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From: JCGRIERSON@aol.com
Sent: 22 September 2004 10:41
To: info
Subject: Scottish Arts Council-Theatre Royal Dumfries[Scanned]

Dear Sirs

I was interested to read the letter from Mr Boyle in today's Dumfries Standard seeking comments on the Arts in Scotland. Further to this I would comment as follows:-

I believe that the Scottish Arts Council is both arrogant and incompetent -strong claims which are justified in respect of their handling of the proposed development of the Theatre Royal in Dumfries.

The position is that the Theatre which is owned by a club (the Guild of Players) has insufficient funds to upgrade the fabric of the building and as a result has sought funding from the SAC. This has in the past been withheld because of the restricted membership and as a result to get round this impasse the Club has proposed giving the Theatre on a ninety nine year lease to the Dumfries Theatre Trust.

At an initial meeting, the Trust stated that the Board would be drawn from a wide group of organisations including the Guild of Players but no members of the Guild could be members in a private capacity. As the main theatre goers in Dumfries are members of the Guild I queried this with the consultants appointed by the Trust and received dogs abuse for my impertinence. I wrote to complain to the SAC who had recommended the consultants who were former members of the SAC and was told that this was a matter for the Trust.

I later received from the Trust a copy of the consultants report which I found inadequate in many respects, for example it did not mention that both Historic Scotland and the Civic Trust had misgivings about the proposals:balancing figures had been inserted in respect of funding from the Council although none had been agreed: no provision had been made for VAT and no allowance had been made for the need to have overdraft funding in view of the possible delays in receiving funding from the various participants. The last straw was that no provision had been made for depreciation on expenditure of over £9000000 and if this were to be taken into account the suggestion that a breakeven could be achieved in three years let alone ever was laughable.

I wrote to the SAC pointing out my misgivings only to be told that they would not respond to me other than through the Trust. On taking the matter up with my MSP, Dr Elaine Murray they reluctantly replied to say that the financial information did not need to be accurate at this stage and could be looked into once funding had been agreed. I found this extraordinary as if this is the case what is the point in obtaining a forecast of the potential outcome. Ignoring the accuracy of the funding requirements seems to me to be a recipe for disaster.

I remain deeply annoyed at the SAC response as I feel that I am being treated as a layman who has no knowledge of the subject. This is far from the case however as most of my working life has been spent in finance and I am a qualified accountant of many years standing.

Yours faithfully

James C Grierson FCCA, FAIA, ACIS

16/03/2005