

# CRAFT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: AN INVESTIGATION

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## 1. Introduction

This study seeks to explore actual and potential connections between craft and sustainable development (hereafter SD). These connections have been explored by way of a two part investigation: (i) a conceptual exploration of connections, drawing on first principles, and (ii) an applied investigation, using Fife craft practice and practitioners as a specific geographical basis from which to explore the issues.

The outcome sought from this work is to improve the understanding of the ways in which contemporary craft is practiced in relation to emerging and significant agendas with respect to SD (linking the local, national and global scales). Attempting to establish this link has been difficult as a common vocabulary does not appear to exist between craft and SD practitioners. There is, however, significant common ground between the two areas, including but not limited to, community engagement, quality of life, a 'slow' movement approach to business and collective structures for economic activity. A porous boundary exists between the areas, but the exact nature of that boundary currently and the possible links in the future are not yet fully developed. This document seeks to further examine that boundary.

This document proceeds thus: (i) an introduction to craft is provided (thereby providing the context for understanding this area of practice), (ii) the scope of the debates surrounding SD is provided (thereby providing the framework within which linkages between craft and SD could be investigated), (iii) a survey of craft practice in Fife is presented (to establish the extent to which Fife is representative of craft in Scotland and to provide a specific context for the investigation), (iv) a discussion of the intersections between craft and SD is undertaken (drawing on the above sections), and (v) some concluding comments are made.

In addition, there are three appendices to this document. Appendix I provides more detailed data on the characteristics of craft practice in Scotland and Fife, Appendix II reproduces the questions that were asked in the survey. Finally, Appendix III provides a list of those individuals and organizations who participated in this study as well as resources for craft in Fife.

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## **2. Craft – a brief history and general introduction**

### ***2.1 Definition of craft/background***

‘Craft’ is usually taken to mean an object which has a high degree of hand-made input, but which is not necessarily made or designed using traditional materials. Craft is usually produced as a one-off or as part of a small batch, the design of which may or may not be culturally embedded in the country of production. Craft is also sold for profit. ‘Craft enterprises’ are those involved in the production of crafts on a part-time or full-time basis. Craft as discussed in this document does not include traditional or heritage crafts such as thatching, greenwood working or masonry.

Whether producing traditional or more contemporary work, the craft sector is now a significant sector in its own right with annual turnover in Scotland of approximately £150 million (see, McAuley and Fillis, 2007) and in England and Wales £450 million (see Oakley, 2006) and makes an important contribution to other areas of government policy including regional development, tourism and social policy. At a wider level, Scotland is politically and culturally committed to maintaining a competitive economy that allows Scottish craft to compete internationally. This sector, however, is facing increasing international competition from countries with lower cost bases. It is therefore clear that the sector’s competitive position will depend in the future on design and quality rather than price. In addition, should sourcing of materials or perceived ‘localness’ become part of a competitive position, Scotland will have a mix of opportunities and threats in this sector. There is, however, some doubt as to whether values will develop in this direction, and whether such values will translate into purchasing decisions.

It follows that these realities present the sector with the dual challenge of raising design and production standards. Addressing education, training and skills development is also an important part of the equation. However, a clear strategy of getting the product to market remains essential to maintain a competitive edge. The demonstrative, collective or collaborative approach being considered and executed by many organisations serves to reinforce future positioning for the sector and many exemplars exist of this approach (for example, the Open Studios Network and craftscotland).

### ***2.2 Craft – Potted history<sup>2</sup>***

Culture/craft is continually reinvented and reinvested in by practitioners who often look back to the trials and experiences their predecessors went through. Craft was once described as art with an inferiority complex. Historically, craft practitioners were mostly rural and lower working class while the members of the ‘new craft’ movements at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were middle and upper class. This dynamic resulted in the use of the term ‘arts and’ craft to differentiate the more traditional approach from the newer movement. The arts and craft movement was motivated by a desire to preserve the values represented by craftsmanship from being destroyed by an impersonal machine age (exponents include Ruskin, Morris, Pugin, Wilde, FL Wright, and Tiffany). Most of this generation never actually made anything: there was something not quite authentic about this movement as a result. The ethos behind this movement was to mass manufacture high quality but utilitarian craft products.

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<sup>2</sup> This material draws from Dormer (1997) and Pye (1968).

In contrast, 1918 saw the emergence of 'Studio Craft', which has several features. There was a move away from a multiple run to a small batch approach to production. In this tradition designing and making was by the same person/workshop and by definition this resulted in relatively costly products. The products tended to be more individualistic and there was a return to a 'hand made' feel in the work. The ceramicist Leach typifies this in "the whole man, heart, head and hand in balance" approach (which is linked to Geddes' philosophy). At the same time, this led to the questioning of making precious objects that didn't seem to serve the needs of the mass consumer. Craft was viewed as a romantic indulgence (which in part was correct) and from this impetus mass craft was born.

During the 1940s/WWII, and particularly in the US, mass craft's impact was felt. During this period, many people were interested in craft and making craft (and in this way craft became more egalitarian in nature). As a result, art education became popular, there was a growth in educational provision and academic interest in craft exploded in the colleges and universities. This trend continued up until about the mid 70's. On one hand this was good because it encouraged freedom of expression and a wider group of people were able to participate in craft (and art). Likewise, new materials and processes emerged during this time. At the same time, however, conflicts arose from this process. For example, there were tensions about whether practitioners or academics 'owned' craft.

An eruption then occurred on three levels:

1. a craft focus at a populist level occurred (resulted in more people buying craft and participating in creating products),
2. many craftshop / gallery or gallery hybrids (modelled on fine art and new collections and supported by affluent collectors) burst on the scene, and
3. the materials in use began to dictate how the product was termed or classified – for example, ceramic and wood suffered as they were still termed craft regardless of whether or not they were art (glass, metal and textile did not suffer from this as much).

In the late 60's in the UK, 'craft' attempted to escape from this dynamic and subsequently the movement became fragmented. Craft education provision shrank, no young makers were coming through and the galleries closed. Discussions about intellectual and commercial ownership of craft moved with the likes of the Scottish Crafts Centre becoming dominant. This organisation recognised the cultural value of craft but this value was defined by them (rather than a more inclusive approach involving consumers and makers). It could be argued that with this dominance came a bland corporate makeover. Although logical and well organised, presented and politically spun this 'corporate' approach was at odds with the values and approach of the majority of the artisan community. Some makers still feel this to be the case.

