

# DÁIL ÉIREANN

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**AN COMHCHOISTE UM CHULTÚR, OIHDREACT AGUS GAELTACHT**

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, HERITAGE AND THE GAELTACHT**

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*Dé Céadaoin, 23 Eanáir 2019*

*Wednesday, 23 January 2019*

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The Joint Committee met at 1.30 p.m.

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MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Michael Collins,	Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell,
Deputy Niamh Smyth,	Senator Fintan Warfield.

In attendance: Deputies Ciarán Cannon, Finian McGrath, Imelda Munster and Eugene Murphy, and Senator Alice-Mary Higgins.

DEPUTY AENGUS Ó SNODAIGH IN THE CHAIR.

## **Business of Joint Committee**

**Chairman:** I hope everybody had a good break. We are back for the first of many committee meetings, hopefully, in the new year. I ask members to turn off their mobile telephones as they interfere with the sound system. I propose to suspend the sitting for a few minutes to allow the witnesses to be seated before we resume in public session.

*Sitting suspended at 1.38 p.m. and resumed at 1.41 p.m.*

## **Why the Arts Matter: Discussion**

**Chairman:** Cuirim fáilte roimh na finnétithe ar fad. Meabhraím do gach éinne na fóin phóca a mhúchadh. I ask witnesses, members of the committee and people in the Public Gallery to turn off their mobile telephones as they interfere with the recording system. If members and witnesses wish to be heard properly and not have their contributions interfered with they should ensure their telephones are switched off.

Today we have four witnesses - Ms Garry Hynes, Druid Theatre, Galway; Mr. Philip King, broadcaster; Fr. Mark Patrick Hederman, Glenstal Abbey School; Mr. Theo Dorgan, poet - who we have invited to assist us in our consideration of why the arts matter. Over the last year the committee has undertaken a considerable amount of work on examining the arts in Ireland in their various forms and genres and we have had the benefit of meeting people from many organisations around the country. Today we are attempting to draw that phase of work to a conclusion, after which we will formulate a report based on what we have heard to date. The submissions and opening statements from witnesses have been circulated to the members and what the witnesses say in their opening statements and in response to questions will be recorded and included in our report when it is concluded.

Before inviting the witnesses to address the meeting I draw their attention to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(I) of the Defamation Act 2009 they are protected by absolute privilege in respect of the evidence they give to the joint committee. If, however, they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. Witnesses are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or an entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. The opening statements and any other documents they have submitted to the committee may be published on the committee's website after the meeting.

Members of the committee are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

Tá sé sin ráite agam. Tá súil agam go dtuigeann gach éinne é. Cuirfidh mé tús le gnó an lae. Tugaim cuireadh don Uasal Hynes a chur i láthair a dhéanamh.

**Ms Garry Hynes:** Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirligh. What do the arts mean to me? Inherent in this question is the flawed thinking we tend to fall into when discussing the arts. This is not to denigrate the opportunity to articulate my view or the passion with which I will at-

tempt to communicate it to the committee. The problem is that the question suggests that there is an abstract entity in society called the arts which has greater or lesser degrees of meaning to different individuals. This is simply not true. Instead, I believe creativity is fundamental to every human being and that we are all creative beings at each and every moment of our lives, irrespective of background, education or the communities in which we live.

Fundamental to all human activity is the capacity to imagine. If there are some, like me, who become professional artists - I earn my living by using my imagination to collaborate with others in the making of professional theatre - I am only distinguished from the person who uses to his or her imagination to watch that theatre by who pays our paycheck at the end of the week. I always think of myself as an accidental artist. Nothing in my background suggests the life I was destined to live. Born in Ballaghderreen in the hungry 1950s, the daughter of an exceptional teacher father and an open-minded, supportive mother, I was privileged enough to expect an education at least to my late teenage years and, if I was fortunate, a university education. This gave me the greatest gift of all, time to explore who I might become. In the usual act of teenage rebellion, I spent most of those years actively pursuing a life outside Ireland. It was only through those early clumsy forays into putting on plays that I discovered how to be Irish and that the plays of an Irishman born almost 100 years before me, John Millington Synge, spoke more to my heart and sense of self than all the American plays by my contemporaries. In those formative years I was doing what we all must do to live meaningful lives - I was becoming part of a community.

What is profoundly terrifying to me now is how carelessly and stupidly we are allowing ourselves to become isolated from one another, broken into blocks of entitlement and self-interest that ruthlessly disregard our need for the common good. For me, the fire and definition in my life and the lives of all others is the act of imagining, but that imagining, which is the practising of art however instinctive its origins and whether it is in performance, singing, painting, making film or making music, always needs to be protected and nourished. It requires the making of structures to enable it, to facilitate participation in it by all and to create the circumstances whereby makers can live decent and respected lives.

On that point, I wish to outline some stark facts for the committee. They were recently published by Theatre Forum Ireland, the forum responsible for theatre performances. One third of all performers in Ireland earn less than the minimum wage and four fifths of the jobs in our sector, the performing arts, are deemed to be precarious. Some 74% of actors rely on other income and 73% of organisations that make and produce theatre do not make employment or health contributions to their members. This is shocking and if it applied to any other industry in the country all of us would hang our heads in shame. Instead, it is tolerated. It is not acceptable in Irish society today that Irish actors earn less than the living wage. It is also not acceptable that one of our major national institutions is apparently so lacking in governance that fundamental disagreements as to its role and function in Irish life remain chronically unresolved. Members of the Joint Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht should note this and many other examples of our failure to protect our culture are not acceptable. I will finish with what I believe are prescient words from the final commencement address of Dr. Joseph W. Polisi to his students at the Juilliard School, a major school for the arts in New York, on his retirement, who stated: "Rather than being a subject of pious platitudes, the arts must be viewed as an essential part of our existence which can be easily neutralized by an uncaring populace or an insensitive political leadership." This is a warning we would all do well to heed.

**Mr. Philip King:** Gabhaim buíochas don Chathaoirleach agus don choiste. Is onóir domsa

a bheith anseo os comhair an choiste inniu.

Looking at the pictures coming from the Mansion House on 21 January, 100 years on, it is a prescient time. The reference that the Taoiseach and many other speakers, including the President, made to the Democratic Programme was indeed a reminder of the time when the State was founded. I must say, 100 years on we in the world of arts and creativity find ourselves in a very difficult place. I concur absolutely with everything Ms Hynes has said and the numbers she mentioned. I will not rehearse that again here.

The arts matter for at least four sets of reasons. First, because creativity, culture and the arts are essential to our well-being and valuable in their own right as uniquely irreplaceable human activities. Second, they matter for the individual and personal benefits they confer by enabling us to imagine, invent, interpret and communicate diverse ways of seeing the world. Third, they matter for the communal and societal value and diversity they create, promote and share and fourth, they matter for the value they add to our reputation globally and for their potential to strengthen Ireland's role in bilateral relationships by enriching common ground. Sir John Tusa, former director of the Barbican in London and executive at the BBC, puts it like this:

The arts matter because they embrace, express and define the soul of a civilisation. A nation without arts would be a nation that had stopped talking to itself, stopped dreaming, and had lost interest in the past and lacked curiosity about the future.

When I was on the Arts Council a new report about the value of the arts would often arrive from Indecon. We would look at the executive summary of that report. The beginning of the report would always say that for every euro invested in the arts, a return of X would be generated. We would hotfoot over to the Department of Finance with the new report, run up the stairs and say we have it now. The officials in the Department would look benignly at the report and thank us for bringing it to their attention, and nothing would happen.

As I was saying a little earlier, I attended the funeral of the late Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin. He and I worked together a lot over the years. One day we were chatting about the value of the arts and why they matter. We were talking about numbers, and he said to me that there is no metric for the priceless. Many years ago I wrote that down. How true is it? I ask the committee to imagine something. If one looks at the depictions of Irish people as they left here in their hundreds of thousands after the Famine, one might say they are not carrying any worldly goods. They do not have anything of value with them. If one was being unkind, one might say these people are fairly worthless. However, when they arrived in their destinations, particularly in Philadelphia, Boston and New York, the great cities on the eastern seaboard of the United States, as well as Chicago, and they unpacked their emotional baggage, something of rare and powerful value became apparent. I wish to read into the record a poem written by the Donegal poet Moya Cannon. It is called "Carrying the Songs". She writes:

It was always those with little else to carry  
who carried the songs  
to Babylon,  
to the Mississippi —  
some of these last possessed less than nothing  
did not own their own bodies

yet, three centuries later,  
deep rhythms from Africa,  
stowed in their hearts, their bones,  
carry the world's songs.  
For those who left my county,  
girls from Downings and the Rosses  
who followed herring boats north to Shetland  
gutting the sea's silver as they went  
or boys from Ranafast who took the Derry boat,  
who slept over a rope in a bothy,  
songs were their souls' currency  
the pure metal of their hearts,  
to be exchanged for other gold,  
other songs which rang out true and bright  
when flung down  
upon the deal boards of their days.

