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Pan-Island Survey of the Creative Economy in the Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland

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University of the
Highlands and Islands
Centre for
Island Creativity

Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean
Ionad airson
Cruthachalachd nan Eilean



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Pan-Island Survey of the Creative Economy in the Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland

This survey was commissioned to establish accurate details around the number of professional practitioners and their subject disciplines contributing to the creative economy in the Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland

Dr Andrew
Jennings &
Stephenie
Pagulayan

Introduction

This online survey was developed to inform, among other initiatives, the UK and Scottish Government Islands Growth Deal Programme's 'creative islands wellbeing' proposal, which aims to establish new island-specific networks of creative practice hubs and wellbeing innovation, but which requires detailed information currently unavailable. It was funded by *Comhairle nan Eilean Siar* and *Highlands and Islands Enterprise* and was open to all those in the Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland involved in the creative economy, from emerging graduates to established practitioners.

The Centre for Island Creativity

The research was undertaken by the *Centre for Island Creativity* (CIC) based at Shetland UHI <https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/centres/centre-for-island-creativity/>. The CIC has well established connections across the Highlands and Islands and beyond, through its network of links to other arts organisations and institutions, for example, An Lanntair, Taigh Chearsabhagh, Pier Arts Centre, Shetland Arts Development Agency, Uist Arts Association, Vere North Shetland, WASPS Studios and Soulisquoy Printmakers Stromness.

The CIC is a community of academics leading on Creative Arts and Island Studies research. It has received revenue support for the past 6 years from HIE, Creative Scotland and Shetland Council. The academic lead was Dr Andrew Jennings, an authority on Island Studies. He was supported by the CIC administrator Stephenie Pagulayan, a successful practising playwright and finalist in the 2020 Converge Challenge Awards.

Context

The creative industries make an important contribution economically, socially and culturally to the Islands, Scotland and internationally. At UK level, there is strong evidence of growth in the creative industries sector compared to growth in the UK economy as a whole. Data from 2020 indicates that the Creative Industries contributed £111.7 billion to the UK in 2018, equivalent to £306 million every day (UK Govt, Dept for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 06/02/2020). This was up 7.4 per cent on the previous year 2019, meaning growth in the sector was more than five times larger than growth across the UK economy as a whole, which increased by 1.4 per cent.

The creative economy is a large and growing sector in Scotland. There was a 15% increase in businesses in the Creative Industries (including Digital) in Scotland between 2014 and 2019, with 15,845 VAT/PAYE registered businesses in the sector (Scottish Government

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Growth Sector database, 2020). Since 2009, the number of businesses has risen in the sector by 47%, three times the all-sector increase of 15%.

Accompanying the rise in the number of businesses has been an increase in employment. There were 87,000 employed in the Creative Industries in Scotland in 2018 (latest data 2018, next release Dec 2020) up by 6.9% from 2015, well above the all-sector increase of 1.9%. Sub-sectors recording double digit jobs growth 2015-2018 include Design (11.8%), Film & Video (16.9%), and Creative Education (+20%).

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak the Scottish Government estimated that Scotland's Creative Industries supported around £9 billion of activity within the wider Scottish economy, contributing £5.5 billion to Scotland's GDP, and that the Creative Industries are the second fastest growing growth sector in Scotland after the energy sector: GVA in the sector increased by 11% between 2016 and 2017.

While these figures signal overall that the Creative Industries sector in both Scotland and the UK has seen positive growth in recent years, specific data capturing the current situation in the Outer Hebrides, Orkney, and Shetland is out of date and inconclusive. The island contexts for creative practitioners are very different compared to their mainland counterparts.

Island communities are facing times of great change with opportunities to develop new infrastructure to meet sector demands. There have also been a number of recent factors that have repositioned the Creative and Cultural Industries:

- a new community of arts graduates/alumni from the UHI and other HE providers is choosing to live, study and work on the Islands
- digital connectivity has increased the Creative and Cultural Industries profile and network
- a pan-island partnership between the RFO arts organisations has been established
- the emergence of Creative Ageing as a lifestyle and extended career for existing and new island residents
- there is an increased interface with arts agencies and organisations working and supporting creative practitioners in the Islands (XPONorth, HE Knowledge Exchange, Scottish Artists Union)
- readjusting to a new norm and future as a consequence of the Covid pandemic.

The survey was commissioned to ascertain the impact of these factors, and to try to establish accurate details around the number of professional practitioners and their subject disciplines contributing to the creative economy in the Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland. In addition, the survey sought information to ascertain the specific resource

needs for these professional practitioners and the graduate community in order to retain existing and attract new talent, and to increase island economic growth and prosperity.

Research methodology

The research consisted of a 49-question confidential, online questionnaire tailored to creative practitioners and expressive specialists in the Islands. The questions were clustered into thematic sections to aid analysis.

I. Island Life – the general nature of living in the Islands, questions of identity, the positives and negatives of island life.

II. The Creative Practitioner in the Islands – the lived work experience of the creative practitioner in the islands.

III. Professional Practice – the financial and economic challenges of being a practitioner in the Islands, income, marketing, business requirements, residencies, professional development, relationships with other practitioners and RFOs.

IV. Covid Recovery, Brexit Impacts and Climate Change

Information about the questionnaire was widely disseminated to Island-based newspapers, social media networks, and arts organisations. The UHI Press Office promoted the survey, issuing a bi-lingual media release, and a message on its Twitter account on 30 June (see Appendix 1).

Participants were provided with a participant information sheet, which explained the background to and the value of the research and set out their rights. They were informed that their data (the questionnaire results) would form the research data for an academic research study undertaken by the University of the Highlands and Islands. As such, the research data would, or might, be reused by UHI or another suitably qualified party for secondary research purposes (i.e. to conduct another research study using the same data). They were also informed that anonymous data (such as excerpts or aggregated data from the research questionnaire) would be included in the final research report. The questions and participant information sheet were vetted and commented on by the UHI Data Protection Officer to ensure they met data protection standards. The questionnaire was granted ethics approval after going through the UHI Ethics application process (UHI Ethics application ETH2021-1470).

The questionnaire was live between 30 June and 19 July 2021.

I. Island Life

138 people filled in the questionnaire. **Question 3** asked **In which island community do you live?** Of the 138, 17 (12.9%) were based in Shetland, 27 (20.5%) in Orkney, and 88 (67.7%) in the Outer Hebrides. It is unclear whether this reflects the respective size of the

creative practitioner cohort in the Islands, or whether other unknown factors come into play, perhaps a lack of desire to take part in surveys or a weaker sense of artist community or self-identification as a creative practitioner in Shetland. This could merit further study. However, geographically all three Island communities are meaningfully represented.

Question 4 asked **How long have you lived in your island community?** The great majority of the participants were incomers to the Islands. However, nearly a fifth (18.7%) had lived in the Islands all their lives. As participants were self-selecting, there might be an inbuilt bias towards more confident incomers. Of the participants over 54.5% had already shown commitment to living in the Islands by living there for over 5 years.

Despite the majority of respondents having chosen to live on the Islands, rather than being born and bred therein, there was an overwhelming identification with being an islander. There were 133 responses to **Question 5 'Would you describe yourself as an islander?'** and 92 respondents answered in the positive. There were negative responses: 'This term seems to be reserved for those who were born and grew up here unfortunately'; 'No: The Island is my home but I am not an Islander'; 'An island resident, but not an islander, no.' More representative was: 'I moved here permanently 3 years ago but have been living here on and off over the past 10 years...yes, I am an islander'; 'An adopted islander, yes'; 'I now live on the Islands so yes.'

Question 6 **What does 'being an islander' mean to you?** sought to unpick what was meant by being an islander. A number of participants took the view that being born on an island was a prerequisite for being an islander, or one must have been, 'Raised on an island and have a family connection', or as one participant expressed it, they were an islander because of deep historical connections, having 'Roots for at least 300 years since 1609 from my Mackenzie ancestors'. However, others had a less indigenous focus and perhaps a more inclusive perspective. For example, an islander was someone who was, 'a part of the island community and engaging with neighbours and the wider community', or simply, 'Cuideigin a tha a' fuireach ann an eilean', or someone who was, 'Living here with the intention of being part of the local community. Wishing to honour the island's heritage and be part of the island's future.' One participant wrote, they were an islander because they were, 'Living, working and being committed to the place in which I now live'. Other participants also had place-based perspectives. Being an islander meant 'Living and working on the periphery, being separate from mainland'. Another felt it meant a 'Strong connection to the sea, the natural environment and our island community.' This was a feeling echoed by other participants: 'I am surrounded by a sea that is beautiful yet unpredictable'; 'Having sea all around me'.

Given the importance of language to the cultural heritage of the Islands and the fact that a number of the participants were Gaelic and Orkney and Shetland dialect speakers, or expressed a positive attitude to the languages, it was felt important to discover to what extent language featured in their practice. **Question 7** asked **'Is language involved in your practice? If so, which language and how?'** Of 130 responses, only 50 said no or not really, which shows just how important the native languages are to creative practitioners in the Islands. These are some of the responses: 'I'm involved with a storytelling festival and a

new publishing company, both of which use English while encouraging dialects'; 'Yes, Gàidhlig. Work draws on cultural heritage and traditional stories. Marketing materials and social channels are bilingual or Gàidhlig leading'; 'Shetland Dialect as part of my teaching of traditional music, tune titles and explanations'; 'Yes, Shetlandic. I include Shetland words and phrases in the names and descriptions of my pieces, and dialect is used in my marketing'; 'Yes, - Gaelic. The organisation I work for is at the vanguard of promoting Gaelic language, heritage, arts and culture'; 'Gaelic is involved in my practice. I would say that as a native speaker it is something that is integral to all that I do but, more tangibly, I see the world through a Gaelic lens and if I were to facilitate a workshop then I would be able to do it through the medium of Gaelic'. Other respondents expressed an interest in learning Gaelic: 'I hope to start Gaelic classes next year. My practice is tied to the landscape and our relationship with it, words are one form of knowing and meeting a place. Gaelic is the indigenous language of this land, so to me it is really crucial that I learn it.'

To better understand creative practitioners' general perspective on Island life **Question 8** asked **What are the positives of living and working on a Scottish island?** While **Question 9** asked **What are the negatives of living and working on a Scottish island?**

The natural environment, a supportive community, culture, creative inspiration and a slower pace of life all featured as island positives: 'I can only speak about Orkney, but could go on all day. Amazingly beautiful place, in any weather. Really interesting and strongly opinionated people. Safe for children (relatively speaking). As long as transport links are good, can do anything from Orkney that you could do from anywhere else, and do it in a nicer environment. Very large creative community, and a destination that attracts interesting visitors -- artists, academics of all persuasions, musicians, writers, poets etc etc. Centres for excellence in fields from archaeology to energy -- lots of innovative people as well as creative people'; 'A soul searching and soul reaching oneness with raw beauty and a departure from some of the intrusions of modern society'; 'Dualchas, dùthchas. Being rooted here'; 'The sense of community when it is there is excellent. It is possible to very swiftly make connections with other people, if you know where to go. Generally in any undertaking in a small Scottish island, you have to become a 'Jack of all trades' which leads to very varied and fulfilling work, particularly in creative practice. There is a sense that everyone has a duty to contribute to their islands with high rates of volunteering, community run organisations and social enterprise'; 'On this island, there are many creatives, so exposure to other like minded folks is easy. Also with less clutter of information, sources of help for the arts becomes more easily heard and accessible.'

