Scottish Government Consultation: A Consultation on the Digital Strategy for Scotland

Submitted: December 2020

Consultation Questions

Questions on collaborative approach

1. Do you think there are opportunities to realise this collaborative approach?

Yes

Please explain why.

The impact of restrictions due to the pandemic have clearly demonstrated that there is an opportunity to change the way we work, at home, on the move and in the office. In addition, there have been changes in how we communicate with friends, family, community and local and national government. Specifically within the Arts, Screen and Creative Industries, which Creative Scotland represents, there have been significant developments in how the sector works with digital. For example, the Performing Arts sector has turned to digital broadcasting of shows, whether live or recorded, to continue to engage with audiences. There has been a shift towards greater digital production tools in Screen and to online trading in the Creative Industries. A refreshed digital strategy must therefore echo and support a reappraisal of how we live, work and communicate and ensure that those positive changes are not temporary, but leveraged for our long term benefit. When discussing the above, it is imperative that the conversation takes place across policy areas and identifies specific links where policy priorities interact within the actions. A shift to digital will mean very different things to different sectors and it is therefore important that the strategy is developed collaboratively, to ensure a wide variety of voices and perspectives are heard. This will enable the strategy which is developed to clearly work for all areas of society and for organisations across the public, private and third sectors.

2. Of the opportunities which you have identified, which do you think are the priority ones?

It should be a priority to take a person centred approach, looking at how developments in our use of digital tools has impacted on how we can choose to work and engage with people, communities, businesses, organisations, culture and government. This is equally true of how people engage with culture and creativity and how organisations in this sector are developing their capacity to use digital tools. During the pandemic, there has been an increase in accessing content online, from film festivals, through streaming platforms to live theatre. It is entirely possible that this shift will become a significant avenue through which we access culture. This has wide implications for business models across the sector, including how to create revenue and for the skills of those delivering that content, not least developing knowledge and understanding around IP. At Creative Scotland, we ran two digital development programmes Digital Pivot and Digital Mentoring and Peer Support to help organisations develop their digital skills to enable delivery and engagement on digital platforms

through lockdown, but there is still a clear need for further upskilling across the cultural and creative sectors. We are also receiving more proposals for digital projects this year, again, as a result of changes in practice due to the pandemic. We have compared our internal coding of Open Fund applications from March-September 2020 with Open Fund applications from March - September 2019 and can see a nearly tenfold increase this year compared with last year. Therefore, we believe that a person-centred approach to the strategy will enable all of these perspectives to be captured and addressed.

Questions on vision

3. Is the vision that we have set out in the supporting narrative in each of these sections the right one?

- No One Left Behind: Yes
- Services Working for All: Yes
- Transforming Government: No
- A Digital and Data Economy: Yes
- A Vibrant Tech Sector: Yes
- An Ethical Digital Nation: Yes

If you have ticked 'no' or you think we could improve the vision please explain why.

There are many areas of this strategy which would affect Creative Scotland's areas of work. In particular, our responsibility to work with the Creative Industries sector and its contribution to the economy, our role as a public sector organisation and our embedding of equalities, diversity and inclusion across our work and as part of our support for the creative and cultural sector. Whilst we are broadly in agreement with the visions set out in each section, we feel that some could be strengthened through additional information and clarification. In particular, the strategy as a whole would benefit from clear, evidence based assertions and a thread from this to the actions proposed. The strongest sections in this regard are the "Digital and Data Economy" and "A Vibrant Tech Sector", which have a strong foundation. This approach should be extrapolated to the other sections. There is also concern that the strategy is not underpinned by enough financial resource. Setting out clear actions will help to understand the resource needed. Civtech is alluded to across many of these sections, but it is not clear what the model is that will be used, therefore clarification of this, perhaps setting it out separately, would be welcomed. Whilst the vision set out in "No one left behind" is ambitious, we felt it was perhaps too all-encompassing – a digital world is not a panacea to all the country's problems. It would be good to see some evidence to back up the assertions made and also a clear vision of targeted action. It is not clear what the delineation is between Services Work for All and Transforming Government. It might be appropriate for these to be combined or clarified around the individual visions. Detail about democratic participation in these sections would be welcome.

4. Do you think that the potential actions set out in each section will deliver the vision set out in the supporting narrative?

- No One Left Behind: No
- Services Working for All: No
- Transforming Government: No
- A Digital and Data Economy: Yes
- A Vibrant Tech Sector: Yes

- An Ethical Digital Nation: No

If you have ticked 'no' or you think we could improve any of the actions please explain why.