It is exquisitely poignant, but what it tells us is that when those migrants - and they were migrants - left here, they carried in their heads, their hands and their feet the emotional baggage of a whole country. When they unpacked it and the Irish songwriters in Tin Pan Alley met people like Irving Berlin, the Irish and the Jews formed the music business. I emphasise "music business". Victor Herbert founded the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, ASCAP, the first collection agency for collecting copyrights on songs. Not only that, we left an indelible thumbprint on the making of the great American songbook with which America colonised the world. When I turned on my radio as a 1950s boy in Cork city, I watched the radio heat up, caught the smell of the valves and heard rock and roll coming from the American Forces Network based in Germany. I was turned on. I bought a pair of jeans and a harmonica. I bought into the thing, because where culture goes, commerce follows.

We are beginning to realise that here, little by little. The granular, metric argument does not wash because we are dealing with something priceless. Ms Hynes alluded to it as well. We are in a world that has become a little bit more virtual, augmented and artificial. However, we have something in our bag of imagination that enables us to be tactile, human and engaging in a way that is a very powerful antidote to what I call "the digitally lonely life"; a screen-dominated life. We have that in spades in this country. When Members of the Oireachtas talk to Intel and people in DCU, they are beginning to talk about science technology, engineering and maths, STEM, and STEAM. With the insertion of the A of arts into that acronym, we are looking at something very powerful.

Two things are absolutely true. The arts and what they can deliver are absolutely central

to this proposition. I emphasises that anything that cannot be automated is going to become very valuable. Second, we have reached a century of independence, and independence by my definition is paying our way in the world in an independent way. If we do not create the conditions where we grow, own and monetise our own intellectual property, we will never have a real wealth proposition that will address health, housing, education etc. It is the resource that Ms Hynes refers to, the naturally occurring resource of imagination, that gives us the song, the poem, the film and the Oscar award, and designs the chip that goes into the Intel box. It is the same thing. These powerful elements of engagement and empathy are a *sine qua non* to a civilised, independent society.

I will conclude by reiterating what Ms Hynes said. It is shameful that we do not look at this resource and treat it with respect.

**Chairman:** Go raibh maith agat. Already, Mr. King has left us with many points to think about, and we have to hear from two more distinguished guests. That is on a day when Irish film has made substantial progress again on the world stage in getting such nominations, but I will not delay the meeting on that. We will return to questions and comments from our guests. I call the next speaker. Is é an tAthair Mark Patrick Hederman ón Glenstal Abbey School an chéad duine eile atá le labhairt linn.

**Fr. Mark Patrick Hederman:** Bob Geldof, in his TV programme “A Fanatic Heart”, released on RTÉ for the centenary of 1916, makes this provocative suggestion:

One hundred years ago, a handful of Irishmen and women rose up against the British Empire. A six-day rebellion that ended in their execution and elevation to near-sainthood. But are they Ireland’s greatest heroes? Is the GPO Ireland’s most sacred place? To me, it represents the birth of a pious, bitter and narrow-minded version of Ireland I couldn’t wait to escape.

But there was another version of Ireland, dreamt up by a poet ... His vision was mythical, romantic, truly heroic and beautiful. That was the Ireland I could never leave behind.

Both Bob Geldof and Oliver St. John Gogarty agree. There is no Free State without Yeats, and both imply that Ireland does not exist without the arts.

Others have suggested that since the beginning of the 20th century and the founding of our Free State, we swapped British rule for three alternative colonisations: a particular brand of nationalism; a home-grown blend of Catholicism; and the prevailing western culture of scientific realism. We may agree or disagree but one thing is certain: the 21st century is a cultural tsunami that has hit the whole world and washed away most signposts and values which constituted the western world as we have known it up to now.

As we sit here now in Leinster House at the beginning of 2019, when all the “isms” of the previous century have worn thin, where do we go and to whom do we turn for a compass and a guideline on the way towards the future? It is not for me, or for anyone else for that matter, to provide a justification for art. Art needs no justification and will survive and endure even where repudiated and persecuted. The words, supposedly issuing from Nazi Germany, about reaching for a gun whenever the word “culture” is mentioned, have less dramatic and more subtle forms of asphyxiation, which are more regularly applied.

In the ten minutes allotted, I will give at least one good reason art in this country must be supported and promoted at all costs. We cannot leave the future of Ireland to politicians alone.

Our great dilemma is that we are trying to prepare ourselves for a world which we will never be able to forecast. Only imagination can help us to prepare for the future. How could any of us who grew up in the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s have prepared ourselves for the world of text, Twitter and tweet? The future is not something we step into as an already designed space. The future is ourselves as we choose to become. The future is alive with possibility to the extent that we are open to change. Change occurs most profitably in the wake of fundamental shifts in our way of being and these occur mostly because someone has imagined and described them. Works of art are the first hints we get, and artists are there to harvest possible shapes for the future and to sketch in outline what we might become.

The future is in our hands. Obviously, there are forces working, influences abounding and pressures surrounding, which diminish our autonomy and lessen our responsibility. However, it is still possible for those of us who live on this island as we approach the third decade of the 21st century to shape our future within the limitations and constrictions which global membership of the universe imposes. There are many imperatives and considerations which should determine the steps we take, but prominent among these should be the voice of artists and the educating influence of art. It is not the only factor but it should be a decisive one. Art can provide an accurate and unflinching cardiograph of the present and a prognosis of possibilities for the future, and politicians and leaders ignore this at their peril.

There may have been other times in history when truth was made available through politics, religion or philosophy, but these grand narratives have been found wanting. Nowadays, we have to rely on sleuths with a keen sense of smell. Artists are the best trackers that we have got. Art is a secret logic of the imagination which subverts actual worlds in the name of possible worlds. The artist may not even be aware of what is happening through their work. In certain cases he or she is used as a mouthpiece for the psychic secrets of the times in which they live. Art of the future has no template, no guide and no intellectual categories; it feels its way forward, finding words beyond the vocabulary of any language we currently know how to speak.

A dialogue must happen between artists and the rest of us. Others do not have the sensitivity, the authenticity or the flair for capturing the originality we need but others have to build the future. We are those others so, in whatever way and to whatever extent is possible, we must become aware of the direction in which the trailblazers are pointing. That does not mean we all have to be artists. It does not mean even that we have to appreciate art ourselves. What it means is that someone has to produce the appropriate work of art and that our sociocultural ambience has to become infused with the understanding that such art inspires so that whatever movement we take forward, whatever way we instigate the future, whatever way we are energised or directed, we must be informed by the spirit of that art that shapes the space which should be cleared for us towards the future.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** Ar dtús, ba mhaith liom a rá go dtugaim faoi deara go mbíonn an coiste seo i mbun cúrsaí Gaeltachta a phlé freisin agus tá súil agam go mbeidh an coiste ag tabhairt cuireadh do dhaoine atá gafa faoi leith le healaoína na Gaeltachta mar tá a fhadhbanna féin acu siúd nach mbaineann b'fhéidir ach an corruair lenár saothair mar ealaíontóirí.

**Chairman:** Bhí roinnt acu os comhair an coiste roimhe seo.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** I regret that there is a typographical error on page 9 of my written submission. If the secretariat would kindly change the figure of €11 million to €21 million.

*(Interruptions).*

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** I recall, for the committee's amusement, that Oscar Wilde was once asked how he had spent the day and he replied that he had spent the morning putting in a comma and the afternoon taking it out. *De minimis non curat lex* may be true - the law may not care about little things but poets must.

On the basis of what, I hope, is the reasonable assumption that some of the members will have read it, I do not propose to read my written submission. Instead, I want to pick up on some of what Ms Hynes and Mr. King said. I also want to pick up on the submission made to the committee from the National Campaign for the Arts, which seemed to provide an accurate, provocative and helpful analysis of what is to be done on the purely practical level in terms of funding the arts. I not want to talk about that. What I want to say is that there is no such thing as the arts. Nobody ever rushed home from work, threw off their clothes, jumped in the shower, dressed again, grabbed a sandwich and a glass of milk and rushed out to the arts. They went to the theatre, they went to a concert, they went to a book launch or they went to the opening of an exhibition. It is important to understand that art takes distinct forms.

Nobody can like everything. One of the difficulties with the way poetry is taught in schools is the poor misfortunates are expected to like everything they see. I have a passion for hurling. I appreciate that football is a kind of a sport in its own way but, for me, passion is about hurling. This does not mean that I think we should break the legs of a football team in order to improve the prospects of a hurling team. We need to start relaxing about this inherited post-colonial idea of the arts as something that all right-thinking people are in favour of because what follows from that is one does nothing about it. Art is made by individuals and by collectives of individuals who are driven by a passion for a particular form. Some people will cross over - backwards and forwards - but that is generally true. In every estate in this country, in every parish in every small town and every single street in every district, there is somebody learning to play an instrument, there is somebody whose most meaningful moments of the day are when he or she sits down to listen to the music he or she loves, and there is somebody who wants to go to a theatre.

