

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM CHULTÚR, OIDHREACTH AGUS GAELTACHT

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, HERITAGE AND THE GAELTACHT

Dé Céadaoin, 27 Samhain 2019

Wednesday, 27 November 2019

The Joint Committee met at 1.30 p.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Teachtaí Dála / Deputies	Seanadóirí / Senators
Éamon Ó Cuív,	John O'Mahony,*
Aengus Ó Snodaigh,*	Fintan Warfield.
Niamh Smyth.	

* In éagmais / In the absence of Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire and Senator Maura Hopkins, respectively.

Teachta / Deputy Michael Collins sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

Business of Committee

Vice Chairman: My thanks to everyone for being here today. Apologies have been received from the Chairman, Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire, and Senator Maura Hopkins. I propose that we go into private session to discuss housekeeping matters.

The joint committee went into private session at 1.30 p.m. and resumed in public session at 1.45 p.m.

Scrutiny of EU Proposals

Vice Chairman: We are in public session. It is proposed that COM (2019) 494 does not warrant further scrutiny. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Promoting Nightlife, Economy and Culture: Discussion (Resumed)

Vice Chairman: To assist the joint committee in considering the protection and promotion of a vibrant nightlife, economy and culture in our major cities I am very pleased to welcome from the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht, Mr. Conor Falvey, assistant secretary of the culture division, and Mr. John Kennedy, head of the cultural schemes unit.

Before I ask witnesses to address the committee, I draw their attention to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Opening statements and any documents submitted to the committee may be published on the committee's website after this meeting.

Members 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.

I remind the witnesses that their opening statements should not exceed ten minutes. Their presentation has been circulated to members and will be available on the Oireachtas website after the meeting. I invite Mr. Falvey to make his presentation on behalf of the Department.

Mr. Conor Falvey: I am assistant secretary in charge of the culture division of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. As the Vice Chairman has said, I am accompanied by my colleague, Mr. John Kennedy, who is head of the cultural schemes unit, which has been examining the matters under discussion today at the behest of the Minister, Deputy Josepha Madigan. On behalf of the Minister, I thank the committee for its interest in this matter and for

the opportunity to present to the committee on this subject today. The Department is aware that the committee has engaged with other stakeholders on this topic in recent weeks and I know our role in this matter was acknowledged by various committee members at a previous meeting.

The Department, directly and through its agencies, contributes substantial supports to night-time cultural activity on an ongoing basis. Some €189 million is provided in the Department's Vote in 2019 for cultural purposes. This funding supports cultural activity in the evenings through bodies such as the National Concert Hall, support from the Arts Council for the theatre sector, including the Abbey Theatre, Gate Theatre and Druid Theatre Company, and through events such as Culture Night. Work presented at regional theatres and arts centres is, in many instances, developed with the support of the Arts Council and performed in facilities developed with capital support from the Department. I recently attended the opening of the French film festival at the Irish Film Institute, IFI. The support of the Arts Council for the festival was acknowledged on the evening, as was the capital support from the Department for the IFI.

The topic of night-time culture has a wider dimension reflecting broader creative pursuits and this is constantly evolving. This has been of growing interest in light of a demand for a more varied night-time creative landscape and recognition of the cultural, economic and social value of Ireland's evening experiences. It is also building on the back of movements throughout Europe, such as Museum Night, and, for example, the appointment of a "night czar" in London.

On 17 April, the Minister, Deputy Madigan, hosted a symposium to investigate the possibility of creative nightlife and cultural activity at night time as an alternative and complementary option to Ireland's existing rich night-time experience. Since then, the Department has engaged further with key partners to develop an approach to support a sustainable and forward-looking infrastructure to facilitate the development of after hours cultural events. The Minister has proposed a number of measures to deliver on these objectives.

The Minister is establishing pilot projects to identify how a night-time culture initiative might work in local settings. To this end, the Department has thus far written to two local authorities, namely, Dublin City Council and Cork City Council, to establish groups comprising representatives from the local authority, the local creative nightlife sector, policing, transport and artists and-or creative workers. The purpose of these groups is to consider and collate what supports and impediments are impacting on opportunities for creative and cultural activity at night, in different settings, and what would be required locally to develop, promote and encourage late night culture. These groups will also consider the appropriateness of appointing local night-time commissioners. We have asked the local authorities concerned to progress the establishment of these groups as soon as possible. We will meet Dublin City Council next week and look forward to continuing a common interest approach to this matter