This approach also resulted in upward migration in the marketplace in order to reflect the costs of creating craft on a small batch manufacturing basis. The maker base became less able to economically sustain themselves through craft sales. At the same time, state subsidy for craft was introduced for the first time to allow craft to be produced that would not have been supported by the market on its own. It was assumed that in time the market would support this activity, but this has not happened to the extent envisaged. There was market failure in the sector did not attract a buying public that was large enough or prepared to pay a price that would support craft activity.

In summary, this brief history of craft has sought to describe some of the key aspects that affect the economic viability of the craft sector. Themes that emerge from this review include:

- Craft was an overlooked sector in terms of status (especially compared with art).
- The craft sector is cyclical and dynamic. Different approaches to craft and raising awareness of craft disciplines come and go in terms of fashion and taste (driven by the consumer but also shaped by government strategy).
- Craft has had long connections with political activism (be it based on class, environmental concerns or gender politics) with craft being at various times in the past an expression of these values.
- If there has been a consistent identity historically it would be based around place (based on resource available and hence its often rural location) and opposition to mass produced, low cost, standardised products to feed a consumption based society.

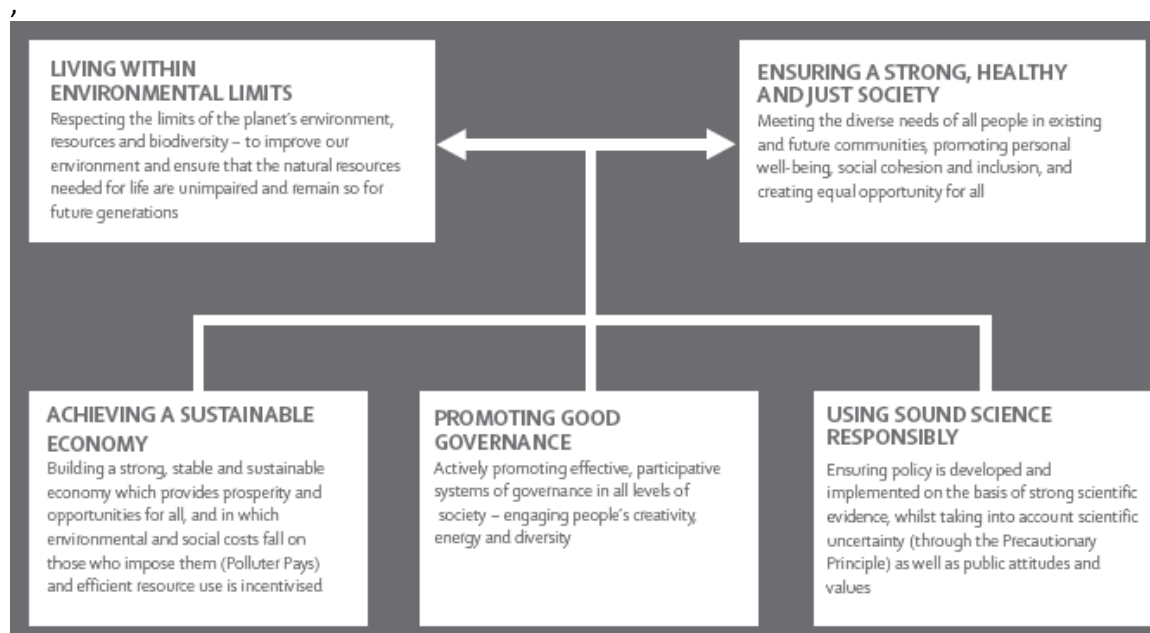
### **3. Sustainable Development – a conceptual introduction**

SD has its roots in the dual concerns of environmental integrity and the need to achieve equitable development outcomes for all humans alive today (and for future generations yet to come). While SD is a notoriously contested term, common aspects of concern emerge from its operationalisation, including:

- A concern to live in an ecologically sustainable manner, within the limits offered by eco-systems.
- A commitment to equity and a concern with socially just outcomes.
- A concern with futurity and the needs of future generations.
- A commitment to democratic and inclusive processes that allow all people to have a say in the nature of the futures they will experience.

Translation of these concerns into frameworks for decision making and evaluation have been developed, most pertinently for our purposes here, by successive UK Governments. Figure 1 provides an outline of the way the UK (and devolved Governments) conceptualise SD.

**Figure 1: The shared UK framework for SD (DEFRA, 2005).**



As is evident from the above, both ecological and social aspects feature as the two key outcomes that are sought from SD. Along the bottom of the figure, the three enablers for SD are described. While the need to achieve a sustainable economy is widely agreed, what form this economy could take is highly contested and uncertain. It is likely that externalities (from either an environmental or social perspective) will be internalized in prices in a sustainable economy. Likewise, the outcomes of such an economy will leave the ecology intact as well as being socially just. Promoting good governance covers a range of activities including (but not limited to): legal frameworks (both international and local); societal expectations (implicit in values and norms of behaviour, including consumerism); action plans/strategies and processes that are designed to address areas of activity (for example, cultural strategies); and processes that allow those affected by decisions to be part of those decisions. Finally, while using sound science responsibly can hardly be disagreed with, the way in which evidence could be gathered and used in policy making processes is not without its problems.

This analysis raises the possibility that SD is about everything, and in some ways it is. The point of differentiation between SD and non-SD, however, arises from the way SD holistically conceptualises the links between the various SD elements and also the end goal towards which SD is focused. For example, a concern with resource efficiency is a necessary but not sufficient step towards SD. For resource efficiency to be within a SD frame of reference, concern with absolute limits of environmental impact will also be a concern. Efficiency helps achieve a relatively lower environmental impact but may not achieve absolute reduction, and hence we linked to SD. This policy framework informs strongly subsequent analysis of the intersection between craft and SD.

