

1 Other

dearbhan beò Gàidhlig

Dear Gaelic Friends

Dear Ms Watson

27 SEP 2004

am Bòrsa



(11)

Karen Watson
The Cultural Commission
Broughton High School
Carrington Road
Edinburgh
EH4 1EG

24 September 2004

Dear Ms Watson

I am deeply involved in Scotland's cultural life in many different ways.

As **Managing Director of Am Bòrsa Ltd**, I make animated films in Gaelic, an area which is almost entirely neglected by broadcasters, who find it cheaper and easier to acquire foreign cartoons and dub them into the language. It has been shown that children are acutely aware of being fed second-hand cultural products, and respond far more positively to animation which is originated in their own culture. My first film, *Piobairean Bhòrnais* (made for BBC Alba) has been screened worldwide with its original Gaelic soundtrack, and has been requested by many Gaelic schools and community groups. It is through indigenous production like this that confidence in the language will grow.

As **Convener of the PACT Scotland Animation Group**, I represent animation producers all over Scotland. This is an industry which requires a great deal of international cooperation and financing. Scotland's position is disadvantaged by tax incentives in countries like Canada and France, which attract investment and coproduction away from the UK. Despite this handicap, there is a burgeoning confidence in the animation sector, which needs urgently to be matched by training, state support, and a dedicated champion for the industry.

As **Art Critic for the Sunday Herald**, I am enormously proud of the visual arts in Scotland, which play a key role on the world stage. Ranging from the National Galleries' Playfair Project to our contribution to the Venice Biennale, and from last year's international Whistler festival to the consistent appearance of Scottish artists on shortlists for major contemporary prizes such as the Turner Prize and Beck's Futures, the Scottish visual arts are buzzing. Glasgow attracts many artists from abroad, and London is no longer a necessary stage on the path to success.

However, to grow a few outstanding flowers you have to water the whole garden and I am concerned that stand-still budgets and complacency may compromise the sustainability of this situation. Capital investment in gallery projects must be matched with a recognition of increased running costs. Artists earn peanuts and have very few employment rights; they must be treated as professionals if we are to continue to reap the rewards of their success.

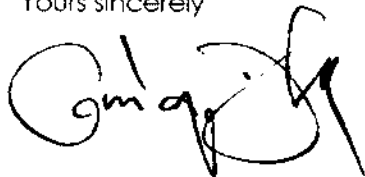
As **Gaelic Music columnist for the Scotsman**, I see the breadth and depth of musical talent in our younger generation, who have the wisdom to draw deeply from tradition before moving forward with progressive musical styles and professionalism of approach. Multiculturalism does not need to be injected artificially; within the local you find the universal. We will not appreciate other cultures without first learning to love our own.

Our traditions remain undervalued here in Scotland, and many of our best musicians are forced abroad, or into alternative employment, in order to make a living. Part of the solution is for Scotland to find a renewed confidence in its own cultural worth, a task to which the Commission should accord primary importance.

Having been through an endless cycle of consultations, reports and interim reports on Scottish Gaelic, as well as a succession of aimless reports on culture, I am wary of yet another government consultation. However I do at this stage remain hopeful that you will approach your task with open minds, for the good of the long-term health of Scottish culture, past, present and future, of which we should be tremendously proud.

I look forward to participating in this consultation during its future phases.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catriona Black', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Catriona Black