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**LEISURE SERVICES**

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Mr Boyle  
Cultural Commission  
Broughton High School  
Carrington Road  
EDINBURGH  
EH4 1EG

Dear Mr Boyle,

Further to my letter of 1st October 2004, my Council considered your letter requesting comments upon the work of the Cultural Commission at its meeting of its Environmental and Leisure Services Committee on 12th October 2004.

At this meeting, I was asked to write to you with comments on the range of questions in your letter of 24th August.

Please find attached our response, and please do not hesitate to contact me if anything requires clarification or further information.

You will note in the last paragraph of our submission that we would be delighted to welcome you to Angus. While we appreciate the short timescale in which you have to carry out your work, we would be very keen to let you see how we deliver Cultural Services to the citizens of Angus.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Norman Atkinson'.

Norman Atkinson  
Head of Cultural Services

Encl.

## Appendix 2

### Cultural Commission Consultation

- Angus Council welcomes the opportunity to comment upon the Cultural Commission's work, and as a local authority which provides cultural services for its community is well aware of the perspective of the public.
- In developing artistic, cultural and social skills and providing cultural knowledge it is imperative that the public can be provided with both opportunities to learn new skills and access to the vast array of knowledge which is available. While the formal education process is responsible for the skills development for the school-age community, accessing such opportunities for the remainder of the community, especially outwith the educational institutions requires assistance.
- The Peoples' Network has been a tremendous boon to the public for accessing cultural knowledge in our public libraries. The initial capital funding which provided 90% of the installation costs of the computer equipment to our libraries was very welcome indeed. However, no allowance was made towards maintenance costs and no funds were made available to library authorities in order to replace equipment at the end of its useful life.

The project also assumed that local authorities would maintain a network of libraries. Sadly, after nine consecutive years of cuts in our funding from the Scottish Executive, we find the maintenance of the excellent scheme and the very core of our library network under severe financial pressure.

- Again our network of museums effectively helps provide a national museum service, spread across Scotland helping not only residents and their access to cultural knowledge, but also visitors who boost our tourism industry. Scotland's heritage, both natural and human is what brings tourists to our country, and local authorities provide most of Scotland's visitor attractions.

Again we find that the financial pressure upon local government is not conducive to museum development. Nevertheless in Angus we have improved the situation by opening Kirriemuir Gateway to the Glens Museum, which won the Scottish Museum of the year in 2001 and was visited by Her Majesty The Queen earlier this year.

Our museums hold precious and irreplaceable cultural artefacts and artistic works which collectively are Scotland's distributed national collection. Sadly, unlike the library service, very few of our collections are catalogued electronically with digitised images, which makes public access very difficult for the general public and researchers.

Again we would urge you to consider a cultural initiative to make this cultural knowledge available to all, perhaps along the lines of the Peoples' Network project, but making allowances for maintenance.

- We believe strongly that the voluntary sector, and our communities at large have an enormous part to play in the development of artistic, cultural and social skills. Within Angus we have the excess of 100 voluntary organisations in the Arts and Heritage field. Many of these organisations, although amateur, possess many skills and the ability to help and train others.

We do help many of these groups with small grants and support in kind, but they rely heavily upon the local authority for the provision of facilities. In Angus we administer a theatre and a number of community halls which enables these many groups, whether drama, art, musical or dance organisations to put on a large array of cultural events and performances for the public.

Sadly, again due to financial pressures, this is becoming increasingly difficult for local authorities. Upgrading our halls with modern equipment to permit local community organisations to put on the range of events and performances is costly and needs assistance from government. In terms of best value such a network of community provision, managed by local authorities but used by the communities is an ideal partnership.

Many local organisations are finding the hire fees which have to be charged increasingly difficult to afford. Here again we require assistance from government in achieving a better partnership with our voluntary organisations who after all are the major player in providing arts in the community.

- The unilateral launch of the National Cultural Strategy by the Scottish Executive paid scant attention to the role played by local authorities in providing cultural services to the public.

With the formation of the Scottish Parliament we now urgently require to forge a partnership between it and local authorities in order to provide cultural services to the public taking account of our commitment to best value.

Like other local authorities we have developed good working relationships with some of the National Institutions. We would particularly mention the National Galleries of Scotland, The National Libraries of Scotland, the National Museums of Scotland, and the Royal Commission for the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland which have all assisted us greatly with joint projects in recent years.

However having a National Cultural Strategy and cascading this to a local level cannot be left to chance, and what is urgently needed is a close scrutiny of how public money is distributed in the cultural heritage field. It is unlikely that significant new money can be found. It is therefore all the more important that we make the best use of what we have. It is imperative that scarce resources are used only when all partners in the delivery of any service, especially the local community, have been involved.