In parallel with this process, the Minister is establishing a national forum comprising the Department, the Arts Council and other Departments with key roles in supporting night-time culture and creativity. This forum will consider matters arising from the operation of the pilot local groups, which could require a national policy or legislative response. This, in turn, would be referred to the relevant Department or agency for consideration. The Minister will engage with local authorities and arts groups on a mapping exercise of existing venues and civic spaces which may be suitable for night-time cultural events to identify gaps and opportunities, building on work carried out previously in this area. Flowing from these engagements, the Minister will develop a national night-time cultural policy, which will complement existing initiatives and supports. This night-time cultural policy will, in turn, give consideration to the appointment of a night-time commissioner to oversee the implementation of recommendations and outputs

arising. Any decision in this regard will be a matter for the Minister and the Government in due course.

The key issue will be to identify those factors that are having an impact on the opportunities for artists and creatives to develop and present creative work for the benefit of all, to ensure that these issues are brought to the attention of the relevant agencies and bodies concerned, and that progress on responding to these issues is monitored. There will, no doubt, be some complexity in these matters. The issues that have been highlighted in Dublin in recent months are being experienced elsewhere internationally and we have had feedback on this. It arose at the cultural conference we had last January, when people spoke about challenges in locations such as London and New York. A key objective will be to distinguish between the natural ebb and flow of venues and events based on changing tastes and to identify those factors which are impacting on the overall level of activity. It is also the case that many of the agencies and bodies concerned will be attempting to balance sometimes competing demands. In this context, it is worth noting developments such as the recent decision of Dublin Bus to introduce a 24-hour service on two routes, the 15 and 41, from next month.

The Minister considers there is a genuine opportunity to create an environment in which night time culture can thrive, with the beneficial knock-on effects of increasing the night time economy, expanding the reach of our cultural offering and, ultimately, helping to create a society with wider night time options focusing on the arts, well-being and the broader human experience. In addition, the Department has had discussions with the Arts Council, the Office of Public Works and some local authorities to consider possible short-term and longer-term approaches to the issue of the availability of artists' spaces in general in Ireland.

The Minister, on behalf of the Government, is committed to identifying ways to effectively support greater opportunity for night time cultural and creative events. She welcomes the engagement of the relevant local authorities and that of the committee. The Department will be pleased to receive any output from the committee's deliberations on this issue.

Vice Chairman: I thank Mr. Falvey for his presentation. I will now take questions from members, starting with Deputy Ó Snodaigh.

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: I have a number of questions. I thank Mr. Falvey for taking the time to come here and present to the committee. We have had a number of presentations on this issue. We have heard one of the major issues for venues is insurance costs, and Mr. Falvey alluded to the challenges and complexities involved, but that issue does not only affect venues. Increasingly more venues are finding it difficult to sustain themselves with the insurance requirement demands that exist. That means that some of the more creative venues that may have a small following find it especially difficult to sustain themselves.

Mr. Falvey alluded to Dublin Bus operating a 24-hour service on two routes. It is about time we had that service and it is a pity more routes are not operating on that basis, given that Dublin is a capital city. I am not aware of any such service operating in any of the other cities. The Luas operates a service at 1 a.m., 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. on Fridays, Saturday and perhaps Sundays during the Christmas period. We were advised the Luas cannot operate a 24-hour service because there must be some time available for servicing but the operation of its service at 1 a.m., 2 a.m. and 3 p.m. should be nearly the norm every weekend rather than only during the Christmas period.

This topic involves a range of issues. Mr. Falvey mentioned the Minister is engaging with

local authorities and art groups regarding a mapping exercise. When will that happen, as there is an urgency to this, as Mr. Falvey reflected, due to the fact that some venues are closing? If the Department takes too long in doing this, we might lose some venues. Also, in terms of their experience, what are the problems involved? I note the Minister is establishing pilot projects and Department officials will meet Dublin City Council next week. It is a pity that did not happen sooner. In terms of the pilot projects, probably the first ask of Dublin City Council or any other council will be where is the money for this initiative and what money is available to draw up a plan for this. While that might not cost much, there will be a cost in implementing it and putting somebody to be in charge of it. A night czar is in place in London, for example. Has the Department reached a stage where money is required to be set aside in a budget for the pilot projects planned for our two biggest cities? We heard from representatives of Waterford at an earlier meeting. It is not a big city but it has a vibrant creative community, which is struggling to sustain itself. Perhaps consideration should be given to establishing a pilot project in one of the smaller cities. We are not overloaded with having very large cities but we are overloaded in terms of having much creative talent in Ireland and that should be harnessed whether that be during the day or in the evening-time. Much more could be done in the evening-time to harness the talents of those members of the creative community and also to provide enjoyment to those of us who live in Ireland and those who come here to avail of that experience. I will leave it at that and I might speak later on a few other issues.