The general increased costs compared to the mainland, the lack of artistic facilities and funding, poor digital connectivity are all listed as negatives of living and working in the islands: 'Expensive and difficult to get artworks to mainland for exhibitions or selection panels. Not so good access to facilities.'; 'Travel links are too expensive so connecting with mainland initiatives, work and other practitioners is very difficult. If you work in a niche field, this can compromise the standard of your work and lead to working in isolation with very little support from those in your area of expertise. There is a sense in islands that

high quality creative practice only comes in from outside, not from within islands. This leads to low morale and impacts on ambition.’; ‘Housing. It's a big problem’; ‘Negatives- no artistic accommodation such as Wasps studios, to act as a focus for the many practitioners here. I know of many artists whose practice is hampered by this. Distance from hubs elsewhere in the UK. Very hard to access galleries, workshops, places to sell work’; ‘Lack of artistic resources/facilities, unlike the cities’; ‘Distance from National Galleries, Networks, Peers. Accessing facilities and opportunities’; ‘High cost transportation of goods and building materials. Lack of resources such as a printmaking workshop for artists to use’; ‘As architects the high build costs make life difficult’; ‘Lack of visiting theatre or arts companies due high costs and lack of permanent venue for live performance or watching films. Little private arts patronage or public funding to purchase artwork’; ‘The financial implications to connect to the mainland, travel, postage etc’; ‘Lack of certain resources for professional art production and preparation for exhibition. Under-developed networks for meaningful dialogue with other artists’; ‘Access to some materials and facilities. Particularly cost of delivery’; ‘Cost and timescales of post/delivery of raw materials, supplies, and subcontractor services. It's difficult to 'upskill' or access mentorship on an island’; ‘Cost, travel, networks, professional musicians’; ‘Increasingly difficult and expensive to travel and be part of a wider community in the arts in Scotland and with other countries’; ‘Digital connectivity is still poor in many places. Please get rid of the word 'remote', it is not helpful or accurate. Transport is poor. Over tourism, before the pandemic was causing significant problems where I live. Funding tends to favour the established artists and writers. LEADER funding was particularly difficult as a large amount went to an 'arms length' company of the council’.

Some other challenging negatives were expressed, which suggest feelings of social exclusion amongst some members of the cohort: ‘Corrupt council, incompetent yet teflon coated officials, anti-incomer bias, an Arts Centre that’s driven by accountants not creative people’; ‘For an incomer, being accepted’; ‘The 'island-mentality'. Inward-looking, cliquy, but you get used to it! I don't think I am saying anything new. It's well-known’; ‘For Orkney -- dark winters that go on a long time. Small community and there is a thread of folk feuding with each other....Tensions between proper Orcadians and incomers’ ; ‘Not being listened to - people here are consulted on issues but it is usually ignored or not taken forward’; ‘I remember someone informing me when I started writing full time, your 'greatest obstacles will be the self-appointed guardians of local culture.' I laughed then, but unfortunately this has proved to be the case. I have found local arts organisations and the UHI in many of their incarnations to be utterly unhelpful, indeed the opposite. Fortunately, I have been able to go above their heads and gain support from national bodies. Not everyone has been so lucky.’

II. The Creative Practitioner in the Islands

Given the specificities of general island life described by the creative practitioners, both for good and ill, the next series of questions sought to better understand the experience of being a creative practitioner in the islands, and how it might differ from that of a practitioner on the mainland.

There were a small number of answers in the negative to **Question 10 Do you think there are differences between island based creative practitioners and mainland equivalents?:** 'Chan e, ach dìreach gu bheil an cànan agus an cultar nas treasa - airson ùine bheag fhathast - anns na h-eileanan'; 'No differences that I could articulate - being creative is something that anyone can do/be, anywhere, anytime and for any reason or purpose'; 'Not really but more chances to ensure creatives are without trivial interruptions.' However, the vast majority answered in the positive, that there were differences between being an island and a mainland creative practitioner. The island-based practitioner needed to be particularly resourceful and innovative, and perhaps a sense of 'place' might play a bigger role: 'I guess there's more inspiration from nature, the sea, agriculture. Given that these things are literally all around us. History and weather is also a large influence'; 'Island practitioners often take inspiration from their environment, but it is not a prerequisite as research for creative work can equally well be undertaken digitally. However, there is a resourcefulness about island practitioners which is evident in putting on exhibitions - a preparedness for all eventualities because last-minute resources are not available as they are on the mainland. (One of the MSoA tutors once commented that island students arrived fully equipped with everything they needed to mount their Degree Shows, and this differed from local students where there may be an expectation that everything would be on hand.); 'Island creative practitioners need to have a strong sense of innovation if they are to survive whereas mainland equivalents need to be more competitive. There is a local perception that mainland practitioners are of a higher quality than local practitioners. Sometimes this can be the case due to a lack of access to good quality creative education which in turn leads to a lack of confidence, or a fear to try'; 'Island practitioners have to be more self reliant, and, I would suggest, more self reflective'; 'Often good at being resourceful with what is available'; 'Yes. Islanders are by nature more resilient.'

There was also a sense, expressed by a few participants, that there was an expectation for creatives to reflect the local community and its cultural heritage: 'I think there is an expectation for island based creative practitioners to use their island surroundings as their inspiration. In cities, creative practitioners seem to draw inspiration from a huge range of sources. Not all island creative practitioners focus only on their island surroundings of course, and many city artists focus on their urban surroundings, but it definitely feels like an expectation put upon you, and it seems almost disappointing if you don't conform to that'; 'Yes. Islanders here want more Gaelic and traditional industries/crafts present, such as Harris Tweed. I feel as though environment, community and sustainability is more important here too. If you try to do creative/artisan work without giving to the community and representing the community, islanders won't like you'; 'Would say you might need to immerse yourself as far as possible within the real local culture, work out over time how to fit in, draw on local rather than 'Tìr Mòr' mores and values. Otherwise you will simply be seen as an aesthetic appropriator and plunderer of what belongs to the place and its peoples, without the sensitivity as to what it means culturally. Walter Kissling, Margaret Fay Shaw, for example.'

Question 11 asked is '**Wellbeing**' a factor in your choice to live an island life? There were a few respondents who answered that it was not a factor: 'Not especially. Orkney is and

always will be home for me. Quality of life is a difficult one. The housing situation is particularly detrimental to attracting back young talented islanders. Yes it's a good place to live and work but younger folk are being priced out of being able to put down roots here which in turn limits the potential uptake of any 'opportunities'. However, for the majority of respondents it was a factor, particularly for those who had chosen to live in the Islands: 'Yes - as an asthmatic I can breathe here'; 'For me, I think it is more a question of finding a place that suits you, and connecting to it. Much of that has to do with the people in a place. Also, for me, living within constant sight of land, water and sky, is very grounding, and promotes a feeling of well being'; 'Yes I guess so. It allows me to lead more of an outdoor like in a landscape that gives me great joy. Not many places you can walk out of your front door straight onto the beach, or out of your office and onto the machair'; 'Definitely. The white noise of crowded society drains creativity'; 'Yes. Life is simpler on an island and so less stressful in a lot of ways than the more hectic mainland'; 'Yes. I would guess that anyone that has moved to the islands has based that decision with wellbeing at the centre of it'; 'Yes. I can get out and go long walks to places where no one else will be but which are also safe. Although I miss the buzz of a city, I soon tire of it and long for the sounds of the islands'; 'Massively so. Being able to be my own boss, work as and when I choose and being able to step out my door into the countryside immediately. The views, swimming in the sea and being able to have a croft. All massively benefit my mental and physical wellbeing'; 'By Wellbeing, do you mean mental wellbeing? The word seems interchangeable these days. Yes, I chose a quieter pace of life following an intensive and stressful career lasting 28 years. Living here is very much about slowing down and stopping to smell the roses.'

After all the positive responses to **Question 11**, the overwhelming response to **Question 12 Is there enough suitable living accommodation to support emerging creative practitioners living on the islands?** was negative, which is not surprising given the current housing situation in the Islands, and clearly presents a huge challenge: 'No it's very expensive for emerging creatives they're probably on a very low income, or they're having to work other jobs mainly in low pay sectors to support their creative practice. Therefore affording suitable accommodation isn't sustainable'; 'Accommodation locally on the whole is currently being squeezed and house buying/rental prices are significantly high. Those on low income, such as returning students or working families, are being priced out of the market'; 'Not if you're wanting to move to live in the islands In my experience yes, however studio accommodation is limited'; 'There's a desperate shortage of living accommodation- not just for creatives but for those engaged in the support structure too'; 'It would be good to have inexpensive accommodation for residencies or workshops; this is hard to find here'; 'Chan eil àiteachan-còmhnaidh gu leòr ann airson muinntir nan eilean period'; 'There should be more studios and studio apartments for creatives, not just in islands but everywhere'; 'Not a lot affordable accommodation for low incomes (not entirely restricted to art practitioners, also lots of young islanders) Not enough accessible studio space, unless you can afford to build your own'; 'No! Nor enough studio space'; 'I'm actually finding not having a workshop harder than not having a home as I'm worried how I can commit to produce commissions'; 'No, we were only able to afford a house with considerable help from a good number of family members, that isn't accessible to everyone'; 'No. I am currently homeless and workshopless. I rent a room from a friend

while I wait for a suitable property to come up - its been 10 months now. I have all the means to buy a house, but competition is very tough as there is a lack of houses on the market. Renting is also expensive and in high demand'; 'I had hoped to buy a small house with space for a small studio on the island when I moved here, and start my own business in my creative industry, but sadly the house prices have all shot up phenomenally since covid, and more and more people with money from the south want to live on a safe island. So this will no longer be an option for me. I still hope to start my own business, but there will be no way that I can afford a house now. There are still places to rent, not many privately, most seem to be through a housing scheme, but this is the better option for me now. Having spoken to others in creative industries, this seems to be the usual narrative.'

There were a number of positive responses to **Question 13 Do you feel that you have a voice in influencing change?**: 'Yes- if I spend the time and effort to try. Everybody is very accessible on an island'; 'Yes, if I chose to use it'; 'Yes. We all have access to a far greater sphere of influence these days, which isn't hampered by living where we choose to live. Also, I have had reasons to contact my local MP several times, and he's been very responsive, which makes me feel heard.' However, most creative practitioners did not feel their voices were listened to, even if they used the internet: 'The internet makes it much easier for these concerns to be vocalised, but people still are not listening. The Council are deaf to it - or say something will be done then it subsequently isn't. I am also concerned that while it is deemed "okay" for others to come into areas like this and voice THEIR concerns, that it remains taboo for locals to voice issues like housing, incomers, Gaelic issues etc. These are real issues but why are we not allowed to raise them - when others can do as they please?'; 'Once I thought I did, but as I don't have, or control lots of £££s, no'; 'Have not tried, but others do try to influence change. However, there is entrenched thinking on the island (Uist) which tends to result in not much changing at all', 'No, not really. I believe the Community Empowerment Act has had a positive impact in the isles and there is an emphasis on listening to the community, however I don't feel the larger umbrella organisations have got this right yet such as the SIC and Shetland Arts. Hopefully we are moving in the right direction though.'

