

Council discusses live music with the professionals



Local music professionals have joined forces with officials from The City of Edinburgh Council to discuss the state of the Capital's live music scene.

At Live Music Matters, an open forum held at the Usher Hall earlier this month a jam-packed audience of musicians, gig promoters, venue managers and academics discussed the current live music offering in Edinburgh and shared ideas on how to enhance the experience of live music for musicians and concertgoers.

The Edinburgh Reporter met up with Vice-Convener Councillor Norma Austin Hart to explain what it was all about:

[The Edinburgh Reporter NEWS – Live Music Matters](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The debate was organised following a commitment in June by the Council's Culture and Sport Committee to increase understanding and awareness of the live music scene in Edinburgh, in order to capture the key issues and opportunities facing the music community in the Capital.

Council policy on entertainment noise levels, the licensing and provision of live music venues in Edinburgh, and the support of grassroots talent emerged as hot topics for the local music community.

Councillor Norma Austin Hart, Vice Convener for Culture and Sport, said: "It is only right that debate about the city's

music scene is led by the experience and insight of local professionals. The Council-run and operated Usher Hall provides an ideal venue for the Live Music Matters open forum to discuss the current offering that we have in Edinburgh, and ideas for making it even better.

“What has become clear from the debate is that Edinburgh has a passionate and proud music industry, burgeoning with creative talent, and as a city we need to support this talent.

“Many venue owners and musicians feel that the Council’s current policy on noise levels can be a barrier to the development of Edinburgh’s music scene. To tackle this, we will specifically look at the current rules, and how these rules impact entertainment venues and residents.

“The meeting has also highlighted the importance many people attach to music venues, which goes far beyond sentiment and is really around cultural enrichment. The music community has told us they want Edinburgh’s music venues to be protected, and so we will aim to identify whether that is an option, perhaps through a register of cultural venues.

“Looking at ways to maintain and improve the city’s live music offering is a responsibility we need to face head on, and the Live Music Matters debate is only the beginning. We will now be gathering the comments and ideas from today’s discussion to look at ways we might be able to address them. Working in partnership will be crucial and the meeting today has reinforced that message. We will now set up a task force, called Music is Audible, with representatives from the music industry as well as the council.”

Karl Chapman, general manager of the Usher Hall, said: “The Usher Hall is a well placed venue to host this important debate, not just because it’s cultural importance in developing the arts and live music in the city, but also because it’s owned by the Council.

“The debate has been truly fascinating and I was surprised and delighted to see the tickets go so quickly. It’s been incredibly inspiring to hear everyone’s thoughts from across the industry today. The event has certainly shown there is a demand for a healthy live music scene in the city and the City of Edinburgh Council and the Usher Hall are committed to supporting Live Music Matters by hosting future meetings here in the venue.”

John Stout, promoter at Regular Music, added: “It’s fantastic to see the Council kick off this much needed conversation, and the open forum at the Usher Hall has covered the whole spectrum of live music in the city.

“The contribution that these events make to the local economy and towards making Edinburgh a cosmopolitan city can’t be underestimated. It will be interesting to see what the Council’s next steps will be.”

The debate will continue on social media and residents can share thoughts on Twitter using #livemusicmatters, and on the Council’s blog. Further updates on the programme will become available later in the year.

The Usher Hall is owned and managed by the City of Edinburgh Council, is an international concert which has a maximum capacity of 2900, hosts around 200 concerts and sells around 220,000 tickets annually.