I appreciate what Fr. Hederman is saying when he talks about the particular native genius in the imagination of the artist but art is not complete until it meets its audience. When I make a poem, I send it out into the world and I have no further interest in it. I do not own it. If it lodges in somebody's mind and imagination and means something to him or her, then the poem is doing its work. Without audience, there is no artist. When we talk about supporting the arts in Ireland, we are not talking about piously making a small allocation towards a few curious individuals who seem to have inexplicable passions for adding words together, adding notes together to make a tune or making lies on a stage in order to tell some kind of truth. We are talking about all of us together. One cannot grow a field of wheat by deciding, stalk by stalk, where to apply one's cultivation. One provides for the entire field. One trusts chance to see what comes up but, generally, there is a harvest if we are prudent. The links between culture and agriculture are not accidental. We have to cultivate ourselves - those of us who have the fortune, or, maybe, the misfortune, to make a life as artists but also those with whom, for whom and towards whom we make our work. It is absolutely critical to understand that.

The Democratic Programme states, " It shall be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children". My father worked in a factory. My mother, until she married, worked in a factory. I am the eldest of a very large family. In the late 1960s, the late Donogh O'Malley went home for the

weekend, he sat there and then it dawned on him that everybody should have access to secondary education. He came in on Monday and called his senior civil servants together and said, "We are introducing free secondary education." The folklore is - I am putting this delicately so as not to cause offence to anybody, pensioned or still in employment - that the civil servants went berserk. They came up with more reasons than Sir Humphrey could imagine about why this could not be done. When they were finished telling the Minister why it could not be done, he told them to go away and do it. Donogh O'Malley's answer was akin to Humpty Dumpty's famous remark. When Alice questioned Humpty Dumpty about the king, he said, "The question is ... which is to be master ...". In this democracy, we elect our representatives, Opposition and Government, at the same time to be master, to decide on large matters of public policy and to issue the instruction that they be implemented.

When the First Dáil convened, all the sensible people laughed. One can go back through the newspaper archives. The realists thought it was hilarious that a bunch of jumped-up culchies, disaffected petit bourgeois and dodgy trade unionists imagined themselves to be the Parliament of a free Ireland. Guess what? It was. It was the first Parliament of a free Ireland and the direct antecedents of the Government in which some of the members serve and of the Government some of which the members hope to be part. That is where we started. We imagined ourselves and it went from there. We imagined a state, which we do not yet have, where all the children of the nation would be cherished. Having so many thousands of children homeless is not the State we imagine ourselves to live in but we have to work at it.

This committee will make a report to the Minister and the Minister will make submissions to Government. What I hope is that the members' imaginations will be harnessed to this. The committee has received submissions from distinguished people who know their business and who care passionately about it and who have laboured against all forms of discouragement to open the doors of the imagination to the children of this nation. They have made poems, they have built art centres, they have built world-famous theatres and they have made television series that have, to the glory of Irish music, gone around the world. They have done that in the face of what I would call the terrorism of neglect. The truth is - I hope the committee will say this in its report - that we have chosen to be poor in the service of the imagination. We have elected to be poor. This is so much against the grain of who we are supposed to be that there are times when I have looked in the mirror and asked, "Are you mad?" However, I keep going, Mr. King keeps singing and Ms Hynes keeps making theatre because this is what we do.

The members should imagine themselves in that situation and finding that the State that one lives in, the people among whom one lives and the children whom one hopes will follow in one's footsteps are being treated with patronising neglect. I am sorry to say so but it is patronising to tell us that Ireland's reputational value leans on its artists when the vast majority of those who commit their lives to this path are living in abject poverty.

Humpty Dumpty's point was a good question. Who is to be master? Master of what? What do we live for in this country? Are we just statistics in an economist's nightmares or are we people - people of each other, for each other, by each other, with each other? We go to funerals and weddings together. We go to Croke Park and Thomond Park together. We understand ourselves and, without having to explain it in deep philosophical terms, we understand that we are a people. What kind of a people are we, though, when we claim the glories of our artists and treat them so shamefully? The only question that is really important in public life is "Who do we want to be?" One may imagine objecting to or taking part in the Rising on Easter Monday 1916, and we can all project ourselves back in history and say with the benefit of hindsight that

we would have done this, that or the other. I take a radical but simple view - these were men and women who thought that liberty mattered and that we should be free to imagine ourselves as a free people. In dribs and drabs, in institutional Ireland down through the years we have made faint stabs at that. This is a very good moment to again ask, with absolute seriousness, “Who do we want to be?”. How can we best imagine ourselves in the 21st century, and the 22nd or the 23rd? What foundations are we prepared to lay for who we can be?

There has been a lot of popular history in the past 1,000 years but there is a kernel of truth in it. Ireland was a *lumen mundi* - a light to the world. In a line from Brest down through France, Switzerland across as far as Slovenia, one will find Irish placenames, based on centres of learning set up by people who brought their complex cultures across Europe at a time when it was ruled by economists with hatchets, people who knew the price of everything but the value of nothing. In our modest but real way, we brought a light to the world.

The current reflexes towards right-wing populism are spasmodic, knee-jerk reactions to globalisation. Globalisation aims to remove what is distinct. It aims to remove things of the mind, heart and soul and turn us into obedient consumers. It is the logic of the market but we should have the strength of character to think of ourselves differently, as people who value the imagination in business, in commerce, in street sweeping and, above all else, in governance. This committee has the opportunity to go back to Government and ask how much better it can imagine itself to be, as a Government. Can it take responsibility for the depth and the wealth of imagination in the Irish people? These include the child yearning to be able to play the fiddle well enough to be at a Comhaltas session and the young man starstruck at the thought of walking the stage and inhabiting invented characters. We have to take responsibility for those people. We have the good fortune to be able to look at practitioners, administrators and artists who have walked this road before us. It is a resource to be tapped into and only one thing is needed for that to happen, namely, the cultivation of respect. I would like this committee to propose that the Minister says to Government that it is time we showed respect to those things we profess to value. We will all be the better for it.

I do not know if any members are old enough to remember “Green Acres”. I remember the character in the programme who got entirely carried away whenever he became passionate about a subject. It is not my intention to hector or to lecture the committee. My beloved Paula says that if I were a country, my national anthem would be “Indignation Once Again”. To a certain extent, I am indignant. I am indignant about the fact that we have an enormous opportunity to fashion ourselves as a model for the world. More than that, we could create a hospitable environment for the children of the nation and show we cherish them, not by imagining that everybody can become an artist but by offering them the fruits of our work and the practice of creative imagination as an integral part of their formation as citizens and as people. We should give these freely, with no foretold outcomes or demands, as a gift to help them disclose their imagination to themselves so that they can go and make what they will of the future. This committee has a marvellous opportunity, 100 years on from the First Dáil, to drive this back into the heart of a democratic programme for the 21st century.

I will end on a slightly dark note. The RTÉ archives for 1966 contain a record of Ernest Blythe saying that everyone thought of the democratic programme as the hoisting of a flag and that nobody ever meant it to be taken seriously. On another occasion, the late Deputy Seán MacEntee said he did not think the working class would have believed in their bona fides and that, besides, the farmers would not have stood for it. What would they not have stood for? Would it have been cherishing children and providing for their health and welfare, both mental and

spiritual? There is a dark way of looking at this, which is to say that the very first Dáil passed a high-sounding programme and then proceeded, fully consciously, to do nothing about it. That is a cycle that could usefully be broken.

I do not have to make an argument for why the arts matter because everybody knows it, apart from a handful of journalists who are still affected by post-colonial cringe but I challenge this committee to produce a report that makes the arts matter. The committee should make a case to Government that makes it impossible not to see why and for whom they matter. They matter for living children and those yet to be born. A child was born about 30 seconds ago in the Rotunda Hospital and I would go to that child for a political analysis before I would go to Bob Geldof.

**Chairman:** I thank all four of our guests for their presentations and for their interesting questions. I am sure there will be many questions from members to them. I hope that when we put the report together, it will look at questions for the Minister and politics and society in general about why the arts matter.

**Deputy Ciarán Cannon:** I thank our guests for their powerful and compelling contributions. My instinctive reaction was to clap every contribution but I do not think that is allowed in this setting. I do not know if it is possible to make the contributions available to Members of the Houses.

**Chairman:** The written contributions will be made available at the end of the meeting.

**Deputy Ciarán Cannon:** I am referring to the video. Each should be separated and made available as a single contribution because their message would resonate deeply with thousands of people.

I acknowledge that we grossly underfund the arts in this country. Mr. Dorgan spoke about the art that happens every single day along the rural highways and byways and in the estates of this country. We must create an environment for a young person participating in Comhaltas for the first time or a potentially great actor treading the boards in a one-act drama in Roscommon, in which they feel at home and in the place they want to be. As to whether we urgently need to examine the funding structure as currently constituted, I acknowledge that it is underfunded but excellence always seems to win out in terms of the largest portion of that structure. We seek to support and acknowledge excellence at the top of the pyramid instead of looking at the highways and byways, the school yards or the next Kodakline rehearsing right now in some kid's garage in Limerick.

I know some of the local authority arts officers in the west well. I know of their knowledge of the arts and their passion for nurturing them. Every year, and regardless of where they are in the country, they often tell me that they do not have the resources to fertilise and encourage nascent artistic endeavour. Do we need to invert the pyramid? Should excellence be able to fund itself? Should those who might be capable of creating excellence in future be the major recipients of arts funding?

**Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell:** Are we taking all of the questions together?

**Chairman:** No. The Minister of State indicated that he has to-----

**Deputy Ciarán Cannon:** I am grateful, as I have to leave. My apologies, but I will read the contributions afterwards.

**Chairman:** Does anyone wish to respond?

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** The Minister of State asked an interesting question, not least because it focuses on how we decide to allocate our resources. Local authority spending on the arts has decreased year on year. This year, it is 27% less than it was last year. I am not convinced that local authorities are, with sufficient passion and sense of service to their communities, committed to funding and developing the arts. The local authorities are perhaps a good place to start with cultivating the beginnings of talent.

Mr. King and I happened to be on the same iteration of the Arts Council from 2003 to 2009. Given that the Arts Council was doing a great deal to support emerging artists, one of the first questions we asked was about what we were doing for them after they had taken the council's encouragement, made the leap of faith, declared themselves as artists and committed themselves to the path, at which point we left them high and dry. It was a way of focusing on the fact that we must provide for the artists, just the makers themselves, from the beginning through to the end of their careers. It is the voluntary embrace of poverty. I am sorry to keep harping on about this, but that is the material consequence of electing to assume the life of an artist. Some few will be lucky - be it because of the *zeitgeist* or the quality of their talent, it is always impossible to say - and become self-sustaining. The fact that there are a small handful of artists who are self-sustaining can often serve to mask the fact, and the value, of investment across the board.

We are in thrall to defective economic thinking, so we want to know the outcome before we make an investment, but a hurling, rugby and camogie team cannot be built like that. At some point, we have to make a leap of faith, and investment in the arts is a leap of faith. We cannot tell in any one instance whether an investment will be returned, but we can say that, financially and using all other metrics, it will be returned from across the sector.

If we are to fund the arts, we must do it on a radically democratic basis. We must make it as available as possible to the largest number of people and not attempt to secure premature guarantees of the outcome. However, the Minister of State is right that there can be an excessive focus on excellence, but that raises a difficult question. If someone is really good and has an international reputation but is not making a living and cannot afford VHI - the majority of artists cannot afford private health insurance - do we stop sustaining that person? Using the metaphor of the field of wheat, one must cultivate the whole field. If some shoots do better than others, that is the luck of the draw, genetics or whatever.

On the practical side, and as imperfect as it is, the Arts Council is not an anonymous arts agency, not least because it employs peer review for much of its considerations in terms of individual artists. It is not a bad mechanism and it has the virtue of at least not attempting to produce regime art or harness prematurely the outcome of a work of artistic creation for the purposes of political propaganda. It places faith in people's maturity, intelligence and moral probity. That is a good thing, but it need not be the only model of support. In many sectors, the powers of local authorities have diminished simply by choking off central funding to them. Does one go to an impersonal bank or one's local credit union for a loan? Especially for people at the beginning who are tentative or intend to become accomplished but remain amateurs in their lives - I use the word "amateurs" in its etymological sense, that is, lovers of something rather than people who are less good than professionals - it would be better to go local, for their local authorities to fund them and for local authorities to have far more funding for scholarships, sessions, schools and every aspect of art support. However, that has to come from central government and would require a revolution of a kind none of us here wants to see, with local

authorities wandering around like so many medieval barons levying their own incomes as it pleased them. It comes back to the same question that legislators face when considering national level funding for the arts - how much are we prepared to put our political weight behind adequate programmes of funding?

For many years, the Arts Council has attempted to build partnerships with local authorities, but it is not in a position to fund the authorities. Some of them have performed miracles with the funds at their disposal while others have been lethargic, but how are they to make these decisions without funding? It is like deciding which child will be allowed to die. If their central funding is earmarked - I do not know, as I have not thought it through to that level - and increased and there is an incentive to develop arts supports programmes, local authorities have an important role to play.

**Chairman:** If none of our other guests wishes to comment, I will turn to Deputy Niamh Smyth. After the Deputy, I will call Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell. There will be two sets of questions before we turn back to our guests.

**Deputy Niamh Smyth:** I thank our guests for their presentations. Like the Minister of State, I felt like standing up to clap after each, they were understandably so powerful, heartfelt and emotional. The witnesses have spent lifetimes contributing to the arts.

Senator Warfield, others and I have spoken to Theatre Forum and listened to young artists who were at the beginning and middle of their careers. They spoke about practical issues that should not be exceptional for us to expect in life, for example, healthcare, aspiring to own their own homes and starting families. Where childcare is concerned, will people be able to follow their careers as performing artists, visual artists and so on? As our guests mentioned, how can they be expected to have long-term security in their careers?

Our guests spoke eloquently and in philosophical terms about being an artist and the contribution it makes to society. We were all won over by that argument. However, will each of our guests make three suggestions as to what the Government and we in opposition can do practically to show that the arts can be a career? We have necessarily spoken about the issue in general terms, but let us get down to the nitty-gritty. How can that be achieved?

**Ms Garry Hynes:** It can be achieved simply - the Government must increase arts funding across the board. It is underfunded. We have spoken a great deal about funding the arts, which tends to make the issue abstract. What the Government would be doing would be funding its own citizens to make art in its own country. So many of them now are not - they are leaving and making it in other countries for other people. It is about increasing funding. The Arts Council's annual subvention still has not reached 2008 levels. We are chronically underfunded. One only has to look at the facts and the statistics to see that *per capita*, we have the least in the European Union. We have proved ourselves in recent months to be worthy members of that Union but the funding must be increased. It must stop being something that is done after everything else is done. It has to stop being at the root of arguments whereby people ask how we can increase funding for the arts when people are waiting for houses, hospital beds and so on. It is the life of our citizens who are crucially involved in the arts. It must be at the centre of Government's thinking in terms of the kind of country we want our citizens to live in. It is simple.

**Mr. Philip King:** I agree with that. We are talking here about a national resource. Like any national resource, one cannot open-cast mine it, dig it all out and put nothing back in. It is nuts to operate in that fashion. Everybody here has alluded to the fact that the arts are valuable. Ms

Hynes spoke eloquently in Dublin Castle recently at an event organised by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to celebrate 100 years of the diplomatic service and to discuss Ireland 2025, under which we want to increase our influence and our global footprint. It is a statement of intent by the Government. How do we make ourselves audible and visible? If we are not audible and visible, we will not be considerable and will not be a consideration.

On the question of STEM and STEAM and the insertion of the arts, we must have an all-of-Government approach. I spoke to a person involved in tourism about a project in which I was involved. I was asked how many bed nights it would generate. The yardstick by which things are being judged is in terms of a granular outcome. I understand that when public money is involved, one must justify the investment but that is not replenishing a resource. Finance needs to talk to arts, arts needs to talk to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and so on. Everyone needs to talk to each other and to leave behind the silo mentality that sees the arts as the responsibility of only one Department. It has gone beyond that.

As I alluded to earlier, we have a significant national resource which is not being minded, husbanded or tended properly. One can talk about the human dimension in terms of healthcare and all of the usual things to which every citizen has right. However, we are making a hugely valuable contribution in a world that is more digital, more virtual and more artificial. It is a national resource, which puts us on the map and makes us audible, visible and considerable. It is both criminal and shameful not to invest in this resource. This committee, as our representative, must take that message to the heart of Government. We are not asking members to do that for us. We are talking here about identity, how we are viewed and the value proposition for an Ireland of the 21st century.

**Deputy Niamh Smyth:** I am sorry to interrupt but when Mr. King and Mr. Dorgan were on the Arts Council, they asked important questions. When an emerging artist makes the decision to be an artist and to make that commitment, we must recognise that it is a life-long commitment. What conclusion did they come to in terms of the provisions that we should be making to ensure that when artists make that decision they will have a life-long career?

**Mr. Philip King:** Ms Hynes alluded to it. In fact, she more than alluded to it; she spoke very clearly and said it is very simple. We need to significantly increase funding for the arts in Ireland so that artists can have a sustainable career in their chosen profession.

**Ms Garry Hynes:** It is one thing to be young and to start a theatre company, as I did with my colleagues. It is one thing to be aged 25, 26 or 27 and want to be an actor but the numbers who stop being professional actors because they cannot even make the most rudimentary living from it are significant. The rate of exit from the profession is enormous. One does not just decide to do it and survive. What happens when someone marries, assumes new responsibilities, has aging parents or gets sick, for example? Almost every day I am disturbed by seeing so many actors that I knew as young people in states of enthusiasm and delight at being actors who have no pension and who are facing lives of real poverty. These are actors who work. I am not just talking about actors who do not work. These are important people who helped found theatres in this country. Their names are ones that people around this table would recognise. They are people who are well known but they are finding it hard to put two pennies together to fund their lives and those of their children.

**Deputy Niamh Smyth:** Can I tease that out a little? Some of the analysis from Theatre Forum suggests that the arts world has become more competitive and that there are a lot more artists in the country now. Courses at third level institutions such as the NCAD and colleges

in Dún Laoghaire, Limerick and Cork mean that significant numbers of students qualify every year, some of whom go on to study at postgraduate level and so on. Let us imagine that funding for the arts is doubled. How do we ensure that artists have more security? What practical measures do the witnesses have in mind? I accept that there must be greater investment in the arts. Let us say that happens and funding to the Arts Council increases. How do we ensure that the increased funding reaches the artists? How do we provide them with security?