Housing might be a problem and there might be a feeling that their voices were not being listened to as much as they might like, however, the responses to **Question 14 What contribution do creative practitioners make to island life?**, show that the respondents felt they contributed to the vitality of islands in a wide diversity of ways, not just economic, vindicating their important role in the islands: 'Creative practitioners add diversity, interest and vitality to island life. To paraphrase, to create art is to share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being. The Islands are wild, beautiful and inspirational. Creative practitioners can reflect this in their practice and help us all appreciate our environment. Our island particularly has a particular emphasis on industry with oil, wind power and fish being the leading economic drivers. A strong creative economy helps us hold on to the more soulful parts of life'; 'A lot! With festivals, events, literature, art etc this supports the local economy throughout the year, along with local events that pull the community to certain area across the islands'; 'Huge. expanding horizons for folk of all ages, stimulating curiosity, offering opportunities to try things out, contributing to the intellectual and creative growth of young people, the pleasures and

sense of achievement of making something, whether that something is tangible, as in some kind of art work or music, or is a collaborative project in any number of fields. Also loads of opportunities for interdisciplinary work, which is also very enriching'; 'Creatives contribute to all aspects of life. I feel like islanders are by default creative people who for generations have utilised creative thinking and making skills through necessity'; 'They add to educational, cultural and economics of the place. They have a large role in keeping people here employed and happy'; 'A heavy contribution - we bring creative thinking to our local businesses, we can help the push for more sustainable approaches in many ways. In university, we were encouraged to only generate concepts that had sustainable outcomes. Creative practitioners move forward with the world through human centred design and uncover solutions to life adapting problems. I believe our island community need us to keep moving forward and thrive'; 'Tourism. Creativity is quietly doing its thing but has so much more potential to make the Hebrides a world class artistic hub, especially with the new developments re cruise ships etc. Creativity is fundamental to the human experience. We are lessened in its absence-as noted during the recent pandemic when everything seemed to have been reevaluated'; 'It is a profound one that operates at a commercial/economic level and more deeply and widely in terms of societal benefit. The Arts, Culture and Heritage sector are fundamental to the identity of Orkney. The arts, culture and heritage are fundamental to personal and community identity, expression and development. Without creative practitioners we lack the influencing of generations to come in finding their own voice and sense of self. These things are fundamental to the priorities and values of L.A. delivery of services. Creativity breeds the resilience, enquiry, enterprise, critical thinking, innovation and leadership to ensure we thrive. All of those skills meet our needs in terms of Wellbeing - living the best life, living well both as individuals and members of communities and the community as a whole. Creatives provide much needed grit to the oyster, they provoke and question, ask and listen and then reflect. We need this mirror to our lives to be able to contemplate and cope with change and complexity. They afford the shades of grey we might otherwise refuse to see!'

III. Professional Practice

Previously there have been very little data available regarding the number of creative practitioners in the Islands, their specialities, their working conditions, their income and their needs. This section seeks to address this gap in knowledge. Despite the questionnaire having 138 participants, it is unlikely that this represents the total number of creative practitioners in the Islands. However, it is a representative sample and it provides useful data on the nature of creative practice in the islands.

Question 15 was multiple choice and asked **What area of the creative industries do you specialise in?** Some participants, being involved in several areas chose more than one box. This showed the wide range of areas in which creative practitioners are currently working in the Islands. There were 39 involved in Design, 62 in Fine Art, 66 in Music, 36 in Creative Writing, 10 in Theatre, 13 in Participatory Arts, and 13 with the Moving Image, with smaller numbers working with Ceramics, Weaving, Knitting, Jewellery, Inter-cultural Exchange, Illustration, Textiles, Candle Making, Architecture, Fly Tying, and Dance. One

has to be careful in assuming that these numbers represent the relative size of each area. However, clearly some areas are particularly well represented like Music and Fine Art.

Question 16 asked if the participants had an **Art School or University Qualification?** Of 132 responses only 26 answered in the negative. The cohort is highly educated with a high degree of expertise. The large majority have degrees, in a wide range of disciplines not all associated with their practice, and /or art school qualifications: 'MA theatre design, MA education I am a printmaker and artist and theatre practitioner and I teach printmaking'; 'yes, BA Hons Sculpture (ECA). About to graduate from MA learning and teaching Gaelic Arts (RCS).

Both have informed my practice in various ways... developing technical skills and creative ways of thinking and a research-based practice'; 'Yes. I did the portfolio course at Taigh Chearsabhaigh Lochmaddy and have a BA(Hons) in Painting. Also have a Pgde in Art & Design teaching'; 'BSc and PhD in Biochemistry. Nothing to do with my creative practice - except research skills are transferable'; 'BA (Hons) painting, MLA (landscape architecture), Diploma in botanical art. Also MSc Community Education. they all contribute'; 'First Class in Product Design BSc at the University of Dundee'; 'Yes, College Diploma in Architectural Ceramics, former member of the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers, BSc(Hons) Rural Development Studies helped me understand the business and ethics side of things'.

Of the 125 who answered **Question 17 In addition to your work as a creative practitioner, do you currently work elsewhere?** 36 responded that they did not do other work and were either retired so they could devote themselves to their creative activities or were full time professionals. However, the majority of creative practitioners were engaged in a wide range of other forms of additional employment: 'Yes - I work as the project manager for a new arts and heritage building'; 'Yes I'm also a Retained fire fighter and have duties few times a week when the islander plane lands. I'm also organising weeklong knitting holidays. I run a croft with my partner'; 'I'm also a full-time carer'; 'Helping facilitate opportunities for young people. Also take on specific projects that may involve a degree of curation, editorial and /or administrative work'; 'Project managing a new arts and heritage building'; 'Yes during the pandemic I completed SVQ3 in Health and Social care and worked in care sector'; 'I freelance writing Gallery interpretation for schools and families. I teach adults creative development courses, I'm in the process of setting up a Gaelic visual arts hub'; 'freelance journalist. This gives me access to the wider community and a network that reaches internationally'; 'Lecturer, Software Developer, Research Fellow (Arts/Computing), Dry Stone Dyker, Musician. All creative practices (under DCMS)'; 'Self-employed researcher. Language tutor. Tour guide administrator to make a living.'

As with employment, creative practitioners have a wide range of working conditions and some are better provided for than others. The range extends from a purpose-built studio, to a garage or spare room in the house. **Question 18** asked **What type of studio or production base do you have?** Obviously, the needs vary depending on the creative activity. However, although some people are well catered for, the general impression seemed to be that most made do with working from home: 'Chan eil a leithid agam'; 'I have a loom shed'; 'My spare room and kitchen table'; 'laptop, phone, camera, probably

in that order'; 'Very small garage. Not fit for purpose'; 'Work from home, in a tiny room not really suitable for the tasks it is put to'; 'Shed in my garden. Not suitable for year-round work'; 'Small room in my house plus a small shed'; 'Basic within a byre.'

There was a wide range of interesting responses to **Question 19 What kind of studio or production base would enable you to achieve your creative and professional ambitions?**, which indicates that many creative practitioners feel there is a great deal of improvement which could be made. Some respondents were happy with their current working conditions: 'Not important for me. I don't need much space'; 'I am probably quite ok as I am'; 'We have built what we need around our personal requirements.' However, most of the practitioners were keen to see change, and had ambitious dreams: 'I had wanted the empty primary school to become studio space. Big windows looking east over the harbour....even one floor would have been welcome'; 'A performing arts studio would be an asset to the Isles for me and other practitioners working in the performing arts and would allow more education and development in this area'; 'Faster broadband for large file transfer'; 'I would like a bigger studio, however islanders are creative within their approach to achieving their goals'; 'A print studio that offered facilities for a range of printmaking techniques, for teaching, learning and exhibiting would be a huge benefit on the island'; 'Small affordable creative hub'; 'A space that would allow me to meet clients, teach and train and manufacture. A space like Olaf Ericsson or Diane van Furstenberg would be great. A showroom/studio/workshop'; 'Wasps studios type set up would be the dream'; 'I can't develop fully without bigger premises. I've looked into building a home studio renting a place locally but the costs are too high'; 'I have a vision that we could develop the old Scalpay School into workshops and have shops for visitors to come and buy our products. The creation of a collective crafting community, supporting each others' ideas, emotional support, connecting and enjoying the space. It's very much a dream, but it would be incredible if we could achieve it'; 'I think the Hebrides needs a major investment in art facilities targeted at the top end of higher education (e.g. masters), facilities that could be shared by career artists. Because of the distributed nature of the population, visiting teachers of international quality should be considered as fundamental. That means they have to be accommodated. So any development should include visitor accommodation'; 'Larger (messy ceramics) studio space with a (clean) gallery / teaching area as part of a small group of studios/workshops/premises for creative island businesses on the island I live'; 'I live on the Uists. It would be transformational if we had a large purpose built print studio with professional production facilities. The Taigh Chearsabhagh studio is beautiful but too small. One artist at a time. To have a workshop like they have in other Scottish cities would have a major impact on my professional work. It would also attract other artists to come and stay on the island. Residency or exchanges would be really valuable'; 'Desperately in need of a light industrial workshop/office space. Expecting a baby in a few months and would love to remove the less child-friendly practices out of the house'; 'An all-year round production space. A shared artist-run workshop space would help with use of new techniques, sharing enthusiasms, exhibiting work, etc.'

Question 20 asked **Is good digital connectivity to your home or work base important to how you operate?** Of the 130 participants who answered the questionnaire,

overwhelmingly practitioners felt it was important to their practice with 117 answering yes: 'Critical. Work with counterparts in other countries on a regular (often daily) basis. Without connectivity, can't do it.' Participants shared the variety of ways they used digital connectivity in their practice: 'yes for research and communicating with galleries and working on my online profile etc.'; 'Yes - vital for cloud storage and security'; 'Digital connectivity is crucial. I use it for communication, research, meetings, publicity, purchasing materials, advice, information and filling in your surveys'; 'Yes, we are fortunate to have Fibre Broadband and with online sales being part of our business this is crucial'; 'Yes, I run two websites and multiple social media accounts for my creative projects. Connectivity is essential to customer communication etc'. Some participants while not currently relying on connectivity, shared that it would be important to future-proof their business: 'Not presently, but is becoming more important for networking'. Some negative comments were made on the efficacy of current broadband provision: 'It's utterly critical for that, and it's unreliable, still'; 'Tha; feuch thusa bhideo de dh'òrain a luchdadh a-nuas air a' bhann-leathainn a th' againn. Bheir e trì latha.'

