



1 TRADITIONAL

Fèisean nan Gàidheal

The National Association of
Gaelic Arts Youth Tuition Festivals

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29 September 2004

James Boyle
Chair
Cultural Commission
Broughton High School
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Dear James

CULTURAL COMMISSION PHASE I OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Thank you for your letter of 17 August, and with apologies for the late submission, I now enclose Fèisean nan Gàidheal's response to the first phase of consultation. I e-mailed it earlier, so that we hadn't missed the deadline by too long!

Our paper acknowledges that although we, as an organisation, are involved in many exciting initiatives at present, and are doing lots of good things and getting them right, there is much more that needs to be done in the wider context of cultural development in Scotland, and the Fèis movement is but a small part of that. Our paper, therefore, partly defines - as best we can - cultural rights, but also recommends actions which we think are essential as a means to some of the ends.

It might not be particularly helpful in this format, but I hope, nonetheless, that you, and the commissioners, will find the paper useful, and that it goes some way to answering some of the points that you have asked us to address in this first phase of your process.

As ever, I would be happy to discuss any of the points at any time, and hope that you might consider a visit to Skye, which is hugely vibrant culturally, as part of your consultative process.

Leis gach deagh dhùrachd

Arthur Cormack
Director



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

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Fèisean nan Gàidheal

The National Association of
Gaelic Arts Youth Tuition Festivals

Response to the Cultural Commission – Phase I

I Introduction

Fèisean nan Gàidheal - The National Association of Gaelic Arts Youth Tuition Festivals - is the umbrella organisation for the Fèis movement in Scotland. Having grown from very modest beginnings, the organisation is now at the forefront of Gaelic arts and traditional music development in Scotland.

The Fèis movement is one of the most impressive arts initiatives in Scotland, and our work encompasses access to and participation in the arts, Gaelic language, education and international work.

Although never measured scientifically, we estimate, conservatively, that the Fèis movement is worth at least £2 million to the Scottish economy through jobs created, tutors employed, help 'in-kind' from volunteers, and the spend from organisers, tutors, participants and on Fèisean nan Gàidheal's development programme.

In this submission we have attempted to give the Cultural Commission an overview of the Fèisean, and the work in which we are currently involved, as well as addressing the questions raised in your consultation paper.

Headline Conclusions

- Cultural Rights can only be enforced if enshrined in law, and Fèisean nan Gàidheal welcomes the idea that there might be a Culture Bill introduced to the Scottish Parliament in the future, as a possible outcome of this consultation
- Traditional Arts and the Gaelic language must be at the forefront of all cultural development in Scotland
- The Scottish Arts Council should be expanded to become the lead cultural organisation in Scotland, and principle advisers to Ministers on all matters relating to the arts and culture, working with, and representing, existing cultural organisations in that role

2 Background to the Fèis movement

Although the genesis of Fèis movement was in lochdar, South Uist, in 1980, the first Fèis was held in 1981, on the Isle of Barra in response to a growing realisation that the traditions and culture of the area were being ignored by mainstream education. The founders were the local priest Fr Colin MacInnes, and the well-known piper Dr Angus MacDonald, and their model is the one on which other Fèisean have been based.

- Fèis is a Gaelic word meaning a 'festival' or 'feast.'
- All Fèisean are community based and led – there is real sense of 'ownership'.
- Fèisean nan Gàidheal, the National Association of the Fèis movement was established in 1991
- There are now 37 Fèisean throughout Scotland
- In 2003–4, more than 4,500 individual young people took part in Fèis activities across Scotland, from the most remote parts of the Highlands and Islands, to the inner city areas of Glasgow,



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- Edinburgh, Inverness and Aberdeen.
- They all feature Gaelic language; 6 are entirely Gaelic-medium
- They all offer tuition in song, music, drama & dance
- Most are run by volunteers
- They are all FUN!

Since 1981 the Fèis movement has grown a great deal, to the extent that its achievements are now recognised at the highest levels of Government in Scotland:

"When heads of state visit this country I'm proud to show them our architectural heritage whether it's a castle, a cottage, or a House for an Art Lover. I'm delighted they can hear young musicians from this Academy (RSAMD), and from the Fèis movement, play the music of our country."