Some of these actions are very ambitious and potentially not realistic or achievable. In addition, the actions for No One Left Behind and Ethical Digital Nation should be consulted on more widely, especially with those which they will most affect as they are not necessarily appropriate. In the section, "No One Left Behind", clarity around the ambition on skills development and links to enabling people to stay in their communities would be welcome. For the latter we mean providing more connectivity for those in more rural and remote areas, so that they don't necessarily have to leave for urban centres for work and they can have the opportunities to reach out from local communities globally. We know that there is often a paucity of jobs available in the creative and cultural sectors for those living in rural areas and all too often, people are expected move to access opportunities. This has the potential to help with this issue. In the section, "Ethical Digital Nation", it rightly points out the international nature of the risks to privacy, but it could be clearer about those multinational corporations who are collecting data and risking citizen's privacy. It could also consider how government might work with other governments or multilateral organisations to protect citizens and hold those corporations to better account. This becomes especially relevant in the context of Brexit and the logistics of implementing it for a small nation such as Scotland, but it is important that it is addressed. The actions set out in this section do not go far enough. There is nothing about specific and targeted action to ensure that those from a more disadvantaged background and those with protected characteristics will be included and feel safe in engaging digitally. Similarly, the extension of "Connecting Scotland" to ensure that "no-one is unable to participate because of poverty" is welcome, but could be much more ambitious and include more partners. In all of these, it is clear that wide consultation and collaboration will be beneficial to developing this section. In the section, "Services Work for all" and the sub-section covering "a digital identity service for users" we'd welcome more clarity on individual digital privacy and to hear about the role of the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner and reference to the public conversation on digital ethics, here. Finally, in the section, "Transforming Government", it was not clear what the New Commercial Model was, exactly and how it squares with the fact that much of Government is about providing nuanced services which may well not be appropriate for automation. For example, Creative Scotland's role as a funder, developer and advocate requires the involvement of people throughout. Clarity around what the model will be applied to, for example, infrastructure, would be welcome. Of equal concern is the impact that this would have, both through commercialising and digitising public services. This is an action that has the potential to leave behind much of Scotland and is at risk of dissonance with other equalising and democratising actions elsewhere. It would benefit hugely from wide public consultation to fully understand any impact and to finesse the model to ensure that is it inclusively beneficial and should include consideration of the role of public funding and support in this. Within this, clarity would also be welcomed defining what a "single, shared Digital Academy" is and in what way it differs from the existing Scottish Government Digital Academy (www.digitalacademy.gov.scot).

5. Are any of the potential actions more important than others?

Yes

Please explain why.

We believe that the following actions are of importance:

- Digital inclusion that tackles inequality and promotes wellbeing

- An education system that builds digital skills
- Accessibility
- Increase community engagement and participation
- Digital Rights

Ensuring these actions are addressed will give an inclusive strategy which looks to the future and works with the people of Scotland and those organisations who work here, resulting in a Scotland which is ready to take advantage of the opportunities which increase digital engagement can offer.

Questions on parameters

6. How realistic do you think it will be to deliver these potential actions? Please explain why.

Key to achieving these actions will be working collaboratively. In this way, the Strategy can be examined from all angles and embrace a multitude of viewpoints, leading to a well-rounded Strategy that is achievable, realistic, well-resourced and beneficial for all. A clear plan of how this will be delivered will be crucial for its success.

7. Is there anything else you wish to comment on that has not been covered elsewhere?

There is no reference to the increasing impact of GAFA (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple) and big tech on all aspects of our lives. Also, there seems to be little mention of fintech and the potential impact of crypto currencies and distributed applications. In addition, clarity around how the tech sector is being defined and the contribution that it currently makes to Scotland's economy would be welcome. Creative Scotland has a particular interest in supporting a digital third sector (which is spelled out in Section 5, "Services Working For All"), as many of the organisations we support are either charities, social enterprises or microbusinesses with a social purpose. The creative and cultural sectors in Scotland are largely small and microbusinesses and freelancers, and support that is devised to reach into these grassroots to develop skills, opportunity, collaboration, efficiency and ambition would be especially welcome. Finally, it would be beneficial for the strategy to give more attention to how we transition out of existing infrastructure and systems and into new ones. The ambitions in sections 5 and 6 will be challenging in terms of transitioning out of ways of working, skills of public sector staff, the ways the digital divide affects service users, the old hardware and software etc. If we were building from scratch this would be a lot easier but as we've got lots of existing systems and tools in place (even those manifestly not fit for purpose) getting rid of them is going to be hard and expensive. Perhaps we might consider incentives for improvements rather than simply targets?