The UK Government's framework for SD is replicated within Scotland within the SD Strategy for Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2005). The principles from this strategy are accepted as appropriate framing for SD in Scotland but also intersect with the Scottish Government's national performance framing (hereafter NPF). Under the NPF the Scottish Government's purpose is "to focus Government and public service on creating a more successful country

with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing economic growth” (Scottish Government, 2007a). High level targets associated with this purpose include those related to solidarity, cohesion and ecological sustainability and in this manner it can be concluded that the Scottish Government’s purpose and NPF are broadly consistent with SD (Sustainable Development Commission, 2008). In addition, a number of the Government’s strategic objectives are relevant to SD (see Table 1).

<b>Table 1: Scottish Government strategic objectives linked to SD</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.</li> <li>• We live long, healthier lives.</li> <li>• We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.</li> <li>• We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.</li> <li>• We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.</li> <li>• We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.</li> </ul>

In summary, while SD can be ‘defined’ in a relatively clear manner, the details of exactly what should be done, by whom, when and how are underspecified. In addition, the Scottish Government’s purpose and its NPF is broadly consistent with SD thinking. Moreover, the vocabulary used within the SD framework is not necessarily in common use among the population – it may be (as we shall see) that people are ‘talking’ about elements of SD but are not consciously and explicitly using SD vocabulary to shape their discourses.

Discourses involving culture and craft are now examined as a pre-requisite of examining the interlinkages between craft and SD. Before these connections are drawn out, however, the nature of the survey undertaken is described in more depth, along with initial conclusions from that survey.

#### **4. The survey**

##### ***4.1 Elements of the survey***

There are several elements that underpin this survey of craft in Scotland (and Fife), namely: (i) review of documents that address issues of craft/culture (see Table 2 for a summary of the most important and the reference list generally);<sup>3</sup> (ii) review of craft demographics for Scotland and Fife (with the aim of establishing if Fife could be considered representative of the wider sector – which it could); (iii) meeting with policy makers in the Scottish Government in order to test the ideas being developed and check if an interest in SD could be usefully translated to craft concerns; (iv) attending various craft meetings where the present status and future of craft were discussed; (v) interviews with institutional players for craft in Fife; and (vi) interviews with craft practitioners in Fife.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The review also looked at similar strategies and documents for England and Wales, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia.

<sup>4</sup> See also Appendix III for acknowledgements with regard to survey participants.

**Table 2: Summary of key documents**

Crafts Council, (2004). *Making it in the 21st Century*. Crafts Council.

Creative & Cultural Skills Industries (2008) *Creative Blueprint Scotland. The Sector Skills Agreement for the creative and cultural industries*

Fife Council Community Services (2009) *Fife Cultural Strategy Generations of Change*.

McAuley, A & Fillis, I (2007) *Crafts Businesses in Scotland A study for the Scottish Arts Council*, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise Glasgow

Scottish Arts Council, (2002) *Crafts Strategy 2002–2007*. Scottish Arts Council.

The Scottish Government, (2007b). *The Government Economic Strategy*. Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government, (2007c). *Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy*. Scottish Government.

#### **4.2 Scotland: the craft picture**

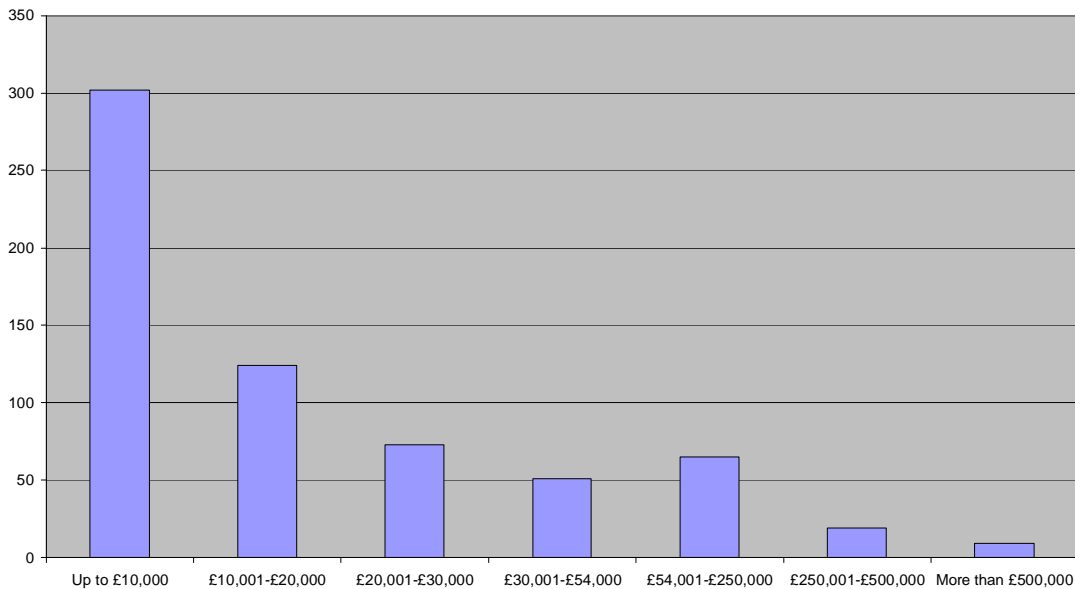
In the first instance, a survey of the various policy documents that related to craft in Scotland, the UK and further afield (see Table 2) highlighted that there is little explicit recognition of SD language and concepts within the industry. This may help explain why the SD vocabulary has not come through more strongly in the discussion that follows. It also suggests that there are opportunities for policy makers in this area to translate their generalized SD aspirations (as evident from the Government's NPF) into the language and concerns of the craft sector.

Table 3 outlines the broad characteristics of the craft sector in Scotland (drawing primarily from McAuley and Fillis, 2007). A variety of data is presented in Table 3, covering the demographics of the sector as well as its economic profile.

