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Cultural Commission

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RESPONSE

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Introduction: This Response is both General and related to Architecture, my particular sector.

1. Definitions

1.1 "Culture" and "The Arts": it is encouraging when we talk about Culture - which seems to be a broad and inclusive term - rather than "The Arts", which sometimes seems self-limiting.

1.2.as for "what is culture": It's one of these terms that we don't, particularly, need to define - off the top of my head I'd say it's "what's in The List". (Note that The List includes sport!)

1.3 Ministerial Portfolios: it's a continuing embarrassment that "Culture" - a critical but subtle thing, who's "bottom line" is immeasurable - appears secondary to "Tourism", of less-critical importance but with a measurable bottom line. It is noticeable that the cultures that we admire - Catalonia, for example - are extraordinarily successful tourist destinations because they have had the confidence to put Culture first, before tourism - and not the other way round.

2. Delivery, General

(It is apparent that the most successful recent Cultural/Arts initiatives are those that have capitalised existing initiatives, rather than floated new "Big Ideas")

2.1 Arts Buildings: it should be noted those that are particularly successful (D.C.A, Taigh Caersabaigh, DanceBase, The Scottish Poetry Library etc) have, firstly, supported existing organisations and, secondly, then acted as a wider focus for the community's cultural activities.

2.2 Information: too many Arts/Culture access/information initiatives result in a subsidised, free, unread and unreadable information sheet/newspaper etc...ignoring the fact that the Market does this quite well. Respect and work with organisations like The List, where the simple congruence of activities like clubbing and sport with "The Arts" must be one of the most fertile ways for Scots to broaden their cultural experience. There are may even be initiatives with such organisations that should be financially-supported, or ushered through red tape - an online List or

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similar, in every Community Centre/Job Centre/Old Folks Club etc would be brilliant.

3. Delivery, Education

3.1 Schools: must start to teach "visual literacy" - not so much about paintings, painting, environmental issues etc, but about how the world around us is formed, and how that impacts on all our lives. This might be taught as a simple sub-module of Art & Design, based on examining a pupil's own classroom (daylight, artificial light, glare, environment modification, noise) then school, then neighbourhood etc etc.

3.2 Wider Public: aside from other initiatives we should note the massive public appetite for architecture & design and, once again, support existing initiatives. Doors Open Day is a huge success that is painfully limited by its minute funding.

4. Sector Support

It would, I believe, be wrong for the Cultural Commission to address the cultural climate around the delivery of buildings in Scotland. 2001's "A Policy on Architecture in Scotland" is, in many ways, the parallel to Jack McConnell's St Andrews Day Speech, setting out the principles which must lie behind Building in the same way as McConnell set out those behind Culture.

Just as the Cultural Commission is to, as far as I understand it, set-out how to deliver on these principles, there is the opportunity, or obligation, for the nascent ADS - Architectural and Design Scotland - to set-out how the "Policy" might be delivered. It seems to me that it is enough for the Cultural Commission to reinforce the existence of this opportunity and obligation, and look for partnership in linking the Principles and supporting delivery.