Vice Chairman: Would Senator Warfield like to contribute?

Senator Fintan Warfield: I thank Mr. Falvey for his presentation. The Department should be commended on being quite responsive to the mood among creatives. The night time economy is essential for the creative and cultural sector and the Department recognises that. The way in which Mr. Falvey's statement is laid out is helpful in terms of establishing the groups in Dublin City Council. We were told by representatives of Dublin City Council two weeks ago that the council had not set up that group. Is the Department frustrated about that?

Officials from the Department of Justice and Equality also appeared before the committee and when I asked them whether Creative Ireland had been in touch with the Department, I was told it had not been. Creative Ireland is an all-of-government initiative and it would probably be quite useful in terms of this issue given its spread across Departments. What role does Mr. Falvey envisage Creative Ireland playing in this respect? Did he watch the committee's proceedings two weeks ago and, if he did, what were the take-away points from that for the Department?

There is quite a focus on Dublin and our cities in the presentation but our rural towns are also being affected. I have noted a number of venue closures particularly in the south west of the island, one being the Hillgrove nightclub in Dingle, County Kerry, which has been a prominent venue in the Other Voices festival. It announced it will shut its doors, citing costs of licensing and insurance. Also, we had the recent closure of Connolly's of Leap in Cork, which was a previous Irish Music Rights Organisation, IMRO, Munster venue of the year. It is moving into the restaurant market and has cited unnecessary licensing issues. A venue in Clonakilty has mentioned licensing and special exemption order costs. Another venue is O'Riada's in Macroom, which mentioned licensing and special exemption order costs. Also, in Kenmare and Tralee, people have nowhere to dance at night. There is a pretty extensive list of closures in the south west. The Minister, Deputy Madigan, has noted the issues these venues are facing in respect of planning, licensing and insurance. Does Mr. Falvey consider the current costs involved for venues to operate after standard hours such as the €410 on legal fees per night is

a fair cost, especially given the current issues around insurance? Given that most venues face issues that have a legislative remit in other Departments, and this comes back to the Creative Ireland initiative, does Mr. Falvey have confidence there is an appetite in those Departments to make the necessary change that we need?

Deputy Niamh Smyth: I thank Mr. Falvey and his Department for their hard work on this issue. To follow on from what Senator Warfield said, the Department has chosen the cities of Dublin and Cork in which to establish pilot projects. I am surprised Galway was not included. Is there a reason it was not, given it is a leading light in terms of its international arts festival and that it will be the European Capital of Culture? It is pretty remiss of the Department not to have it included as part of any pilot project or research to move forward on this issue.

I concur with what Senator Warfield said. There is an opportunity for the more rural constituencies and counties to be involved in this initiative. Our urban areas are the hive of activity and there is great potential and outlets in them but this initiative could be an opportunity for rural areas. There are many creative industries and creative workers in those areas who probably have limited outlets and opportunities. Is the Department looking at the opportunities this could present? It may not be an issue because it does not even consider work in terms of night life. This might present an opportunity. Could Mr. Falvey expand on that? The Minister held a symposium recently and Mr. Falvey spoke about engagement with further partners. Who might these partners be and what role might they play?

Mr. Conor Falvey: Insurance is an issue for us across the sector with regard to different activities. It is presenting as different issues. As members are aware, the Government has produced an initiative on this. We have raised the matter with the Department of Finance in terms of the impact it is having. There is a whole-of-government response. Regarding impediments to any sector-specific or State-driven response, it needs to be a comprehensive package that tackles the insurance industry generally. We are aware of it. It is presenting in different sectors for us.

Regarding the question about Dublin Bus, these are matters for that company. I happened to hear a spokesperson for Dublin Bus on the radio when it announced this recently saying that the ambition potentially is to expand the number of services. From our perspective, this is certainly very welcome. That might, in part, flow from the experience of the operation of the new service as it is being introduced.