Question 21 considered RFO's and asked **Do you regularly visit or use the current resources and opportunities available to you?** There was a mixed response to this question. Positive comments included: 'Yes local resources are vital to my research'; 'Yes, I work freelance for Shetland Arts Development Agency, use the cafe space, watch films and visit exhibitions and shows when I can'; 'have worked with Pier Arts Centre over a period of years. Always a pleasure, very professional, very knowledgeable folk, and a lovely balance of work from all over the world and from very different disciplines, and support for local artists/makers are different stages of their careers. Also has an outreach/education programme second to none, and an interesting series of events and lectures. Able to support artist residencies, which means that folk from elsewhere can come and work in Orkney for a longer period than just a few days or weeks.' In contrast, 35 of the 130 respondents answered 'no' or 'not really'. Some highlighted location as a barrier: 'Taigh Chearsabhagh when they run an exhibition, but it is 50 miles away'; 'Not often enough as it entails a 120 mile round trip or a ferry crossing and overnight stay'; 'I do visit exhibitions when possible but it's an expensive business - £50 on ferry & transport. It can't be done by public transport.' There were also some comments on the suitability of the services provided for artists' needs: 'The RFO's do not provide any resources or opportunities that are relevant to my practice'; 'No - they don't seem to address my needs'; 'No. The Pier Arts Centre has no interest in local practitioners unless they are recent UHI graduates. There is no remit to support artist makers in Orkney'; 'No because they are not a good resource and do not provide practical opportunities'; 'I regularly visit an Lantair. They really don't do much for craft practitioners based here. The shop is a missed opportunity to create a curated collection of local craft/applied arts, with improved, (much) faster payment and reduce their commission.'

Following on, **Question 22** asked **What additional facilities or activities would you like to access through the RFO's?** Several people highlighted the need for support for early stage and developing artists, with a particular emphasis on peer support, funding and information sharing: 'Creative Entrepreneur courses'; 'Give more grants to the wee guys'; 'grant funding?'; 'Information about residencies or commissions'; 'I feel that there could

be more done to support early-career artists therefore facilitating meetups and peer crit groups would be great. Improvements to the print and darkroom facilities would also be great'; 'some kind of 'creative forum' would be a nice idea.' There were also some suggestions for improvements to facilities and equipment: 'Personally more access to film equipment'; 'Shared equipment, shared bookable studio space with specialist equipment'; 'Equipment hire, workshop hire, equipment grants, shared marketing'; 'workshops for printmaking, sculpture, jewellery, ceramics, darkroom.' Other participants also noted the need for more affordable studio spaces: 'Affordable studio spaces...Not applicable to the current RFO's, but again a performing arts infrastructure that could support national touring in first instance and capacity in the longer term to foster professional theatre and performance in Orkney'; 'Studio or retail space for hire at reasonable rates.' Some other ideas included developing language and culture and art collections: 'I would love to see more Gaelic support for artists through An Lanntair, more cultural development of the Gaelic arts in contemporary ways'; 'The Pier Arts Centre is world leading for its permanent art collection. It would be wonderful if the other Islands had permanent collections that could support Island artists through a purchase scheme'.

Question 23 asked **Are there enough outlets and opportunities in the Islands for you to share or promote your work?** Answers reflected the need for more gallery spaces: 'More galleries would be great! Also the commission on sales through SADA is 50% which is a commercial rate but also seems a bit high for a publicly funded organisation'; 'No, none. No public or commercial exhibition spaces in Orkney. No structures for accessing amenities spaces – e.g museums - all done through 'who you know'. No transparency'; 'No, definitely not. No gallery for local artists'; 'Not at a level that would support full time studio employment. It would be good if there was an entrepreneur, agency or business promoting high quality artwork here in the Hebrides. There is an opportunity for someone to lead on this.' Delivery charges were highlighted as a barrier to exhibiting work: 'Probably - but as mentioned above one of the limitations is the cost of shipping or delivering work off island.' A suggestion for improvement included a studio trail: 'The studio trail Art on The Map was a great way to enable this in the past'. Another suggest support for practitioners: 'I think a lot of promotion has to come from the individual. I for one am terrible at it and would benefit from some guidance!'. The importance of clear strategy planning was also highlighted: 'in a post Covid and climate crisis environment, there have to be clear strategies such that there is support for the arts/creative projects on top of a diverse and broad economic base that creates resilience in an uncertain world.'

Question 24 focussed on peer networking asking **Do you have strong links with other creative practitioners?** Of the 130 participants, 32 said they did not have strong links with other creative practitioners. Of the remainder, many stated that they had strong links but that they were informal, or friendships rather than any formal network: 'Yes, though just personally. There is no formal creative industries network or group on the island'; 'I have some friends who are also creative practitioners but they are friends first and practitioners second'; 'Strong friendship links'; 'Yes, I have strong links. No, I am not part of an art group or creative industries network.' Some shared that this was through choice: 'No, I'm a loner by choice'; 'have strong links on a personal basis. Prefer not to be attached to groups.' Others felt strongly connected to other practitioners: 'Yes I'm a founder of a arts collective

that's supports local graduates, I also participate in other local events and I'm a member of various arts organisations in Scotland which keeps me plugged into the mainland'; 'As storytellers, we run the Orcadian Story Trust, which promotes local storytelling events and the preservation of Orkney heritage. We have links with the Scottish Storytelling Centre in Edinburgh, the School of Scottish Studies, XPo North and Publishing Scotland and The Alliance for Independent Authors (UK-wide)'; 'Tha, gu h-ire. Tòrr cheòladairean tradaiseanta timcheall'. Some participants noted the barriers to setting up or maintaining a network on island communities at this time: 'I have strong links with other musicians but I often feel these connections are tenuous - it is difficult to maintain links with musicians who are elsewhere, regardless of modern communication methods'; 'I have worked with others on island over concrete actions - eg island artist studio trail' leaflet, which is ok, but I dont think we function as a group except around very clear, short term projects. Sadly, some folk think it's a competition "theres only room for one potter/painter" etc. Rather than seeing it as an issue of critical mass, the more there is the more there can be...'; 'Not as strong as I would like. There are people I would like to meet and form links with, but I think COVID has made that hard. I'm not sure what groups/networks there are and what the benefits are.'

Question 25 provided an opportunity to look at other skills practitioners bring to their island communities asking **Creative Islanders often have a number of skills and can be highly innovative. Are there any novel cross or transdisciplinary areas that benefit from your skills? Or are there areas that would benefit from your skills given suitable investment?** There were a wide variety of skills shared along with some ideas for development: 'I have particular skills in social enterprise/business management and operations. I would like to find a way to support other creative practitioners who wish to set up businesses but do not know how'; 'Education! Please shout it from the rooftops. We want Creatives to get involved in schools please. In return we can share accommodation, facilities, eager bodies and energy!'; 'Architecture and fine art used to have many more cross overs, design of new buildings for homes, particularly housing schemes would benefit from artists' input'; 'Setting up the distillery I've used my creative background to steer the visual development and creativity of the business. Perhaps teaching or being involved in creative retreats if they were to happen on the island'; 'As a retired teacher I am always interested in how we can try out ideas. My new Polycrub is the most exciting place on our croft.' Some recognised the added value and skills developed from their creative practice: 'Tackling social and mental health issues through art projects'; 'My artistic practice is a balance between textiles, sculpture and film. Suitable investment would push my film/editing skills.' One artist noted that more could be done to support work such as collaborative projects in island communities: 'I have worked with a number of artists, especially visual but also musicians, actors etc. The incentive for this kind of work, however, has rarely come from the island arts groups - Taigh Chearsabhigh being an exception. Instead, they have been generated by different groups such as Celtic Connections, Creative Scotland and even individuals living elsewhere. There seems to me a distrust of outside achievements found among islands arts organisations. (I am not unique in observing this.)'

Question 26 asked **Can you signal your annual income from your practice?** From the 129 participants who answered this particular question, 24 preferred not give a number. 67 (51.9%) said they earned up to £10K, 23 (17.8%) earned £10K-25K, 8 (6.2%) earned £25K to 50K and 7 (5.4%) earned £50K+. According to the Scottish government 'Earnings in Scotland' Report 2020 the average salary for all employees in Scotland in 2020 was £25,616. This suggests that at least 69.7% of participants asked are earning less than the Scottish average salary through their practice with only 11.6% earning over £25K.

Question 27 asked about the participants' business structure, **Do you operate as a sole trader or in a small / large business partnership?** Most participants – 82 out of 131 - shared that they are currently working as a sole trader. Of the remainder there were a variety of business structures including several not-for-profit structures such as charities, community groups and community interest companies and some limited private companies: 'Managing Director of a Community Interest Company (est. January 2020), prior to this operated as a Sole Trader'; 'I have ticked up to £10k to represent the annual income from grants and other sources (tickets, raffles, donations)'; 'small business partnership for publishing; non-profit volunteer organization for storytelling'; 'Just started my own business as a CIC'; 'Small enterprise - a Community Benefit Society and Scottish Charity.' From the participants' answers, only 2 respondents stated that they were employed as opposed to self-employed.

Following on, **Question 28** asked **How do you generate income from your creative practice?** 131 participants answered this question and most had more than one source of income, with the most common blend being selling products, workshops and commissions. 79 individuals generated income from selling products, with 41 earning from commissions and 31 from workshops. Added to this 16 participants said teaching was a source of income, meaning 47 participants in total earned income from teaching in some capacity. 18 participants had involvement in facilitating community projects, 12 in writing/publishing work, 7 in performance, 5 worked in consultancy/mentoring, 5 in design, 2 attended residencies, 2 delivered tours and 1 carried out repair work.

Question 29 focussed on marketing, asking **Can you describe how you market or promote your work or creative practice to the public?** The majority of 127 respondents shared that they used social media (65 participants) and had their own website or online presence (53 participants): 'Primarily on Facebook and we have a website'; 'Social media, website, and have taken part in other platforms such as Xpo North.' Most social media users shared that they had an Instagram account and found they had a large reach: 'Instagram is something I've been using for years and feel I've benefited from'; 'I have a following of about 3,000 folk on social media and that forms the basis of my advertising.' 22 participants shared that word of mouth was important to promoting their goods/services: 'I benefit from local word of mouth advertising alongside an online presence.' Several identified local methods of advertising including local press/radio (15 participants), local shops or craft fairs (13 participants) and gallery or studio spaces (11 participants). Participants shared that they still made use of more traditional methods of marketing such as printed leaflets or posters (12 participants) and advertising in local tourist brochures (12 participants). 8 participants shared that they are part of a network

which they feel is important to their marketing. Most commonly respondents had more than one route to market, with an emphasis on effective communication with customers: 'Direct communication with our members. Orkney public media - print and radio. Social media - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. Posters and sometimes leaflets. Word of mouth.' Of the 127 individuals who answered the question, it is notable that only 11 had a physical gallery or shop front to display their goods for sale despite most income being generated by product sales. This reflects the findings in Question 23 which highlighted the lack of gallery/studio spaces in island communities.