Mediums	Ceramics, textiles, wood and jewellery dominate total activity
Gender of craftspeople	Female 61%, Male 39%
Age of craftspeople	35% aged 45-54 years old
Employment pattern	77.6% of participants only work in craft
Business start up dates	11% began in last ten years, 50% in 90's, 23% in 80's
Business longevity	24.8% males and 12.6% females working for >20yrs in their craft
Previous occupation	68.6% had previous occupations before working in craft
Education	70% of makers have a further education qualification
Ethnicity and disability	2.1% other than white, 2% recorded disability
Methods of training	50.7% self taught, 34.7% arts schools, 21.4% learning on job
Turnover (but see Figure 2)	£44,000 p.a. (average)
Size of business	83% 1-2 person businesses
Business form	77.5% sole traders
Premises	68% from workspace at home
Growth aspirations	73% wish to grow
Market channels	64.9% commissions, direct from workshop 51.3%, trade fairs 43.7%
Promotion	65.6% via leaflets, 57.8% personal selling, 44.6% registers/directories

Of particular importance in the above table is the business turnover figure. As can be seen from Figure 2, the average annual turnover masks a highly unequal distribution of turnover. Significantly, these figures (in combination) suggest that for many craft makers in Scotland, turnover is not sufficient to sustain someone who has no other source of income support (either from other family members, additional personal income streams or via subsidy). This data would lead to the suggestion that the very small craft businesses are likely to lack the capacity to significantly leverage their impact either in turnover or employment terms. This would explain why individual craft enterprises are often perceived as not making much of an economic contribution within the enterprise landscape. Likewise, looking at averages also masks the existence of a small number of makers who become “instant internationals” (interviewee) and is something normally associated with leading edge, high-tech companies.

Figure 2: Average turnover of craft businesses in Scotland (source: SAC, 2002).



Using the above data, typically a person who works in the craft sector will normally work for themselves within a small organisation, may be in a close network of collaborators and associated practitioners. They will probably be working on several different things at the same time and many of these projects and products will be one-offs. Despite the small size of many craft organisations, group activity is still central in the craft sector. Networks, partnerships and collectives as a means of developing, delivering and ensuring businesses efficiency and profitably are important. Group activities would also appear core to develop makers and, therefore, the investment in the present and future making community is likely to be done in a collective or generic fashion (these observations are based on frequently made comments from the interviews).

Interviewees also thought of themselves as key players within their local community in terms of making a contribution to its social fabric (that is, making an artistic, cultural and aesthetic contribution). Some of these businesses also felt that they were making a contribution to local economic and community regeneration. At the same time, much of the work that contributes to building the profile of craft generally is undertaken by volunteers. These individuals and groups are also key contributors/ambassadors for the sector and making community.

In addition, some data exists with respect to who is the buying audience for indigenous craft (McAuley and Fillis, 2007). This audience makes up 6% of the overall population, with some regional variation. For example, in the Borders, Dumfries and Galloway and the Highlands and Islands participation rates rise to 11%. ABs were the social class most likely to have purchased craft product (with a penetration rate of 12%). Overall, about two in five Scots adults (39%) attended a contemporary crafts/arts event or exhibition in 2007 (more than in similar study in 2004). Of those attending events or exhibitions a larger proportion have a higher education (60%), are aged 35 to 44 (45%) and are in the AB social classes (63%). This data suggests that the sector contains considerable opportunities for business growth (both in terms of penetration of existing buyer markets and also in the development of new buyer markets) and also suggests that there are many individuals who have had exposure to craft but who have yet to make craft purchases.

In terms of demographics and spread of craft practice, Fife is broadly representative of the picture of Scotland (see Appendix I). The conclusions that can be drawn from the overall Scottish profile of craft are, therefore, applicable to Fife. Equally, it is likely that any conclusions drawn from the Fife based survey are likely to be applicable to Scotland as a whole.

### ***Survey data: the conversations in Fife***

Informal approaches were made with a loose script/questionnaire to a section of makers and institutions in Fife that were found using a snowball interview method, where initial interviewees recommended others for interview (see Appendix II for a list of the topics covered). In total 28 individual makers were interviewed including 18 people who had institutional roles in the sector. In addition, a meeting was held with Scottish Government representatives who focus on the creative/craft industry. When asking about SD many interviewees did not wholly understand the term nor was it easy for them to define it or say how it related to their activities. There were a lot of blank faces amongst the making community, but less so amongst the institutions. There was, however, a willingness to enter into a debate (from practitioners and institutions alike) in Fife.

### ***Concerns of makers and institutions***

Makers main concerns with respect to their businesses are the: (i) need for creative and professional skills development, (ii) availability low cost workshop space, or indeed any workshop space in Fife, (iii) availability of advice and funds for business development (with recognition of the usefulness of the Fife Contemporary Arts and Crafts) and (iv) a desire for reducing isolation through the use of more shows, gallery space, contact with public and other makers.

In general, makers felt they had no control over the supply or demand for craft with many makers living subsistence lifestyles (this latter point is consistent with sector statistics outlined earlier). In addition, there is a lack of a wholesale market for craft and a weak commercial market. Both of these markets are dominated by sale or return, which itself does not create a steady income stream for makers. Likewise, there is little sense of collectability of craft in the UK which reflects that fact that the public don't necessarily realise the exclusivity/rarity of the product nor the skill taken to produce it.

Finally, there is also pressure coming from central buyers of 'visitor attraction' retail outlets for high volume, low value product offering because this sort of product increases retail profits and also arises from/feeds into cultural expectations of craft being relatively affordable. The weak commercial sector is further compounded because of the dominance of subsidy in the sector in combination with a generally high level of risk aversion (see Appendix 3 for a full list of subsidies available). The craft sector is generally perceived to be conservative in its approach to developing new markets.

These pressures are being magnified in the current economic conditions where buyers are perceived to be shopping around more. Price sensibility exists at present for some craft, particularly clothing and furniture, and in general prices are suppressed with discounts being requested from the public. These pressures are also evident in the retail sector with many galleries expressing cash flow concerns

In addition, there is a lack of developed 'subscription' to craft from within markets and related sectors. For example, while the open studios events bring buyers and members of the public into contact with makers, an ongoing relationship is not fostered by the likes of widespread craft trails or workshop visitor information. Likewise, there are many spaces where craft could be displayed (beyond galleries) but is absent. For example, craft could be better promoted within community space (such as councils) and in touch point concessions. This approach, however, carries costs (in terms of having stock tied up in locations) and risks (of craft product being in relatively unattended positions).

