

## **National Galleries of Scotland Cultural Commission: Response to Phase Two Consultation**

The National Galleries of Scotland has considered the consultation document at length. The comments are linked to the main sections of the document and do not respond to each question explicitly.

NGS's main conclusions are as follows:

1. A key theme for the cultural sector should be partnership between public bodies, individuals, companies and voluntary bodies. The Scottish Executive should play an important role in creating an entrepreneurial and creative environment for the cultural sector that brings very real benefits to the individual citizen. Developing entrepreneurial partnerships is a real way of delivering cost efficient government initiatives.
2. Scotland should develop a more coherent view of the cultural sector as a distinct sector in the community. The sector needs to develop opportunities to work together at various levels and around various issues. Scottish Executive could play a key role in providing the environment in which the sector can flourish.
3. There is a need for increased training and education throughout the sector. The Scottish Executive could play a leading role in encouraging leadership and professionalism in the sector.
4. A more diverse funding base needs to be created, encouraging income generation strategies and philanthropy. Public funding needs to be allocated in a way that balances strategic goals with individual opportunity and takes into account a range of different organisational needs.
5. A structural solution, creating new organisations to manage and/or strategically direct the sector, is not the solution. This will take resources, skills and creativity away from the front line. We should make more effective use of the current structures in place, in particular working closely with all levels of government.
6. A representative cultural body to facilitate better communications across the sector, to bring people together at various levels, to provide training and facilitate partnership opportunities and discussion with government, would be a welcome development.

## **Section 1: Rights, Entitlements and Responsibilities**

NGS believes that it has a responsibility to give free public access to the fine art in Scotland's national collections.

NGS aims to contribute to creating a vibrant and creative cultural community which is owned and enjoyed by the people of Scotland. It is our belief that a dynamic cultural sector plays a key role in strengthening civic society and will enable Scotland to play a leading role in the UK, Europe and the world. The visual arts have a crucial role to play in this, especially as visual literacy becomes increasingly important in the information age of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

NGS believes that we need to create an entrepreneurial approach within the culture sector that brings innovation and creativity to the fore and breaks down traditional barriers. It is our considered view that this is not done on a prescriptive basis ie by legally enforcing a set of cultural rights. We would favour an approach by the state that empowers and encourages individuals to take full advantage of the cultural opportunities available to them and works towards removing the barriers which might inhibit such involvement. We would be concerned that an over-regulated cultural sector would stifle the very creativity and excitement that we seek to deliver. This is a problem experienced, for example, in France, with its over-centralised and expensive cultural bureaucracy. Paris has not really been a vibrant centre for contemporary visual art or the art market since the 1950s, in contrast to London and New York.

There are a number of excellent examples of projects run by NGS which have broken down the barriers of perceived cultural exclusion.

- *The Parallel Lives Project gave groups of young people in disadvantaged areas an opportunity to interpret historical paintings and make them relevant to their own lives.*
- *The Ossian Outreach Project in the Highlands enabled community groups to produce their own exhibition and travelling book to complement the NGS's own Calum Colvin Ossian exhibition.*

## **Section 2: Cultural Leadership**

The cultural sector is a multifaceted and complex sector working in many media, many areas and with a huge variety of partners and audiences. As such the question of leadership is complex. If it is to be successful the sector needs to create a successful partnership between the state and the endeavours of individuals, voluntary organisations and the corporate world.

Leadership of the culture sector from within Scottish Executive is vital. NGS remains concerned over the high turnover of culture ministers in recent years which has given a sense of instability to the sector. NGS supports the current approach from government in managing the national institutions, as stated in the phase one consultation response. The arms length approach has been successful in building museums and galleries which can compete on an international stage.

Ideally the leaders within the sector should emerge from the relevant part of the cultural community. However there are two ways in which the state could play an important role in encouraging the development of such leadership:

- Establishing a training programme, such as the recently founded Clore Leadership Programme, which develops cultural leadership skills and which is available to staff and practitioners in the cultural sector. Funding in the cultural sector is tight and access to leadership and management training is difficult. The Scottish Executive, together with local authorities, might consider how they could make such training more available, possibly making some of their own training schemes available to people in the cultural sector. The cross-fertilisation of such training with civil servants and local authorities could also help bring greater coherence to our approach to culture.
- Encourage leaders of the various parts of the sector to get together on a regular basis to discuss strategic issues affecting the cultural sector and how links can be made to other parts of the public sector. An annual meeting along the lines of the Scottish International initiative may be a good starting point.
- Encourage secondments to museums and galleries from the corporate sector to create skills growth among culture sector staff in the areas of, for example, IT, finance, fundraising, marketing etc.

Links with Scotland's education sector is very important. Education plays a key role in deepening people's involvement with culture – it is essentially a learning experience. The academic institutions have a crucial role to play in developing a greater appreciation of, and participation in, our culture. With 50% of young people of Scotland going into higher/further education, these institutions can play a crucial role in building the confidence of Scottish people to play a full role in their culture and to help overcome barriers. NGS is building links across the education sector – for example, in partnership with AHRB-funded centres and VARIE (both Higher Education initiatives) and with various projects at schools level.