Many creative practitioners have a national or global reputation, and some are able to capitalize on this to reach an international market with their work. **Question 30 Do you present, sell or export your work nationally or internationally?** sought to discover the extent of this national and international reach. Of the 124 respondents, despite the challenges of Brexit and Covid, only 22 said they did not: 'Increasingly I am being approached on an international level, but mainly nationally'; 'Through our social enterprise some of my pieces have gone abroad'; 'I used to tour a lot and worked internationally performing at festivals etc but there is no dependable support for this from CS. I cannot afford to work like that any more'; 'No, I had planned to but with the new Brexit rules it has become virtually impossible for me to consider'; 'Internationally - but only because our customers come on holiday from all over the world'; 'Internationally, although Brexit has choked sales to EU in red tape so no longer viable, and covid has doubled delivery charges to US, so that's not really viable either'; 'With support Gaelic products could be sold internationally'; 'customers from around the world buy from our website'; 'Yes - I have gigged in several countries pre the UK's departure from the EU; I have had CD sales from numerous countries. Most of my musical tourism customers are from the UK but I have had participants from New Zealand and Ireland'; '25% UK and 75% international - North America is biggest market, but plenty of other countries too.'

It was expected that most participants would answer positively to **Question 31 Do you market your work through the internet via your own website or social media etc**, and indeed that was the case, although a very small minority did not use the internet. Most answered with a simple yes or no, but there were a number of comments providing a picture of the nature of internet use and noting some challenges: 'Through our social enterprise some of my pieces have gone abroad'; 'Yes, I run two websites and have three separate social media identities for my various projects'; 'I have a showcase website - not selling'; 'The band has a website as well as social media outlets. Personally I use social media'; 'Yes, we have a dedicated website and use Instagram and Facebook'; 'we only survived the covid lockdowns by online retail. We entirely produce our website in-house'; 'I have an online presence but it doesn't really count as marketing'; 'I have but I seem to live in a black spot. This has been a drawback for years.'

Question 32 What are your creative and professional ambitions? sought a wider perspective than **Question 19**, which had focussed on what ambitions the practitioners might have about studio facilities and built structures. The participants' ambitions ranged from the personal, such as developing their business so they could make a living, or developing their creative or academic profile, to the public, such as helping develop the

creative industries within the islands: 'To carry on designing and making a living'; 'I have recently been awarded funding from Creative Scotland where I'm able to collaborate with two local creatives. My ambition is to push my creative practice further making a new body of work and especially focus on making a film across the island'; 'To continue to make films that give people a voice and to make a change'; 'To expand my product and service range'; 'To build a sustainable business that manufactures in Orkney, works with the circular economy and builds a legacy for this generation post covid and beyond'; 'I'd love to run a studio, preferably a partnered studio. I think I thrive most when I work with others so this is something I would prioritise in my future place of work'; 'To become a professional artist would be a dream, but first steps such as improving my skills, getting a studio space more realistic'; 'To continue to draw and paint, work hard, involve myself in the creative community, keep learning. Develop creative workshops that support people in the community to engage, build confidence and see place differently'; 'to make good art that resonates with viewers. to do my bit for raising the profile of Gaelic visual arts'; 'To find opportunities to deploy Forum and other theatre skills within Education and Health sectors'; 'I'd like to work part time as an Arts Practitioner in children's hospitals and charities. Working with young people and creativity is something I've always been passionate about'; 'Ultimately, I would like to do more to support, change and provide creative education in Shetland. I'd like to bridge the gap between theatre and education which currently exists'; 'To make a difference, and to use my skills to encourage new creativity and engagement.'

For ambitions to be met, there needs to be suitable facilities and a support network which can help creative practitioners successfully meet them. Are practitioners happy with the current situation? Do they feel their needs are being met? **Question 33 In your community, do current support and resources meet your creative business requirements?** canvassed opinion. The responses indicate a roughly 50/50 split between those that were happy with current support and resources, and those who were not. There was a reasonable level of awareness of the resources available: 'Within our community there is considerable advice and support available - it depends on artist/creative practitioners having right attitude and being prepared to expend a bit of energy to articulate their ideas and intentions'; 'yes, through Business Gateway'; 'Business Gateway is brilliant. Everything else is useless, as I don't tick the right boxes'; 'how long is a piece of string? you work within the scope of the resources you have, and try to build those resources out. Human capital is the key to finding other kinds of capital and investment. Orkney has very talented people, but most of them are already doing a long list of things, so it can be difficult to find folk with the right skills'; 'I must be honest and say that well-intentioned council-led long term support such as particular Arts Development posts have seemed to me very poor value for money in new projects achieved - in comparison (eg Orkney and Shetland) these have seemed to me to result in more visible initiatives - in comparison mentoring schemes and gatherings of creative practitioners seem to me to have been better value'; 'No, there is very little support. The occasions that I have sought support, I've been unsuccessful - I suspect because my practice is erroneously regarded as 'craft' rather than an artistic practice'; 'No, I do not have a suitable premises to deliver classes. The Theatre is in terrible condition and needs significant investment'; 'No. There is a real lack of studio space and no available small light

industrial units. We literally carve stone, at home, in our home and are expecting a baby this year. This is not ideal.'

Question 34 asked **What additional support or resources (including built infrastructure) would enable you to achieve your ambitions?** Participants had many ideas about what would help them to achieve their ambitions. These ranged from financial help in some form, to the creation, or renovation, of suitable working premises, and from specific support focussed on their own practice to more general resources. The need for more, and better studio / exhibition spaces is a theme that comes through strongly: 'Having access to (micro) grant funding where there's no stipulation of creating employment'; 'I would be having access to film equipment'; 'Awareness of importance and power of films when evidencing funded projects and to creatively look at ways to use films in research projects'; 'Digital connectivity, and financial support for things like proper Zoom accounts'; 'Training, infrastructure for studio spaces, exhibition space and support financially'; 'A centre with rentable workspaces for artists would be wonderful because it would allow me to discuss ideas with other creative professionals'; 'Small industrial units like more of the units the North Harris Trust manages near Tarbert/Urgha in Harris. Also, more fine art studio space. And also a facility such as An Lanntair or Taigh Chearsabhaigh in Tarbert, Harris (smaller probably) seems quite a reasonable aim'; 'Facilities that are very professional in various fields for hire like Pro photography studios or printmaking facilities'; 'shared reasonably priced studio space. I've looked at trying to do this for myself but the costs are too much, and rising post covid'; 'It would be great to be able to have a share space to show and sell work within maybe a collective frame where I could be working with other artists on products. Would be nice if it could be a system where there is smaller commissions because artists rotate to man the gallery/ shop or something like that'; 'Business support, especially advice with planning, funding and website. I find Business Gateway to be a little vague with some of its advice. I feel like I need expert legal advice and a proper website designer to say "for you specifically, you need xyz" rather than a "you could do this, you could do that"; 'Available, reasonably priced exhibition spaces; use of studio space for making large work; Dedicated roomy printmaking studio with range of equipment; Help with costs for travelling exhibitions to mainland and international venues; Help with marketing'; 'I would love to see a dedicated area/building which celebrated Shetland's music with displays of musicians who have moulded our current position in the international music scene. So many of the young people who study trad music do not have the opportunity to learn its history as lesson times are so restrictive. Also a book on a similar theme to assist in teaching the future players about their past'.

Question 35 asked **Are there any key challenges, professional or in everyday life, that hold you back from your professional ambitions?** Although, 20 of the 119 respondents replied that challenges did not hold them back from their practice, the majority noted a wide range of examples, from maintaining a regular income, long working hours, a lack of working space and the difficulty of balancing creative activities with care responsibilities: 'Money - I mentioned low income for creatives as opportunities are limited even if you're not looking for a creative part time job to support your creative practice it's difficult to find a supportive job that's well paid. Although being creative I'll try to find a solution to

the problem'; 'Sustaining regular income is a challenge. I am consistently stuck between providing for my family and developing my business further. I have tried to move more into freelance work to be able to focus on it, but ultimately had to move back into paid work which is less fulfilling than my creative work. To have a creative business here in the islands, you have to be prepared to work twice as hard for twice as less, and this can compromise your quality of life and mental health'; 'I'm a solo-crewed mum to two primary aged children. This really limits what events I can attend. Going online has helped, but even then some initiatives have been at impractical times of the day and short courses often run over weekends'; 'Making enough sales to support self and investing in equipment, training, workspace etc'; 'Finance, trying to juggle the croft & livestock with opening workshop, family commitments & husband working away'; 'lack of space is my main problem.'

Participants acutely aware of the challenges they face had some constructive answers to **Question 36 If you do have challenges, are there solutions which might address them?** These ranged from easier access to funding and marketing support, to reorganization of the local arts organisations and a greater awareness of the challenges faced by creative practitioners: 'A greater appreciation of the importance of art practice and the barriers that we face as artists'; 'Access to mainland markets eg galleries, tunnel to mainland, decent ferry service'; 'Creative grant - so I don't have to work - that would be wonderful'; 'Studio space, if possible shared to keep costs down'; 'A comprehensive support network where creatives can make a living and communicate and energise others'; 'I believe more support needs to be given to young creatives - we need to find people who share our goals and ambitions to move forward. We need the funding to step up the ladder because part time work on the side isn't enough for us to make it happen on our own. More needs done to call out and encourage people in, this is something that I'm very passionate to generate ideas for'; 'Better marketing I suppose to attract better clients and projects. Architecture can be quite passive- waiting for the right people or project to turn up. Sometimes we build our own houses which allows more creative freedom'; 'An overarching artistic vision for the islands More finance. I've approached business gateway for instance but there don't seem to be obvious routes to grants etc (partly Brexit related, I was told)'; 'We have a wealth of producers on the islands. Those that are very internet savvy and feel comfortable self marketing thrive easily. It would be good if there was an agency that promoted creatives equally not just further promote those who are already good at it. Small weaker producers end up hidden'; 'I do wish that I could hand over some aspects to others - perhaps graphic design/social media and business plan/funding applications.'; 'Better marketing and publicity...website'; 'Subsidised residency or exchange programme'; 'subsidised transport costs for shipping work and artists back and forward to the mainland.'

Many professional practitioners engage in residencies or exchange programmes to provide experience and a space in which to exercise their art. For example, artists travel to Scalloway in Shetland to the Booth a purpose built live/work space. **Question 37** asked the Island cohort how many of them had done so - **Have you ever participated in a residency or exchange programme?** The answer was very clear, the great majority had not. One 'really wanted to' and another thought it was a great idea. There were a small

number who had, indeed had done so on several occasions, and there was a feeling that it was a really valuable experience: 'often (see www.ianstephen.co.uk) - consider these vital part of making new work from experience and of contact with potential audience for work - also sharing experience - eg inter-island or comparing writing scene on island and Saskatchewan'; 'Yes. A number, including some based in Jersey, Gibraltar and Grez-sur-Long. I have also been responsible for residencies in various locations such as Moniak Mor'; 'yes - Triangle Arts Trust'; 'I was part of an exchange programme in Richmond Virginia Commonwealth University, USA. I was an art resident at Christ's Hospital School, West Sussex, for the first two years, before I became a full time art teacher. As a teacher I ran a yearly art resident post for over 25 years.'

