SUBMISSION FROM IGDA SCOTLAND

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About IGDA Scotland

The International Game Developers Association (IGDA) is the largest non-profit membership organization in the world serving individuals who create games. We are a global network of collaborative projects and communities comprised of volunteers from all fields of game development. We bring together developers at key industry conferences, in over 90 Chapters worldwide, and in Special Interest Groups; and advocate on behalf of game developers to ensure quality of life, perpetuation of our craft and preparing the next generation of developers. Our mission is to advance the careers and enhance the lives of game developers by connecting members with their peers, promoting professional development, and advocating on issues that affect the developer community.

One particularly successful scheme for doing so has been the IGDA Scholarship Programme helping students to attend the biggest and most prestigious games industry events around the globe. The strength and vitality of the Scottish games industry is positively highlighted by the fact that Scotland boasts an outstanding track record of IGDA scholars when compared to the rest of the world, owing to the work of Scotland's universities and the quality of their students/graduates.

IGDA Scotland is the Scottish chapter of the IGDA. Founded in 2011, we have proudly worked to serve developers with monthly meetings in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee; in addition to organising or supporting a wide range of special events. With a thriving and rapidly growing community, we are one of the most active IGDA chapters in Europe, and one of the first internationally to begin the process of legally formalising ourselves as a non-profit charitable organisation (SCIO).

Scope of evidence

As the IGDA is a professional association which represents individuals (as opposed to a trade body), our evidence will not directly focus on the economic impact of the games industry within Scotland, but instead address broader issues that affect professionals working in the sector as a whole, and the knock on effects these issues can have.

Responses to the committee's inquiries

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

- **There is a need for public sector agencies to present a clearer and more unified effort in their work to support the games sector.** With many different bodies such as Creative Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and more each specialising in different areas or only providing support for specific types of business, navigating the complex minefield of agencies can prove difficult, especially for smaller companies or individuals. This is in addition to many

agencies being relatively unfamiliar with games as opposed to other creative industries. There are also relatively weak ties between these organisations, with many developers reporting 'gaps' in support, or a lack of a clear progression path between agencies as their business grows.

- **Public sector agencies need to be more effective at outreach.** Due to the issues referenced above, there is a perception among developers that many agencies fail to effectively advertise what support they can provide. One example of this includes the recent Cultural Tax Breaks, with many developers not making use of the tax credits easily available to them simply because they don't understand how the benefits can apply to their business. While efforts have been made by public sector agencies and trade bodies to better communicate these benefits through lectures, events and workshops; these organisations have always typically catered to larger companies, leaving smaller developers feeling that these benefits are "not for them".
- **Outreach with consumers is as important as with developers.** Many developers praise the work of Scottish Development International in providing them with valuable opportunities and support when attending major games industry events such as the Game Developers Conference (GDC) in San Francisco, but there are opportunities for SDI to provide similar support for consumer-oriented events too. Exhibiting games at consumer expos can be prohibitively expensive, but by following examples such as the Indie Megabooth, SDI could help organise joint booths much like it already does, but with the aim of connecting developers with consumers as opposed to each other.

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

- **Focus more funding on wider initiatives and resources as opposed to directly subsidising businesses with grants.** Lower the financial bar to success by supporting the growth of the industry as a whole, instead of always directly subsidising games companies. This can include:
  - Training and education with the creation of a Skillset-style fund for Scotland or supporting efforts such as the BAFTA Games Crew.
  - Further supporting Scottish developers at conferences to develop skills such as GDC or Develop Edinburgh, and expos to market their products at consumers such as Dare ProtoPlay.
  - Support the creation of low-rent short-term facilities and co-working spaces such as the Bristol Game Hub, Fleet Collective, Edinburgh Hackerspace or Dundee Makerspace for smaller developers who otherwise cannot afford office space.
- **Support the creation of Prototype Fund style startup accelerators.** Besides the direct financial support, many fledgling studios have benefited from the tertiary support provided by programmes such as the Prototype Fund in the form of office space, development hardware, commercial software licences and business training, which would otherwise have represented an unfeasible initial startup expense.
- **Support collaborative initiatives and events to encourage innovation and creativity.** Game jams present a valuable opportunity to develop innovative new IPs and technology in an informal and social setting while

simultaneously providing strong opportunities to showcase Scotland and it's talent internationally. Many of these events are typically privately sponsored or free, but there is potential for such events to have an impact on the wider public if handled appropriately, in a similar vein to the Dare to be Digital game development competition. Attention should also be paid to encouraging a closer knit game development community such as IGDA Scotland's where collaboration can lead to the cost-effective sharing of skills and in turn the creation of career opportunities.

- **A full-scale study into the games sector is needed.** Aside from the limited research performed by the UK's games trade bodies (UKIE, TIGA, SGN) and organisations such as Creative Skillset and Nesta, there is presently very little definitive data on the state of the games industry in Scotland. Following examples such as the Boo Games Report which studied several key regions throughout Europe, a comprehensive database of industry data could be constructed allowing for a greater understanding of the issues the sector is facing, and better informed decision-making on how those issues should be tackled.

How to retain in Scotland those with the necessary creative skills

- **Encourage stronger recruitment efforts and internship programmes.** While events such as Game in Scotland make some effort towards this, a platform where students and graduates can learn about the needs and requirements of employers in more detail would ensure not only that young talent is better prepared for work, but also that specific needs of companies can be catered for. Similarly, a scheme promoting fair and legal internship programmes would ensure that the interests of both prospective game developers and games companies are protected. Both parties knowing and understanding what they are each going to get out at the end of an internship can be mutually beneficial, which then leads to the better passing on of practical skills, and greater employability.
- **Develop a "Scottish Game Portfolio".** A public (probably online) resource providing information about the talent, products and services Scotland has to offer will demonstrate Scotland's competitiveness in the global market, and in turn attract talent and investment from abroad. Building on the aforementioned study into the sector, an official list of companies and a directory of skilled professionals alongside a careers service catering for the video games industry would be highly valuable.
- **Promotion of career opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM) in schools.** This is essential to the continued growth and maturation of the games industry, and for tackling the ongoing issues of gender inequality and diversity within not just games, but technology as a whole. Video games showcase a perfect amalgamation of all these five fields in a creative, fun, and accessible way for all ages; and combine the talents of professionals from software engineers, through artists, writers to audio engineers and more. Video games boast a broad range of opportunities for collaboration not only across disciplines, but across other mediums such as film, TV and theatre. The nurturing and encouragement of future talent is something that cannot be overlooked in order to ensure future growth and sustainability. For example, IGDA Scotland already works with several

universities across the country, and more recently held a game jam with Glasgow primary school pupils. This is alongside the ongoing efforts of other organisations such as STEMNET, Ukie's Video Game Ambassadors scheme, Code Club, Coder Dojo and the Raspberry Pi Foundation.

- **Help highlight the cultural importance of games in the eyes of the public.** As well as supporting rising talent, it is also important to raise the public profile of games and promote their vast cultural contribution. Video games are still in their infancy as an artform, and have been confined to a relatively niche audience until recent years. Games and the creation of digital interactive works have become much more accessible by much wider audiences; however, there is still often a lack of understanding an appreciation of the medium by the wider public, particularly when they are only regularly exposed to the biggest blockbuster hits. More can be done to educate parents, teachers, children and decision makers about their cultural potential. Video games should be appreciated for their own artistic merit and cultural importance in the same way as music, film or television are.

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