Jack McConnell MSP, First Minister, St Andrew's Day Speech, 2003

The Fèis movement lives within the Gaelic communities of Scotland, and this community 'ownership' has been one of the major successes of the Fèis movement, and we believe it is a model that is transferable to other aspects of other Scottish cultural life.

At no point in the development of the Fèis movement has Fèisean nan Gàidheal decided that we'll have a Fèis 'here' or 'there'! Instead we have always waited for communities to come to us, and from that point on we assist as much as we can, trying, as far as possible, to remove some of the administrative burdens, including insurance, Disclosure checking and 'core' funding from the community Fèisean. In this way, they are able to concentrate on staging the event and being creative in delivery.

2 Cultural Rights

It is the view of Fèisean nan Gàidheal that the rights which emerge as part of this consultation should, as far as possible, be enshrined in a legal framework. Otherwise the 'once in a lifetime opportunity' will be missed. We have seen with recent initiatives to secure the status of Gaelic, the reluctance among some public bodies and local authorities to do anything unless required to do so. We therefore welcome the idea that there could be a Culture Bill introduced to parliament, which will enable the aspirations of the Scottish Executive, as articulated by the First Minister in his 2003 St Andrew's Day speech, to be realised.

We have categorised what we see as appropriate rights under each of the headings suggested in the consultation document, with the addition of language. Gaelic is a very important component of our work, and is what makes the Fèisean distinct from all other traditional music initiatives.

As a preface though, we believe that the country's traditional music must be placed at the centre of contemporary artistic life. Our languages, songs, tunes and stories articulate aspects of Scottish life about which every citizen should know, including social history, politics, place names and people.

2.1 Language

- The Gaelic language should have secure status in Scotland
- Gaelic should become more visible, and used, in Scottish public life
- Gaelic should have parity of esteem with English in Scotland

2.2 Education

- Every child in Scotland should, through time, have the right to receive their formal education through the medium of Gaelic
- This right should not be confined to primary school level, but extended to secondary and tertiary level, allowing all school leavers and other adults the right to receive their further education through the medium of Gaelic
- The learning of Gaelic should be promoted and encouraged throughout Scotland, and its relevance to all Scots clearly articulated
- No child at a state school in Scotland should be charged for a music lesson
- Cultural activities should be an integral part of school life and should not be the 'afterthought' to other 'mainstream' school subject

- Traditional music should have parity of esteem with any other style of music in terms of education
- Young people who express an interest in a cultural subject at primary level, should expect that this will be offered to them at secondary level
- Over and above this, there should be no expectation on a young person that they have to 'excel' in a cultural activity i.e. take it as an exam, for them to be supported at secondary school level. The secondary curriculum should accommodate participation as well as excellence
- Within the 5–14 curriculum in Scotland, every young person should leave school with a satisfactory knowledge of indigenous Scottish culture, including language
- The formal and informal education sectors in Scotland should be treated as equal partners in the delivery of cultural education

Fèisean nan Gàidheal has successfully managed to enhance the provision of traditional Gaelic arts both within the 'formal' and 'informal' sector and sees greater co-operation between the two as a key factor in improving the cultural health of Scotland.

Case Study – Delivering the Youth Music Initiative programme for the Highland Council

For many years Fèisean nan Gàidheal has been aware of the lack of arts education in schools, in particular traditional and Gaelic arts education in schools. The recent SAC Youth Music audit *What's Going On?* (2003) indicated that there were 8,800 young people taking part in community-based traditional music activities in Scotland each week, compared with a combined figure of 11,000 in classical, rock, pop and dance music.

However, corresponding figures of weekly participation in local authority music instruction was 47,000 in classical music, with minimal figures for the other styles. This seemed to represent an imbalance in opportunity of choice within schools and confirmed view that most formally taught music in Scotland is still classical, whereas traditional music features strongly within informal, community education.

One tangible outcome from that audit was the setting up of the Youth Music Initiative with £17.5 million of new Scottish Executive funding, and the aim of "ensuring that by 2006, every primary school pupil should have access to at least one year's free music tuition by the time they reach Primary 6". Administered by the Scottish Arts Council, each local authority is allocated funding based on a formula agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

The Fèis movement was, and is, the major provider of traditional music tuition within the area, and in November 2003, the Highland Council was allocated £135,756 from year one of the initiative funding, and recently was awarded £271,511 for year two. The Council took the enlightened decision to allocate the bulk of this funding to Fèisean nan Gàidheal, to work up a scheme to deliver traditional music tuition to schools in the Highland area.

