

I EDUCATION

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Dean of the Faculty of Arts:
Professor John Caughie

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James Boyle
Chair
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Broughton High School
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27 September 2004

Dear James,

Cultural Commission Phase 1 of the Consultation Process

As Alec Scrimgeour indicated in his letter to you of 31 August, The Principal, Sir Muir Russell, asked me to co-ordinate a response to the issues raised in your circular of 24 August. Unfortunately, I was on leave until 14 September and have had limited time for co-ordination since I got back. The response which I now enclose, therefore, is based on a very limited number of conversations and has not been confirmed as a University view. In order to meet the 27 September deadline, I have sent an electronic copy to your office and will send copies to a number of senior officers of the University, including Sir Muir. If anyone disagrees radically with what I have said, I will let you know – or they will.

I received last week an invitation to join the 'Support' thinking group of the Commission, and have accepted enthusiastically. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to participate in a way which goes beyond the necessary rhetoric of an institutional response.

Best wishes,

John Caughie
Dean of the Faculty of Arts
Professor of Film & Television Studies



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**RESPONSE TO PHASE 1
CONSULTATION PROCESS**

CULTURAL COMMISSION

**27 September
2004**

Introduction

Glasgow University recognizes the significance for the future of Scotland of the Cultural Commission's remit and welcomes this opportunity to make an initial response to Phase 1 of its consultation process.

Education, at every level from pre-school to life-long learning, must be a central component of any cultural strategy and we believe that the Universities of Scotland have a distinctive role within the spectrum of provision.

The most immediate contribution which the Universities and Higher Education make to the economy and culture of Scotland is graduates. The sector as a whole provides a significant proportion of the trained and educated graduates who will not only be the artists driving creativity but will also be the administrators, entrepreneurs, policy formers - and sometimes visionaries - who provide the conditions in which creativity may flourish. More generally but of equal importance, the sector has a particular, though not exclusive part to play in producing a culturally and critically informed citizenry - the 'entitled citizen' who drives the demand for creativity and shapes cultural change.

Equally, though perhaps less obviously, our research provides the 'long view' which is the necessary basis for a proper and critical understanding of the present. Such scholarly research not only includes work of cultural preservation such as, to take a single example, *The Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, but also historical studies which allow us to see where present conditions have come from and how they change, critical studies which disinter our identities from the myths which shroud them, and comparative studies which allow us to see ourselves in a larger context, understanding the particularity and the commonality of culture. Such research is the foundation of a deep, complex and dynamic culture. While many of its expressions may be seen, rightly or wrongly, as remote from the public at large, we believe that the development of the Knowledge Transfer agenda, the encouragement by the funding bodies of the widest appropriate dissemination of research, together with the strategic commitments of the Universities themselves, provide the conditions in which University research can - and already does - make a considerable contribution to public understanding.

From George Davie in *The Democratic Intellect* to Arthur Herman in *The Scottish Enlightenment: the Scots' Invention of the Modern World*, cultural historians have recognized the central role of the Universities in the formation of Scottish culture. The Enlightenment provides an historical ideal in which the curiosity of scholars like Adam Smith ranged from the systems of economics to the structures of music, in which the Scottish Universities were centres of popular education rooted in their communities, and in which the four Universities of Scotland (much more than the two Universities in England) were centres of a European intellectual and cultural network. While 'a new Enlightenment' may be more rhetoric than reality, we believe that the situation of contemporary Scotland may provide the conditions of scale, engagement and, possibly, political will in which the Universities can and should play a key role. Both materially and at the level of ideas and aspirations, the Universities should be engaged in the development of a creative and critical culture and in the debates about cultural strategy and cultural policy which the Cultural Commission is initiating.

We turn now to the specific questions which the consultation document raises.

Cultural Rights

The introduction of the notion of cultural rights and the hint of legislation to enshrine them was perhaps the most eye-catching element of the First Minister's St Andrew's Day speech. As a way of understanding it, we return to the draft UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) on which the notion of cultural rights may be based:

Article 5 – Cultural rights as an enabling environment for cultural diversity

Cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, which are universal, indivisible and interdependent. [...] All persons should therefore be able to express themselves and to create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice, and particularly in their mother tongue; all persons should be entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their

cultural identity; and all persons should be able to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices, subject to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

It would be very difficult not to support this statement as an aspiration. When one finds it quoted again in a UNESCO paper on cultural rights in Asia and the Pacific, and when one thinks of the economic and political conditions which apply in some countries in that region, one begins to realize how difficult it is in realization. And when one thinks of implementation in the Scottish context, it quickly becomes difficult to separate it not only from questions of legislation (rights of access or of indigenous and ethnic languages) but also of resource, infrastructure, and, ultimately, taxation. These questions pose real challenges to the political will.

In relation to the specific question asked in the consultation document concerning 'cultural rights for the Scottish citizen, and those of its creative community', we believe there are responses of a different order:

- The rights of the citizen relate, in the first instance, to information and access;
- The rights of the creative community relate, in the first instance, to the infrastructure of agencies, support and resource.