**Ms Garry Hynes:** We do not allow a situation, for instance, where any organisation funded by any part of the Government pays less than the minimum wage. There may be people willing to work for less than the minimum wage because they want to get on but that should not be allowed. We must create a situation where the health of the sector is always in view. We must make sure that we do not have people at the age of 40 who need private healthcare but who cannot afford it. We must sit down and think about it. Various stakeholder bodies like the Arts Council and all of us involved in the industry are required to do this so that we do not have a situation where 312 members of the theatrical profession are signing letters to *The Irish Times* saying that they are being “cast adrift”. That is significant. This is an easily ordered thing but it needs an increase in spending on the arts by Government, which this Government is not doing currently.

**Chairman:** Senator Marie-Louise O’Donnell is next.

**Deputy Niamh Smyth:** I ask that the Chair would-----

**Chairman:** I will come back to Deputy Smyth, time permitting, but three other members are waiting to contribute.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** Can I contribute an answer to the Deputy’s question?

**Chairman:** I am trying to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute because we only have the room for a limited time. I would love to sit here all day. Three members have yet to contribute but if we have time, I will come back to Mr. Dorgan.

**Senator Marie-Louise O’Donnell:** I thank the witnesses for their contributions. It is a real privilege to be here today. I was told not to become a member of this committee because there are no votes in it. That in itself is very telling. This is my first time on the arts committee, which raises another question. This committee used to be called arts and sport. Then it became arts and tourism followed by culture, heritage and the Gaeltacht. We refuse, within the arts, to name the cats. We will not name what we are speaking about. It has become globalised and amalgamated into something called culture. There is nothing wrong with culture, heritage or the Gaeltacht. Equally, there is nothing wrong with sport or tourism. Arts is all right if it is connected with tourism or the economy but on its own, we are not too sure. The arts cannot stand as an independent cat. We lost out politically, in the first instance, that it is not an independent cat, sitting there with all the radii of its own circle and not attached to something here, there and everywhere.

It was interesting at the Dáil100 celebration the other day that what moved the audience and the point at which one could hear a pin drop was “The Coolin” played on the violin and the O’Carolan piece played on the harp. It brought everybody right back to their stomach. It raises the point that the expressive arts, creativity and imagination are important regardless of whether someone takes them up. As a performer, it is important for well-being and not feeling useless.

I wrote a study on bereavement and death in Ireland and whether we do dying well. We do

it well ritualistically but we are sometimes not good on grief. Arts people are turned to all the time for the language of grief, to go somewhere when life became meaningless or valueless. That is true for young people, not necessarily as performers, but somewhere to fill up.

Ireland has a politics that says it is all right to give 25 points to mathematics in the leaving certificate but it is not all right to give points to an imaginative passion or creativity like visual arts, dance, theatre, literature, poetry or spoken art, which is completely neglected, or music. We do not think that is a good thing. A good place to start would be to allow young people find a way through communication.

We are also fighting hedges and birds here. We should not fight those issues even on this committee because we will not name the cat. First, we should restore the performing and expressive arts and the creativity and imagination of that radii to its own Department which makes its own decisions and is not messing around in trying to balance.

I could go on about the full meaning of imagination. I could go on about Palestine. I could go on about how the arts is above politics, territory and the Kalashnikov. We could replace the Kalashnikov with the expressive arts. Let us consider the East-Western Divan Orchestra of Mr. Daniel Barenboim, or El Sistema, or Sing Out With Strings. I think of the way the performing arts have elevated people in the worst situations and it is sometimes the only way through when politics has completely let people down.

In Europe, I rarely see the Commissioner for Arts or the Commissioner for Culture or Heritage standing in front of the flags. It is always the bloody economist, or the banker, or the insurance man who is telling us how things should be in front of the waving flags in Europe. We need better speakers and, whether the Government appoints people such as the witnesses, or appoints them internally, we need greater vocalness about it. I ask the witnesses their opinions of what I have said.

One of the problems with national theatre is, as Mr. Hederman said, akin to a cardiograph or a pulse. That pulse or rhythm has been lost. Did we lose that because we have no training school there? What is wrong there and, without being political, what can we do to fix that? Is that Arts Council vocal enough? That is not a political question either. Do the witnesses think we are not being vocal enough?

I saw from my work on dying, death and bereavement that people thought those issues had only to do with health when it had to do with travel, the arts and education. This is across all Departments. Every Minister should have a fool, like in “King Lear”, to tell them that a certain route is not the right way to go. There should be an artist sitting in every Department who will say that there is a way forward and a communication level here. My basic point is that we must go back to having an independent creative arts Department that is not a part of something else. We must make the arts - music, drama, theatre, poetry, dance, spoken art - a subject, or rather a discipline, capable of its own independence within education and its own passion within the leaving certificate points system so people can do it for themselves as well as for practicality.

I have made a speech because I am so delighted to have the witnesses present. I always felt the words “elevation” and “joy” around the arts. If I am looking for the truth, I will not go to the press, the TV, the radio or politics, I will watch theatre, or listen to a piece of music, or read a poem, or listen to what Mr. Hederman has to say because I am elevated and brought somewhere by them, both in pain and in joy. There is a truth in what is being said and we are missing that.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** I rather like the Senator's idea that we should have a Ministry of the national imagination but I can just see the reaction in some quarters in Dáil Éireann to an announcement that we are going to have a Minister for the Imagination. I, of course, completely agree with the Senator in substance.

I would like, for a moment, to go back to Deputy Smyth's question about practicalities. The committee would hardly expect us to come up with a programme of investment and a blueprint for how money is to be spent. The crucial change that is needed is to shift from a mindset that money is given or granted to the arts to a firm and unshakable understanding that we are talking about investment. If the collectivity of arts activity in this country was to be brought together under a shareholders' offering and offered on the market, as it were, as a business, we would be beating off investors.

I agree with Mr. King that, when the Indecon report came out, everybody thought salvation was coming without reckoning with the Department of Finance and its absolute inability to grasp the concept of investment. In 1968, the Arts Council grant-in-aid was €68 million, €47 million of which directly came back from arts organisations funded in PAYE, PRSI and VAT. The return to the economy from the €21 million of investment was €147 million directly attributable to those organisations. If someone gave me €21 and, at the end of the year, I gave them €147 back, is it not the height of foolishness to give me €19 next year? If the situation was reversed, I would give that person €42 the following year if I had it. We need to understand this is investment in an enormous collectivity of entrepreneurs. We fetishise the quality of the entrepreneur in this country but, in fact, every artist, theatre company and arts centre is an entrepreneurial enterprise.

I want to turn again from the idea that we want to somehow emphasise the special position or privileges, or notional privileges, of the individual artist. I want to look at all of us. The population of our Republic is 8,000 people more than the population of metropolitan Boston. The population of the metropolitan area of Boston is 4.6 million and we are something like 4.68 million at the moment. There is no comparison between the reputational value accruing to the State of Ireland from the work of its artists to that which comes out of Boston. I cannot, off the top of my head, think of a world-renowned figure from Boston and I could keep us here all day talking about the quality of Irish artists of considerable worldwide achievement. We should not be asked to demonstrate the value of what we do any longer. We should not be going, cap in hand, as it were, to ask for a dig out and for more to do what we do. We should turn the question around and ask who we want to be, as a proud people. What do we do, in the 21st century, for meaning in a post-religious, polyvalent culture with people from all over the world joining us in citizenship and bringing the streams of their inheritances to bear? I can tell the committee there is a generation of new Irish poets coming through who will blow the minds of committee members. I am beginning to see these seeds coming through.

This is a new Ireland. This is a country with a proud history but a shameful reputation in being proud of itself and in cherishing one another. That is true. There are deep elements of shame in how we treat many of our citizens. Yet, we do not have to be like that. One hundred years ago, who would have said that the little island of Ireland could set in train the dissolution of the biggest empire the world had ever seen? Anyone suggesting that would have been told they were insane even to think about it, but we imagined it otherwise. That is my recurrent question. If we can imagine ourselves as bigger and better and filled with right pride – not grandiosity but actual pride - in ourselves and in one another, then what would we not do for one another? This will involve material resources but it also involves a commitment to chang-

ing a mindset that does not believe in supporting the arts in schools. Who has that mindset? The people of Ireland believe in doing so. I am asking about those making the decisions. If I go into a secondary school in this country and ask people whether they would rather economics or music, can members guess what the answer would be? We all know what the answer would be. There is a disconnect between what the people who grant Government its authority want and what the Government, once in place, decides it may have. We have to begin to dissolve that boundary. We need to do it as a matter of urgency because if we do not and if the economists get too used to being in the saddle, then God help us all.

**Mr. Philip King:** I wish to add one comment. I look at Science Foundation Ireland and ask myself how it is funded and who funds it. I look at the quantum of money that Science Foundation Ireland gets. I compare that with the national resources of, and the investment in, the arts. What is going on?

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** The important point is how to feed the imaginations of our scientists.

**Mr. Philip King:** A society of engineers came out recently and said that we were producing great mathematicians and good engineers but that they have no empathy and cannot talk to people or engage with them.

