

APPG *for* CRAFT

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Craft

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 17th March 2021 at 10am on Zoom

Attending

Katy Bevan	Craft Specialist	James Grierson	ICON
Greta Bertram	Craft Study Centre	Lisa Hammond MBE	Adopt-a-Potter & Clay College
Lesley Butterworth	Craft Advocate	Sir John Hayes CBE	Chair
Steve Byrne	Traditional Arts	Steve Heap	Assn of Festival Organisers
Daniel Carpenter	Heritage Crafts Association	Sharon Hodgson MP	House of Commons
Jennifer Chen	Creative professional	Maria Herron	MP's Office
The Earl of Clancarty	House of Lords	Patricia Lovett MBE	Secretary
Judy Cobham-Lowe	Worshipful Co of Goldsmiths	Carole Milner	Former executive UK National Commission for UNESCO
Susan Coles	NSEAD / Art Educator	David Mortlock	Worshipful Co of Wheelwrights
Dr Kelly Cordes	Researcher	Michael Osbaldeston	City and Guilds
Prof Máiréad Nic Craith	Heriot-Watt University	Paul Playford	Allchurches Trust
Brian Crossley	Chair caner	Greg Rowland	Master Wheelwright
Dr Harriet Deacon	Coventry University	Judit Seymour	Consultant
Charlotte Diamond	Heritage Crafts Association	Wendy Shorter-Blake	WC of Upholders & AMUSF
Dr Ollie Douglas	MERL	Stephen Spark	SOCA News
Gillian Dye	Lace maker	Katy Spicer	English Folk Dance & Song Society
Sally Eley	Director, City & Guilds	Derek Stimpson	Worshipful Co of Gunsmiths
Eivind Falk	Norwegian Crafts Institute	Melissa Strauss	NLHF
Dr Chrissie Freeth	Tapestry Weaver	Anne Whittal	National Wool Museum
Baroness Garden	House of Lords	Robin Wood MBE	Woodturner and Toolmaker

1. *Welcome and Introductions:* Sir John Hayes welcomed the members of the APPG, and extended special thanks to guests joining for this meeting on Intangible Cultural Heritage and the UNESCO Convention.
2. *Apologies for absence:* Apologies for absence had been received by Dr Rebecca Struthers (Watchmaker) and Dr Julia Bennett (Crafts Council).
3. *Progress report regarding Intangible Cultural Heritage:* Sir John Hayes updated the APPG on his meeting with Secretary of State, Oliver Dowden, to discuss the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage. He assured the APPG members that Mr Dowden is sympathetic to the APPG recommendation that the UK ratify the UNESCO Charter. He outlined the positive outcomes of joining the convention, and summarised that it would send an important signal to the government of the significant role that craft plays in the local economy. Sir John Hayes confirmed that a follow-up meeting had been agreed.

4. *Why ratifying the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage will be an advantage:* Professor Máiréad Nic Craith, Heriot-Watt University

Máiréad began her presentation with a brief history of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and noted that the number of UNESCO member states is now 193, and the UK is one of only 13 not to have ratified this Convention.

She outlined the five domains recognised by the convention:

- Oral traditions and expressions
- Performing arts
- Social practices and ritual
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- Traditional craftsmanship

Máiréad noted that the considerable infrastructure needed for surveying and reporting on intangible cultural heritage as part of the UNESCO requirements could be an issue for governments. However, she felt that despite this, there are considerable benefits to ratifying including:

- Visibility for crafts on a national scale
- Encouraging a new generation to learn craft skills
- Supporting an environmental and sustainable community
- Bringing different communities together and celebrating diversity; a means of peacemaking
- Promoting well-being and good mental health

Sir John Hayes thanked Máiréad for her presentation and invited questions: points raised from James Grierson, Carole Milner and the Earl of Clancarty included:

- Reasons governments are reluctant to ratify the Convention included complications surrounding indigenous craft, lack of confidence in ICH and the creation of domestic ICH lists.
- A change in perception of ICH is required in order for it to be perceived as a sector worth developing on an international scale.

Patricia Lovett extended thanks to Máiréad, as well as Dr Harriet Deacon, and Daniel Carpenter for their contribution to the APPG briefing document.

5. *What effects ratifying the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage has had in Norway:* Eivind Falk, Norwegian Crafts Institute

Eivind explained the advantages of ratifying the UNESCO Convention, from the perspective of an established member state.

Focusing on the importance of grassroots organisation, he described the role of NGOs as 'cultural brokers' between the craft communities and state parties. He noted several positive outcomes from this relationship:

- A healthier balance between investment for tangible and intangible cultural heritage

- A lifted societal status for craftspeople
- A stronger craft education system
- A broader approach to living heritage
- Development of safeguarding methodology and outcomes
- Increased collaboration between NGOs
- Important and extended international collaboration

Sir John Hayes thanked Eivind and opened the discussion. Points raised included:

- That exchange of safeguarding methodology between NGOs and experts has resulted in positive outcomes, including dissemination of articles about safeguarding experiences.

6. *What difference ratifying the UNESCO Convention will have on heritage crafts in the UK:* Robin Wood MBE

Robin explained that ratifying the convention would instigate a change in perception of UK ICH. He noted that the UK has strong institutionalised support for architectural heritage, but noted that the safeguarding of UK ICH is left to market forces – resulting in the forced closure of many historical craft businesses, including the Whitechapel Bell Foundry.

Robin talked about the negative impacts that a lack of domestic safeguarding implementation has on ICH:

- There is a direct and negative effect on the numbers of young people taking up careers in the heritage crafts sector
- There is no mechanism in order to ensure adequate training and thus the safe transfer of a craft business from one sole trader to an apprentice
- Business failure is perceived as the effect of lack of interest from the public, rather than structural failure

He concluded by summarising the positive effects that could be expected should the UK ratify the UNESCO convention:

- Government would be committed to surveying ICH
- The most at-risk crafts would be identified
- Structures and safeguarding mechanisms would be implemented
- ICH practitioners would be recognised as a valuable resource

7. *Discussion on Intangible Cultural Heritage:*

John thanked the speakers and opened the discussion. Points raised included:

- The cognitive dissonance between the perceived value of architectural heritage and the intangible skills needed to preserve it (David Mortlock)
- The possibility of the renovation of the Palace of Westminster as a focus for the importance of apprenticeships for craft skills (Michael Osbaldeston)
- The vulnerability of embodied knowledge (Eivind Falk)

In closing, Patricia Lovett extended her thanks to the speakers and asked each

member of the APPG to write to their local MP to encourage government ratification of the UNESCO Convention, and requested signatures be sent on the agreed letter on ratifying the UNESCO Convention to the Secretary of State.

8. *AOB*: There was no *AOB*.