The two are clearly interdependent, both are dependent on education at every level, and neither can be sustained without public funding. The Universities have an obvious part to play in forming and educating the entitled and informed citizen, but their role in the training and education of the creative community and its infrastructure should not be forgotten.

Fundamentally, however, the rights of the citizen to have access to a diverse and nationally distinctive culture are dependent on the rights of the creative community to have the financial, educational and infrastructural support which will create and sustain such a culture. It would be a disastrous mistake to believe that rights relate simply to widening access which can be legislated into existence without considering the support which is required to sustain the creative community which will give access its meaning.

While we believe that 'cultural rights' is a crucial framing and enabling concept which may drive and inform the work of the Cultural Commission, we do not believe that a debate about rights should be allowed to distract from the material questions of what is to be done to produce the culture in which these rights may meaningfully be exercised.

Education

The role of education at every level in producing both the agents and the context of culture is indisputable. We concentrate here on particular aspects relating to the Scottish Universities in general and Glasgow University in particular which may inform the thinking of the Commission.

- We have already indicated the role of the Universities in educating and training both the informed and entitled citizenry and the creative community. At Glasgow University, in addition to the characteristic Scottish breadth of our curriculum in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, we would point to the Department of Adult and Continuing Education and the public appetite for its courses in the arts and culture; to teaching and research in Scottish Literature, Celtic and Scottish History; to the success of our postgraduate programme in Creative Writing; and to Departments like Theatre, Film & Television Studies, Music and History of Art which engage directly with the creative and performing arts and the cultural industries.
- In our research, as well as deepening our understanding of the culture and cultural identity in general, we provide particular cultural resources through, for example, the Gaelic Dictionary, the Scottish Language Dictionary, the Scots Corpus; the work of researchers in uncovering the art, artefacts and literature of Scotland's heritage and making them available for public understanding; or the work of the Centre for Cultural Policy in providing analyses which might inform public policy.

- We would ask the Commission to note the significance of SHEFC's initiative in developing a 'Cultural Engagement' strand of the Knowledge Transfer grant which it makes to Scottish HEIs. Knowledge Transfer funding has hitherto been directed largely towards making university research available to business and industry and to the formation of 'spin-off' companies. The Cultural Engagement strand, and the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships which accompany it, provide an important potential avenue for 'third leg' funding to support a closer engagement between the Universities, the creative industries and public culture.
- We would also draw the Commission's attention to the significance of the development of the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) into an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) within the Office for Science and Technology. The AHRB has long held the dissemination of research to the widest appropriate public and collaboration between academic research and public and private institutions as important criteria. Its emergence as a Research Council within OST will reinforce the need to demonstrate public value. This is a significant shift in the research environment of the arts and humanities.
- Importantly, the Universities, like the Conservatories and Art Schools, have to be recognized not only as providers of education and training in culture and the creative and performing arts, but as themselves direct providers of cultural heritage, performing arts and media. Our museums and galleries are major components of the cultural and heritage environment. At Glasgow University, our collections comprise 1.2 million artworks, artefacts and specimens; they are the same size as the collections of Glasgow Museums put together; and they are one of the top five collections in Scotland (including the national collections). In the performing arts, we provide significant public venues in theatre and music, supporting work from within the University creative community as well as professional work from local and touring companies and ensembles. It is important that the Cultural Commission recognizes the Universities and Higher Education Institutions in general as part of the ecology of the arts and culture in Scotland even though their funding comes, for the most part, from sources other than 'arts funding'.

In the sphere of arts and culture, what seems to be lacking both within individual Universities and between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Scotland is similar to what is lacking in cultural agencies in the wider public sector: co-ordination between the various cultural activities – or, in the well-worn cliché, 'joined-up thinking'. For HEIs this has weakened the contribution which they might make to the wider Scottish culture.

We believe that a more focussed, better coordinated and more actively marketed approach to the cultural resources within Universities would give them greater visibility within the public sphere and allow them to make a greater impact on public culture. This is in line with the Universities' strategic commitment to adding value to the social, economic and cultural development of Scotland.

We also believe that the encouragement of closer links between the Conservatories and Art Schools on the one hand and the Universities on the other will enable them more effectively to foster and sustain a creative, critically aware and imaginative community and make a greater contribution to the development of the creative potential of the people of Scotland.

Finally, we would encourage closer links between the Universities and the 'creative community'. Scotland benefits from a particular economy of scale in which the linkages between the various agents of the cultural sector are as much personal and informal as they are formal and institutional: they are produced by everyday encounter as well as by committee. This is a significant building block of a dynamic and diverse culture. In the Universities, our students benefit from our ability to bring professionals and practitioners to engage them intellectually in the issues which concern the creative community directly. We believe there is considerable scope for greater partnership between the creative community, the 'heritage community' (national and civic museums and galleries) and the Universities which would allow each to draw on the strengths and resources of the other. And it is worth stressing that such partnerships need not be considered solely in relation to the Arts and Social Sciences: some of the most imaginative and innovative partnerships have involved an exchange between creative artists and scientists or engineers.

