

# APPG for CRAFT

## All-Party Parliamentary Group for Craft

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 24th June 2025, 5pm–6.30pm

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### Attending in person:

Tony Butler OBE	Derby Museums
Judith Cobham-Lowe OBE	WC Goldsmiths
Earl of Clancarty	House of Lords
Lord Freyberg	House of Lords
Baroness Garden	House of Lords
Sir John Hayes MP CBE	Chair
Nicholas Hughes	Artworkers' Guild
Emma Jhita	ICON
Dr Stephen Knott	Crafts Study Centre
Patricia Lovett MBE	APPG Secretariat
Natalie Melton	Crafts Council
Michael Osbaldeston	City and Guilds
Wendy Shorter-Blake	WC Upholders & AMUSF
Margaret Walker	Craft Consultant

### and on Zoom:

Greta Bertram	Crafts Study Centre
Daniel Carpenter	Heritage Crafts
Susan Coles	Arts Consultant
Dr Kelly Cordes	Independent Researcher
Dr Harriet Deacon	UNESCO Consultant
Nicola Duncan-Finn	CITB
Ekta Kaul	Inner Thread Soc
Dr Alex Langlands	Swansea University
Bethan Lewis	St Fagan's Museum
Daahir Mohamed	Lime Plasterer
Ann Packard	RSA MCICH Network
Geraldine Poore	Basketmakers Association
Kerstin Rice	1720 (Germany)
Dr Innan Sasaki	University of Warwick
Kibby Schaefer	Historic Building Conservation
Rose Sinclair MBE	Uni of Goldsmiths
Catherine Spink	Neon Creations Ltd
Melissa Strauss	NLHF
Dr Rebecca Struthers	Watchmaker
Ann Whittall	National Wool Museum

*Apologies for absence:* Charlotte Cane MP, Gil Dye, James Grierson, Lisa Hammond MBE, Lewis Heath, Carole Milner MBE, David Mortlock, Paul Playford, Baroness Warwick, Nikkan Woodhouse.

1. *Welcome:* Sir John Hayes was delayed and the Earl of Clancarty took the Chair, and welcomed the group.

On behalf of the APPG for Craft, Patricia Lovett thanked Baroness Warwick for arranging a meeting with Baroness Twycross, Heritage Minister, at which the Earl of Clancarty and Lord Freyberg also attended, reporting afterwards that it was a very positive meeting. She also thanked the Members of the House of Lords who spoke at the recent debate on Craft and Government Support: Baroness Garden, the Earl of Clancarty, Lord Freyberg, Lord Lingfield, Lord Parkinson and Baroness Warwick.

Kate Dewmartin of Craft Courses was also thanked as she had very kindly uploaded all the minutes and details of speakers to the APPG for Craft website, and it is hoped she will also re-design and add photographs to make it a much more pleasurable experience to visit.

2. **Tony Butler:** *Derby Museums*

Tony began by explaining that Derby Museums, which included the Museum of Making, focused on making heritage, with creativity and activity at its

heart, and employees include those with practical skills that they are able to pass on. A workshop was created first emphasising the importance of making, activities for visitors, and passing on skills. They run a 'Give Get' scheme whereby makers can use museum equipment in return for helping the Museum and visitors in making and skills. STEAM rather than STEM is the key. Industry partners are crucial and include Smith of Derby, clock repairers, who are training apprentices, and Vaillant Boilers where apprentices are learning traditional skills but applying them to contemporary methods, including air source heat pumps. Once a year they focus on running craft courses related to the exhibits, such as a tinsmithing course, and jewellery-making based on the stained glass collection. Heritage Crafts had their 2024 conference at the Museum at which Lord Parkinson, then Heritage Minister spoke. According to their Impact Survey the Museum has had an impact on the community by creating 40 new jobs and 100 new jobs in local businesses. Every £1 invested reaps £6 of benefit, and they truly believe in a head, hand and heart approach.

**Points raised:**

- The Impact Report sounds very good indeed and should be a blueprint for other Museums and similar organisations.
- Unfortunately the Impact Report had little impact on public funding but it did help to get employers onboard.
- It really is redefining the role of the museum in the best possible way in this new era of government-backed living heritage.

**3. Bethan Lewis:** *Amgueddfa Cymru*

Bethan focused on St Fagan's and explained that it is a museum of ordinary people. They employ 4 permanent craftspeople on site including a blacksmith, weaver and a clog maker, who have apprentices. Crafts form the basis of the activities offered. In 2012 they received the largest Nation Lottery Heritage Grant in Wales which meant that the site could be redeveloped, and so it was back to basics. A new space was built – Gweithdy – which means workshop – which created not only a workshop within the workshop but also gallery spaces with interactive areas and drop-in facilities. The strange shape of the building is as a result of limitations of the site. Over 500 items are on display including textiles, wood, clay, metal and stone, with stories that span 250,000 years, and include soundscapes of makers at their craft; objects are not arranged chronologically but such that visitors can dip in and out.

**Ann Whittall:** *National Wool Museum*

The National Wool Museum is the story of wool in Wales. Wool was a crucial part of the economy for centuries and there were many woollen mills in the country, including 23 alone in the village of the Museum. Ann explained that the aim of the Museum is to preserve the skills for the future but that these must also remain relevant to contemporary practice. The last woollen mill in Wales closed and was taken over by the Museum employing some of the

workers; in 2019 it took on two new craftspeople. Daniel Harris of London Cloth visited to advise and when there actually bought a mill in the next village. When the mill on site closed, which made flannel and other cloth, the Museum was able to take over the machinery. The weaving shed is not just a Museum but it involves the wider community, and in doing so emphasises the importance of craft to the visitor experience. The ambition is to continue to weave wool in Wales and to inspire the next generation.