Another thing struck me. We were invited to take “Other Voices” to Austin, Texas. The people who came to Dingle to look at it asked us to bring it over to Austin. Willie Nelson has a studio in Austin. It was suggested we would work with him and that it would be fantastic. I asked why they wanted us to go to Austin - there is more music in Austin than you can shake a stick at. They said that it was because it would enhance the value proposition of the town. The motto in Austin is to “Keep Austin Weird”.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** Invite the Irish.

**Mr. Philip King:** That is the motto. I asked a person there what it was about. He said they keep the music at the heart of their town. They like to attract creative interesting people who can develop intellectual property and new stuff. They reach out to people throughout the United States. They set up the town in that way and it is a cool place to live. It is a blue dot in a red state. It has great music and food. Technology people who like to work in the middle of the night and who dream up this, that and the other decide to live in Austin. They cluster around the lifestyle of the place itself.

Of course, we are looking a gift horse in the mouth in that sense. We have got it. We do not even need to make it up. We do not have to go to a marketing agency, advertising agency or creative agency, as they are called now. We are a creative agency. Fintan O’Toole said in Dublin Castle that we have soft power. It is the only power we have but it is very effective. I will go back to my three words. The first two are “audible” and “visible”. If we are audible and visible, then we become considerable and a consideration. The people in Austin who have great music said that was why they wanted us there. They said it was because it was cool and they liked what we do and that was why they wanted us to bring our thing over there.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** I can offer an anecdote to supply an answer to Deputy Smyth’s question again. In 2001, the Golden Gate University in San Francisco held a festival of Irish writing organised by our consul general. After the first session, he turned to me and I said there were 22 chief executives of Silicon Valley companies in the audience with whom he had been trying to get meetings for six months. He could not get meetings with them for six months but they

all turned up to hear poets and novelists speak. One of the people present was Chelsea Clinton. Chelsea was there because she was then a student of the poet Eavan Boland, who has done so much to open access to poetry for Irish women. I had just edited an anthology of Irish poetry and I gave a copy to Chelsea. Two days later I was in the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. because I was presenting a programme of Irish writers. Jean Kennedy Smith told me there that the book I had given to Chelsea was on Bill's desk. In one weekend, drawn purely by the arts, we had a presence on the desk of the President of the United States as well as before 22 chief executives of Silicon Valley companies. I came away inspired. I remember saying to the ambassador in Washington that every Enterprise Ireland delegation that comes out there should have as the keynote of its mission an arts event, a performance of a play, a concert of music or a poetry reading. They should harness what Mr. King has aptly called "soft power" and work in conjunction with those in the arts.

The Senator said that the Departments should be working together – of course they should. There should be no trade delegation anywhere in the world that is not linked to a high-profile cultural event. It is a simple proposition. Trust me: it works. When President Higgins went on a state visit to China and he presented the President of China with an edition of W.B. Yeats's poems translated into Chinese, the man took President Higgins's two arms in his two hands and said it was the most meaningful gift his people had ever been given by a Head of State. When President Higgins made a state visit to Athens in February, he presented a beautiful volume, printed by Stoney Road Press, that included two of his poems translated into Greek. That was his gift to the President of Greece. I was there and the Greek President had tears in his eyes and said it meant so much. We need to be aware of how powerful our cultural presence is abroad. What are we known for? Is it the excellent management of our banks? Is it for our superiority in providing health services and housing to our people? The only thing we are known for-----

**Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell:** Drink.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** True, as well as the performance of our rugby team, although not, alas, for the performance of our soccer team. What are we known for in the world? What is our footprint in the world? It is our culture. How insane it is not to invest in that.

**Ms Garry Hynes:** I wish to make exactly the same point as previous speakers. Let us consider one small thing: "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett. We made that piece of theatre two years ago. It played in our theatre in Galway, which seats 100 people. It played for two weeks. Luckily, it was not enough. Everyone else wanted to see it. The arithmetic of that made no sense whatsoever. It requires a subsidy of €40 to €50 per seat for Irish people to see it. If that was where it had ended, that would be simply an example of why subsidy is required in the making of theatre, but that was not where it ended. The last performances were at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts to an audience of 700 or 800, who were all guests of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. They included heads of mission to the United Nations from all over the world. They were there as part of the process whereby the Department was attempting to gain a seat on the UN Security Council. It is precisely the same point.

I wish to address the Senator's remarks about the problems at the Abbey. It is a problem that I am, unfortunately, only too aware of having been artistic director there over 30 years ago. I thought long about this during my time there and I have thought about it subsequently. Essentially, it is a problem of governance. The board of the Abbey must lay down narrative and agree a purpose, role and function with the major stakeholders, including the Minister, the Arts Council and various other bodies. Once that is done, it will be the context in which the artistic directors are appointable and to which they are held accountable. It is crucial that the Abbey

has sectoral responsibilities, which is why the letter was such a bombshell last week. As it receives 50% of the performing arts funding in this country, it has sectoral responsibilities over and above other organisations in training, development, health and what it pays people, and it must be part of the narrative of governance of the organisation.

**Senator Alice-Mary Higgins:** I thank the Chairman for allowing me to join the committee. It is not my usual committee and I thank the members for accommodating me. I thank the witnesses for their wonderful presentations and for the work they do all the time.

I will pick up on one aspect of the bigger picture before moving to more specific aspects. The analogy of agriculture which was given could be built on further if we look past agriculture to the ecosystem. When we think about the arts, it is important that we do not focus on the predictable outcome, the tallest tree in the forest or the one with the sweetest fruit because it may well be that excellence may not be in a form that will be financially rewarded or even politically or socially welcomed. Rather, we must recognise all of those parts. It was described eloquently in terms of the experiences of every person who touches in on an exhibition, sends a picture of his or her classroom, goes to a show, is moved by something somewhere, reads something written on a bench or whatever it is. The full picture of the community creates an ecosystem of creativity, imagination and culture. The dividends for that are immense but they are hard to understand. The one idea I would quibble with is that of the entrepreneur because the benefit can be isolated. We need to see that the benefit often arises elsewhere. We know the significant financial dividends to be gained from the arts that have been described, and we know about them in areas such as tourism.

The case of proposition E, which was recently passed in San Francisco, is an interesting flip of the bed night analogy. A levy on bed nights was put into a general fund for public art because the environment generally created by art in the city was recognised. It was interesting although I know we need direct central funding as well as that kind of levy. The benefit is also seen in science, creative thinking, relationships and difficult conversations, such as in the Magdalen laundries, where many tough issues did not come through until they were faced and confronted through the arts.

It also makes for better politics. The international power and considerable impact Ireland has through the arts, as well as how we have made our mark in our founding moments and in presenting ourselves to the world, were eloquently described, but it is important to note that power is also recognised in the inverse. Around the world, when we see bad politics and the rise of authoritarianism, the arts are one of the first areas to be restricted. During the dictatorship in Brazil, the first thing to be banned was a little instrument, based on a turtle shell, which was used in folk music. Paulo Freire, Augusto Baol and others created the Theatre of the Oppressed, as part of what is targeted by those who wish to curtail the imagination. At this time, when many resources are being focused on a narrowing of perspectives and the cultivation of fear, connections that challenge through the arts rather than divisions are immensely important, globally necessary and possible.

On a practical note, like others I come from Theatre Forum. I arrived late to the meeting of the committee because I was speaking at Theatre Forum's annual meeting. I was reminded of Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, which expressed the idea that actors and performers are often treated like their characters, and that artists come into a glorious bloom when they are needed for special occasions but then disappear between those occasions. While we have described the importance of the arts for full humanity in a society, we must also recognise the full human lives of artists. This is about an increase in funding, as was said clearly,

but it is also about how the funding is spent. There is something to be said for examining how we do our procurement and contracts in order that employment is strongly considered from the beginning. Local authority funding was mentioned. The centres and venues, which are a great resource, need to be resourced further to allow them to become sustained employers. Will the witnesses comment on that and on how we can build in progression? Artists in Ireland move between employers very often. How is it charted that artists move up rather than start again with each new scheme and project, that progression is built in, and that a pay scale that works across the sector rather than just within one institution?

On social protection, I know there is controversy about the scheme. I am a member of the Joint Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection and I await the report of the culture committee to bring it before the social protection committee. Within the social protection system, there is a deep lack of understanding of what it means to craft a life in the arts. It can be quite punitive for artists, who often live in fear and scrutiny. While the social protection system should not be a safety net, reward or hand-out, it should be a recognition of the contribution everybody makes and one of our mechanisms of redistribution for the public good.

There is not much time remaining but if the witnesses have any thoughts that I could bring back to my committee, I welcome them. Otherwise, I am happy to follow up separately.

**Ms Garry Hynes:** What the Senator has articulated is very pertinent. We are so accustomed to the idea that artists will do what they do in any event because they love what they do and it is not really work, and that arts are about passion. The sense that the arts are something other is at the heart of thinking about financing the arts. The questions the Senator asked are important and we should address them in whatever way we possibly can, in our own work, which, I hope, we are doing, and as part of the various fora. We need to make the various organisations, such as the Arts Council, decide that while it is critical that artists make art that we think they should make, such as art for children or people who live in remote areas, as Druid Theatre does, it is also critical that we fund artists in order that the individual actor or maker of art does not suffer. We must stop talking about the arts all the time and talk more about artists.