Institutional infrastructure

This is clearly at the heart of the Commission's remit and raises questions about present structures and future potential for which there are no easy answers. We would simply highlight three issues:

- *The issue of advocacy.* If culture, however broadly defined, is to play the part in Scotland which the First Minister outlined, it is essential that it has a direct line of advocacy in the formation of policy. The clearest indication which the Scottish Executive could give of the priority which it wishes to place on culture and creativity would be the creation of a 'Minister for the Arts' with 'cabinet responsibility'. It is not clear that it is in anyone's best interests to combine this responsibility with other responsibilities for, for example, sport or tourism. At the same time, we recognize that any priority which is given to culture will not simply be because it is a good in itself but will reflect its growing significance for the Scottish economy. We would expect that the remit of any ministerial post would reflect this and would have responsibility for culture in a broad sense.
- *The issue of coordination.* The Commission will wish to consider the operation of the various agencies which currently have responsibility for the support of the arts, media and heritage. We do not wish to comment on these in particular, but would wish to recommend a greater coordination between them. This may require an overarching body, perhaps a Standing Cultural Commission, to advise the Minister and to ensure that the individual agencies – Scottish Arts Council, Scottish Screen, Scottish Museums Council, Scottish Crafts Council, Historic Scotland, etc. – are delivering best value within the common framework of a Scottish cultural strategy.
- *The issue of evidence.* It is important that any cultural strategy and the institutional infrastructure which supports it be informed by robust evidence. The Universities should have an important role to play in this by providing research evidence on the longitudinal, 'tracking' basis which can reveal more effectively than 'snapshots' underlying trends and long term value. This is an example of the way in which a partnership between the cultural agencies and the Universities might operate.

We note, in passing, that broadcasting is not included in the Commission's remit. While we appreciate that broadcasting is not a devolved power, we would encourage the Commission not to exclude one of the most significant of modern cultural forces from its thinking even if it cannot include it in its policy recommendations. We would also encourage the Commission to consider the role of Scottish publishing in the support and dissemination of a Scottish literary culture.

The delivery of services and access to them

Again, the University of Glasgow is not best placed to offer expert opinion on the operation of touring companies, national companies and exhibition strategy. From our perspective, however - and, we believe, from the 'citizen's perspective' - the delivery of and access to resources should not be restricted to taking art to the people but should also consider the embedding of cultural resources within communities.

One particular contribution which Universities might make to this is through the harnessing of the considerable digital resources and digital expertise which has been developed within the Higher Education sector. As a particular example, we could cite *The Glasgow Story*, a lottery-funded project using the resources of the City and the Universities with the technical and archival knowledge of Glasgow University to produce a highly accessible history of Glasgow for public and educational use.

While we are a long way from thinking that ICT and digitization provide the answers to all questions of delivery and access, they are a significant new component in the cultural landscape. The kind of partnership between public authorities and universities evidenced by *The Glasgow Story* suggests an important way forward. The dissemination of historical and biographical archives, collections of art

and artefacts, and Scottish language dictionaries are further examples of the distribution of cultural resources by electronic means. If this dissemination is to be effective culturally, it cannot be restricted to the serendipity of home web discovery but should be marketed, made accessible and supported through local digital resource centres.

The Universities, through their research and digital expertise, could be important partners in the production of content for such centres, but it would be for a cultural strategy to recommend how they are to be publicly supported.

Marketing and promotion

While this University itself has concerns about its own marketing and promotion in the performing and visual arts, we do not feel competent to comment on the operational issues of marketing and promotion in the wider public sector. It is, however, implicit in our comment on Cultural Rights above that the right to information is a key right of the entitled citizen. At the same time, we should recognize that once the right to information has been fulfilled and the entitled citizen is informed, it is then up to her or him to choose whether or not to exercise the right of access. This choice is a matter of individual judgement and will be determined by the issue of quality: Is it good? Was it good last time? Am I interested? The slogan, 'Arts for all', becomes hollow indeed if it is considered solely as an issue of access without also, and primarily, being an issue of sustained and sustainable quality and diversity.

What is the best way to maximise the creative potential of the people of Scotland?

The answer to this question is either extremely simple - 'all of the above' - or it is so complex that justice cannot be done to it here. If the 'creative potential' is understood not simply as the production and support of creative artists but as maximizing the capacity of the entitled citizen to respond creatively to her or his culture, then it involves all of the issues which the Commission must address.

In brief summary, we would re-emphasize the following two points:

- Education, at every level, both formal and informal, is fundamental, and educational institutions, including the Universities, must be brought in, and must buy in, to the formation of cultural strategy and cultural policy.
- If a cultural strategy is to be meaningful, it cannot simply legislate to promote access but must also confront the issue of the resources and funding necessary to produce quality.