- Time was limited so there was no time for questions or points to raise.

#### 4. **Stephen Knott:** *The Crafts Study Centre*

Stephen explained that the Crafts Study Centre is a museum of modern craft of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries with over 9,000 objects. It started in 1970 as a charity and in 2004 moved in to a purpose-built museum. There is an online database, an exhibition space, and a research room on the top floor. Although it is a fully accredited museum it also is a study centre and that is the key to its identity. Students and curators are able to handle works and explore the archives; although there is an academic tone to it, it is not just sitting down with books, but the emphasis is the enjoyment of craft, and enriching craft practice by handling objects in the collection. The early makers in the collection often had a holistic view of craft, building their own studios and workshops and taking on apprentices. Farnham was the first recognised Craft City in the UK; the Craft Study Centre works closely with the Farnham Craft Town Partnership, also creating collaboration with makers, visitors and academics. Last year the Lantern Festival at Hallowe'en was attended by over 1,000 people who made their own paper lanterns. A vibrant art and crafts scene keeps crafts alive.

- Time was limited so there was no time for questions or points to raise at the meeting but a previous point made in an email: how good are museums at using the specialist knowledge of volunteers when they have no experts among the staff?

#### 5. **Lord Freyberg:** *Update on the Craft meeting with the Heritage Minister, and the recent House of Lords Craft Debate*

Lord Freyberg explained that the meeting with Baroness Twycross arranged by Baroness Warwick and attended by the Earl of Clancarty and him was very positive. In the House of Lords Debate the Heritage Minister explained that her mentor in her youth was a potter, she also went on to stress that it was important to preserve heritage and encourage growth. Although crafts have an economic value, they go much further in terms of helping people to avoid or support them with mental health issues, developing hand-eye co-ordination, dealing with failure and so on. Lord Freyberg also raised the issue of the discrepancy between the 'Mapping Heritage Crafts' (2012) research showing a GVA of £4.4 billion, and over 210,000 working in the sector, and the

DCMS figures of £400 million and 7,000 given by Baroness Twycross in the Debate. This was, apparently, the figures only for 'jewellery and related articles'.

The Earl of Clancarty has already put down a written question on this. Discussion followed in which the Chair said that it seemed that DCMS did not really know what craft involved. The cross-department nature of craft also often resulted in what one department was doing in craft not being passed on to others.

Daniel Carpenter and Mary Lewis of Heritage Crafts were asked to a meeting with Baroness Twycross after the Debate and explained that there were more than 7,000 makers known just within the Red List of Endangered Crafts. The Heritage Minister was also unaware that no funding under the Trailblazer scheme goes to the maker, either to pay the apprentice, or to cover costs spent on training and not on making.

It was resolved that the Chair would write a letter to Baroness Twycross asking for a meeting in which, among others things, he would put forward that there should be a Cross-Department body for Craft. This was particularly urgent because of the upcoming Spending Review.

**Points raised:**

- Craft for sustaining our national heritage has an ongoing impact on tourism.
- The Apprenticeship+ pilot project by Heritage Crafts with the Hugo Burge Foundation shows how top-up funding for government-backed apprenticeships can make a crucial difference for small craft businesses.
- Creative Industries Sector Plan released 23.vi.2025 may be relevant. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/685943ddb328f1ba50f3cf15/industrial\\_strategy\\_creative\\_industries\\_sector\\_plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/685943ddb328f1ba50f3cf15/industrial_strategy_creative_industries_sector_plan.pdf)
- Funding in the HEI sector for research in practice-based craft/design in a heritage context is also important.

**5. Margaret Walker: *Creativity and AI***

Margaret distributed a handout (attached, apologies for the quality; my scanner decided to pack up!), explaining the ways in which the skills of makers when put online could be scraped by AI which would then create duplicates with a small difference, thus affecting the income of craftspeople.

**Points raised:**

- The DfE have already integrated AI into the school system:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/generative-artificial-intelligence-in-education/generative-artificial-intelligence-ai-in-education>
- This may also be relevant: Roundtable on ICH Inventorying, Intellectual Property and Artificial Intelligence, 3 June 2024
- The bright side of operating in the AI Revolution is that crafts are potentially amongst the most resilient/resistant to job substitution as a result of their embodied nature. So perhaps we can engage with less fear than other sub-sectors.

The meeting finished at 5.40pm.

## How did we get to AI in Creative work

How did craftsmen learn their skills

Watch, try, practice, improve

Apprentice → improver  
→ journeyman → Master

What did 'excellence' mean

Precious skills were guarded

Monitored by medieval Craft Guilds & Master Craftsmen.  
Apprentices made a Masterpiece

What is this thing about 'notes'

Early notes were recipes

Michelangelo kept notes but..... Masters kept notes on supplies & techniques.  
People made their own notes

Have you got a handout?  
  
Can we have them on-line?

I can keep going back to them

Tutors produced notes, often unpaid  
  
Easy to access, no need to store, on-line they are there forever

On-line courses developed

Do it in your own time

Colleges encouraged it pre Covid.  
Then it mushroomed

I think I'll make .....  
Can't be that hard

How would you know?

Find it on You Tube. Maybe good, maybe ok, maybe rubbish

I can copy the tutor's ideas

Make my own YouTube video or

If there's money in it, AI can mine it, scrape it, steal it, copy your work, re-draft it, sell it for less than you would and stop you earning any money for all your efforts