

SUBMISSION FROM GILL PARRY, CONNECT FILM

Dear committee members

My name is Gill Parry and I run CONNECTfilm, a small independent production company based at Summerhall in Edinburgh. We make documentaries, mostly what could loosely be called Arts documentaries, for cinema and television release. This has included the Prix Italia winning Mark Cousins' documentary about children and imagination in Iraq THE FIRST MOVIE, which received a UK wide theatrical release to wonderful reviews, plus documentaries about iconic Scottish artists Annie Ross and William McIlvanney (films about the creative life and how to survive it!).

I'd like to put forward the following few practical suggestions from my experience as a producer and as someone who has worked in the film business in Scotland and the UK for 25 years.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing the results of your inquiry.

Practical measures are needed at this point rather than management speak, please!

The role of public sector agencies and the effectiveness of the support they provide

Creative Scotland (CS)

CS do a good job in a difficult situation, but there is room for implementing some key practical steps to improve the effectiveness of the support they provide producers and film makers. Asking for more money from the same pot to be handed out to the film industry is not realistic in the current climate. Therefore either the existing pot needs to be invested more effectively and/or other pots of funding need to be found.

Some suggestions for practical changes that would have a significant impact on more effective investment of the current pot of money:

1. CS should invest in development and production of projects from Scottish producers as 'first in' finance. CS are unique among funding bodies internationally for insisting that Scottish producers need other sources of finance in place before even applying for backing (30% for production, 25% for development.)

Scottish producers are currently in the untenable situation of having to go to funding sources internationally (or in the UK ie the BFI) without support from their own country. At a seminar this June about co-production at EIFF, the panel (of prestigious international producers) simply could not believe this was the situation, as it is so unproductive and unrealistic in generating genuinely Scottish projects.

2. Seed development funding (ie 5k for feature docs, 10k for feature dramas) should be available to legitimate Scottish producers with a track record as a 100% investment. This would enable Scottish producers to develop a project sufficiently to be able to take a good, well-worked proposal to market and to other funders, and retain 100% of the rights in the project at an early stage. In the case of feature docs this would involve researching the idea, attaching a director (inc legal

support for this) and writing a full producer's proposal and director's treatment to take to production forums and financiers.

3. Projects that wish to obtain funding from Creative Scotland should be required to apply via a Scottish co-producer. This would ensure that inward investment is effective in growing a sustainable and vibrant Scottish film business, and that it will help to support in the long term, indigenous Scottish production companies, producers and the projects that they develop (largely with Scottish talent.) Currently companies from outside Scotland can access valuable and scarce Scottish funding without any real Scottish involvement creatively or structurally. In Ireland, production funding is only given via Irish production companies, contributing greatly to the long term sustainability of producer's business models.

How the issues that hinder the growth of the creative industries can be overcome and how to capitalize on opportunities

Some suggestions for accessing additional pots of funding:

Creative Europe is a pot of valuable funding for the film, tv and games industry which is currently hard to access because of the way 'Scotland' is defined.

The development and production finance available is large in scale and retained by the producer to re invest in other projects, therefore invaluable to long term sustainability of companies.

However, projects are assessed on a 'points' system, with additional points being given for projects from countries with a low audiovisual production capacity. Therefore, for example, Irish projects are given 10 automatic additional points as they come from a country of low capacity. Whereas Scottish projects, despite Scotland being of a similar size to Ireland and producing far fewer films, do not receive the automatic points. On average, six Scottish films are made per year, whereas in Ireland eighteen films are made per year. Clearly Scotland has a lower production capacity than Ireland.

This is an anomaly which could and should be addressed so that Scottish producers have a better chance of accessing this very valuable funding.

All countries participating in the MEDIA sub-programme are considered as having a low audiovisual production capacity except: France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom.

I would urge the relevant government department to collaborate with CS and producers bodies like IPS and PACT, to lobby Creative Europe to re-define the automatic points as being given to a project from a 'country (**or** an autonomous region with a devolved parliament which has responsibility for cultural affairs) with low capacity. This would give Scotland, Wales and Catalonia the ability to access the automatic points system, and create a much fairer level playing field for producers from those places.

At the moment Scotland is seen as being a region of the UK from the purposes of Creative Europe, but not as a region of the UK when it comes to accessing regional funds (as Screen Yorkshire have done so successfully.)

(Personal experience: I submitted a feature doc development application to Creative Scotland last year, and received a brilliant quality of project and team assessment, scoring 84.5 points out of 100. The threshold for receiving funding was 86.5 points. A colleague in Ireland received a quality assessment in the seventies, but with the additional 10 automatic points passed the threshold and received the funding.)

Examples of successful international strategies for growing these sectors

Ireland, Canada. Please can some delegation be sent on behalf of producers and CS to both of these countries and come back with some key points to implement positive change.

Gillian Parry
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