

CREATIVE IND / VOL

## Media Access Projects Scotland (MAPS)

Initial Response to Cultural Commission Consultation - September 2004

### Introduction

This document represents an initial response from MAPS to the first round of consultation of the Cultural Commission. It has been composed by the Chairperson Mark Langdon who is an independent representative voice of those organisations which make up the membership – however this initial response has not yet been ratified by all member organisations and as such should be seen as an independent contribution to this stage of the Commissions consultation process.

### Background

Media Access Projects Scotland was founded in 2002. It's aim is to develop awareness of the work of organisations involved in media access and to work towards greater opportunities for communities across Scotland to engage in and reap the benefits of media access. The founding projects offer a diverse range of approaches to media access from equipment hire at subsidised rates, high quality technical & artistic training, support to individuals and community / voluntary groups and the production of independent and funded short films.

- **Education:** How do we develop artistic, cultural and social skills and provide cultural knowledge?

In terms of Media Access enormous potential exists for the greater integration and involvement of new media and media skills within the mainstream educational curriculum and in educational work out with the traditional school/college environment.

Many examples of successful & innovative work involving a wide range of media tools exist across Scotland, (Young People Speak Out, Pilton Video & Edinburgh Mediabase – Edinburgh, Stationhouse & Peacock Arts – Aberdeen, MiMac – Fife, Glasgow Media Access Centre – Glasgow), however there is currently no National Strategy for Media Access which makes it difficult for good practice to be sustained and developed.

Film, television, video games and related media are the common language of the 'new' generation and we require systems and structures that can respond quickly and effectively to give people of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to access these forums for creative & commercial cultural development.

Recent developments such as the four-year Executive funded project carried out in partnership with Angus Digital Media Centre are likely to lead to very useful advances in developing media integration within the 5-14 curriculum. However many opportunities already exist to spread good practice across Scotland.

### **MAPS will seek to make further representation to the Commission in this area.**

- *The institutional infrastructure: How best to organise and support the cultural sector in Scotland to deliver the maximum value in the most effective manner?*

Excellent question! The answer is of course extremely complex. Media Access is an area of work that has suffered considerably by falling between the espoused remits of a number of National organisations. Many of the MAPS organisations are *not-for-profit* companies and have been assisted at times by Scottish Enterprises – Creative Industries development schemes unfortunately it is unclear whether this type of

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support is to be continued. The Scottish Arts Council via the Arts Lottery have supported media access projects in the past however other areas of support have been more elusive – due largely to a dispute between SAC and Scottish Screen as to which organisation should be supporting media access work.

Scottish Screen have steadfastly refused to offer media access projects desperately needed revenue funding while simultaneously providing such funding to the regional film theatres (whose work the media access sector supports without reservation). To its credit Scottish Screen have worked in successful partnership with media access organisations in delivering a number of very well regarded short film schemes including Cineworks, Bridging the Gap & DIGICULT. However with broader support from Scottish Screen a great deal more could have been achieved to develop the media access agenda – work which many feel would have assisted the achievement of many of Scottish Screen's organisational objectives.

Recent negotiations facilitated with support from the Creative Industries section of the Executive, have begun to give opportunities for resolution of these long standing problems and it is hoped that the advent of the Cultural Revue will aid in expediting these negotiations.

From a MAPS perspective the overriding lesson to be learned from our collective experience is that whatever institutions are charged with developing Scotland's cultural sectors they must be:

- ◆ forward thinking
  - ◆ willing to respond positively to constructive criticism
  - ◆ transparent & open in their dealings
  - ◆ representative of a diversity of cultural types / approaches / backgrounds
  - ◆ apolitical
  - ◆ innovative
- **The delivery of services and access to them:** How best to provide cultural facilities and ensure the widest access?

Connectivity with communities is key to many areas of media access and other cultural development work – local, national and community based organisations working within a clear and cohesive national structure is the best hope for delivery of high quality, best value, sustainable experiences for individuals and groups being served by cultural facilities. The not-for-profit type of organisation allows for useful income generation from alternate sources – i.e. production work for charities, public & private sector clients.