### ***Current objectives for the craft sector: institutional responses***

Various ways of addressing the challenges identified above were offered by interviewees (and also can be found within relevant policy documents). Exposure to markets and greater market penetration was seen as the key to raising the income of makers and increasing the turnover of the sector as a whole. This would require a greater focus on design and marketing skills for the individual businesses, the cost of which would need to be recovered through greater income and product placement opportunity. Likewise, there is a need to create greater cross fertilization of existing successful business models, practices and organisations within the designer/makers, craft, heritage, arts and community sectors. At the same time customers/visitors could be made more materially aware about what they are buying and why the price of craft is at the level it is. All this needs to be underpinned by market structures that create more robust business models as well as educational programmes that allow for excellent craft practitioners to make products that are culturally appropriate and commercially viable. Taken together this may create a more resilient sector.

In summary, this section has sought to outline the current economic state of the craft sector in Scotland. The data supports the contention that the craft sector has structural issues to address with regard to economic viability which plays out in a variety of ways. The interviews undertaken for this project (focused on Fife) reinforce the picture drawn of the sector as a whole within Scotland and elements of the negative dynamic at play were reported by individuals in the sector. This material needs to be kept in mind when considering the links between craft and SD, and these are addressed in the next section.

## **5. Craft and SD**

There are two ways in which the links between craft and SD can be explored, namely: (i) the extent to which the craft sectors creates positive/negative impacts on the achievement of SD, and (ii) how SD thinking can be used to support and enhance the craft sector. Both of these areas are considered below.

Turning to the first point of comparison: how craft's impact play through a SD lens. From an ecological basis, only wood products (and to a lesser extent textiles) provide any direct link between craft and SD, depending on the sourcing behaviour of craft makers. These are also disciplines where sourcing and the ecological impact of the raw materials have self consciously featured in marketing and product design. This is not to say that all timber products, for example, will be from an ecologically sound provenance. For example, furniture made in Scotland from tropical hardwoods would not necessarily be sustainable, depending on the source of that product (a Forest Stewardship Council label would provide some reassurance). However, even if such a label were carried by timber, there is still the issue of the carbon impact from moving materials around the globe.

For some other craft disciplines, achieving ecological sustainability is harder. For example, the processes by which leather, ceramic and jewellery are manufactured often have 'heavy' environmental footprints. In addition, some of the resources for these crafts have to be transported long distances. The exception to this general rule would be where craft uses recycled raw materials in its production (indeed, there are some crafts that focus on this feature). In addition, there is also an argument that some craft products displace demand for more damaging material (while the impact will be highly dependent on production processes in each case).

At a more conceptual level there are, however, values inherent (but not always explicitly expressed) within craft practice that has resonance with SD. For example, for some makers nature is an inspiration for their work. For others social and/or environmental unsustainability may provide a political and/or creative motivation (this may, for example, emerge in the form of craftism/craft activism). Likewise, an understanding of how materials (glass, metals, textiles and wood, for example) respond to stimuli (heat, cold, pressure and moisture) may be so implicit that they are not labeled as being links to environmental understandings. Moreover, some craft practitioners may view themselves as part of rather than separate from nature. The connections, however, are there.

Connections between aspects of social sustainability and craft are more straightforward to identify. The practice of craft has much in common with some social sustainability aspirations. Unusually, craft in Scotland is dominated by home based production practices (see Table 3 – 70% of crafts people work from their home) which may create the conditions for socially connected and sustainable places (as well as reducing environmental impacts of travel). This pattern of working could reinforce local communities where people would otherwise commute to more distant work. At the same time, there may be an issue with regard to access to the sector and the possibility of 'social blocking'. For example, if only the privileged get access to craft skill development, and then don't develop organizations to a level where they can pass on skills once trained, then it is unlikely that access to craft for all social groups will exist. Indeed, the level of educational attainment in craft businesses suggests that craft practitioners are not drawn from a cross section of the population.

Perhaps the most promising link between craft and SD is the extent to which craft provides cultural connectivity. This connection can exist between the past and the current with regard to cultural practices such as textiles (through weaving and spinning), timber products and jewellery. Craft also creates a connection between human labour and skills and objects that we use. These aspects also rest on the intrinsic values sometimes associated with craft practice but which are relatively difficult to articulate because they are personally experienced. Co-location of craft workers together may also reinforce this sort of effect.

Looking in the opposite direction, craft could benefit in many ways from tapping into the values and behaviours that underlie SD and some of the movements that helped form the thinking behind SD. These movements include community ownership of resources, permaculture thinking, social justice movements, anarchism, counter culture values of the 1960s, more expressive educational systems and the environmental movement itself. Indeed, if we dig below the surface of craft and SD it is possible to locate a shared *raison d'être*. For example, craft's ethos leads us back through a long history of resistance to both the industrial revolution and the general tendency of technology and capitalism to replace the more genuine and authentic forms of hand made production. At the same time, craft is continual process and each generation of maker will have their own experiences and 'truths'

as it is their paths and work will lead the culture to new places and ultimately, new reasons for being and making.

In addition, if makers could identify their product with SD values (such as localness, environmental soundness and such like) they may gain new markets. At the same time, craft could be used as a recognisable and tactile medium through which the more esoteric values of SD could be more clearly seen. Craft also provides a way to satisfy the basic human need to connect with a benign material world and may reinforce identity, community based narratives as well as connections with landscapes and the natural environment.

These sorts of linkages are also found in SD writing that is seeking to explore how society will develop in the future. The language of 'transitions' and 'resilience' are often used in this context to sketch a possible remaking of our world that moves beyond the current dichotomies that are sometimes offered in discussion of the future. For example, one possible response to economic pressures is to increase output from craft such that it resembles current mass production. This approach, in our opinion, would be in direct conflict with SD and the values of craft practice as described in this document. The other end of the dichotomy could see a retreat to some idealised version of craft before the industrial revolution. As we have argued this would not be economically viable. It would appear, therefore, that some way to move beyond these two alternatives needs to be found. The motifs that one would expect in this yet to be fully imagined and realised alternative would include: green(er) modes of multiple or batch-run production, the use of new technology without compromising traditional values, creation of robust chains of supply that are sensitive to SD issues, professional development of makers to grasp the opportunities that may arise from the SD agenda, approaches to markets that infuse these values, and the creation of new expectations in the buyers about what 'value' means (be it cultural value or economic worth). Taken together this may create the conditions for an economically viable craft sector in a new economic and social order. This type of imagining would be a productive area of future work around the intersection of SD and craft.

