

Ack by email 9/2/05

visitor

From: Michael.Matheson.msp@scottish.parliament.uk
Sent: 08 February 2005 16:49
To: info
Subject: FAO of James Boyle[Scanned]

✓ Local Gov.

Please find the SNP submission attached. More than happy to meet up and discuss.

Regards.

Michael Matheson MSP <<Cultural Commission final draft.doc>>

\*\*\*\*\*

"The information in this e-mail transmission and any files or attachments transmitted with it are strictly confidential and may contain privileged information. It is intended solely for the person or organisation to whom it is addressed and if you are not the intended recipient, you must not copy, distribute, disclose or take any action in reliance on it. If you have received this e-mail in error, please delete it from your computer system and notify the sender as soon as possible.

While this e-mail message and attachments have been swept by MIMESweeper for the presence of computer viruses, the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body does not guarantee that either are virus-free and accepts no liability for damage sustained as a result of a virus. It is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that the onward transmission, opening or use of this message and any attachments will not adversely affect their systems or data or otherwise incur liability in law.

Visit the Parliament's website at http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ or watch the Parliamentary business live at http://www.holyrood.tv/"

\*\*\*\*\*

**Cultural Commission submission by Michael Matheson MSP, Shadow Spokesperson on Culture and Sport.**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Whilst it is clearly not possible to examine the entire artistic life of our nation in a short submission to the commission, this paper deals with some key issues in present cultural policy pertinent to the Commission's remit.**

Culture policy should serve to release the potential of the Scottish people, as it is fundamental to our national identity. It should enhance and build upon their creativity, improve the economy, lift and liberate individual lives, making Scotland a better, kinder, more generous, more thoughtful and more exciting place to live.

As a nation with strong cultural routes and a passion for ideas we should not be modest about what we want to achieve or what we wish to achieve.

Culture should be defined in the widest and broadest possible terms, to avoid the potential for a narrow definition which may only benefit the few, i.e. if a child picks up a book to read, they are engaged in cultural activity.

The proper role of government in our national cultural life is to provide the right framework for Scotland's artist and creators to flourish. Government must not view culture as an add on, rather, it should place culture in the mainstream of government thinking in order to promote culture awareness and creativity, which is core to a self confident and healthy society. We therefore require a structure of government that reflects the widest view of culture, our heritage, our lands and languages.

Placing culture in the mainstream of government thinking is not only about structure and finance, but it does need to recognise that the right structures, properly supported, are essential. Coupled with that must be a welcoming of diversity and the means to ensure its continuance.

For the past twenty or more years our culture debate has largely been dominated not by what we want to achieve, but what cuts we can avoid making. One or two very fortunate art forms – opera being the most fortunate – have consumed large amounts of the national cake, sometimes even beyond what they were given. Others have found that their resources are squeezed and pinched year after year, despite the claims of the funders. While some of our most important national cultural strengths – such as the traditional arts – have been woefully neglected in

financial terms. There has been little space for new thinking and emerging new approaches.

### **Structural change**

We require to establish a direct relationship between government and the national arts companies, inline with the existing relationship between government and the national institutions, to encourage excellence. This is a relationship which must be based upon trust and transparency. Each party must know what it must deliver and in what way, and the penalties for not delivering. However, it is not the role of government to interfere in artistic freedom, but there is the expectation that the budgets set are observed and that they remain fully engaged with Scottish society.

Establishing a clear, firm and fair arrangement will underpin achievement and excellence which benefit most sides of the equation. It will allow the national companies to be direct ambassadors for Scotland at home and abroad and it will guarantee their long term future. Service level agreements, accompanied by a modernisation of the often archaic constitutions of these bodies, would secure excellence, but would also give a greater degree of accountability as well as ensuring a long term, secure future, for those parts of our cultural infrastructure which should not be subject to the vagaries of short or medium term decision making.

- Remove the funding of the national companies from the Scottish Arts Council with direct funding to these bodies provided by the Scottish Executive. This is entirely consistent with the direct funding already in place for the National Library, the National Museum, and the National Galleries.

The removal of the national companies from the responsibility of the Scottish Arts Council will change fundamentally the role of that body. Indeed, so great would be the change that the Scottish Arts Council as we know it would cease to exist. I believe that we require a new, flexible and proactive body as their funder of first resort for the arts in Scotland. Therefore an alternative structure to Scottish Arts Council which facilitates effective engagement with the culture community in Scotland, while maintaining its independence from government. It is important that the creative community of Scotland are actively involved in the decisions about arts policy in Scotland to ensure that decisions are taken which take accounts of the needs of all the arts in Scotland.

Accordingly the idea of Scottish writers, Scottish painters, Scottish sculptures, Scottish dancers, Scottish musicians, Scottish architects, Scottish publishers and many others coming together to decide upon funding priorities and to tell the world what Scotland needs and to encourage or condemn government arts policy is an attractive one. Real devolution of power may demand nothing less.

- The establishment of a Scottish Academy, bringing together professionals from all the disciplines along with the audiences, administrators and others which would consider all cultural policy proposals from government and would advise on them. Such a body would have a refining function, assisting, innovating and disseminating in equal measure. It could also serve as a new, flexible and proactive body as funder of first resort.

Of course for many engaging in cultural activity will take place, first of all, at a local level. Placing culture in the mainstream of government thinking should also take place within our local authorities. They have a responsibility to provide cultural leadership within their given community, ensuring that cultural initiatives are at the heart of our community planning process. Too often local authorities are ambivalent about cultural issues. By ensuring that cultural issues are central to the community planning process, local authorities will promote cultural awareness and creativity within local communities. To achieve this local authorities must be obliged to include cultural activities within the community planning process and must be resourced to do so. The creation of a partnership structure between local authorities and central government, and involving local and national cultural bodies, is essential.