### ***Section 3: Pan-sectoral Planning***

There is a need to create a forum for cross-fertilisation within the cultural sector, to bring people together to share experience and ideas and work together on projects. However we doubt that a pan-sectoral planning agency is required. We believe much of the creativity and initiative must rise from the bottom up, rather than a top down approach for planning for the sector. We believe there is an inherent danger in this approach which could stultify initiative and academic excellence and create an overload of centralised management/administration.

So, what is the best way to allocate funds within the sector to ensure that Scottish Executive policy goals are achieved? One of the ideas which may be considered is the setting up of a funding council. NGS would be concerned at such a development, in particular because it would be more difficult to secure a stable funding environment to protect and enhance the national collections. National institutions need to make their own funding decisions.

A Funding Council would need to:

- understand all the cultural sector across the breadth and depth of Scotland.
- have a long term view – especially important for collections.
- consider the international aspect of culture.
- be entrepreneurial and creative in outlook.
- have a clear definition of how it fits together with the remits of government departments and its relationships with its client bodies.

We would need some convincing that such a body would be more efficient and cost-effective than the current system of ministers and civil servants. We do not consider that there is a need for change.

### ***Section 4: Funding Arrangements***

The challenge facing funding arrangements is to balance the need of core funding to provide stability across the cultural sector and to provide funding to support new initiatives, creativity and change in the sector. Given the range and complexity of the cultural sector this would indicate that a sophisticated funding model is required. It must enable Scotland to develop a coherent strategy of public funding for culture while at the same time stimulate growth and creativity from individual organisations. The funding in this context should be enabling rather than controlling. For example challenge funding can be very effective in stimulating an entrepreneurial approach while directing funds to key areas.

The funding also needs to take account core strategic objectives for the Scottish Executive. For example, the public funding for NGS provides free access to the national collections. This is a central plank in making the collections available to all sectors of the community as well as serving as a major attraction to visitors.

NGS believes an investment approach is necessary for funding. From our perspective, this is particularly relevant in our ability to build up the collections. Our aim is to add to our internationally acclaimed collection with a view to passing it on for future generations. Government support is essential for us to be able to achieve this.

Taking the long-term view, it is the belief of NGS that funding of the cultural institutions will involve far more diverse sources of funding than the current reliance on government funding. NGS is investing in expanding its income-generating services with improved restaurants, gift shops, publications and venue hire. We are also working to deliver a sustainable fundraising base. We believe that philanthropy will be playing a much greater role in culture in the next 30 years. We are deepening our relationships with our visitors and supporters, creating opportunities for more involvement and inviting people to give something back by supporting us philanthropically. Similarly, we work with the corporate sector to bring new resources to the Galleries. NGS believes this private/public approach to funding will be critical in enabling Scotland to bring substantial new resources into the cultural sector – it simply can not be achieved by government funding alone.

One particular area we believe that government could be of particular help is creating more favourable conditions to enable the cultural institutions to build up long term endowment funding, such as has been achieved in the USA through the creation of planned giving.

This funding base should be backed by a supportive tax structure which enables gifts of art and money to be made in the donor's lifetime. Serious consideration should be given to the recommendations of the Goodison Review on Museums and Taxation, commissioned by the Treasury (especially recommendations 34 and 37).

### ***Section 5: Standards and Evaluation***

Standards and evaluation are very important if funders (both private and public) are to achieve their goals and encouraged to further support. A climate of accountability and reporting back to funders should be encouraged throughout the sector.

At the same time it needs to be appreciated that effective grant-giving is a skilful process and the funder needs to work with the recipient. Given that organisations are trying to achieve many different things and are at different stages of development we do not think a consistency of standards across the sector is appropriate. The danger with such an approach is the smaller, less well

resourced organisations will find it difficult to meet the standards and thus win the funding.

However there could be a set of consistent principles that operate across the sector. For example:

- Transparency
- Public Involvement
- An accountable governing body

Making training on these issues more accessible would be a great help.

As part of accountability of the national collecting institutions, NGS believes the current status quo of an NDPB and charitable status should be sustained. This enables NGS to operate to the highest standards of public accountability and to keep the collections directly owned by the Scottish people. Charitable status provides us with the opportunity to build our supporter base and to diversify our funding base by attracting philanthropic support. Great harm will be done to the cultural sector if this status is not maintained, as it is in England and Wales.

### ***Section 6: Operations and Administration***

We need to promote a better understanding of new technology, what it can achieve in the sector and make it more readily available. We would not support a single organisation providing this and we do not believe it would be either efficient or cost-effective. In our experience, new technology works most effectively when it is close to the user. However, we do believe partnerships with similar organisations could be very helpful and should be encouraged.