Aspects of these potential connections are summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4: Linking craft and SD**

<p><b>Environmental Limits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable management of resources (carbon impacts, careful resource management, responsible procurement)</li> <li>• Environmental impacts of production &amp; consumption</li> <li>• Lifecycle effects of craft (and products that craft displaces)</li> <li>• Adding value to existing resources</li> <li>• Reusing existing materials</li> </ul>		<p><b>Healthy &amp; Just Society</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social responsibility in production</li> <li>• Cultural integrity (countering rootlessness of products &amp; consumption)</li> <li>• Valuing cultural aspects of place (&amp; localness)</li> <li>• Communities of makers/makers in their community</li> <li>• Access to craft practice (&amp; sustaining future craft makers)</li> <li>• Aesthetics (worth versus value)</li> <li>• Socially stimulating, reflective &amp; provocative</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainable Economies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Facilities for makers (workshops &amp; places to showcase/sell work)</li> <li>• Knowledge &amp; skills (developing &amp; sustaining &amp; new skills)</li> <li>• Co-operatives (for resilience)</li> <li>• Branding &amp; labelling (SD messaging in the product)</li> <li>• Creating an economically viable sector (not subsidised indefinitely)</li> <li>• Sustainable livelihoods (in sustainable communities)</li> <li>• Scale of activities (&amp; appropriateness)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective, transparent &amp; democratic governing bodies</li> <li>• Engaging craft makers with the future of their sector</li> <li>• Participatory structures for makers (with each other &amp; institutions)</li> <li>• Educating for SD &amp; craft skill development</li> <li>• Craft practitioners as agents of social change</li> </ul>	<p><b>Using Sound Science Responsibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of impact of craft sector</li> <li>• Education for SD informed craft practitioners</li> <li>• Professional development</li> <li>• Use design to communicate SD messages</li> <li>• Documenting and passing on skill knowledge</li> </ul>

## **6. Concluding comments**

Three concluding comments emerge from this work.

### ***Developing a shared vocabulary***

There is commonality between the concepts that underlie SD thinking as well as some of those that are implicit in craft practice and thinking. There is not, however, a shared language or vocabulary between the two areas. This language and/or vocabulary barrier can be overcome but would require time and effort as well as sensitive, mutually respectful interaction. Achieving this task is not within the remit of this document and indeed this task cannot be achieved by a document, it can only be achieved between people working together. Craft as a medium through which ideas about environment and sustainability can be communicated has huge potential (the converse is less the case). To link craft and SD in this manner would require imagination and academic/political/public support. Both areas are based on strong and coherent 'thought based' processes within their conceptualisation. Craft and SD share a common ground but presently exist on imagined islands.

In the heritage craft sector the link is more obvious than that between SD and contemporary craft. Heritage craft, with its focus on skills, technique, resource management, obvious environmental, social and cultural embodiment in a 'piece', links more easily with the preoccupations of SD. Heritage craft is also more demonstrative and culturally identifiable than contemporary craft.

### ***Structure and Money***

Craft must also be placed in the context of what 'counts' in contemporary society. Where cultural expectations of what constitutes a 'good' job focus on the use of one's intellect rather than hands/creativity/making then craft may suffer. Moreover, such an assumption privileges 'head' knowledge over other kinds of knowing and expressing. Craft is often taken as a vocational subject at school and not always considered a job for life or as a responsible 'calling'. This presently results in potentially good makers being lost from the craft sector.

This, in turn, leads to the issues of value added and where (economically) the craft sector sits. The statistics presented (which themselves have limitations) suggest a pattern of low individual income, income substitution through grant funding and under capitalised businesses. If this is the case, economic sustainability is a key challenge to the sector. While the craft sector is not a large identifiable economic sector from a national perspective, it may still have a contribution to make at a local level. In particular, locally appropriate, culturally connected craft practice may build social capital and boost local economies.

The perceived viability of craft is also conditioned by our perceptions of what a viable economy looks like. If our conceptions of economy change (perhaps along the lines of a focus on prosperity rather than growth, as it has been narrowly defined – see, for example, Jackson, 2009) then the existing approaches to craft may become more viable. This may arise because more people may be working on less than the traditional full time basis, buyers may be more interested in higher value purchases (while making less purchases) and an acceptance of 'slow' craft may become a shared cultural value.

Further, a great deal of group activity in the craft sector is supported by subsidy and the 'control' of craft still remains in the hands of the administrators. The Scottish Arts Council is one of the main financial contributors to professional development, venue support, matched

local authority funding, start-up assistance, centre of excellence support, loan schemes, and school residencies (all of which are elements of the subsidy regime). The total Scottish craft budget for 2009/2010 is £740,000.

The transition to Creative Scotland will see screen, drama, literature, crafts, arts, music, dance and theatre activity in Scotland come under one roof. This leads to several possible conclusions. First, as craft is gathered up under a broader framework it may suffer from having less access to funding that is specifically focused on its activities. At the same time, a broader framework may allow greater support for creative industries across the board. Second, in a tightening fiscal regime all activities that rely on public funding are likely to be vulnerable to cuts with obvious knock on effects. Finally, subsidy regimes cannot be expected to support activity indefinitely and any subsidy must at some stage translate into a commercially viable craft industry. In this latter context it may well be that there is more public/policy support for some elements of the creative industries compared with others. In such a competitive environment craft may well lose out.

### ***We need more sense than money***

The craft sector in Scotland is characterised by confused surveys and strategies (this may also be said of other sectors involved in landscape, food production, transport etc) and the question arises as to how, if at all, the SD debate can provide support and strategic alliance in such an environment. Part of the reason for a confused national strategy is due to the varied make up of businesses in craft. There is definitely not a one size fits all solution to supporting a viable craft sector. Despite this, the craft sector in Fife has a functioning multi layered approach and is (despite the lack of perceived economic contribution) in good heart. For a small geographical and political area craft in Fife is 'punching above its weight' in terms of number and range of craft practitioners and their cultural contribution to the region. This is largely due to a willingness between the governing bodies and practitioners to find ways of making craft more viable.