In arriving at this decision, the Council fulfilled a key aim of the Youth Music Initiative in maintaining a balance of styles and genres. As the Highland Council's current programme of visiting instrumental tuition is largely concentrated on western classical music, the introduction of traditional music to the schools was considered to be a way of expanding the styles available. This approach was praised by the Youth Music Initiative Reference Group, and in the Scottish Arts Council press release the Highland Council's bid was specifically mentioned: "The new approaches to music tuition include Clackmannanshire Council's new singing teacher who will work across all primary schools in the area; and in the north, Highland Council is teaming up with Fèisean nan Gàidheal to provide traditional music tuition to pupils who presently have no access to it."

Formal agreement was reached between Fèisean nan Gàidheal and local Fèisean as to what was required of them to deliver the project, and what level of management fees would be appropriate for the work expected. For year one, Fèis Rois agreed to deliver in Caithness and Inverness; the Lochaber Fèisean, though Fèisean nan Gàidheal's full-time Development Officer in the area agreed to deliver in Lochaber; and Fèis Spè agreed to deliver in Badenoch & Strathspey. This has meant a considerable strengthening of the

Fèisean, and heightened awareness of them, in their local communities. The Youth Music Initiative is, initially, a three-year project. Year two has seen the funding doubling from the year one base, and it will double again in 2005-06, giving the Highland Council a sum of around £543,000 by year three. Fèisean nan Gàidheal put a great deal of effort into the planning and infrastructure needed to deliver the tuition it is offering, but the year one funding was targeted towards only 4 out of the 8 areas within the Highland Council. With year two funding now in place, the programme will be rolled out to all 8 areas. This will mean around 5,000 tuition sessions being delivered in around 165 primary schools, and is a huge, though welcome, challenge.

Other local authorities are now looking at the model for delivery adopted by The Highland Council, and there are lessons to be learned from Shetland too, where there is a local education policy to invest in instrumental tuition in schools, which according to the Shetland Music Development Co-ordinator is **“creating a solid foundation to support our tradition and culture now and hopefully into the future. It is also an investment in both social and economic terms of inestimable value”** (Gardner, 2003). From the example of The Highland Council, Shetland and the national education work undertaken by Fèis Rois, there is clearly potential for greater partnership between school and community.

2.3 Institutional Infrastructure

There must remain an organisation at arms-length from the Scottish Executive, which takes the lead in cultural policy-making, and advising ministers on all matters relating to cultural development. At present, there are several national bodies that support cultural development, and while we think that it is necessary to retain the functions of all those bodies, and for them to continue to have a strong role, the Scottish Arts Council should, we believe, be given a central role in developing and coordinating cultural provision. SAC has already adopted a Gaelic arts policy, and has made traditional and rock & pop its priority within its music strategy. Both are major changes in direction, and along with many other examples, demonstrate how the organisation is capable of looking inwards and effecting change in its dealings with the public, with organisations, and within its priorities for development.

In relation to institutional infrastructure, we believe that the following rights and actions would be appropriate:

- The cultural sector in Scotland has the right to expect publicly funded institutions to give both financial and practical help
- The sector has the right to expect that public agencies regard financial support for culture as an investment, not subsidy
- Traditional arts in Scotland have a rightful place at the centre of new development, and should have parity of esteem and receive appropriate support from the national cultural institutions
- National Companies in Scotland should reflect a wider range of cultural activities e.g. a National Scottish Pipe Band, a National Scottish Traditional Music Ensemble, and should not be defined by levels of funding, or by artform, but by how they fulfil a national role
- Local authorities across Scotland should be more supportive of community groups and individuals undertaking work in the cultural sector, both at the voluntary and professional levels
- Every community in Scotland should have the right to the provision of good quality cultural facilities and support from their local authority. In particular, public buildings including schools, should be designed and/or equipped to support a range of community and professional cultural activities at affordable rates
- There has to be greater understanding of the important social and economic value of Scottish culture to the nation, both at home and abroad

Case Studies - Working in Partnership

Fèisean nan Gàidheal has developed an excellent reputation working in partnership across the spectrum of institutions within Scotland, from local authorities, to local enterprise companies, the Scottish Arts Council, the Scottish Executive and other public and private bodies.