In **Question 38** participants were asked **How might an Islands focused residency and/or exchange programme benefit our Island communities?** The answers suggest that opinion is mixed. There were a number of respondents who expressed scepticism: 'There have been initiatives like this in the past, such as 'artist in residence' programmes but there is a lack of strategic planning as to how this can make long term change to development in the isles. It tends to be artists being 'helicoptered' in to share their practice and inspire people, without any thought as to how the people can continue to develop their practice once said artist has departed. Until this is resolved, while it is nice to have, I don't believe residency placements are beneficial'; 'What benefit does it bring here - the people coming in must be willing to 'give' if they are intending to 'take'. Too often local information and knowledge and people's time is used by others who then profit from it - while local people still live with day to day issues and are not listened to. What will local creative people get from this? These are the questions. We don't need more tourists'; 'Depends on what kind of residency and where it's based. I've seen residencies which are on during the week in a remote part of the island - automatically ruling out participation by anyone who has a day job in addition to their artistic work. Residencies need to be realistic about how easy it will be for people to access them'; 'I don't see it as important. People with any kind of a passion for being here can come and literally wild camp for free if required. That said, space for creative practice that can include sculpture and messy/noisy work would be something I'd highly value'; 'I don't feel residencies do. Recent funding spent on flying artists in to briefly experience the islands while neglecting the artists that are here, year round. Exchanges involving islanders would be much better'; 'They bring income and new people, but I am not sure how they benefit local practitioners. Sometimes they can feel patronising to people living and working here Long overdue'; 'I personally don't think I'd benefit from exchange programmes because I don't like leaving the island, but I'd very much like to explore a residency with the library and archive in Kirkwall or with the heritage centre on Sanday with Creative Scotland funding. In terms of how that benefits our communities - I don't think we gain much from yet another artist spending a week here and then making some ill-informed work that folk elsewhere think is a beautiful insight into our way of life. Local talent can do that better, but lacks a platform which can elevate our work.' However, the majority were positive about the benefits of residencies and/or exchange programmes, and offered reasons why they thought so, including personal experience: 'I consider a residency I spent in Jersey with other islanders - from Faroe, Channel Islands, Bermuda, St Helena etc - to be among the best and most valuable experiences I've ever had as a writer'; 'It would be of huge benefit as we learn from shared

practice'; 'wonderful to bring people in to collaborate. Great to get fresh perspectives on the place you live. Exciting to see other creatives and how they approach their practice'; 'Reduce isolation, support with understanding in the challenges of Island life'; 'This would be superb. Any well run art residency/exchange programme will always generate new ideas, create new perspectives and develop and broaden positive links beyond the island'; 'It could dynamise creativity, put some islands in the spotlight and even maybe bring more full time residents to smaller islands (people usually fall in love with the place !)'; 'Exchange of knowledge and experiences, especially between other peripheral communities, could help build a strong network of support and mutual understanding across the world.'

Residencies and exchange programmes can be regarded as educational experiences which 'dynamise creativity', helping creative practitioners to develop their potential. **Question 39** canvassed the respondents as to whether they were interested in engaging in other forms of education, namely island tailored postgraduate opportunities - **Do you think post graduate programmes (i.e. MA, MRes or PhD) in creative practice subjects tailored to island delivery contexts would interest you?**

Clearly there is a thirst for undertaking postgraduate study as 50% of the respondents answered positively, although fees were an issue for some, while some of the others had already studied on postgraduate programmes: 'Yes - although I'm studying MA with Glasgow online next year - but PhD would be great'; 'I may do an online PhD one day'; 'Yes. Post graduate opportunities are already attractive to older students who are also looking for value added lifestyle. We need more of these selling the islands' unique selling point'; 'yes definitely, but the courses now are not at a level I would like to participate in, further these are 1.5hrs drive away'; 'Perhaps, I'd like to knit my environmental knowledge with my creative practice'; 'Yes, although for me it would be about craft development'; 'Yes, if practice based and likely to result in new body of work'; 'Yes. Post graduate opportunities are already attractive to older students who are also looking for value added lifestyle. We need more of these selling the islands unique selling point.'

Postgraduate programmes are not suitable for everyone and are only one facet of the education offering. About half the respondents were interested in continuing professional development and other training opportunities. **Question 40** asked **Are there any CPD (continuing professional development) or training programmes that you would like to see on offer to assist in your career or professional development?** Clearly CPD needs can be subject specific, with those of a writer differing from those of a painter and the range of answers reflects this diversity. However, some needs are shared such as how to market work or successfully run a business: 'I think all artists living the Western Isles should be offered Gaelic support, both in language learning, but in cultural context'; 'Continuation of the Open Book programme online. Online is vital, we are too far out to attend anything in person'; 'again self promotion is the key but is not generally the normal personality of a crafter. Any training how to write content, how to reach target audience would be great'; 'setting up and running online Training Events. I taught myself through necessity but a course and advice would have been good. Video training - how to make and edit short videos. Art Therapy courses made available online'; 'CPD is essential and I think

there could be many useful opportunities in the less familiar aspects of running a business such as social media development, accounting and bookkeeping etc'; 'CPD can be difficult here, compared to in a city for example. Any help with that would be good'; 'Yes. I don't have an art degree and have considered doing an MFA to gain experience. But as I have already spent 10 years of my life at university I don't really want to go back and do an MFA. A residency or CPD course would suit me much more than an academic qualification'; 'I'd like to collaborate more with archaeologists or produce work for museums such as Museum nan Eilean (Lews Castle) and collaborate with geologists'; 'Yes visiting artists and tutors coming to the island to teach one off classes in drawing, painting and printing'; 'Short courses for specific topics, e.g. the usual such as marketing, using social media; plus how to navigate the new issues created by Brexit for working in Europe or sending work to Europe;' 'Yes - practical workshops in improving blogging and blogging skills; also looking at low cost and simple alternatives to video editing and photo editing - less emphasis on apps requiring high cost subscriptions and more on proven simpler ways of getting job done.'

Whereas there was a general understanding of their CPD needs, the vast majority of respondents were unaware of Knowledge Exchange opportunities available from universities. **Question 41** asked **What do you know about 'Knowledge Exchange' opportunities available through universities?** Most responded that they knew nothing and were unaware how it might support their practice. However, a small minority did have some experience and a number of others were interested in learning more: 'I am aware of Knowledge Exchange opportunities. Slightly unclear as to how to make use of them though'; 'I've participated in various Knowledge Exchanges (all within STEM subjects) so believe they are extremely useful. I have not been involved in anything from a creative practice perspective and know little about the university context within arts'; 'I have set up KE programmes with local industry at my previous university'; 'Have benefitted from it. Effective method of widening horizons'; 'Very little. I'm interested, though. Especially because I have a PhD and interdisciplinary approaches/methods really interested me'; 'It is a valuable way to gain access to University Research expertise and funding.'

IV. Covid Recovery, Brexit impacts and Climate Change

Some of the previous answers referenced the impact of Brexit on some practitioners. The next thematic section sought to explore this in more depth, and to find out more about the impact of Coronavirus, which was the focus of **Question 42 What effect has the COVID Pandemic had on your creative and professional practice?** For some practitioners the effects have been minimal or mixed, for the majority of the others it has been severe: 'I was unable to work'; 'Gainead àiteachan gus an stuth a ghabhail'; 'Devastated by it'; 'Heavily - I have completed my last two years of university during this pandemic and it's affected me in being able to complete work, have money behind me to fork out on my own materials, not being able to work with others or have in person learning which I believe would have helped me a lot'; 'This is difficult because I was still able to make and show work, but it's been very stressful financially as many people whether islander or not have experienced'; 'During the lockdown I had no creative work and had to retrain in another completely different sector'; 'Reduced opportunities to sell my craft as my

customers are tourist based outlets'; 'I have been unable to travel for residencies or use workshops away from the island. I have less income. I am saving to build a studio, but that is now much more expensive to do as building materials and labour costs have risen (might be Brexit as much as pandemic) My confidence as an artist is very low'; 'Total loss of face-to-face customers. My studio space has been closed to the public (without consultation) so I'm no longer accessible. There is no suitable alternative studio space available in my community'; 'Positive and negative, conceptually it has brought much into focus and motivated us to work more, go deeper, develop our practice, negative impact has been a constriction of the artwork and market, less visitors and general anxiety of the economic security of the Outer Hebrides'; 'Very little, as most of my work is bespoke design. I have, however, had greatly reduced footfall at my studio and there has been some supply chain issues. On balance, I feel COVID has helped my business as customers are more comfortable buying online and having consultation meetings via Zoom etc'; 'Lowered income through lack of tourist travel. Has staggered our previously blossoming business which means the projected early growth of our business didn't happen last year. Allowed some time to develop creative ideas but with no external outlets'; 'Severe. I no longer live in Shetland and I do not have access to studio or work space. My company is barely trading and the practice is fragmented'; 'It's been a really creative period with lots of new challenges, but a lonesome journey'; 'Killed it off completely - I got a job on Test & Trace to survive financially'; 'no visitors, closed the Gallery for risk of Covid'; 'Forced more online sales, closed gallery to the public for a year (though I was still working in my studio, there pretty much every day.'

About half of the respondents answered **Question 43** in the positive - **Are you aware of the various schemes to support freelance creative professionals ie. the Creative Scotland Bridging Bursary Fund?** 2 respondents claimed to have actually received funding. However, many more were ineligible: 'Yes - but I am not eligible for any of them - fall through the cracks'; 'Yes but have been ineligible for them all'; 'No- The Creative Scotland information is poorly distributed, not an easy website to use, application process is badly designed and off putting'; 'We fall between the cracks for a lot of these schemes, not being full-time paid creative practitioners'; 'We did receive help from the hardship fund from Creative Scotland. Lifesaving'; 'Yes - but each of them have one (usually out of 7 to 10) condition which stops me being eligible. eg no rateable business premises; self publishing (despite winning awards for some of these); having a state pension etc etc'; 'No I'm not. I feel like we need an island specific funding body, though, because of the situation I described in my answer to question 42. People don't understand our needs and think we're out in the sticks or something!'

Some of the respondents had actually supplied answers to **Question 44 Have you applied for support and has this enabled you to operate during these challenging times?** in the previous question. Some respondents had applied and received support, but 74 of the 124 respondents, a clear majority responded that they had neither applied for nor received support. A number of different funds were applied for: 'Yes, I applied for the SEISS grant and that kept me going until I was able to start working again'; 'Yes Creative Scotland - Sustaining Creative Development Fund'; 'Yes, I received two grants. One from the Corra Foundation back in November and one from our local council. Without the latter, my

business would have had to shut down completely in April this year'; 'Yes for our groups, running costs of premises, and volunteer operations with some considerable success'; 'No - as a fledgling business I didn't tick the box'; 'No. Nothing was advertised locally'; 'Yes I have had support and it kept the rent and wages paid. I repaid the government loan though as I could not see enough of a recovery in the coming years to repay the debt'; 'During the third lockdown I was able to access some funding from the small business support scheme'; 'I was unable to receive support through this scheme as 50% income or greater was necessary through self-employed creative practices, and I was gaining 40% this way.'