In the short term the structure of the craft sector nationally and in Fife is unlikely to change. There will, in the short term, continue to be a subsidy versus survival mentality. In spite of some practitioner opinion that they could well do without tiers of administration and 'tsarism' there is still a reliance on the co-ordination of the infrastructure. There remains a longer term need, however, to make craft economically viable. This would include changing the relationship with buyers as well as a more popularist and engaging public agenda. Such a move could plausibly include aspects of the SD message (green, local, resilient, socially responsible) within any transition.

Sustainable organizations and presumably sustainable economies arise from and create sustainable societies. A future dovetailing of SD thinking and craft practice would seek to confirm and strengthen a society where craft is valued and hence economically viable. At the same time, craft would support a culture where SD aspirations are more likely to be met.

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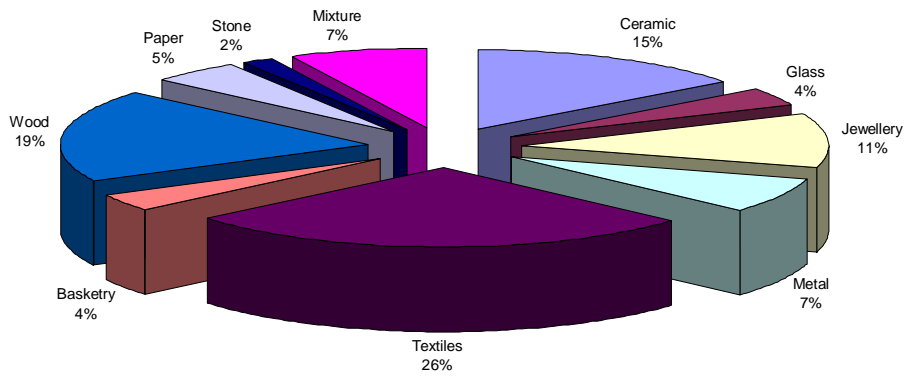
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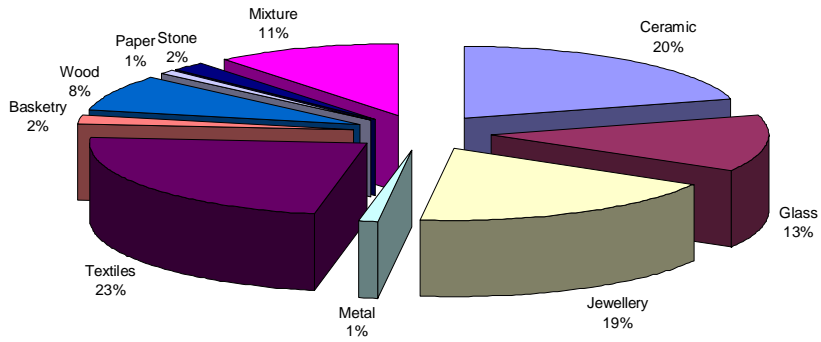
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## Appendix I: Data on the craft sector in Scotland and Fife

**Contemporary Craft in Scotland  
Discipline Spread (source SAC 2002)**



**Contemporary Craft in Fife  
Discipline Spread (source FCAC 2009)**



## **Appendix II: Questions asked in Fife survey**

Questions were addressed in an informal way during North Fife Open Studio events and Fife Contemporary Art & Craft forums. The purpose of the discussion was to learn, discover and establish:

- makers attitudes towards sales, selling vehicles, routes
- buyers attitudes towards selling
- educational aspects and, specifically, if we don't promote skills within schools will craft die ?
- does designer craft require apprenticeships?
- does craft need to be 'taught' rather than just facilitated?
- if the buyer does not have the knowledge in the first place, will they know what they are being asked to buy and is it a makers role to inform the buyer?
- makers attitudes towards arts funding generally
- understandings of the term sustainable development
- would you encourage your own offspring to go into this sector?

### **The maker conversations**

Through maker conversations a number of issues were addressed to get a feeling for how makers perceived craft as a social, economic and cultural contributor. Similar questions had been asked of a public sample of over 2,500 Scots.

Questions:

- Do you think that arts, crafts and cultural activities give a lot of pleasure to many people?
- Do you think that the success of Scottish arts, crafts and cultural activity gives the outside world a good impression of Scotland?
- Do you think that the success of Scottish artists, performers and writers gives people a sense of pride?
- Do you think that central government has a responsibility to support arts and culture?
- Do you think that arts and cultural activity helps to bring visitors and tourists to Fife?
- Do you think artists, performers and writers are important people who contribute to society?
- Do you think that Lottery money should be going to the arts?
- Do you think that if any local area and Fife in particular lost its art and cultural activities, the local people would lose something of value?
- Do you think arts and cultural activities help to bring people together in local communities?
- Do you think arts and cultural activity help to enrich the quality of our lives?
- Do you support your local authority in spending money on arts and culture in Fife?
- Do you think that the public buys your work because it contains subliminal SD/Scottish messaging?

### **Appendix III: Acknowledgements and resources**

Susan Batchelor, Curriculum for Excellence  
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Louise Butler, Applied Arts Scotland  
Susan Davis, Davis, Fife Contemporary Art & Craft  
Tim Fitzpatrick, film maker  
Kenny Grieve, woodworker  
Ann Gunn, Fife Contemporary Art & Craft  
Myer Halliday, ceramicist  
Gordon Lohead, silversmith  
Babs McCool, Arts & Theatres Trust Fife  
Dave McKeen, Creative Fife  
Adrienne McStay, glass maker  
Ian Moir, DAM Dunfermline based group of makers / artists  
Keiko Mukaide, glass maker  
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George Young, Scottish Potters Association  
Emma Walker, craftscotland

#### **Relevant and current craft organisations in Fife (and relevant documents and programmes)**

##### ***Fife Contemporary Art & Craft***

This is a very active and professional organization aiming and succeeding in presenting the highest quality contemporary visual art and craft activities to the widest possible public across Fife. It is the leading visual art and craft agency supporting makers at events, exhibitions, residencies. They organise the annual Fife Artists' and Makers' Forum and have a very proactive newsletter and information service via their offices and website. This organisation is key in the link between public and craft in Fife. It is also the Scottish Arts Council touch point for makers.

