

24 September 2004

29 SEP 2004

Karen Watson
Cultural Commission
Broughton House
Carrington Road
Edinburgh
EH4 1EG

Cultural Services – Arts

Gracefield Arts Centre
28 Edinburgh Road
Dumfries DG1 1NW
Any enquiries please contact
Rebecca Coggins
Direct Dial 01387 262084
Fax 01387 255173
E-mail RebeccaC@dumgal.gov.uk

Dear Karen

RESPONSE TO CULTURAL COMMISSION CONSULTATION

I'd like to thank you again for coming to Dumfries and Galloway in August and am pleased to attach some comments in response to the current round of consultation. These are written from my perspective as Cultural Services Manager - Arts.

In addition, as promised, I have enclosed some material that may also be of interest, including the region's Audience Atlas prepared by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre and the latest version of our Advancement Plan for Change, which advocates a new approach to the delivery of regional arts services in Dumfries and Galloway, and may be a useful model for other parts of Scotland.

I look forward to hearing more about the Cultural Commission's work as it progresses and can confirm that our Department would be pleased to help facilitate any further meetings, or other consultation exercises that might take place in Dumfries and Galloway.

Best wishes,



Rebecca Coggins
Cultural Services Manager - Arts

c. Alastair Johnston, Operations Manager, Cultural Services

Cultural Commission Response

From Rebecca Coggins, Cultural Services Manager – Arts
Dumfries and Galloway Council

Education

Young people at focus groups we undertook in Stranraer as part of the Dumfries and Galloway Audience Development Pilot Project (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre) reported that **young people need to have an early introduction to arts and culture – if they don't have access before the age of 10 they are very unlikely to attend or participate when they get older.**

It is therefore vital that all children under the age of 10 have access to cultural experiences, and this is probably best done through schools, ideally facilitated through the Cultural Coordinators programme or any successor scheme (ideally mainstreamed into local authority provision):

Pre-10 experiences should include:

- Access to quality performing arts experience – visiting companies/ musicians, trips to local theatres/performances and participation in local/national education and outreach programmes (active participation as well as watching others perform)
- Access to quality visual and applied art – trips to local and national art galleries, travelling gallery, participation in local art gallery education and outreach programmes
- Access to quality film and new media – trips to local and regional film theatres and participation in their education and outreach programmes
- Access to creative professionals – artists in residence schemes (to include range of artforms including creative writing and new media)
- Access to local and national heritage – trips to local and national museums and archives, participation in local (and national) museums outreach and education schemes
- Access to literature and creative writing – linked to local libraries
- Tuition – quality arts teaching

In **secondary school** the same range of access to arts and cultural experiences should be guaranteed – culture should form a core part of the curriculum and this should include the development of skills such as creating and promoting one's own art and expressing one's own culture (sub-cultures included), plus critical analysis. This will enable young people to be confidently creative themselves, while having the skills to interpret and interact positively with other people's expressions of creativity and other forms of culture.

Education also needs to be seen as a continuum, of which school is only a part. **Life-long learning and community learning should be a key part of national and local government-funded arts and cultural provision in any**

given local area. Active participation for learning purposes as well as enjoyment should be a key goal, as well as the opportunity to learn from creative professionals and have access to high quality arts and cultural experiences at all stages of life.

Institutions

Two key priorities for me would be **'fostering and promoting access to excellence for all in Scotland'** and a **'community planning approach to local cultural provision'**. I would advocate local responsiveness, achieved by including local communities in determining their local cultural strategies, while at the same time supporting creative professionals, companies and organisations who can demonstrate the excellence of their product, and facilitating bridges between the two.

Best placed to support and facilitate culture at a local level are local authorities, in partnership with their community planning partners. **Every local authority area should have a cultural strategy that is 'owned' and delivered in close collaboration with key partners.** These key partners would include national funding agencies and organisations (to ensure for example that Scottish Ballet, or the National Galleries of Scotland is able to impact locally); local government; local agencies such as tourist boards, health boards and local enterprise companies; local arts organisations and voluntary organisations; creative professionals and individual residents.

All local community plans should have a strand within them that considers cultural provision and development.

By far the most important players in Scottish local cultural life in terms of providing cultural opportunities for both local people and visitors are local authorities. However **the word 'adequate' must be removed from the legislation governing local authority provision.** It has led to vast inequalities in provision across Scotland and has placed culture on the very periphery of local authority provision (if it is there at all). Culture (and especially the arts) is accorded a subsequent lack of respect within local government, and were it not for the advocacy of national cultural bodies such as SAC in promoting best practice and excellence, many of Scotland's recent cultural achievements (local and national) would not have been made.