A case can also be made for invest in centres of excellence which allow state of the art facilities to the most motivated of cultural vultures!

- **Marketing and promotion:** How to increase and broaden the profile of the audience and the public engaging with cultural activity in Scotland?

By allowing access to the tools of media production and the opportunity to counter act the centralisation of media production and exhibition, media access projects already attract many audiences that do not engage with traditional cultural sectors. By making media access meaningful to wider communities, by being on their doorstep, ready to speak their language we can offer a ladder of opportunity – social skills, entrepreneurial development and creative fulfillment. The idea of offering training and support out with – colleges, schools and run down community centres is

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key to attracting a wide spectrum of the public and engage them positively.

- **Encouraging creativity:** What is the best way to maximise the creative potential of the people of Scotland?

Of course it would be foolish to disregard the significant role that closing health & wealth inequalities gap across Scotland would play in allowing many of our most excluded community members to develop their cultural knowledge and interaction.

In my view a key factor in maximising the creative potential of the people of Scotland is to actively promote a far more 'can do' approach to life and culture. Self esteem must be nurtured from an early age with parents supported to engage with their children in creative, relationship building past times. There is already a great deal of this type of work in process and it has indeed been producing fantastic results across dance, theatre, visual arts etc. for decades.

The role of cultural co-ordinators in schools is an example of a policy development supporting tangible benefits in the approach to cultural activities within schools.

Identifying significant additional funds for cultural development such as those made available for sports development via the National Lottery could; if spent within a effective organisational structure – involving local representation, effect substantial & sustainable developments – in the creative potential of the people of Scotland.

- **The concept of 'cultural rights for the Scottish citizen, and those of its creative community'**, and would welcome your suggestions as to how these putative rights might best be formulated and then translated into a scheme of entitlements.

In terms of the creative community within media access, wages and working conditions are very poor, especially when compared to wages offered within the broadcasting / filmmaking industry. Recognition of the inherent value of the skills brought to the nurturing of creativity and cultural involvement by tutors, technicians etc. within media access / arts projects is well over due.

In terms of cultural rights – the safe guarding of 'arts' spending and the improvement of community arts venues and facilities have to be enshrined. We have seen over the past twenty to thirty years that often 'arts' provision has been eroded when local government spending has had to be curtailed. Also that cultural or artistic values are seen to be less important than provision for the elderly or disabled etc. It strains belief that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century such redundant arguments are still trotted out. Changing the national and political mindset – from a condition, which I think, is neatly summed up by the common use of language when referring to arts and business e.g.

Funding is used to SUPPORT the arts – (inferring that arts / culture – which I feel people still tend to think of as not including sporting pursuits etc. – is an ailing patient that only exists thanks to the largesse of generous public funding (*kind of like the National Health Service?*))

Whereas the large amounts of public subsidy paid to the business community – is referred to as INVESTMENT. – Implying the nation gets something back for this funding.

This idea of arts/culture as some how being the 'icing on the cake' of a developed civilisation must DIE! The pursuit of creative expression or the opportunity for such expression, is an inviolable right and it's benefits are abundant.

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I believe that by investing in cultural development in it's widest sense we can – reduce spending on the results of vandalism and anti-social behaviour, we can develop our creative (in fact all) industries, we can project a positive image of Scotland and it's people throughout the world, foster sustainable involvement in lifelong learning and develop a population more willing to engage in the democratic process.

Sounds good doesn't it?

Perhaps the greatest barrier I can foresee is the mindset of politicians and policy makers whom are unwilling to truly empower individuals and communities – either artistically or 'politically'. To many 'old school' attitudes that see the *status quo* as the best we can achieve rather than the starting point from which we can grow and prosper. We have to move from espousing the right values to embedding them in the fabric of our social policies, service delivery mechanisms and decision-making processes.

Mark Langdon

Chairperson MAPS

September 2004



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**From:** Mark Langdon [mark@changetheworld.fsnet.co.uk]

**Sent:** 27 September 2004 23:05

**To:** info

**Subject:** Response to Cultural Commission on behalf of Media Access Projects Scotland (MAPS)[Scanned]

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Please find initial response attached

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Peace, Love and Joy

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