that created the universe — of course, some members would disagree with that — and your collider is the triple helix model. I noticed that, during the week, the Minister of Finance and Personnel said that we must create better synergies between Departments because so many issues are cross-cutting. At the moment, your triple helix model is theoretical. Are you confident that you can move it on to the stage at which it will begin to deliver for the creative industries?

Mr McGowan: Yes, I am confident. The triple helix model is a concept embedded in the new economic strategy. It recognises the importance of the three key players — government, academia and industry — working together. My colleagues know that, a lot of the time, I am prone to giving cheesy examples. However, I like the example of the Large Hadron Collider, because the benefit of firing protons at nearly

at the speed of light in opposite directions so that they crash is to see the outcome. Our view is that new ideas and new ways of doing things will come out of stimulating creative collisions between creative people and creative organisations. Through those creative collisions, the benefit for the sector will be developed.

It is my personal view that the Northern Ireland economy will not be saved by civil servants from either Invest NI's side of Bedford Street or DCAL's side of Bedford Street. The economy will be saved or supported and rebuilt or rebalanced through the creative energy of entrepreneurs and businesses. As a government, we can harness programmes, funding, focus and infrastructure to enable them to do that. Through the framework, we can bring those people together, and they can tell us what works, what does not work and what we need to do more on. That will make a tangible difference.

Mr D Bradley: Quite often, Departments here are accused of having a silo attitude and working in that silo to the exclusion of everything outside it. Your framework document mentions four Departments: DCAL, DETI, the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). What gives you the confidence to believe that your model can break down that silo attitude?

Mr McGowan: At many cross-departmental meetings over the past two years, particularly at the start of my involvement in this process, I saw people around the table staring at me as if to ask why DCAL was attending a meeting at which the economy, neighbourhood regeneration or health was being discussed. The question seemed to be: "What has culture got to do with this"? Through a process of highlighting our contribution, we showed how, through working with museums, arts and libraries, we could help other government priorities. By demonstrating that, other Departments have become aware of the potential and value of the arts and cultural infrastructure. The silo mentality, which exists across government and many organisations, needs to be broken down. The way to do that is by highlighting what is possible and by demonstrating how we can help other organisations to meet their objectives. It is a long slog, but I am confident that other Departments have become increasingly aware of the value of the role that culture, arts and leisure — the infrastructure that we support — can play.

Mr D Bradley: What progress have you made to date?

Mr McGowan: Look at the work that we have done, for example, on the music industry strategy with Invest NI. South by Southwest is a trade mission in Austin in Texas. It is the world's premier conference for digital film and music. Last year, Invest NI and the Department, working with local councils and organisations such as the British Council, pooled resources to enable the largest trade mission from Northern Ireland to go to that event. Those organisations could have worked in isolation, but only by pooling the resources and the focus were we able to achieve so much last year. That is only one example.

The Chairperson: Did DCAL lead that?

Mr McGowan: DCAL and Invest NI led it.

Mr D Bradley: Where are you with the implementation of the framework?

Mr McGowan: At the meeting in December, we were clear that we wanted the Committee and its inquiry to feed into that process. You have received and will receive evidence directly from a diverse range of organisations. We want that to inform the framework approach. DETI is keen to advance that with us. Following the outcome of the inquiry, ongoing evidence and public consultation on the economic strategy, I intend the framework to be in place by the new financial year.

Mr D Bradley: Has the ministerial advisory group been set up?

Mr McGowan: It has not been set up yet. Across the Civil Service, many colleagues will be honest and say that a cross-departmental steering group is often the kiss of death to many projects, because a project becomes bogged down with paperwork and shuffling, and nobody knows what is happening. This is about ideas and flows of information. We do not propose a ministerial advisory group through which Ministers or the Committee meet twice a year — job done. This is about providing the opportunity for leading lights in the sector to give honest opinions about what needs to be done in

Northern Ireland. I see that as an important feature of the framework, along with the sub-sector groups. We hope to get them established in the new financial year.

Mr D Bradley: Thank you very much, Stephen and Joanna. If your enthusiasm is anything to go by, we should be able to make progress. We await further briefings.

Ms McConway: When talking about working in silos and the institutionalised attitudes of civil servants, of whom I am one, it would be remiss of me not to say that Stephen is a secondee from Queen's, so we have an immediate link with academia that is part of that triple helix approach. Stephen is not a civil servant — we have not managed to convert him yet, although not through lack of trying. So he brings a fresh approach to the collaborative groups. Sometimes, putting four civil servants into a room without some fresh thinking can be very drab. Stephen's ability to network in wider circles and bring fresh thinking has been an important element of the work being done in creative industries in DCAL.

