

Inverness Arts Forum

Submission to Phase 1 of the Cultural Commission Consultation

GENERAL

The Inverness Arts Forum is an independent charitable organisation, established to represent the community arts sector in and around the city of Inverness. Currently the Forum represents some 60 individual groups, who in turn have in excess of 4,000 individuals taking part in their activities on a regular basis.

REMIT OF THE COMMISSION

The Forum welcomes the establishment of the Cultural Commission, and welcomes this opportunity to make a submission.

However, as an organisation we have had some difficulty in coming to terms with what exactly the commission is asking of us. If the Commission is serious about this being a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity to change cultural life in Scotland, then the language it uses has to be a lot clearer. To say that the literature to date has been ambiguous would be an under statement. The last thing we need in this process is to put people off on the first reading of the information. Therefore, a wholesale re-think of how the questions are asked has to be implemented for the next phase of the consultation. This response is our best interpretation of what is being asked of us.

In general terms the Inverness Arts Forum believes that "Cultural Rights" requires legal definition and be supported by appropriate legislation – otherwise they are meaningless. The Forum also believes that Cultural Rights have to be a central part of the decision making process across all departments within the Scottish Executive.

There may not be many new and revolutionary proposals contained in our submission but we do not consider there to be much wrong in the present delivery by the education authorities and most inadequacies, if not all, could be rectified by adequate financial resources. In many cases, all we have to do is look back a few years to see what has been lost in the interests of 'economy.' It is probably little surprise that erosion of many aspects of the Scottish community has gone in parallel with an erosion in support of cultural activities. Culture is a factor, which has an influence on every part of life.

EDUCATION

Every primary school pupil in Scotland should have the right to tuition over the spectrum of Scottish and international culture.

- (i) Most nursery school pupils already receive a fair amount of culturally based activities as an aid to early learning. We would like to see this strengthened and an awareness that it is 'culture'.

- (ii) We would like to see the links between culture and education introduced at this time continued throughout the school system.
- (iii) See also www.pips.edu.hk/parkview for a model of culturally based pre-school education from Hong Kong.

Every primary school pupil in Scotland should have the right to tuition over the spectrum of Scottish and international culture.

- (i) This is defined as no less than 40 hours per school year in each of the following subjects: music, art, drama and dance.
- (ii) Where a child shows sufficient ability, individual tuition should be provided free of charge.
- (iii) In addition, every primary school pupil should be enabled to engage in no less than 40 hours of other wider cultural activity e.g. visits to the theatre, museums, galleries or sporting venues
- (iv) This will help to ensure that the young people of today become the proficient practitioners and educated audiences of tomorrow.

In order for this 'right' to be effective, it must link up with the Curriculum Review and be embedded within that.

Every school pupil in Scotland should have the right to access cultural activities within their own community.

- (i) This is defined as having the quality of facilities to participate in and / or be an audience member.
- (ii) Having access to a good standard of equipment that will enable them to engage effectively e.g. musical instruments / art / ICT equipment.

Every secondary school pupil should have the right to continue to develop their chosen cultural activity / activities to whatever level they wish.

- (i) The support on offer should allow for those who show ability to achieve their maximum potential, and be enabled to progress directly to higher education.
- (ii) The same training and encouragement to participate should be available to others, so that they may enjoy the benefits alongside their chosen career.

Every adult in Scotland should have the right to engage in Cultural 'learning' throughout the course of their life.

- (i) This applies equally to those seeking training at further education level, and to people in the community who wish to learn something new, or develop an existing cultural skill.

The 'informal' education sector in Scotland should have the right to enjoy the same levels of public support as the 'formal' sector.

- (i) Far more people in Scotland undertake cultural activities within the informal sector, than in the formal.

- (ii) The role of the community and their 'ownership' of the activity is of vital importance to ensure that people engage with culture.
- (iii) In many instances top-down cultural provision can have a negative impact – it may be more appropriate to allow communities or community groups more freedom to express their culture in a non-judgemental fashion. In too many cases, the word 'community' or 'amateur' amongst the cultural sector in Scotland is seen as being inferior to the 'professional' sector.
- (iv) For professional cultural activities to succeed, they have to be supported by a wider community sector – the two are inextricably linked.
- (v) The formal sector, including the teaching profession has to be more accommodating of people from the community who may be able to deliver cultural activities, but don't necessarily have a teaching qualification.

If the formal and informal sectors were to work more closely together, then not only would it transform the provision of culture within our schools, but would give greater opportunities for individuals to making a living from their activity in every community that has a school.

INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Inverness Arts Forum believes that although the provision of adequate accommodation should be a key right, equal status should be placed on the development of the infrastructure to support activity at both the community and professional level.

The 'cultural business' is and should be acknowledged as a key part of people's lives in Scotland. The provision of and support for culture should have an impact across the board, from health to law and order.

Every community in Scotland should have the right to the provision of good quality cultural facilities and support from their local authority.