Regarding the mapping exercise and when it might happen, we are really looking at quarter 1. I would say to any members who might raise this issue that the Minister very much shares their ambition regarding timelines and is looking for the measures that have been set out to be implemented as promptly as possible. I hope we will be able in some locations to build on previous work done in this area. I am informed that there has been but we just need to make sure this is up to date. We may not be starting from scratch with regard to that exercise. We are meeting Dublin City Council next week. We have all read material in the newspapers about things such as District 8, the Bernard Shaw or other venues closing. Venues come and go for different reasons. It is just a case of arriving at an evidence base in order that there is something underpinning something more fundamental here and that there is a broader and more generally based impediment to opportunities for people to either do creative work at night or to experience and participate in it than has been the case previously. It is about building that evidence base to see what the appropriate policy responses to those pressures are. We are working with Dublin City Council on the precise structure to do that most effectively.

Regarding Waterford and the other locations, we may not be finished with this exercise. The issues in other locations can be quite different. Dublin is where the issue appears to be presenting most acutely in the context of some of the issues we have discussed. To some extent, the issues in rural Ireland are a bit different.

I do not know whether Senator Warfield will be rejoining us but I am from Tralee, live in the south west and am acutely aware of the circumstances in rural Ireland, particularly in the south west. I had heard that the Hillgrove was to re-open temporarily next week in the context of "Other Voices". There are issues regarding changing tastes. All manner of issues impact on the way people, including young people, socialise that are possibly different today but, again, it is about building that evidence base. If the venue is saying that these are insurance issues, these are matters we need to take into account.

Regarding the appetite in other Departments, we have engaged with other Departments, met them over the summer and written to them regarding our intentions in this regard. We will write to them again. It is not our intention to duplicate the role of any other Department. The point of the exercise is to provide the structures so that these issues can be raised, identified, referred and progressed with regard to responding to the issues. People have been discussing this issue in the media and there have been very effective campaigns such as Give Us The Night, so we need to be able to respond to this at an official level. That is what the Government wants to do so we need to provide a structure through which these issues can be raised formally, referred to the appropriate level for resolution and if they cannot be resolved at local level through the participation of the local transport providers or the local authority and if a legislative or a policy response is required, there is a structure through which that can be referred to the appropriate body or agency. That is a key element of what we are trying to achieve regarding the exercise that is under way.

The role of Creative Ireland was mentioned. It is something we have not considered at this stage. The Creative Ireland programme has a defined body of work set out. The focus is very much on the creative youth plan strand, with which members will be very familiar, and the creative communities strand through the local authorities. It has been very involved in terms of the audiovisual stream, the capital plan in the Department and our international presence and is doing a significant piece of work around supports for creative industries in the context of future jobs so that is where the focus is. That is not to say that the Department does not have other means through which to engage with colleagues across the system and other Departments to identify issues and assess what those responses might be. Having said that, it is not our job to step in and assume the role of the Department of Justice and Equality or the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government but rather to say that we are interested from a cultural perspective in the impact of Departments' policies on creative spaces and are raising these issues in that context and will see what the Government response will be with regard to those matters.

The issues raised at the previous meetings were broadly aligned with the issues raised with the Minister at the symposium in April. Consequently, many of the same issues such as venues, licensing, transport, policing and costs generally came up. I will not say that nothing was new. It is useful to have those conversations and to hear those views being verified and echoed but the issues raised were broadly similar to those raised with the Department through the symposium.

Next year will be a very busy year in Galway, although that is not say it would not be an appropriate place. By their nature, pilots involve picking a small sample. We picked Dublin on the basis that it is most acute. I do not know whether, if Deputy Ó Laoghaire was in the Chair

today, he would have a different view about Cork city. Everybody will have an opinion but we will run the pilots. If we think there are other issues that are not being captured, we can look to expand and see what other issues emerge or come back to us from different sources. By their nature, however, pilots tend to be limited.

We spoke about the challenges in urban and rural areas. Some of the narrative in the media appears to be around development pressures, particularly in Dublin, and their impact on those opportunities and venues. It is different in rural areas. I know some very established artists based in Kerry, possibly because those development pressures are not there, and they are able to find venues more easily. The difficulty may involve things like transport and the density of population to support demand for particular types of arts pursuits. What is the optimal level of support? The Deputy is quite right in that the issues will be different. We should look at the issues that come out of the pilots in the cities to see whether they are applicable or whether we are looking at something quite different. Pilots are limited and restricted. We will see in due course whether we think there is a need to sample more widely.

