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From: Dave Rushton [local.tv@virgin.net]
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To: info
Subject: Response & Comments from Institute of Local Television & The Broadcasting Trust[Scanned]

Response and Comments to Cultural Commission from the Institute of Local Television & The Broadcasting Trust

Thank you for inviting the Institute and the Trust to contribute to the Cultural Commission's work. Some background on the two organisations (and myself).

The Institute of Local Television was established in 1989 to research and contribute towards the introduction of local television channels in the UK. The Institute became a company limited by guarantee in 2000 and in addition to the early objectives now works with post graduate students on TV programmes on artists and writers in Scotland for distribution on local television services in the UK and Europe as well as through the web and DVD.

The Broadcasting Trust (a charity) was set up in 2003 from the merger of the long-established Television Trust for Scotland and the Association of Scottish Small-scale Broadcasters. The Trust provides equipment, training and assistance to community and voluntary organisations seeking to establish community TV and radio stations. The Trust has an archive of local, community art-oriented TV programmes produced (mostly) in Scotland

Following the introduction of the Communication Act 2003 the Broadcasting Trust has recently sought a wider role than its predecessors - as a model Trust - for handling devolved responsibilities in broadcasting.

The Broadcasting Trust believes that if media literacy is to stimulate wider public interest and decision making informing media policy (as the 2003 Communication Act recommends) then responsibility for regulating small-scale broadcasting should be devolved to a political layer closely represented in the footprint of the broadcast services. Local and community radio and TV would become the responsibility of local Broadcast Trusts. The (current) Trust is therefore of the view that the starting point for public involvement in broadcasting is a real choice to be made locally to use small-scale frequencies for the delivery of localised services rather than for their combination to deliver regional or nation services, which in future may better be delivered by satellite rather than terrestrial means.

Also with the assistance of the Institute and its post-graduate programme the Trust distributes DVD's on writers and artists visiting and working in Scotland and a short series on Community Television, drawing on examples from the UK and Europe.

Both organisations are members of Open Channels for Europe which lobbies for the introduction of open access television and radio by (in part) shifting the weight of legal responsibility for what's transmitted from the broadcaster to the producer. The Broadcasting Trust is the UK partner in the YEFF! network of European broadcasters/producers working with young filmmakers on race and diversity programming.

My own background I was a member of Art & Language in the 1970s, co-author of Politics of Art Education (1979) and subsequently editor/author of Citizen Television: a local dimension to public

service broadcasting (1993), Local Television Reviewed (1994), Creating Local Television (1997) and Don Quixote's Art & Television (1998) - and director of Edinburgh Television and Channel 6 Dundee (1999-2003). I've recently begun exhibiting again, currently in Berlin and during the summer at Model Art Gallery during the Edinburgh Art Festival.

So to your questions/topics

Education: How do we develop artistic, cultural and social skills and provide cultural knowledge?

Developing artistic, cultural and social skills - fine, okay but 'and provide cultural knowledge' is much too deterministic, too finite and solidified - top down and one dimensional. Knowledge 'provided' excludes interpretation or at least strongly indicates a correct understanding. Perhaps it would be better if the phrase were 'for interpreting cultural engagement'.

The public service broadcasting legacy shares much with the justification for the introduction and early management culture of CEMA and the Arts Council - particularly in representing interests to a legitimate class culture as national culture and (what remains of this) lingers found in the over centralised role passed off as a certainty in the dissemination and narrow self-selection of both the arts and public service broadcast management. The gallery, the museum and broadcasting's roles contributed to promoting both citizenship and a sense of inclusion but within a national framework of priority and vision - whereas today the experienced cultural interface is more realistically comprised of local and global elements in discerning character, complexity and priority.

If public broadcasting, the museum and the gallery should still remain infused with a shared and socially inclusive objective (public service broadcasting, public galleries and museums) then a renewed social objective for all three would be better realised much more locally.

Iconic national projects can continue to be sustained and as a focus for global access. It is interpretation of the local contribution bringing about the production, enquiry and visibility of more localised, radicalised and critical/perhaps less commercial/glossy/imitative cultural forms. The Communications Act talks of 'media literacy' and I'm not so averse to considering an 'art literacy' agenda, a multiplicity of languages maybe, but at least the ambition of communication if not always of fulfilment.

More money therefore should go into risk ventures, less tail-ending success, while mounting a forthright defence in the press of 'ambiguity', 'uncertainty' etc. The arts should 'occupy' the media - if necessary with some funding support - while longer term sustaining development should be only peer-reviewed for funding decisions at all levels/forms. Sorry, retire all the aparatchiks and mandarins - if you're not currently engaged in art practice/theory, then please leave.

The institutional infrastructure: How best to organise and support the cultural sector in Scotland to deliver the maximum value in the most effective manner?

See above - but again the question begs itself - would the maximum value include social revolution - or is 'maximum value' implicitly curtailed within the 'national' political status quo? Surely not if radical solutions are understood and genuinely being sought they will be political as well as cultural.

The most obvious contemporary political/cultural question, how do non-militant muslims and non-believers get anywhere close to understanding or comprehending a culture in which suicide bombing is an

ever growing accepted personal option? Would such an understanding comprise some form of political legitimation? Is suicide bombing capable of a radical translation for cultures which prize above all/much else the individual and continuing material life?

The delivery of services and access to them: How best to provide cultural facilities and ensure the widest access? Again the 'media literacy' objective might be borrowed from broadcasting (see localtvonline.com, where this is explored in its context). An 'art literacy' scenario would not be much different in scope - leading to promoting local opportunities for participation/engagement in tandem with viewing/screening/listening and policy making.

Marketing and promotion: How to increase and broaden the profile of the audience and public engaging with cultural activity in Scotland?

Here too the link between local(ised) public media (shared across national boundaries) (for example, the Trust's Art in Scotland TV archive currently running in 1.5 million homes in Berlin) and art representation/presentation. Any funding provided by an 'arts council'/public body should require that a copy of the work (reproduction or a video if performance/interview with artist(s) etc) is placed in the public realm - this would help support local media 'representing' work/artists and issues.

Encouraging creativity: What is the best way to maximise the creative potential of the people of Scotland?

Staff all funding bodies from volunteers working in the sector, maximum five year term with gap before re-engagement.

The concept of 'cultural rights for the Scottish citizen, and those of its creative community'

The Arts Council board should be elected from an annual 'arts council' - comprising all artists/creative contributors/supporters in Scotland - each signed up for a basic fee (individuals x, groups xx, large organisations xxx etc, concessions o) all with one vote.

There would also be local 'arts councils' covering local authority areas (to maximise partnerships) board membership by the same process - entirely volunteer expenses only. There would be a national fund to secure some national/global objectives but otherwise funds devolved to local 'arts councils' (set up as trusts) who would assist local producers in securing match local authority (and business funds) and (if relevant) EU funding. The national fund could support local work to help promote taking local work further afield etc.

Hard to see 'cultural rights' without 'democracy' - and again no appointments, an elected board required.

David Rushton
Institute of Local Television
The Broadcasting Trust