##### ***CreativeFife***

Creativefife is a one stop shop for information on business improvement initiatives including grant funding. With close links to Business Gateway Fife it has direct access to a range of Business advisory services including those who manage Fife Council's Financial Assistance for Small Business scheme. Website with about 30 makers/artists directory.

### ***Made in Fife***

An eclectic group of makers.

### ***The C Word Premiering Craft and Challenging Perception***

This is a new audience development programme being delivered by craftscotland through a national cinema and print campaign. Pearl & Dean are lead partners and will challenge public perception of craft and aims to break the association of craft with handicraft and hobbicraft, placing craft as desirable, unique edgy and contemporary. It allows designer/makers to expose their work and present an insight into what inspires their work, how the work is created and the variety of materials and techniques involved in this. The design process and creativity involved is explored as well as the inspirations and materials found in the Scottish landscape.

### ***Arts and Theatres Trust Fife Strategic Plan 2008-2013***

This is a long-term plan to promote and increase participation in arts in Fife. The strategic plan has been developed following structural changes whereby the former Fife Council Arts and Theatres services are now being delivered by the newly created Arts and Theatres Trust Fife Limited (AttFife). Although not wholly concerned with craft in Fife, this body does have a high level of experience of community arts projects and has four venues that can be used for exhibition and workshop space. Cultural and educational engagement with Fife residents is a core theme of the plan. Establishing a creative identity and arts infrastructure to attract, develop and sustain artists of all media and disciplines is a priority.

AttFife co-ordinates a small grants scheme for craft practitioners and is developing a single marketing and communications strategy.

### ***Fife Artists' and Makers' Forum***

Annual forum organised by Fife Contemporary Art & Craft as part of the organisation's work in supporting and developing a network for artists and makers based in Fife. It provides a professional development and networking opportunity for both individuals and artists' groups. This is an intellectual exchange and information point and was a very accessible and immediate point of contact for the craft sector in Fife.

### ***Open Studios North Fife***

This is an active group of around 50 makers and artists who open who allow public access to studio and workshop space over a period of three days. This is well co-ordinated and self governed and has a growing public and participating maker involvement mainly in North and central Fife. This is an increasingly popular way for the public to meet with makers and is subsidized event organized by the participants for the participants.

### ***Pittenweem Arts Festival***

This is an annual event in its 20<sup>th</sup> year focused on the town of Pittenweem. This event has grown and grown in the past few years and is an interesting collaboration between visiting, mostly from outside Fife and householders in the town. It makes art accessible and familiar. It is a genuinely "alternative" way to engage with craft and visual art in Fife.

### ***Fife Museums Forum***

A forum for independent and publicly funded museums across Fife. Occasionally organises a coordinated events programme of exhibitions and shows in Fife museum venues with umbrella marketing.

### ***Cupar Arts & Heritage Project***

In its second year this is a dynamic event with great opportunity for arts and the “urban” landscape. Some very well attended events and exhibition with large scale craft installations and environmental arts projects. Cupar Arts & Heritage Project (CAHP) is a non-profit arts organisation formed in February 2008.

The committee consists of visual artists, musicians, performers and others committed to addressing the lack of arts provision for the arts in Cupar and the surrounding area. CAHP are the organisers of Cupar Arts Festival, which last year received funding from the Scottish Government, the National Lottery and Fife Council. Cupar Arts Festival is a multi-disciplinary, two-week event with an emphasis on contemporary visual art/public art. The programme also includes music, performance poetry, film, craft workshops and more.

### ***The Big Tent, Falkland Centre for Stewardship***

The green festival of Scotland in a way with good opportunities for makers and artists to demonstrate, sell and talk about their work. Landscape, sustainability and environmental issues are very much to the fore at the well attended event.

### ***Creative Links Programme***

Run by Fife Council Community Services it includes Fife’s Cultural Co-ordinators. They seek to support, promote, improve and build the creative and cultural skills particularly with partnering schools, communities and makers. It is coordinating a programme of school and youth projects linking artist / makers with new and young audiences.

### **Other Sector Representation in Fife**

Applied Arts Scotland  
Creative Scotland  
Cultural coordinators and Creative Links Office  
Cultural Enterprise Office  
Curriculum for Excellence  
Determined to Succeed  
Excellence in Education  
Hi-Arts  
Museums Galleries Scotland  
Scottish Enterprise  
Scottish Leadership Foundation  
Skills development Scotland  
Skillsset and Skillsfast  
Tourism Framework for Change  
Voluntary Arts Network

## **Grant funding available in Fife for crafts**

This is an incomplete list of funding opportunities available to Fife based makers. There are many other charitable groups, grant schemes, foundation funding and through Scottish Arts Council etc

### ***Cupar Arts Festival Visual Arts Award***

Cupar Arts & Heritage Project (CAHP) offers a new Visual Arts Award for the proposal which best reflects the criteria of Cupar Arts Festival's Visual Arts programme. The £1,000 award was selected by an external juror.

### ***Craft Artists and Visual Artists Awards: Fife***

The 2008-09 Craft and Visual Arts awards are decided in partnership with ATTFife, FCA&C and Fife Council. They are co-funded by the Scottish Arts Council and focus on individual creative development. Over 30 awards were given out in the last financial year.

### ***Fife Council***

A new Culture Grant has been introduced by Fife Council which aims to encourage and support creativity in local communities and is open to individuals (from £50 to £300) and groups (from £100 to £1,000). The scheme covers literature, performance, heritage, audio-visual, and visual arts/crafts.

### ***Pittenweem Arts Festival Bursary Awards 2009***

To encourage promising new artists, The Royal Burgh of Pittenweem Arts Festival offers 2 bursary awards to artists from any Scottish School of Art and whose home is in Fife. The award takes the form of a rent free venue and waiver of the artists' registration fee. In addition, the bursary includes £200 towards expenses.