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: I do not think Mr. Falvey and I are at odds. It is one of these areas where society is starting to grapple with certain concepts. In the past, things happened by their nature. I attended the venue in Dingle many times as a youth and it was of its time when I visited it. I have visited quite a number of venues over the years and when one visits them now, they do not look the same because owners change their premises to meet current demand. Sometimes it takes a number of years for venue owners to see how the demands of younger people have shifted. Changing or upgrading a venue can often be a significant undertaking and there are no grants available. Owners usually have to get a loan based on a business plan. Such a plan will show that if they invest, they can change their venue to reflect the new cultural landscape. A music venue could change and become a film venue, for example. In the main, it is the dance and music venues that have had the strictest health and safety and fire safety conditions imposed on them and rightly so. Tragically, this city has seen the need for such conditions in the past. Meeting those conditions is often a significant undertaking for venue owners. At this point, more and more of the larger, under-utilised venues in semi-derelict parts of the city are being gobbled up by the building boom. The same thing happened towards the end of the Celtic tiger period. Dance venues in the city of one or two storeys have shot up in value. It is the owners of such properties, who may have leased them out for a number of years, who will decide what happens. It is not necessarily in the gift of the Government or the local authorities to prevent owners from selling. I am not suggesting that the State buys lots of venues but we do need to look at the venues that are under the control of the State. Are we getting full value from them? Are there venues under the control of the councils or the State that could serve a different purpose at night from that which they serve during the day? I am talking here about multipurpose venues. If the State is planning further investment in community halls in Dublin or in the larger towns, it could consider whether such halls can sustain events at night and on weekends. Festivals held in particular venues will come to an end if the venues close. The Other Voices festival in Dingle is happening this weekend but if its usual venue closes, to where will it move?

We also need to ask questions about access to transport. In the city, if a venue is four miles away, one can walk to it because there are footpaths and street lighting or one get a taxi. If one is in rural Ireland and there is no transport, however, one is not going to walk home at 4 a.m. in the dark. That is an issue with which rural Ireland and the Government are grappling in a very haphazard way. While it is not specifically an issue for the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, it is an important consideration nonetheless.

The Give Us The Night campaign is not just about venues and extending the licensing hours. It is also asking what activities can be run at night that people will go to. There is no point in putting on events that nobody will go to. We have seen State buildings in this city opening on Culture Night. Can that be extended to later hours? Can we look at other events? Dublin City Council is planning to develop white water rapids at the International Financial Services Centre. Will that be a late-night venue? Can cinemas be encouraged to show late-night films or to show films all through the night as part of a film festival? The same question could be posed in the context of drama festivals. Things like tech conventions or superhero conventions take place in the city but they usually run from about 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Is there encouragement, prompting or funding available to organisations that are running such events to think outside the box? This is possibly a question for the Arts Council rather than the Department. Could the Department encourage the Arts Council to work with Dublin City Council and other local authorities to encourage those who are making applications for funding for events or festivals not to limit their activities to normal hours? Could we concentrate for a period of two to three years on evening and night time events? Is that doable? Do we have sufficient footfall? Can we attract more tourists to the country by having offerings that are not limited to the day time? In that context, the licensing hours and fees payable must also be considered. If events had State backing, with additional funding to promote themselves, that would make up for the extra cost of opening at night.

Mr. Conor Falvey: To come back to the rural question, the way people consume culture is different now. The festival format which is popular now is good for rural Ireland. Festivals like Other Voices draw people in, albeit for short bursts and people seem to have a taste for that now. One can run such festivals anywhere. There are many locations in rural Ireland where opera, contemporary music and traditional music festivals are held. It is a format that people like and to which they have become accustomed.

In terms of spaces being used for other purposes, one of the cultural highlights for me this year was when the very distinguished arts practitioner Ms Kim Gordon from a punk band that I liked when I was young, Sonic Youth, performed at IMMA on a summer's evening. It was a really nice event and I now that IMMA has ambitions to run more such events in that space. In terms of the cultural institutions, their primary objective is to protect, preserve and present national collections so anything they would do in that space would have to be consistent with that objective. A very substantial programme of capital investment is underway in the cultural institutions which will enhance the spaces. We will explore with them all options, while also considering the resource implications but there is already evidence of the cultural institutions themselves looking at opportunities to widen their reach. Culture Night, when people visit outside of the normal times, has inspired them to ask if they can do more in that area and that is something that the Department is interested in exploring over time.