- (i) Local authorities should be mindful that any public facility they build and / or have management of, should be fit for the purposes of the local cultural sector e.g. maintaining school theatres, community centres, new build schools.
- (ii) In construction of new buildings, particularly schools conditions should include provision of facilities for use by adults as well as young people, e.g. dimensions of fittings and furnishings.
- (iii) Provision should be made for full maintenance / repairs of such buildings and facilities when providers are setting annual budgets.
- (iv) This extends to the provision of adequate staffing levels within the authority to support and develop a wide range of cultural activities e.g. properly funded arts teams and extended janitorial / curator cover.
- (v) Local authorities should be mindful of the needs of both the professional and community / amateur cultural sectors and provide both with adequate levels of support e.g. facilities and funding.

Every cultural activity in Scotland should have the right to seek investment from the economic development institutions.

- (i) The cultural sector in Scotland is widely regarded as one of the major growth areas within the Scottish economy. Support for the sector should be regarded as investment
- (ii) The inclusion of members from the community cultural sector should be a requirement of all local enterprise company boards.

The cultural sector has the right to expect adequate levels of support from a range of key local and national institutions and be able to influence their operation.

- (i) To ensure that culture is at the heart of Scottish government, each department must be mindful of this in each of their new policy making sessions. Responsibility for implementing this should be with the First Minister.
- (ii) In terms of the arts, there should be locally based 'Arts Councils / Forums' (as there is in sport currently) to negotiate at the local level, and to provide support that is tailored to that area. This could be set within the framework of a Scotland wide Arts council, but with more local accountability.
- (iii) The boards of local and national institutions should adequately represent both professional and community arts interests.

DELIVERY OF PROVISION AND ACCESS

Every person living in Scotland has the right to access high quality cultural provision.

- (i) In all cases, barriers to delivery have to be minimised, specifically access to funding, streamlined bureaucracy, suitable workshop / performance spaces, adequate training opportunities and access to equipment.
- (ii) In all cases, barriers to access have to be minimised, specifically suitable affordable transport, disabled friendly, affordability, access to equipment and up-to-date information.
- (iii) Accessibility also refers to attitudes towards cultural participation. These attitudes - both of those who currently do participate and those who don't - have to be challenged, to ensure that every person in Scotland can feel comfortable about taking part in any cultural activity.
- (iv) Quality of delivery has to be monitored to ensure that everyone taking part gets the best possible experience. If what they have done has been a good experience, they are likely to repeat it and tell others about it.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Every person living in Scotland should have the right to receive information on the cultural activity of their choice as easily as possible.

- (i) In the first instance, all marketing and promotional efforts should be aimed at the public in Scotland. If visitors are attracted as a consequence, then that is well and good.

- (ii) Local authorities should be obliged to ensure that they support the advertising of a wide range of cultural activities in the local press – not just their own activities.
- (iii) Although the web is a great tool, it should not be regarded as the only one. Many people don't have access to email / web and therefore, imaginative, local solutions may be needed to disseminate information.
- (iv) In all instances, information should be as clear and easily understood as possible.
- (v) The BBC in Scotland as a public service broadcaster should be obliged through their charter to ensure that the promotion of cultural events – both professional and community and at the National, Local and international level.
- (vi) The media in Scotland generally has a duty to promote cultural activities to new audiences. All too often programmes with a cultural agenda are out of the 'mainstream.'
- (vii) Within the media, cultural activity has to be seen to be a 'normal' activity and promoted as such.

MAXIMISING THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF THE SCOTTISH PEOPLE

Every person living in Scotland has the right to expect that the Scottish Executive are doing their utmost to ensure that Scotland's culture at home and abroad is supported and developed as much as possible.

- (i) Ensure that all young people in Scotland are given a wide and varied experience of cultural throughout the period of their formal education.
- (ii) This should encompass hands-on participation, but also build an appreciation of the range of cultural experiences available to them.
- (iii) Cultural education should be a central plank of life-long learning within Scotland.
- (iv) Excellence should be encouraged and nurtured as rigorously as allowing people to have fun.
- (v) Ensuring that the cultural aspirations of individual communities are listened to, without pre-judgement. If required, support from outside agencies should be provided to minimise barriers to delivery and access.
- (vi) Viewing the 'formal' and 'informal' sectors as one and the same thing; mutually supportive and enriching.
- (vii) Ensuring that people are given the 'tools' required to undertake a quality cultural experience –finance, facilities, equipment, training and ease of access.

Ian

From: David Boag [davidboag@yahoo.com]
Sent: 27 September 2004 15:17
To: info
Subject: INVERNESS ARTS FORUM SUBMISSION [Scanned]

Re the submission I made earlier today, I enclose a new version with a couple of small amendments. Please can you confirm that you have received this version in place of the earlier one.

Thanks.

David I Boag

Vice-Chair

Inverness Arts Forum

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