1. The creation of a Traditional Music Tutor Training Network (TMTTN) enabled Fèisean nan Gàidheal, Fèis Rois, Fife Council, Lauder College, Adult Learning Project/Scots Music Group (Edinburgh), Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland (TMSA), RSAMD, University of Strathclyde, National School of Excellence for Traditional Music, and the Scottish Arts Council to collaborate in creating an SQA-approved Certificate in Music Tuition. This work was led by Fèisean nan Gàidheal's Training Officer, who was seconded, half time, to the TMTTN to ensure that this Professional Development Award was delivered.

"It is unlikely that any other group of professional musicians could have collaborated so well in devising such an excellent course. The traditional music folk have a great sense of equality and can work well together despite disagreement and different views for the common good of the music. This Qualification puts the Traditional music tutors at the forefront of quality assurance for their students, young and old, and it is a model of good practice for other groups wishing to develop professional qualifications in their sectors."

Mark Sheridan, Head of Music at the University of Strathclyde

2. Meanbh-Chuileag, Fèisean nan Gàidheal's Gaelic theatre-in-education arm, has worked with public bodies such as the National Trust for Scotland and Historic Scotland, developing Gaelic education materials for both organisations, and with education partners in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to produce a bilingual Gaelic and Gaelige book for young people 'Biorachan Beag agus Biorachan Mòr'.

3. Fèisean nan Gàidheal has been contracted to devise a new, international, traditional music festival for the Highlands, as part of Highland2007, the Scottish Year of Highland Culture. This will be delivered along with partners, such as the Promoters' Arts Network (PAN), and will feature young people working alongside the professionals who inspire them most. It will take place in venues across the Highlands from 2005 onwards.

"... our own home-grown Fèis movement has enjoyed staggering growth and success."

Dr James Hunter CBE, then Chair of Highlands & Islands Enterprise

2.4 Delivery of provision and access

The Fèis movement has prided itself over the years in being able to offer high quality tuition experiences to young people in their own communities and at an affordable price. In many cases these are some of the most isolated and cash poor areas of Scotland.

In relation to delivery of provision and access, these are some of the rights that we would consider appropriate:

- Every person living in Scotland has the right to access high quality cultural provision, and this should apply equally to urban and rural settings
- The provision of quality, affordable transport links within and to/from communities has to be a key consideration in ensuring that everyone in Scotland can access culture
- Barriers to delivery have to be minimised, including access to funding, streamlining bureaucracy, suitable workshop/performance spaces, adequate training opportunities and access to equipment
- Barriers to access have to be minimised, including suitable affordable transport, disabled access, affordable admission/participation prices, access to equipment and up-to-date information
- Other barriers to access and participation have to be challenged – for example in the case of song, where there is a really poor attitude in Scotland towards any male singing anywhere other than a football match! Great though that sound might be, within the wider world of traditional music, this attitude is changing, possibly as the result of more young role models leading the scene.

Cool Traditional Music

The Fèis movement in Scotland has been instrumental in ensuring that the image of traditional music amongst young people has undergone a dramatic change. At the recent Fèis Rois **Ceòlraidh** concert at

Eden Court Theatre in Inverness, it was very obvious from the young people taking part that they regard their participation in traditional Gaelic music as 'cool.'

This point was highlighted by musical director for the evening, Donald Shaw, a member of the internationally acclaimed group Capercaillie, who said: ***"When we were starting out with the band 20 years ago at Oban High School, I used to have to enter the school with my accordion under the cover of darkness. Now I am glad to say, it is cool to be a traditional musician."***

To bring about attitudinal change like this requires sustained support, and normalisation of all aspects of Scottish Culture. One of the major barriers to the speaking of Gaelic, for instance, is that it is viewed as the language of the school, and not 'cool' outwith that formal setting. Offering young people the opportunity to take part in activities involving Gaelic outside school, helps them to identify such activity as being normal, and shifts their attitude towards the language. The same may be true of all cultural activity.

2.5 Marketing and Promotion

The media in Scotland has an important part to play in the promotion of culture within Scotland. All too often, cultural programming is relegated to minority status within the broadcast and print media. An example of this is that there is more chance of seeing a Scottish traditional musician appearing on BBC Four than on BBC Scotland! But there is a lack of cultural programming in general across the media in Scotland.

