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From: Ian Carradice [iac@st-andrews.ac.uk]
Sent: 27 September 2004 16:55
To: info
Cc: Principal@st-andrews.ac.uk
Subject: Consultation phase 1[Scanned]

Dear Mr Boyle,

Cultural Commission

Thank you for inviting me to contribute to the Commission's consultation. My comments largely relate to Museums and Art Galleries, since this area of Scottish culture is the one in which I have professional interests, in my capacities as a teacher, as a curator, and as convenor of University Museums in Scotland. I will attempt to frame my comments under the headings suggested:

1. Education

Support the existing providers of education and training with a proven track record of success; encourage new provision in areas where there is a perceived lack (this should be properly researched, but leadership has often been noted as a problem; there is also concern in Scotland about the loss of subject specialism); reduce barriers to access for whatever reason: social, economic, school curriculum, etc.

2. The institutional infrastructure

Provide the museums sector with more resources. Core funding is needed, rather than more short-term, usually collaborative, projects. Reliance on the latter is a false economy, since it deflects resources into 'co-ordinating' (ideas and policies) rather than 'delivering' (services).

3. The delivery of resources and access to them

The existing curators, managers, etc., already have the ideas, the policies and the networks; they just need the extra resources to deliver them effectively.

4. Marketing and promotion

Providers need resources, and perhaps training, to 'sell' their services. They also need to be alert to changing expectations of society, both in terms of quality and in the type of 'cultural product' that will attract new audiences, particularly the young. For museums and galleries, this means preserving and 'selling' to the public the best of what they have always done, but also creating new services (exhibitions, community services, etc.) that will encourage and broaden access.

5. Encouraging creativity

All levels of education need inspirational teachers who can capture the imagination of the young and encourage them to be either providers or customers of a vibrant cultural scene. Teachers in training need to be encouraged and enabled to use material culture. At the tertiary level, training providers need to be of the highest quality. Just as important, the 'cultural industries' need to be perceived as worthy of attracting the best students. An industry that is starved of resources and consequently over-reliant on volunteers (mostly retired, middle-class) is not an attractive option for intelligent, highly motivated and ambitious young people.

6. The concept of cultural rights

The historical development of museums in the UK has reflected broader developments in society, and the strongest defining characteristic of museums is their provision of access to the public. At first, this was restricted to a privileged few, defined largely by class or education, but in the mid-nineteenth century new public museums were created as facilities for 'social improvement'. Now, they have a role as centres of cultural and creative activity, providing community services that should complement those offered by other facilities for public education or entertainment.

7. Key issues and main priorities

We should only be encouraging access to products that are worthy. Our artists need good quality teaching and guidance to bring out their full potential. Our gallery managers and museum curators need the best training and they need the resources to provide the services that will attract and inspire our people. It is also vital that the sector has the standing to attract people with the talent and the managerial potential to develop and steer the creative industries into the future.

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