Question 45 Is there any other COVID recovery support that you would like to see in place tailored to island contexts? received one of the least number of responses. This is unsurprising as it required respondents to come up with potential solutions to a difficult question. Nonetheless, despite a number of respondents stating they did not know or that they were unsure, there were some valuable thoughts about what support could help recovery, many, although not all, involving financial support in one form or other. Interestingly two respondents mentioned the negative impact of campervans: 'I'd like to see financial assistance given to those who are unable to take advantage of mainland opportunities (trade fairs/craft fairs etc) because of ferries being totally booked'; 'Assistance with travel costs. The cost, say, of travelling by ferry has increased astronomically this year'; 'Supporting opportunities to take on part time or virtual support - website, marketing, pick and pack for you orders'; 'Yes- Support for building a studio. Without dedicated space to work progress will always be hugely stunted'; 'Studio/making/exhibiting spaces that can adapt'; 'Think a register of what people can offer each other, might be helpful. We have had four funded projects on the go'; 'A tool library and available workshops would be great'; 'Travel and R&D costs to develop new projects and test marketing'; 'As Island communities have been in the lowest levels of restriction for some time perhaps it could be that they are the first to enjoy live music performances? Audiences will need time to adjust to attending such events again therefore these events may well need to be subsidised. It would however give musicians the much longed for opportunity to perform'; 'perhaps funded tutorials on how to make best use of zoom meetings/ better filmed performances/ vlogging/workshops on independent publishing/exhibiting opportunities still open'; 'More promotion of individual creatives on the islands, more open exhibition opportunities, workshop space(!)'; 'There is a massive opportunity for artists to work in our community to support recovery. Especially in building confidence and mental health'; 'Yes funding for social inclusion projects to reach those who remain isolated following the pandemic'; 'I want more recovery of communities than from covid. I think the housing and campervan situation is damaging and unsustainable. How will creative practitioners flourish on the island if they can't afford their homes?'; 'I'd like to see a camper van tax. invested in micro island economic growth. Like a micro bank or incubator funded by camper vans'; 'Initiatives that will encourage communities to engage fully with art: visiting galleries, discount schemes to buy original art; public commissions to produce art with / for communities; initiatives to give confidence to people to once again attend large public gatherings.'

Turning from Coronavirus recovery support to the challenge of Brexit, there was a greater response to **Question 46 How has Brexit impacted on your professional activities?** Some respondents had not seen much impact, such as the respondent who supplied hand made goods to local shops. However, the overwhelming response was that Brexit had had a detrimental impact on the life and business of creative practitioners: 'It now feels like it is unnecessarily complicated to ship works to EU'; 'has had negative effects in terms of added bureaucracy and added costs, both of time and money, for things like shipping'; 'I think there is a potential loss in funding around Gaelic arts (as a minority language). I was aware of wonderful residency projects between countries which I imagine we will now no longer be eligible to apply for'; 'It has indirectly as goods have been delayed in shipment to my suppliers, also an increase in price due to custom tariffs from Europe'; 'I have to fill in customs paperwork now when sending things to Europe'; 'HELL YES. I've had to stop taking orders from the EU because of the paperwork, material prices have gone up and the brute triumphalism of the brexiteers is anti-art and anti-culture'; 'I'm now going to have to pay someone to help me figure out all the issues in selling our books and online shop items worldwide. Also, storytellers and festivals expect more difficulties and fewer opportunities in collaborations with other countries'; 'Increased building material costs. Difficulty ordering goods from mainland Europe'; 'Yes, destroyed my ability to play in Europe, but that has changed also as I now have an Irish passport'; 'Thinking back to key events such as inter-island literary conference on Isle d'Ouessant, regular participation festivals in France and Czech Republic, plans to revisit collaboration with German composer - all gone due to increased costs, and administration'; 'Brexit has extinguished a number of opportunities for artists to travel, work, study and collaborate with our European neighbours.'

The third great challenge for creative practitioners, and islanders more generally, is the existential threat of climate change. This is clearly exercising the minds of many of the practitioners. **Question 47** asked **What does climate change mean for your practice?** There were a few who did not feel climate change would affect their practice, for example a weaver in the Outer Hebrides. A creative writer also based in the Outer Hebrides felt that their art was not directly affected but the effects on the environment and the community would hurt their art: 'Saoilidh mi nach ann mun ealan agam-sa a tha e; bidh buaidh fada nas motha air a' choimhearsnachd agus air an àite seo, agus cronaichidh sin mo chuid ealain.' However, most respondents, even if their work was directly impacted, were worried about the impact in one way or another: 'Everything. No island, no community, no culture. It's as simple as that. With more erratic weather and rising sea levels, we are facing a crisis. Rural communities will suffer before urban ones'; 'A lot. My creative practice is currently focused on this subject, how could it not be being an islander'; 'In works like 'The Dark Stuff', an exploration of peat, it has given me a subject to write about! (Peculiarly I obtain a lot of enquiries about that particular subject from Netherlands and Ireland!); 'It makes me think about the techniques I use and sustainable/waste'; 'everything. I mainly use by products so recyle and repurpose. I have removed all plastic from my products and research to ensure I do not include in it future projects. My products are natural and biodegradable'; 'Coastal erosion will be a factor for desirable ocean front properties'; 'I'm very conscious of it and I'm flying less, whether I resume this to the same extent post-covid is a big question for me'; 'It forms a cornerstone

of my practice, however; it is also a concern as someone involved in crofting and for the future of the islands in general'; 'I'd look at that the other way round, noting in particular the brilliant work at Taigh Chearsabhagh, which was the cover illustration for the first issue of Art North. So art affects my perception of climate change'; 'Raising awareness of environmental issues'; 'Living on an Island we are much more aware and sensitive to our changing weather patterns. this is not overtly impacting on my work but I am increasingly aware that it effects my working conditions and studio space. Hard to work when you are constantly battered by the wind and your artwork gets mould from the high humidity!'; 'Now reluctant to take on any work which requires air-travel or other non efficient energy means. Have found Scottish bus system works well but ferries under great pressure and UK train system in poor state and expensive - these have meant more dependence on the magic www. Also less use of paper - all editing now done digitally.'

Again, some of the respondents had provided answers in the previous question to **Question 48 What consideration have you given to mitigating climate change or achieving 'net zero' in your practice?** Some practitioners had not considered how to minimise their footprint in their practice, or could not for one reason or another, but many had taken steps like planting trees on their croft, recycling and minimising their travel: 'Some, I have looked at using alternatives to plastic and by-products of petrochemical industry for packaging and materials. Stay local, wear a jumper, work in spaces with good daylight'; 'We do all we can to minimise waste and any non-essential travel. There isn't a whole lot we can do other than this as we are a small, mobile business'; 'Would love to, can't afford building adaptations or renewables'; 'island cars are a big user of diesel and petrol, and people only buy old ones. Likelihood of getting an electric car on our island is very remote and how would we charge it? The building is a council building, run by oil that is brought in by ferry in a bowser. It would be a huge overhaul to change that. Waste is a big issue. We recycle but our waste has to go out in a skip or be burnt. Some crofters are very efficient, powering their home heating system from a furnace of waste plus solar power. Peat of course is always going to be a stumbling block for crofters. There's a creative skill if ever we saw one'; 'I do as much as I can paperless. I walk to places. I have reduced my car usage but its not possible to get rid of it as it is still essential to have a car where I live'; 'I have switched where possible to local or natural sourcing for materials but for textile things, I have my own sheep now'; 'I renovated a shed rather than building on green ground. I used recycled materials as far as possible for the shed. We plant 1,000 trees a year on our croft. I source some of my raw materials locally'; 'I like to think my practice has always been working efficiently. I use natural fibres and dyes and use environmentally friendly packing'; 'We designed our gallery space to be part of our new build which is a highly insulated, nearly airtight construction heated by an air source heat pump. We continue to do everything we can to minimise our carbon footprint but this is a general activity rather than one related to our creative practice'; 'I always consider environmental impact in all my activities but would like to see more interest in wider impacts such as social and economic considerations within practice.'

To reiterate, this online survey was developed to inform, among other initiatives, the UK and Scottish Government Islands Growth Deal Programme's 'Creative Islands Wellbeing' Proposal, so it seemed pertinent to ask the respondents for their opinion about what

three things would have the most impact on their practice, which of course would impact on their wellbeing. This is in many ways the key information about the needs of practitioners. Indeed, its conclusions could feed directly into policy. The question was not posed positively or negatively. **Question 49 Could you summarise the 3 things that would impact on your future ambitions as an island arts/creative practitioner?:** 'Studio Space...More investment in suitable premises comes tops'; 'Investment in People'; 'Better strategic planning, More investment in suitable premises. More emphasis on creative learning within schools'; 'Connections'; 'Maintaining a customer base, being able to source my raw materials and being able to export to the rest of the world'; 'I would love a "Craft Business Counsellor" - someone to get business/ craft advice from and to discuss ideas'; 'Grants for artists to practice. I would like to see student accommodation provided to attract students to the island. Better workshop provision'; 'Research travel grants for indie designers/publishers'; 'An up to date information network - advertised widely- of residency, funding , collaboration and networking opportunities'; 'more artist-run facilities'; 'glèidheadh cànan, glèidheadh coimhearsnachd, soirbheachadh fàs sluaigh'; 'Stronger inclusive cross-arts support network within own island, with further sharing of experience, networking and mentoring'; 'better print studio'; 'funding, a recognition of the value of the arts'; 'Easier travel to these remote places'; 'A free movement agreement for musicians across Europe'; 'There are some great young people here and we need to give them the opportunity and encouragement to stay on the Islands and flourish'; 'Ferry subsidies'; 'A sense that I was a part of something that was making a difference to island life'; 'Developing the island's attitudes towards diversity, ableness, LGBTQ, and race'; 'Recognition that there is local talent - sometimes the big name isn't on the mainland, they're on the doorstep'; 'More support for Gaelic Arts (by this, I don't mean from the funding bodies, I mean by the local Arts Centres in the Outer Hebrides). Encouragement of workshops and suchlike in communities, in villages all over the islands, rather than being focused on the main towns. Recognition that there is local talent - sometimes the big name isn't on the mainland, they're on the doorstep'; '1. A purpose built centre, with workshops and shops for people to visit. A crafting community centre that would offer support, creativity, inspiration and a sense of belonging. 2. Financial support to promote, advertise, train and educate creativity. 3. A showcase for environmentally friendly practices, working hand in hand with our stunningly beautiful environment (for the bees, of course!); 'Creating and building my art studio/space on my croft. Staying inspired and learning through visiting artists/courses/classes. Eventually taking part in residencies off island too or on other islands.'

Reflective Overview

This survey was commissioned to add to our understanding of the nature of the creative industries and the work of the creative practitioner in the Islands. Clearly a small survey which was live for only 20 days can only provide indicative information as to the scale of the creative industries in the Islands. However, it can be regarded as a representative sample, both across the three island groups and across a full range of creative activities, with the caveat that Shetland seems to have been underrepresented. 138 replies in a short period indicates a clear appetite on the part of creative practitioners to participate. They were a highly articulate and well-educated cohort, who were very keen to answer

and make their opinions known. The report contains a representative, but by no means complete, collection of responses. There was a clear loyalty to their island homes and their local communities. This is not an economic impact study. However, there was valuable data generated about the impact of, and the scale of, the creative industries in the islands.