**Senator Alice-Mary Higgins:** Before the other witnesses answer, I wish to add a question. Will they comment on the social and artistic cost if a diversity of voices is pushed out, and if only some artists can afford to make art because people who are older or who have children end up leaving?

**Mr. Philip King:** The Senator spoke about the current political situation in the world. I hear more and more that as the habits of partnership that we have with our nearest neighbours become strained and a bit more adversarial, that pipeline of cultural diplomacy between the two countries, working together over and back, is a useful and powerful way of continuing a human engagement in those times of stress.

There is a significant capital budget at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Buildings need to be maintained and national cultural institutions need to be maintained. However, artists do not live in those places; their work lives in those places, sometimes when they are dead. We need to look after the humans. The capital side is necessary but the other side of the column is essential because, without that, there is no art to put into these places.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** I will take Mr. King up on that point. The Arts Acts allow for the Arts Council to have a legislative responsibility in acquiring land and property. Does Mr. King think that is a conversation we need to have, namely, that the Arts Council could be in-

volved in the conversation on public housing?

**Mr. Philip King:** Yes, I do.

**Senator Fintan Warfield:** Music and performance are my counter to life in here. If I have had a lousy day or if I am in tears, or whatever, I will go home and lash it out on the guitar or sing, as I always have done. I would probably die without it. The difference is that if I was still working on the road, I would either have moved to America or I would be living at home. That is the benefit of working in here on a good wage compared to friends who live at home. I cannot separate the arts and the struggle of artists from housing in this city.

I wanted to make a point on the local authorities, which I believe should have a bigger role. At the moment they have a similar budget to the Arts Council as a whole, if one counts up the spend across all local authorities. However, the disparity in spend is troubling and ranges from €18 per head of population to 50 cent per head. There are inequalities that need to be addressed, and I do not see this as a threat to Arts Council funding.

What are the witnesses' views of the neoliberal mindset? CSO statistics last year stated that artists were earning 3.5% less in quarter 1 of 2018 than in 2013, and in 2013 Arts Council funding was €60 million. We could throw 25% more money at the Arts Council or the local authorities but wages might not go up. The conversation around the Abbey Theatre should be a trigger. Where the State is involved, we should expect the highest standards. That is what I took from Ms Hynes's comments. I struggle to believe wages will go up unless we make interventions on wages alone.

I wanted to get into the nitty-gritty of art forms, two of which I know well - film, which I studied in GMIT, and music, which I know from life in general. Mr. King mentioned that Austin wanted to keep music at the heart of the town. I was at an event the other night organised by Give Us The Night, a campaign around licensing laws and venues. Many venues, particularly queer spaces where I would dance, are closing and while hotels are being thrown up and the Hard Rock Cafe is due to open next year, we are losing places to dance. The campaign approached the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and tried to make a case around the culture of the night, but we were told: "That is not our responsibility. It is a justice issue."

Some of the campaign's ideas are around staggered opening hours and closing times, places to go and public transport home. It got me thinking around a different idea we have, which IMRO has called for over some time, that is, a music strategy for Ireland. This is something to run with now because by the time Creative Ireland has had its day, in 2022, we should have certain strategies in place, and a music strategy is one of them. I would be reluctant to get involved in arts forms specifically and the Arts Council should play that role. However, I believe music has its place in all of our art forms. Where does Mr. King see the sector, the music industry and emerging artists going? Does he see the need for a music office as a one-stop shop for young or emerging artists? Where does he see the infrastructure of music? Royalties online is obviously a huge issue. Spotify is good compared to YouTube but people would still be left waiting.

**Mr. Philip King:** The model of the music industry at the moment is a very difficult model for any artist and for anybody creating intellectual property. On the one hand, very large record companies, like Universal, when signing an artist will sign them to what they call a 360 deal, which means they will advance some money in the form of a loan in return for the recording rights and the publishing rights, but they will also attach gigging income to the 360 deal because they deem that, by promoting the artist, they have made the artist commercially viable and they

want a kick-back from the gig receipts. When I started out in music, an artist released a record and then went on the road to promote the record. Now, it is entirely the other way around, and the artist puts out a record to promote the tour, and their only income is from those places. It is a very different world.

There are various different organisations that do extremely good work and it would be very good if they all came together. The mission of the Other Voices model is to celebrate what is about to happen and to give a platform to the generation of musicians who will be the musicians of the future. If Hozier does his first televised gig in Dingle, that is the sort of thing I am talking about, and our dedication is to that and to finding a platform to make that happen and to make these artists, to use the phrase again, audible and visible.

The Arts Council, when Mr. Dorgan and I were on it, did not recognise traditional music as an art form and we worked very hard to put what we call the traditional arts as a line item in the Arts Council's budget. It does not recognise rock and roll either, which is quite odd. Therefore, when an artist is looking for funding and goes to the Arts Council, there is no subhead under which a rock and roll artist can say, "This is what I do", because it has no box for that. That is nuts, when we think about it.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** It is not only that the Arts Council does not have a popular music officer. Once upon a time it had one but it let that drop. I have chaired the policy and strategy subcommittee of that council and I attempted to bring the council to adopt a policy on popular music, but it was resisted tooth and nail. I was driven to bringing in two CDs and playing a Joni Mitchell song and a Schubert lied, and pointing out that, from a musicological point of view, the Joni Mitchell song was more sophisticated and complex than the Schubert.

**Mr. Philip King:** It was not art though.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** There is always a tendency, and it has been reinforced at State level, to take a middlebrow attitude to the arts. The Arts Council would not have given a bursary to Van Morrison or Bob Dylan. That is an absurd state of affairs. If the Minister, following from this report, were to suggest very gently but with a big stick half hidden behind her back, that it would be a very good idea for the Arts Council to start supporting popular music, this would achieve two things: it would signal to people that the music which people are most interested in is being invested in and supported at State level, and it would help to open up the minds of professional arts practitioners to the idea that we are a broad church. Everything we do in pursuit of meaning is part of culture, and that is the message we need to send out. People want meaning in their lives and where do they go for it? They go to art forms, not to the arts - not to that generalisation. They go to music, theatre, film, books and the art of conversation. This is what we want.

I wish to make a last reference to the Democratic Programme. It refers to securing the permanence of Government in the willing adhesion of the people. It has been my experience, at 65 years of age, that the level of trust in Government is dwindling each year.

**Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell:** Yes, there is no truth in it anymore. That is obvious.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** Why is that? Successive Governments and the instruments of Governments and the State have come to define the State as their property and there has been a sliding away from the idea that the Members of Dáil and Seanad Éireann and those who inhabit the upper reaches of the public service are at the service of the people. This is not an abstract con-

cept when it comes to the arts. When people decide not to teach the arts or to promote the arts in school they are going against the express interests and wishes of the people. The State does not have that right. Conversely, it has a duty to ask the people what they want and to arrange to give it to them.

The idea that somebody somewhere in a committee knows what is best for us is, quite frankly, beyond offensive. We know what we want and what the Irish people want when they are finished paying their tithes to mammon and selling their time and a considerable portion of lives in order to feed, clothe and shelter themselves. They want music, theatre, sport and the things that give passion and excitement and a release to their imaginations. It is not for the State to deliberate and decide whether it will grant us this. The State has a responsibility to answer to that imperative if it is to continue to secure the willing adhesion of the people. Let us not fetishise the Democratic Programme but listen to what it says and do something concrete about implementing it.

**Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell:** Mr. Dorgan will be happy to know that I consider myself very much a conduit of expertise here. One of the advantages of the committees is that they are where one hears the truth about what is happening. One will not hear it on the floor of the Seanad and one does not hear it much of the time from the Government because there is a certain way of thinking and it is difficult to get through that stew. It is even more difficult for an Independent Member.

I was interested in what Senator Higgins said about the environment, as it has a big part to play. I believe people have no expectation of beauty. They do not have it around them. They do not expect a tree to be on their street and architecture has gone kind of crazy. If any of the witnesses was the Minister for arts - I like the word "arts" in the sense that I think of it in a different way in terms of music, art, poetry, drama, literature and dance - what is the first radical thing they would do if they had that opportunity? It is magical thinking but, leaving aside and understanding the social welfare aspects and thinking of the artist first, not the building, as Garry Hynes said, because we preserve buildings before people, what radical thing might our four guests do or suggest if they were the Minister of an independent Department, which is the first place we should go?

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** To lighten the atmosphere a little around here, I would begin each session of the Seanad and Dáil with a poem and conclude it with a piece of original composed music.

**Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell:** That is very good.

**Mr. Philip King:** Instead of being a silo Department, isolated and called the Department of arts, it would be essential to have buy-in across the Government that would be inter and intra departmental. The senior civil servants in each of the significant Departments would come together and a policy to strategically fund the arts correctly, as we have discussed over the last couple of hours, would be put together and would have weight. Being in isolation is no good-

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**Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell:** Or being tagged onto other Departments.