The NGS looks after a number of listed buildings and this is an integral part of what we offer to the public ie fine art shown in magnificent buildings. We have not had problems in accessing technical expertise but the level of funding required to keep these buildings in top condition is a challenge. Our small building department is readily available to deal with both maintenance and development issues as they arise. We are not convinced it would be more effective to amalgamate this in a larger organisation. (The example of Berlin's national collections – eighteen museums grouped together under one centralised administration, with the fabric and maintenance of the buildings looked after by another, separate body – is not one to be copied.) There may be an argument that the know-how of the NGS should be made more available to other organisations and we could benefit from others' experiences. More information sharing would be useful.

The responsibility for the cultural promotion of Scotland does not rest with any one body; we should all make a contribution. However, there is a need for

greater awareness across the sector of what frameworks exist and what opportunities there are for working together – for example, on initiatives such as Tartan Day. The National Galleries believes it has a critical role to promote Scottish culture and Scotland across the world. As an example, Sir Timothy Clifford's recent speech to Scotland International on how Scottish culture can play a role in enhancing Scottish business interests abroad was well received by the business community.

While we work to ensure we keep our administration and management costs as low as possible, we would not see these costs as an alternative to front line spending. Effective administration and management is essential if we are to achieve our corporate goals of building the collections and widening participation. We would rather put the question as to how we develop administration and management systems which enable the greater investment in front-line service through improved performance. In a wider context, we would be cautious of setting up a pan-sectoral organisation to provide support services. It is our belief it would create additional bureaucracy and be less flexible – without necessarily creating additional resources for front line services. Our approach would be to improve management and administration within the cultural organisations and create opportunities for organisations across the sector to meet and skill share.

### ***Section 7: Local Authorities***

The National Galleries is committed to developing a partnership approach across Scotland and recently held its first Partnership Conference for local, regional and national cultural institutions. Local authorities play a crucial role in helping to deliver the visual arts in Scotland, in particular by helping to create the conditions available to take advantage of touring exhibitions and working with local galleries and museums. NGS endeavours to tour exhibitions and works of art wherever possible in order to allow remote access to its collections and develop supporting relationships with smaller museums and galleries.

NGS encourages partnerships with other institutions, however resources for providing a support and advisory service are limited. In order to ensure the success of future partnerships resource requirements need to be shared between the parties involved in the relationships. National institutions do not have the resources to wholly fund partnerships with regional/local museums and galleries, much as they would like to do so.

Technology can play a key role in helping to overcome the diverse geographical spread of Scotland. Through use of the web, NGS is working towards putting the collections on line. This obviously is no replacement for standing before the actual work of art, but it will enable the people of Scotland to have a greater awareness of the national collections and so make a visit more attractive.

### ***Section 8: Regional Bodies***

NGS considers that there is no need for an additional layer of bureaucracy at regional level. Developing culture at regional level is necessary, but it can be done through local authorities and nationals and through the proposed regional development challenge fund.

Scotland is a small country and we would be concerned we would be creating a top-heavy infrastructure at the expense of direct services. We should work to make the communications between local authorities and national authorities and between individual local authorities work more effectively when it comes to cultural matters.

### ***Section 9: National***

It is difficult to have a precise definition of what a national agency or company should be. However we believe there are two core principles that should define a national institution:

- An organisation that works for the whole of Scotland and represents Scotland in the international community.
- The standard of work for these bodies should aim to reach the highest international standards, competing on the world stage.

### ***Section 10: Cross-cutting***

Partnerships do exist with other parts of government and into other sectors. For example National Galleries has a myriad of relationships with schools and higher education institutions through school education programmes, internships and joint research projects (which in turn encourage research grants). We also work effectively with the corporate sector to promote the visual arts, Scottish culture and businesses with an interest in Scotland.

The visual arts has a significant role to play in promoting tourism in Scotland. NGS has five magnificent buildings in Edinburgh which house collections of international standing as well as an outstanding and varied exhibitions programme. Tourism can be encouraged by working in partnership with VisitScotland to promote Scotland's rich cultural heritage.

As a more mature and cohesive cultural sector emerges there will be greater awareness of what partnership opportunities exist. In our opinion this is an organic process which should be encouraged by government, but not set up by government.

The National Museum Directors' Conference International sub-committee produced a report on *International Dimensions* in 2002, to which NGS contributed. The purpose was to make politicians and the culture sector aware of just how much national museums and galleries were doing already in this area. The report made the following points:

- NGS is international in scope on account of the collections we hold, interpret and display.
- NGS is one of a small group of leading international institutions.
- A large percentage of NGS's public is international.
- NGS collaborates and exchanges with museums and galleries across the world eg on exhibitions, loans, skills, expertise.
- NGS's remit extends beyond national boundaries eg cultural diplomacy (eg via British Council), spoliation/restitution, world heritage.

National Galleries of Scotland  
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