I believe national advocacy for excellence and for equality of provision/opportunity across Scotland needs to be led from the Centre, while local provision needs to be properly resourced so that it can facilitate the growth of grass-roots culture and local community involvement, and make sure local residents are able to take up a full range of cultural opportunities, including the challenging.

Delivery/

Delivery

Key words here are **partnership, a community planning approach, increased resources at local level** where provision interacts with communities and individuals, **and increased resources at the centre** to add value to local provision, advocate best practice and encourage high standards across Scotland.

We need to **change the current short-term funding culture**, which is based on projects rather than core support. This has led to a funding-led, short-termist culture within cultural provision (especially arts) and to a lack of consolidation of otherwise positive interventions. This short-termist approach raises community aspirations, and then dashes their growing hopes and expectations.

Marketing and Promotion

The key to this is in **understanding audiences** and their possible motivation for attending or participating in cultural activity (or for not attending). However an emphasis on audiences need not mean altering the cultural 'product' in order to meet the needs and desires of the audience – the product might be an entirely new and potentially life-changing experience that the audience cannot anticipate.

Instead we should use what we know about audiences to help us to get the right messages across to them about any given cultural product, i.e. to help them understand why it might be worth their while to experience it. Understanding audiences will also help us to present cultural products in new and different ways, ones that make the experience more accessible, appealing, memorable and life-enhancing.

This area needs resourcing – funding and training. Too much concentration on the product with little consideration of anything but the 'core audience' has led to perceptions of 'elitism'. The cultural sector is also poor at marketing and audience development, especially in rural areas where many arts events are promoted by unpaid volunteers. There are few professional marketing posts in culture and the arts (none in Dumfries and Galloway, for example).

It should also be remembered that audience development means attracting and retaining audiences. The aim should be to include the socially excluded, and then to keep them included. This means long-term investment in audience development resources, not one-off free ticket schemes, and also investment in the product itself, to ensure it can meet the growing expectations of existing and newly 'included' audiences.

Creativity/

Creativity

I believe we should have creativity-promotion policies, strategies and campaigns, in the same way that we have health promotion policies, strategies and campaigns.

Creativity should be a priority within all aspects of education and placed at the heart of learning.

Creativity should also be encouraged in other aspects of life – for example the working environment. A day per year per employee doing creative activity would greatly enhance skills and morale. (An example heard about recently was a one-day life-drawing class for a group of midwives. Their feedback showed that not only did they become more confident in their creative skills, but they understood better how different people see and interpret the same things differently, and they even began to see the bodies of the women they worked with differently – moving from a predominantly clinical perspective to a more holistic one, which helped enhance their care skills – c.f. Steve Tilley, Nursing Studies, University of Edinburgh).

Cultural Rights

We need to replace the 'optional' approach to local authority provision (i.e. the adequacy clause) with pledges to ensure that citizens have access to meaningful, memorable and transformational cultural experiences from the cradle to the grave.

Citizens should also have the right to participate in local and national cultural planning.

Children should have the right to an education rich in cultural input, fostering a sense of 'ownership', respect for and pride in their own culture (in its various forms, historical and contemporary) and respect for and understanding of the cultures of others.

Key Issues for Arts/Culture in Dumfries and Galloway

These are some current issues:

- How to maintain access to a broad range of cultural provision for all citizens with very scarce resources available to do so
- How to ensure the availability of meaningful learning experiences related to culture for citizens of all ages, not just school pupils (though this latter is vital)
- How to improve local arts delivery by combining current strands of arts provision to create a central Strategic Arts Unit for the region and Area

Arts Teams – this needs additional resources, as many current staff contracts are short term, linked to one-off short-term projects

- How to be responsive to local community needs and aspirations – in particular how to find the core grant funding now sought by new community-led cultural initiatives
- How to resource the voluntary arts sector – key providers of cultural activity and almost all reliant on unpaid volunteers
- How to ensure local audiences have access to excellence
- How to overcome barriers of geography, ability, poor health, poverty of means and poverty of aspiration
- Our audience atlas indicates a high level of interest in the arts and culture – a key challenge is how to translate this into repeat attendances that will help sustain local provision and provide positive experiences for D&G citizens
- How to continue to develop the region's creative industries, including micro-businesses now that ERDF funding is coming to an end
- How to maximise the benefits of cultural tourism for residents, visitors and local cultural and business sectors
- How to develop partnerships with the health sector and integrate arts and creativity within mainstream healthcare – there is willingness on both sides to do this but we need the resources and expertise to do so.