Section I which focussed on Island Life showed that creative practitioners based in the Islands were there by choice, and the majority identified themselves as islanders, despite only a minority actually being autochthonous. However, a couple voiced tensions between incomers and the existing community. The local culture and languages were clearly important and featured in the practice of many respondents. As for the positives of living in the Islands, the community, the environment, and cultural heritage were all noted. The negatives included poor digital connectivity, increased costs, lack of facilities and distance from the mainland.

The findings in **Section II** explored the experience of being a creative practitioner in the Islands. The majority of respondents felt that there were differences between being a practitioner in the Islands as opposed to being based on the mainland. There was a feeling that the island-based creative responded more to the island sense of 'place', and they believed the island-based creative had to be more innovative and resilient. For the majority, the sense of 'wellbeing' evoked by the landscape and the slower pace of life was an important factor in their being based in the Islands. However, the majority also felt that there was a serious problem with a lack of suitable living accommodation and a lack of suitable workspace. In addition, the majority of the respondents felt that they had no voice to influence change, which presumably accounts for their avidness to complete this survey. There was a clear pride in their contribution to a vibrant society in the Islands – generating creativity, economic and cultural vitality, and expanding horizons.

In **Section III** more detail was sought about the number of, the working conditions of, and the income of creative practitioners in the Islands. The range of activities was impressive and included design, fine art, music, creative writing, theatre, participatory arts, the moving image, ceramics, weaving, knitting, jewellery, candle making, architecture, fly tying, and dance. The cohort was highly educated with most of the respondents having undertaken Higher Education, including Art School. However, the majority were not employed full-time in their respective creative practices, with most undertaking additional employment, often unrelated to their practice, to make ends meet. Only a small minority were earning the national average wage or above from their practice e.g. an architect. Over 50% made less than £10000 annually from their practice. Clearly making a sustainable income from their practice is a challenge for the majority. Other challenges included long working hours, lack of suitable workspace, and the problem of balancing work with care responsibilities. The majority were also operating as sole traders and generated income in a variety of ways e.g. from selling products, running workshops and commissions. A wide range of different means were being used to market or promote their work, but it appears a sizeable minority did not use social media. However, despite this, the majority were using the internet and reaching the national or international community, although Brexit was having an impact. The majority of respondents seemed to be working from home and there was a clear desire for better and more suitable

working spaces – studios, workshops, showrooms and creative hubs. The case for improved digital connectivity was made. There was an awareness of the RFOs but many did not make use of their resources. There was a feeling expressed that more support could be offered by the RFOs to early stage and developing creative practitioners, and it was also expressed that there was a need for more spaces for creative practitioners to exhibit their work. The respondents were ambitious, both creatively and professionally, about 50% being happy with the current support being offered to help meet these ambitions. However, many stated that there was also a clear need for further support and resources to help meet their ambitions. Suggestions included more financial support, easier access to funding and more marketing support, better working premises and studio / exhibition spaces, and a reorganization of local arts organizations. Despite residencies not featuring, and further educational opportunities only being mentioned once in respondents' answers, when asked if these would help them, the responses were positive. Despite the majority not having been involved previously in residency or exchange programmes, the majority did feel that these could be beneficial. Further educational opportunities, both graduate programmes and CPD opportunities, were also looked upon favourably by about half of the cohort. The majority of respondents had links with other creative practitioners, but these links tended to be informal and often of a tenuous nature. Stronger, more formal links could help build an artistic body with more collective clout.

Covid 19 and Brexit have added further challenges to the creative practitioner, and climate change is a current and future worry. **Section IV** focussed on how these have impacted on the respondents. The pandemic has had a severe impact with many of the respondents being unable to practise or to access support. To aid recovery post-pandemic many reiterated the need for more financial and marketing assistance, and better workshop and studio spaces. Brexit has had a major impact on those who have previously marketed or performed within the EU. However, the overwhelming response was that it had had a detrimental effect on their lives. The existential threat of climate change exercised the minds of many of the respondents, and many had taken steps to try and mitigate their own carbon-footprint.

Creative practitioners have taken the opportunity in this survey to make their voices heard and their opinions known. From their contributions it is clear that there are a number of key issues which resurface throughout the survey. These can be summarised as more focussed support, financial, marketing and educational, to meet the actual needs of the island-based practitioner facing the challenge of making a living on the island. These could include funding for initiatives like residencies, exchanges and support for travel costs, and a fund to support research and innovation by island-based creative practitioners. Build better, more suitable physical infrastructure, studios and workshops, again to meet islander needs. Finally, respect and listen to the creative practitioners themselves.

Appendix 1 Media Release

The University of the Highlands and Islands centre for island creativity wants to hear from creative businesses, practitioners and professionals in Shetland, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides as part of research into the economic and social impact of the islands' creative sector.

Open until midnight Monday 19 July, a survey for those involved in any aspect of the creative arts and industries, from emerging graduates to established practitioners, is aimed at not only those currently based in the Islands but also those with an interest in relocating or returning to the islands to live and work. Collecting responses is key to building a clear picture of what the professional and practical support needs of the sector are.

The findings will influence the development of the Islands Growth Deal's 'Creative Islands Wellbeing Programme', which aims to establish new island-specific networks of creative practice hubs and wellbeing innovation, and which is being supported by c£6m investment from Scottish and UK Governments. Professor Keith McIntyre, interim director at the university's centre which is leading the survey on behalf of the Islands Deal partners said:

"Our islands are a source of inspiration for artists, designers, filmmakers and creative businesses working in so many sectors. And it is of real importance to the development of the programme that we focus on identifying and understanding local opportunities and community priorities.

"We want to create a foundation that not only retains our talented thinkers, manufacturers, producers and creators, it also attracts imaginative entrepreneurial talent and new businesses into our Islands creative economy and beyond.

"So, if you are a designer in fashion, graphics or products or are working in TV, film, animation, games design or an artist working in Shetland, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides, please take a little time to take part in the survey. By contributing you will help to provide us with the much-needed data to inform how best we invest in our future resources to grow our creative economy sustainably."

Cllr Roddie Mackay, Leader of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, speaking on behalf of the local authority partners in the Islands Growth Deal, said:

"The proposals for investing in the creative industries sector through the Growth Deal recognises the already strong reputation of Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides as creative centres of excellence, inspired by the natural environment and rich culture of the islands, along with real opportunities we have for further growth. The responses to the survey will be critical to helping us find out more about the growth aspirations of creative practitioners and the support they need to achieve these ambitions".

To take part in the survey visit <https://uhi.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/pan-island-survey-of-the-creative-economy-in-shetland-ork-2>. Closes midnight on 19 July 2021.

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For more information, contact communications@uhi.ac.uk Twitter @UHIPressOffice
Notes to editors

1. The Islands Deal is a partnership between the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council, Shetland Islands Council, Scottish and UK governments and the academic and business sectors that aims to harness the Islands unique assets and strengthen the distinct and important contribution they make to the economic vitality and international reputation of Scotland and the United Kingdom. For more information visit www.cne-siar.gov.uk/your-council/our-islands-our-future/islands-growth-deal or contact Islands Deal Programme Director Anne Murray at amurray@cne-siar.gov.uk
2. The Creative Islands and Wellbeing partners are the University of the Highlands and Islands, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, leading on behalf of the three councils.
3. Images - Islands Deal logo - (click to download | cliog airson luchdadh a-nuas)

Appendix 2 Survey Questions

1. I confirm that I have read the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
3. In which island community do you live?
4. How long have you lived in your island community?
5. Would you describe yourself as an islander?
6. What does 'being an islander' mean to you?
7. Is language involved in your practice? If so, which language and how?
8. What are the positives of living and working on a Scottish island?
9. What are the negatives of living and working on a Scottish island?
10. Do you think there are differences between island based creative practitioners and mainland equivalents? If so, how would you describe these?
11. Is 'Wellbeing' a factor in your choice to live an island life? If so, can you explain why?
12. Is there enough suitable living accommodation to support emerging creative practitioners living on the islands?
13. Do you feel that you have a voice in influencing change?
14. What contribution do creative practitioners make to island life?
15. What area of the creative industries do you specialise in? (please tick all that apply)
16. Do you hold an Arts School or University Qualification and does this relate to your creative practice?
17. In addition to your work as a creative practitioner, do you currently work elsewhere? If so, can you tell us about your other work?
18. What type of studio or production base do you have?

19. What kind of studio or production base would enable you to achieve your creative and professional ambitions?

20. Is good digital connectivity to your home or work base important to how you operate?

21. Our island communities are supported by a number of Creative Scotland Regularly Funded Organisations (RFO's). An Lantair, Stornoway; Taigh Chearsabhagh, North Uist; Pier Arts Centre, Stromness; Shetland Arts Development Agency. Do you regularly visit or use the current resources and opportunities available to you?

22. What additional facilities or activities would you like to access through the RFO's?

23. Are there enough outlets and opportunities in the islands for you to share or promote your work?

24. Do you have strong links with other creative practitioners? Are you part of an arts group or creative industries network?

25. Creative Islanders often have a number of skills and can be highly innovative. Are there any novel cross or transdisciplinary areas that benefit from your skills? Or are there areas that would benefit from your skills given suitable investment?

26. Can you signal your annual income from your practice (optional)

Up to £10K £10 – £25K £25K - £50K £50K +

27. Do you operate as a sole trader or in a small / large business partnership?

28. How do you generate income from your creative practice? For example - selling products, commissioning, delivering workshops, facilitating community projects.

29. Can you describe how you market or promote your work or creative practice to the public?

30. Do you present, sell or export your work nationally or internationally?

31. Do you market your work through the internet via your own website or social media etc?

32. What are your creative and professional ambitions?

33. In your community, do current support and resources meet your creative business requirements?

34. What additional support or resources (including built infrastructure) would enable you to achieve your ambitions?
35. Are there any key challenges, professional or in everyday life, that hold you back from your professional ambitions?
36. If you do have challenges, are there solutions which might address them?
37. Have you ever participated in a residency or exchange programme?
38. How might an Islands focused residency and/or exchange programme benefit our island communities?
39. Do you think post graduate programmes (i.e. MA, MRes or PhD) in creative practice subjects tailored to island delivery contexts would interest you?
40. Are there any CPD or training programmes that you would like to see on offer to assist in your career or professional development?
41. Do you know about 'Knowledge Exchange' opportunities available through universities?
42. What effect has the COVID Pandemic had on your creative and professional practice?
43. Are you aware of the various schemes to support freelance creative professionals ie. the Creative Scotland Bridging Bursary Fund?
44. Have you applied for support and has this enabled you to operate during these challenging times?
45. Is there any other COVID recovery support that you would like to see in place tailored to island contexts?
46. How has Brexit impacted on your professional activities?
47. What does climate change mean for your practice?
48. What consideration have you given to mitigating climate change or achieving 'net zero' in your practice?
49. Could you summarise the 3 things that would impact on your future ambitions as an island arts/creative practitioner