We would therefore strongly urge you to consider the inter-relationships between the various national cultural bodies bearing in mind the Scottish Parliament and how it relates to local authorities. When we were consulted on the Museums Framework we saw the need for rationalisation and clarity at a national level.

Within the heritage field alone there is a plethora of individual bodies acting independently. The National Museum, National Gallery, National Archives, National Library, the Royal Commission for the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and Historic Scotland all hold collections of cultural importance.

From a funding perspective some public money is disbursed in this field from these organisations but the Scottish Museums Council, Scottish Library and Information Council and Scottish Arts Council also publicly fund many heritage projects, in addition to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The arts field closely parallels this.

There is a great need for the bringing together of these bodies to provide a more coherent strategic approach at a national level. There are clearly gains to be made in terms of best value in the delivery of cultural services from the Scottish Executive. Local authorities are already well down the road of best value and many have organised their cultural services into single departments, often alongside education. There is much confusion and duplication and we desperately need to ensure that scarce resources are used to maximum benefit of the Scottish public.

- In the delivery of cultural facilities and ensuring access to them, we believe that local authorities are best placed to provide the network across Scotland. Most burghs should have a library, museum and hall, and the larger burghs and cities should have larger facilities including a theatre and an archive.

Within the smaller communities we believe that, with assistance, more use could be made of schools to ensure a network of halls and libraries. Schools have been built in the main for young people between the ages of 5 to 18, and are mainly used by this part of the population, but they are only open for a third of the time.

These are significant investments and financial assistance is needed in order to enable physical changes to be made to encourage community use of these resources in the evenings, weekends, and school holidays. When new schools are being built, again an audit of community cultural provision requires to be undertaken and then built into the new school.

Both these approaches require assistance with running costs and also new attitudes adopted concerning the role of the school in the community in delivering cultural facilities and providing wide access while taking full account of the traditional duty to educate young people.

- We have mentioned the range of cultural events organised by the voluntary sector and added to this is the programme provided by local authorities and the national organisations.

While some local authorities and tourist boards put much of this together to provide regular "What's on" type calendars of events, there is in general little co-ordination encouraged at a local or national level. We note that EventScotland is beginning to address this at a national level, and we hope that the soon-to-be Tourist Hubs may also do so at regional level.

We feel that this should be encouraged, however not just for tourists but for the Scottish public in order to engage more people in cultural activity.

Our local libraries do try to make cultural calendars available, but in this age of electronic information there would appear to be a great opportunity to capture the whole array of cultural events and make this information accessible to all. This should be the responsibility of a national office which can relate closely to the local authorities and the regional tourism hubs.

- In much of the above we have suggested ways of providing facilities, creating opportunities for learning and giving access to cultural information to the public. By maximising these we will go a long way to providing the platform for creative thought to flourish. Facilities which enable digital media, music and film to be created are scarce, but more are becoming available in our schools, colleges and universities. More opportunities for the public to get access to these facilities is needed.

The creative spark is often the result of exposure to an experience of cultural excellence. Young people need to experience a wide range of cultural excellence. The cultural co-ordinators scheme piloted in some schools requires to be strengthened in order that all school age children can experience the range of excellence in our cultural institutions. They have to see top quality painting, drama, hear top quality music, see a conservator at work in a museum or archive.

- Cultural rights and entitlements are already with us – free books from our libraries, and free admission to our museums to mention but two, but these are being eroded due to financial restraints. This is largely due to the low priority given to culture from the top, and the Cultural Commission is a position to tell the Scottish Executive that it must put culture back high on its agenda.

Every child, indeed every citizen should have access to the range of cultural facilities and knowledge which we have mentioned in our submission.

Each community should have an adequate library, museum, hall and within each local authority area there should be a theatre and an archive. These facilities require funding and they have to be affordable to their community.

Each child, indeed each citizen also has a right to know about the history and culture of his/her country. While we have outlined ways in which access to cultural knowledge can be achieved we feel that the teaching of Scottish History in our schools must be addressed. The study of Scottish history at our universities has advanced greatly in the last two decades, however this has not translated to our school curriculum and we feel strongly that this must be improved.

- We are grateful for this opportunity to comment on what is a very important subject, and we note that you will be in touch with us again.

While we appreciate the short timescale in which you have to do your work, we would be delighted to welcome you and your Commission to Angus. We are proud of the many cultural facilities we provide for the community, and your Commission is more than welcome to join us for a visit if this can be achieved.

Norman Atkinson  
Head of Cultural Services  
Angus Council  
October 2004