

INTERNATIONAL PEN SCOTTISH CENTRE

FOUNDED
1927

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Please reply to:

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09.11.04

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Dear James Boyle,
Please find enclosed a submission to the Cultural Commission from Scottish PEN, the Scottish Chapter of International PEN. We would be happy to provide further information or to meet for a discussion. The vice-president, Jenni Calder, has compiled this submission with me on behalf of our committee. Jenni is our representative on the Literature Forum.
Please let me know if you would like a copy sent electronically to others.

Yours sincerely,

Tessa Ransford

17 NOV 2004

THE SCOTTISH CENTRE OF
INTERNATIONAL PEN
A worldwide association of writers

Honorary President:
Edwin Morgan OBE

Honorary Vice-President:
Joan Lingard MBE

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James Allan Ford CB, MC
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INTERNATIONAL PEN, SCOTTISH CENTRE: SUBMISSION TO THE CULTURAL COMMISSION

Scottish PEN, as one of International PEN's 150 centres around the world, has four essential Strategic Aims.

- *Building a world community of writers guided by the values of the PEN Charter (see blue leaflet for the Charter)*
- *Reaffirming the importance of literature and literacy in civil society*
- *Supporting access to literature across linguistic borders*
- *Defending freedom to write and supporting writers under repression*

International PEN considers a vigorous literary life indispensable to the free development of the individual and of a peaceful civil society. Each Centre's work relates to its own context within the broader sphere of international commitment. In Scotland over the last 77 years PEN has fulfilled its role on the world stage and affirmed a belief in the energy and value of Scotland's languages and literatures.

Much of what we stand for is shared by other organisations working for literature and language in Scotland, especially those that have international aims. As our primary emphasis is international, we can, through our existing world-wide network of practising writers and editors, enhance the international aspects of other organisations. Scottish PEN has contributed importantly to issues of translation and linguistic rights, literature across linguistic borders (which may be internal as well as external to a nation), and protection of freedom of expression and of writers under threat.

The work of Scottish PEN

We believe any civilised society, in its own interests, should nourish and encourage its PEN Centre (as indeed happened in Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War). PEN is an active and campaigning organisation, neither profit-making nor profit-seeking, all of whose members are practising writers or editors.

Scottish PEN's recent achievements and current projects include:

- An increasing focus on the predicaments and needs of writers in exile.
- The pioneering Baltic Exchange project which provides a foundation for further international exchanges.
- Annual lectures and Writers-in-prison events at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.
- Poster highlighting 100 Scottish women writers, most overlooked by the conventional canon.
- The annual Naomi Mitchison Memorial Lecture, with the University of Glasgow.
- Two-way translation project of immigrant writers in three languages, culminating in the pamphlet and CD *Exile*, seen by PEN Centres abroad as a model of what can be done.
- Promotion of Scotland's wealth of excellent writers, especially those semi-invisible in a market-led environment.
- Promotion of Scots and Gaelic on the world stage.
- *Crossing Borders* project, producing a CD with an international theme featuring twelve contemporary writers in Scotland, for distribution to schools and colleges in Scotland and PEN Centres around the world.

World City of Literature/City of Asylum

As Edinburgh accepts its responsibilities as World City of Literature, a project supported by PEN, it will need our continuing collaboration in order to achieve its aims. The World City of Literature steering group is in contact with Stavanger's Express Centre for freedom of expression. Stavanger was one of the first to become a City of Asylum, welcoming and supporting adopted writers in exile. Scottish PEN proposes that the City of Asylum principle should be subscribed to by Edinburgh and Scotland alongside the City of Literature remit.

The Future

Future projects include:

- Education: establishing PEN clubs in some of Scotland's secondary schools and fostering contact with schools in other countries where there are PEN Centres.
- Translation: initiating and fostering translation in Scotland and internationally.
- Partnerships: expanding partnerships with other literary and cultural organisations (for example foreign institutes in Scotland, the Scottish Refugee Council, Artists in Exile)
- Writers' Museum: Scottish PEN endorses the proposal of an expanded and augmented Writers' Museum that would present the full richness of Scotland's literary heritage and act as a focal point for literature-related activities

Needs

To play its part in developing the World City of Literature and City of Asylum, as concepts and realities, to sustain projects already under way and develop new ones, and to continue to contribute on the international scene, Scottish PEN, which has until now relied entirely on voluntary work by hard-pressed writers, needs more resources. These include:

- Office space for administration and storage of materials
- Meeting space – could combine with the above
- Part-time secretary
- Physical presence in any proposed literature centre or expanded Writers' Museum

Conclusion

Scottish PEN has been in existence since 1927, kept in operation by voluntary effort on the part of often struggling writers. As we move towards a post-national world, radiating with cultural and linguistic diversity, it becomes even more important for Scottish PEN to continue a vigorous existence in the difficult realm of communication, truth and literature. To give practical support to writers who are uprooted or persecuted, it needs to be supported itself and provided with the basic tools by Scotland's literary strategy planners and the political executive.

Tessa Ransford, November 2004

Tessa Ransford
President Scottish PEN