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Karen

From: Iain Fraser [irfraser@globalnet.co.uk]
Sent: 11 September 2004 07:13
To: info
Subject: cultural rights[Scanned]

Dear Cultural Commission

If culture can be described as an activity that takes one out of the everyday routine or away from thinking about work then valid activities could include going to a fitba game, going to the bingo, going down the pub, going to the Rural, going to church, watching TV, cutting the grass or washing the car on a Sunday and first footin on Hogmanay. But are these cultural events or customs? Which of the events listed above would discontinue if there was no funding from the Scottish Executive?

I think the cultural commission has to define the difference between culture and custom before allocating rights to them. Or if custom is a sub category of culture, then differentiate between activity that can be described as national enjoyment of a great variety of highly valued customs and practices, which are each elements in the composition of the national psyche *and* other endeavours that can be described as artistic or creative but also are highly valued and play a part in determining how citizens of Scotland live their lives.

We have the chance here to come up with a new definition of what culture in Scotland is. This new definition has to have sub-elements that may be labelled customs, practices, group behaviour, creativity, creative arts, arts participation, professional sport, sport participation, creative food, food participation, education and health.

If creative arts and professional sport are to be given equal value status in this new definition how do we create that parity of esteem and perhaps even come close to parity of income? Deacon Blue or Belle and Sebastian playing a football stadium might offer a good example of parity but how about Scottish Opera setting up for an unsubsidised concert in Hampden park?

How value is attached to cultural or artistic endeavour must not be limited to snapshot polls of how popular the activity is. There exist many historic examples of how the value of a culture was not appreciated until it was too late and it had almost disappeared. The fiddle music of Cape Breton Island was about to die out in the 1970's when CBC made a film documentary asking the question "Is Cape Breton Fiddle Music dead?" The result was a great calling to arms, the founding of the Cape Breton Fiddle Society and now there is a vibrant cultural identity there. If culture can only survive if TV programmes ask the question "Is Culture Dead? then let's make the programmes!

Iain Fraser

Musician and teacher

Iain Fraser

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