As broadcasting is a reserved matter, it will be difficult to bring this change about, except through a combination of goodwill, and through time as other measures succeed, and there is a resulting sea change in attitudes towards Scottish culture.

The Scottish Executive and publicly funded institutions should do more to raise the profile of Scottish culture within the Scottish population and abroad. This of course extends to tourism bodies such as VisitScotland who have been singularly poor in promoting Scottish culture to the domestic and international tourist trade. This is in sharp contrast to the Irish Tourist Board – Bòrd Fáilte - whose sustained and measured marketing of Irish culture has virtually made the word 'Celtic' synonymous with 'Irish' culture, and their music is recognised worldwide.

The following should be regarded as rights and actions in terms of marketing and promotion:

- The cultural sector has the right to expect first class marketing and promotion support from the public sector in Scotland
- There should be a dedicated Gaelic digital television channel
- Every person in Scotland should have the right to access information on cultural activities as easily as possible through a range of media, including the web, and other locally based forms of dissemination
- Every person in Scotland should have the right to purchase a ticket for a cultural activity as easily and as quickly as possible
- The Scottish Executive and its NDPBs, including VisitScotland, have to be far more proactive in marketing the Scottish Cultural sector both at home and abroad
- The BBC in Scotland (particularly television) should be compelled to broadcast more programmes which focus on Scottish Culture, promoting the sector to a wider section of the population

2.6 Maximising the Creative Potential of the Scottish People

The Fèis movement and Fèisean nan Gàidheal have been successful because they are delivering locally appropriate and accessible programmes of activity of which local volunteers have 'ownership'. First Minister Jack McConnell recognised the work of the Fèis movement in his St. Andrew's Day speech, and hopefully the key aspects that have led to this success can be taken on board by the Cultural Commission and implemented. The following is an example of the social impact that greater participation in culture can offer:

Case Study - Measuring the Social Impact

In an independent report by Comedia, *Use or Ornament: The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*, its author, Francois Matarasso concluded: **"Rarely have I seen work whose quality and value spoke so eloquently for itself as that which I witnessed in the Fèis movement in Scotland."**

Detailed research was conducted by Comedia with 3 of the local Fèisean; Fèis Bharraigh, the first Fèis established, Fèis Rois, the biggest of the Fèisean, based in Ross & Cromarty, and Fèis na h-Òige in Inverness, a Gaelic-medium Fèis.

Summarised, the report's findings revealed that:

- 78% of Fèis participants felt more self-confident as a result of having attended a Fèis.
- Many children said that they found it easier to make friends because of their Fèis experience - 96% said that they had made new friends through the Fèis.
- 79% said they had developed new skills, and most could see ways in which these skills would help them in everyday life.
- Communities felt empowered having run a successful Fèis, and 41% of those in the community were keener to become active in other local projects as a result.
- The Fèisean contribute significantly to people's sense of creativity and importance, and 93% of adults felt this was important.
- Matarasso says *If health benefits can hardly be attributed to the Fèisean, 43% said they felt better as a result of attending, and the enjoyment they produce is unquestionable.*
- 80% said they felt happier and 87% wanted to become involved in more work of this kind.

Conclusions

Fèisean nan Gàidheal believes that for Scotland to become a more creative society, there has to be mechanisms put in place which allow communities - either in the voluntary or professional sector - to become more confident about expressing their desire to engage in culture. Normalising culture will ensure that people who watch the television, go to see a film, visit a museum, read a book, or have music at their wedding, recognise all these everyday activities as cultural activities. Through time, the culture of Scotland - in all its forms - should be valued and recognised as something in which every single citizen participates in one way or another.

The Fèis movement has proved that the relationship between a group of people and 'ownership' of their culture is fundamental. Fèisean nan Gàidheal has provided a key role in ensuring that the creative potential of Fèis communities is maximised by, on the one hand reducing barriers to participation, whilst on the other, encouraging individual community identity to flourish.

There is no doubt that this approach has helped to raise the profile of the Fèis movement and traditional music within Scotland and abroad. However, for this impact to reach out to the wider Scottish community and wider culture, the nation has to become more culturally aware and confident in itself. There is a key role for the Scottish Executive, cultural organisations, the formal education sector, Scottish institutions and the media, to ensure that this message is reinforced. The Fèis movement has shown that the positive impact of participating in culture goes beyond the individual and can make real changes to the confidence and appeal of whole communities.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal
September 2004