In terms of the Arts Council, the Department is entirely respectful of the arm's-length principle and the independence of the council in terms of its funding decisions. As stated earlier, the Arts Council would be a participant in any forum that would consider these issues at a national level. We would certainly be happy to present issues to the Arts Council and engage with it on them. I am very confident that this is a topic that the council is very interested in exploring. The licensing question may well prove to be one of the more difficult and challenging issues. I will not get into the nub of it now. The situation in other jurisdictions might be different, but it is the way it is in Ireland for a reason, and many stakeholders are involved. If our process raises issues, we will ensure that there is a response to same.

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: I thank Mr. Falvey.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I apologise, as I had to attend a vote on the Industrial Relations (Joint Labour Committees) Bill in the Seanad. I did not hear the response to my questions. Would it be inappropriate to ask for the response again? Have the questions been addressed?

Mr. Conor Falvey: The Senator asked whether there was frustration with Dublin City Council. I have been talking to the council about this matter. To repeat some of what I said, there is a narrative. Bodies such as Give Us The Night have done a great job in shining a light on an issue. Journalists like Ms Una Mullally in *The Irish Times* have written pieces highlighting the pressures. The Minister is keen to respond to those and bring stakeholders together to see what can be done. The city council is anxious that we move forward on a strong evidence base. We are talking to it about how to proceed, and the Minister is ambitious. I have no doubt about the city council's bona fides and commitment to working with us on examining the issues.

Creative Ireland has a full programme in terms of creative youth and creative communities. It was involved in the development of the audiovisual and capital plans. Outside of the long-running elements in the form of creative youth and creative communities, its main focus is on the creative industries and mapping supports for same in the context of the future jobs initiative. That is not to say that we do not have other levers for engagement with Departments, but it is an interesting perspective.

The Senator missed the bit where I got to say that I am from Kerry. I am very familiar with the Hillgrove, Tralee and west Cork for various reasons. The pressures are different, so the responses for those locations may need to be different as well. There are places that survive and thrive. To name drop, I was talking to Philip King yesterday about "Other Voices". I mentioned that next Saturday night would definitely be the gig of the month in Kerry in November. The gig of the month in December will be when the Fontaines D.C. perform in Mike the Pies in Listowel, where they are returning to as a reward for the support they got previously. That did not just sell out - the tickets just disappeared into vapour in nanoseconds.

There are people who are managing it, but a very particular skill set is needed to survive and thrive now. We will consider the pilot projects and see what emerges, whether there are elements that lend themselves to rural Ireland solutions and whether there are other issues. It is a different situation, though. We have discussed how the festival format of consuming culture is to the benefit of some rural locations, but the appetite and demand for those experiences on a week in, week out sustainable basis, and creating an environment within which people have an opportunity to participate in them, is something that we need to consider.

Senator Fintan Warfield: If I were Minister, I would have been frustrated with Dublin City Council. It does not have to do what she says, but I would have been frustrated had the committee been delayed.

Mr. Conor Falvey: Something else to consider is that the Minister is ambitious to move forward on these matters quickly.

Senator Fintan Warfield: Creative Ireland's current programme will last to-----

Mr. Conor Falvey: Until 2022.

Senator Fintan Warfield: Would a creative night, creative youth or whatever element be a good addition?

Mr. Conor Falvey: I do not see this as an issue where we step in with a quick intervention or a magic-wand solution and everything is fixed. This might require rolling monitoring. Reverting to a previous point, perhaps these spaces presented themselves in the type of city that Dublin once was and this arose more organically, making it easier to find opportunities to engage in those types of activity. Perhaps a function of the city's economic success in a global sense is that finding these opportunities is a little more challenging now. That is the evidence base we need to establish. What factors that are different to the natural ebb and flow are inhibiting opportunities? It may not be a case where we should step in, make an intervention and step out. Who knows?

Senator Fintan Warfield: I am confident in Mr. Falvey and the Department's commitment to this. It is for the Department to stand by the cultural element of this campaign. This is not about drink. One of the largest obstacles would be for this to be an extension of drinking or whatever. It does not have to be, though. Mr. Falvey will have noted from the witnesses from Waterford two weeks ago that they had to transition into an alcohol-based event to stay open, which is atrocious and cannot be defended.

Regarding artists' ability to earn money, we are discussing the time of night that they earn a wedge of cash. Artists' wages are approximately €12,000 per year. This is necessary and does not require grants or other State funding. It is a win-win for the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Vice Chairman: That concludes our consideration of this matter.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Exactly on time.

Vice Chairman: I thank the departmental officials for their engagement with the committee.

The joint committee adjourned at 2.30 p.m. until 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 11 December 2019.