**Mr. Philip King:** Yes. One needs to open that box by going to the Cabinet secretary, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and all the Departments that have an interest in realising the advantages and strategic application of a functioning arts sector and what it can do for

us, and invest correctly in it, as one would do with anything else.

**Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell:** Okay.

**Ms Garry Hynes:** I will not repeat what Philip King said because it is absolutely right. In the same vein, every Department should be forced to be part of the thinking and deliberation of the Department for the arts, to stop the silo mentality that somehow or other the arts are something outside that other people do for other people they do not know-----

**Mr. Philip King:** And that they better give them a little something.

**Ms Garry Hynes:** Yes, a bit of something to make us look half civilised.

**Fr. Mark Patrick Hederman:** The impression I got from Deputy Smyth is that even if we doubled the amount of money that was being given to artists or whatever we want to call it, the question was how that would be filtered. The problem is that nearly every person in Ireland regards himself or herself as an artist. Everybody has a sheaf of poems or a novel he or she will write. That is a great thing about Ireland but it means one must decide whether everybody is going to get a coupon or an amount of money to develop that. How does one filter or distribute that money? If we are going to reform the Seanad, as we have been saying for a long time, there should always be appointments to the Seanad from Aosdána. The artists there should be in the Seanad as artists and therefore have a say in what is happening at Government level.

The first thing I would do if I had the opportunity is reform the leaving certificate examination-----

**Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell:** Absolutely.

**Fr. Mark Patrick Hederman:** -----and try to make it develop some type of creativity rather than having everything to do with memory. We do not need memory when we have Google.

**Chairman:** I have a few questions.

**Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell:** The Chairman has been generous.

**Chairman:** I have waited.

**Deputy Niamh Smyth:** Have we not covered everything, Chairman?

**Chairman:** If I were to impose the normal rules of debate in the House in this type of debate we would not have the benefit-----

**Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell:** It is dynamic.

**Chairman:** -----of the exchanges we have had, which will be very useful in compiling our report. There are two items of information which the witnesses might enjoy and which the members should take on board. Next week, representatives of the Abbey Theatre, some of the people who wrote the letter and representatives of the Arts Council will appear before the committee because it is so important. It will not be to delve into the specifics but, as Garry Hynes said, to deal with the overarching issue of how we got to this position and how we can get out of it. It is not necessary to be always argumentative. Hopefully, members of the committee will benefit from that. Others will probably attend to give their tuppence worth.

The other item, which is interesting, is that every year there is an arts budget and the Min-

ister must appear before the committee. The Minister will appear before the committee with the Estimates on 6 March next. The information the witnesses have given us arms us to argue with her that the budget presented is not strong enough to deliver on policies that have been presented to the people. Platitudes have been given to the arts over the years but one should put the money where one's mouth is or one's mouth where the money is. I do not know which applies in this context. There was some talk about the cost-benefit analysis. That is the first question for every investment. That has been shown and proven so there is no need for us to continue that argument. That is an argument that prevailed in the current climate. I ask Fr. Hederman to elaborate on his point that there are many imperatives and considerations which should determine what steps we take to shape the future. He said that prominent among those should be the voices of artists, about which there is no doubt. He referred also to the educating influence of art. Mr. Dorgan and perhaps Mr. King alluded to the fact that this is a small country on the edge of the world. While we have had a huge influence, it seems that in future the world will be more technologically structured. To do that, the world needs artists and people with imagination. We would not have all the new gadgets we have, on which kids are sometimes stuck, if someone had not imagined. Unless we value imagination, which is a hard thing to quantify, and educate the influence, it will affect everything that is happening in technology in future. Art or imagination is stuck in there somewhere which is important. How do we get that across?

Some people know about the influences on me of artists and everything to do with the arts. I have known many artists over the years and I note the bravery and courage of those artists who seek to reflect their imagination, interpretation of the world and music and so on to eke out a living. It is literally an eking out. I have seen people in absolutely dire straits saved by other artists who have managed to be a little bit better off. The vast majority of artists in this country have not made a living from art alone. That is the biggest scandal considering what the witnesses have said about the influence of Irish artists on art around the world and on our standing in the world. That is an economic contribution as well as on our standing as people. If there is anything in what I said to which the witnesses wish to respond, I ask them to fire away.

**Mr. Philip King:** I agree with every word the Chairman said, really. We have a magnificent resource but are not tending it. We are not giving oxygen to that priceless resource. One cannot apply the standard granular metric to the outcomes from this resource because they are civilising and humanising. The Chairman referred to technology and the all pervasive screen life, the antidote to which will be in the human tactile and visceral engagement enabled by art and its humanising quality. It is something that will differentiate Ireland's offering to the world and its own people. Of that, there is no doubt. At the risk of repeating myself, we are looking a gift horse in the mouth. We have the resource. Other societies and places in the world would kill for what we have but we take it for granted that it is there and will tip away. We must be strategic, clever and thoughtful about this particular resource. That will repay handsomely in every part of our lives economically, socially, culturally and politically.

**Senator Marie-Louise O'Donnell:** What Mr. King said there was brilliant. Neil Postman wrote *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and *The Disappearance of Childhood*. Before he died, he wrote *Technopoly*, which was a very interesting book on the rise of technology. He said that anything plugged in will not help one to become. I was very taken by it. It is exactly what the witnesses are saying as artists, practitioners, writers and philosophers. We need the human and the tactile; the touch, taste, smell and voice of the human being. People now make love without voices. They communicate "I love you", "I hate you" or "I want to meet you" without voice and they do not come with tone anymore. Nothing that is plugged in will help one to become. It was most interesting. Mr. Postman was not talking about music being plugged in; he was

talking about what “technopoly” can close down in the human being.

**Mr. Philip King:** It is absolutely true. That is the truth of it. If we tend this resource and husband it, it will repay us in ways we cannot imagine.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** The false idea of progress as represented by the machine world is far more insidious and dangerous than we grant it. The late, great Michael Hartnett said, thinking of that kind of progress, “poets with progress make no peace or pact; the act of poetry is a rebel act”. The former holder of the Ireland Professor of Poetry chair, Paula Meehan, said recently that the machines had begun to groom us. The machines are teaching us to think in simplistic, binary terms. We are adjusting our patterns of behaviour or ways of being in the world with the simplistic algorithms of our iPhones, iPads and small machines. That is not what being human is about.

**Mr. Philip King:** That is right.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** In that sense, we need to use these things but in a rebellious and cranky way. I note to the Senator that Seattle put a series of billboards up all over the city a couple of months ago to tell people they could not text 911. One has to actually use one’s voice to speak to a police operator.

**Senator Marie-Louise O’Donnell:** That is brilliant.

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** It is a sign of things to come. I thank the Chairman for the sense of welcome we have felt here. To meet the State on these terms could be construed as a right but it is also a privilege and a pleasure. I have the sense that this is seriously meant. My innate and natural Cork-born scepticism is at bay for the moment. There is one extremely useful thing the committee could do. It can call the Taoiseach on a promise he made to double funding for the arts over a ten-year period. Why should this not be front-loaded? Why should it be eked out bit by bit, increment by increment, over a ten-year span? I can imagine the rows in Merrion Street if he did it, but why not? Who is to be master? I remind the committee of this question. Mr. King has made the case superbly about what a valuable investment the arts are. Ms Hynes and Fr. Hederman have spoken to the human capital and human resources of this nation which need to be fed. Why wait? We will take the Taoiseach at his ten-year promise and give him the primary benefit of the doubt but why does it have to be in 10% increments?

**Ms Garry Hynes:** As two 65 year olds, we ask, why wait?

**Mr. Theo Dorgan:** Put it up front now. Put 50% up next year and look at what we get for it. I remind the committee that an investment of €21 gets €147 back. What is there not to like?

**Deputy Eugene Murphy:** I am not a member of the committee, but I want to make a brief contribution. Mr. Dorgan has been in my Roscommon constituency at the Douglas Hyde summer school while Ms Hynes has strong connections with the county also. Of course, I know Mr. King from the radio. I spent 20 years in local radio at Shannonside Northern Sound, which Deputy Niamh Smyth will know very well. I produced and presented a variety of programmes and note to Senator Warfield that I often played good ballad music down through that time. What struck me during those years while making documentaries and so on was the extent of hidden artistic talent that is out there. We have major debates about depression and people’s lives being turned upside down, bun ós cionn. If the Government were really to come on board and properly support and finance the arts, it would be beneficial on several fronts. We have an able Deputy in our own party to speak about that. I thank the Chairman for allowing me to

make that short contribution. I would be interested in promoting the initiative, producing it and working with the delegates. The arts represents a very much untapped area. Those of us who support the arts, locally or otherwise, can see the talent that exists. I thank the Chairman for giving me a few minutes to speak on this.

**Chairman:** Táim ag iarraidh críoch a chur leis an gcrúinniú. Gabhaim buíochas leis na finnétithe a thánaigh isteach inniu: Ms Garry Hynes, Mr. Philip King, Fr. Mark Patrick Hederman agus Mr. Theo Dorgan. Tá cead agaibh bualadh bos a thabhairt, más mian libh.

The joint committee went into private session at 3.51 p.m. and adjourned at 4.15 p.m. until 2.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 30 January 2019.