The Chairperson: Thank you for that clarification. Obviously, he is somebody whom you want to hold on to.

Ms McConway: Absolutely.

The Chairperson: We are massaging your ego now, Stephen. That is mutual today.

Mr D Bradley: We will check from time to time that "Civil Serviceitis" is not setting in.

Ms McConway: With him, that would be tough, believe me.

Mr Ó hOisín: Much of what I was going to say has already been said. I want to follow up on Mr Hilditch's point. The creative industries are an organic force. I was disappointed when I looked at the list of submissions and realised who was not included but should have been. However, I am very pleased, Joanna, to see that the Stendhal Festival of Art, which comes from your and my part of the world, is included.

Ms McConway: Absolutely, yes.

Mr Ó hOisín: For anyone who does not know about that festival, it came from an idea that a couple of young lads had a few years ago. Their idea has now come to fruition, and I believe that it will go from strength to strength.

However, I am disappointed, because much of the arts and crafts industry, and research and development, should be led at local government level. There are a number of good examples of that. Last week, I was at an economic conference in the Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre, at which the three areas of growth in this part of the world were identified as agrifoods, tourism and R&D. R&D and tourism cross into the creative industries.

Stephen, you used the collider analogy. With that collider, they are trying to recreate creation and the Big Bang. However, for that to occur, there must be a catalyst, and the tying together of that catalyst is what is important. That made me think that the one opportunity that we may have for such a catalyst in the foreseeable future is the City of Culture in Derry. That has huge potential to unify all the creative industries. Indeed, a number of the submissions to the inquiry were from industries located in Derry. Those include the Verbal Arts Centre and the Nerve Centre, which are at the forefront of the business.

My point is that there are missing links. I do not know how you can address that, but, given its record, I am not convinced about Invest NI. In my part of the world, we use various other acronyms for Invest NI that I will not repeat. I am not convinced about its input. That is just a comment; if I am proved wrong, I will be very pleased.

Ms McConway: It is important to say that there are two aspects to what we are trying to do. First, DCAL wants to showcase the huge creativity that we have in Northern Ireland. The City of Culture will be an absolutely fantastic showcase for that, and it will let people outside of Northern Ireland know

that there is a great deal of creativity here. Secondly, we are involved in the individual decision-making. I know that all funders come in for criticism about the final individual decision-making element.

We are working well with Invest NI on creating the environment and atmosphere of a region with fantastic potential in which local craftspeople, who may not have the capacity in their own organisation, and other small businesses, can feel that they are part of a bigger, wider group of people who have something to say internationally. It is about creating that kind of confidence. We are doing that through events such as the City of Culture and by instilling international and global thinking into smaller businesses. It is at that strategy and policy level that Invest NI works well. It is a long-term initiative; you cannot make it happen overnight.

Mrs McKeivitt: I want to explore whether gaps exist in current policies, the lack of entrepreneurial skills in the sector and the perception that some higher and further education institutions are imperative to the success of the creative industries. It is proposed that DEL be disposed of. Do you think that its disposal might dilute the collaborative group that would drive partnership?

Mr McGowan: The entrepreneurial challenges facing the sector are clear. One of the ways in which we have tried to help with those challenges is through the creative industries innovation fund. Successful applicants to that fund can ask for mentoring support from the Institute of Directors. That is the first time that we have done that. If a company needs help with marketing, tax or export advice, the Institute of Directors will match that applicant with a mentor. That is not just for the duration of the CIIF award; a long-term relationship can be agreed between the mentor and the CIIF applicant. The Institute of Directors involves many of Northern Ireland's leading business people, who are willing to support our creative sector.

I regard higher and further education, along the same lines as the creative and cultural sector, as having vast potential and strengths. We have world-class universities and FE colleges throughout the region. It is about their working and focusing their energy on the creative industries. Again, more can be done there. That is why the triple helix model is not just about having visual representation from the universities and FE colleges; it is about stimulating meaningful engagement and their focusing their resources on this sector.

The Chairperson: You said that you hope that the framework will be in place by the new financial year, but I am concerned about whether our inquiry, which you welcome as part of informing the framework, will be concluded within that time frame.

Mr McGowan: We will have further discussions with DETI and Invest NI, which are key partners in the framework approach. We hope to have the framework established sooner rather than later. Certainly, the Committee is fully aware of the tone and direction of where we want to go, and I think that the industry and the creative industries sector are becoming more aware. I hope that not many organisations' response to the Committee will be that collaboration is not the way forward. We are proposing the core principles that we want to take forward, and the results of the inquiry will inform how they are fine-tuned.

The Chairperson: As always, thank you very much for coming this morning. Your enthusiasm is more than welcome.