- Local authorities should be obliged to ensure that culture is central to the community planning process.

### **Securing our languages.**

Language is an important element in any nation's cultural heritage. But it is also a living embodiment of the relationship of individuals and societies to the world. Language must therefore never be placed in any former of ghetto, but must imbue governmental and national thinking at all levels and across all subjects.

In the cultural sphere the particular expressions of Gaelic and Scots (as the indigenous languages) and the new languages must be encouraged across the genres. Given the difficulties of securing funding and audiences some element of positive discrimination will be required. In addition the development in the

mainstream English language arts sectors of knowledge of the importance of this cultural heritage, and a familiarity with its richness and influence is important.

The present secure status bill for Gaelic is a useful first step. However all cultural legislation needs to bear this issue in mind. In addition developmental work on a national languages strategy is required, leading to a "Languages of Scotland" Bill which deepens and entrenches the position of all the threatened and emerging languages in our country.

- Greater developmental work on a national languages strategy leading to a "Languages of Scotland" bill.

### **Broadcasting and Film**

The SNP has long believed that broadcasting should be a responsibility of the Scottish Parliament and remains of that opinion.

Broadcasting has a huge influence on our cultural life, both directly in terms of cultural spend, and indirectly in terms of the organisation of cultural activity. For the Commission to be unable to consider this matter and recommend a Scottish Parliamentary input would be absurd.

However there is a concomitant responsibility on broadcasters in Scotland to acknowledge that the exercise of their responsibilities even when regulated by Westminster must be undertaken in the full realisation of the need for guidance and support within our nation. Accordingly the broadcasting institutions must be fully integrated within the dialectic of our cultural life, and responsive to it.

Specifically there must be a better interface between Scottish Screen, the Gaelic Media Service and the Broadcasting Companies, and a funding flow between the Arts and Film bodies and independent producers (for both film and television, although that distinction is artificial)

There must also be national strategies to encourage production and the development of Scottish talent on the national, UK and international spheres. The absence of tax powers for the parliament makes this problem considerably more intractable, and the Enterprise agencies must be encouraged to find ways to invest in, and promote, the creative industries.

The SNP is committed to the devolution of broadcasting, the establishment of a Scottish Public Service Broadcaster, the creation of a Gaelic Channel (possible with input from other minority languages in Scotland) and to a system of light

touch broadcasting regulation which encourages innovation, the creation of new channels and the building of Scottish production opportunities.

The Scottish Directorate of Ofcom should also be required to embrace a specific cultural purpose as well as its more general purposes in terms of taste, decency and adherence to broadcasting regulations

- Better interface between Scottish Screen, the Gaelic Media Service and Broadcasting Companies.
- Enterprise companies to be more proactive in seeking to invest in, and promote, the creative industries.
- Devolving of broadcasting and the establishment of a Scottish Public Service Broadcaster.
- Create a distinctive Gaelic television Channel.

### **Education.**

Too often Scotland is ambivalent about its own indigenous culture, studying history, music, literature, arts and languages are viewed as marginal. To enhance and build upon the creativity of our young people, while giving them an understanding of their nation's culture, our present national priorities in education require to reflect this.

Of the five national priorities in Education, there is no mention of culture. No nation can flourish without a constant nurturing of its cultural roots and all coming generations have a right to be educated in our cultural background and a right to be given opportunities to participate in creativity.

The mainstreaming of culture from governmental to local authority level, must also reach the classroom. Culture should be an explicit part of our national priorities in education. The commission should grasp the opportunity to influence the National Curriculum Review to embed culture in the school curriculum.

However enshrining culture within our educational priorities requires the support and assistance of teachers. Presently, teacher training provides limited opportunity to promote greater cultural understanding for students. The mainstreaming of culture must equip our teachers with the skills and knowledge to deliver a curriculum, which has culture central to it. I would urge the commission to make representation to the ongoing Initial Teacher Training Review to address this issue

- Explicit reference to culture within the five national education priorities.

- Support and develop the skills of teachers to constantly secure cultural and creative opportunities for children.
- Culture commission to make representations to the Initial Teacher Training Review and the National Curriculum Review to embed culture in the school curriculum.

### **Scottish Institute of Culture.**

Promoting and celebrating Scottish culture internationally will not only assist Scottish based artist in projecting their talents abroad, also serves to assist in fostering a greater understanding of Scottish culture. Historically the promotion of Scottish culture internationally has been reactive in approach. There are clearly many individual artists and companies who have activity engaged in cultural partnerships throughout the world. However a more proactive approach would serve to expand and build upon the existing range of cultural activities Scottish artists are presently engaged in.

With confidence, Scotland should follow in the footsteps of many other nations by establishing a Scottish Institute of Culture. Such a body, independent of government, working across the world would proactively promote a greater understanding of Scottish culture.

The aims of a Scottish Cultural Institute would be to;

1. Promote the dissemination of information from Scotland and to further international cultural exchanges.
2. Initiate and support cultural projects which promote either Scottish culture in another country or another culture in Scotland.
3. Assist in contact mediation, finding venues and organising seminars on Scottish culture.

A specific budget for international promotion, touring and activity is required for this purpose and should be devolved to the Institute.

- Establish a Scottish Institute for Culture to promote and celebrate Scottish culture internationally.

## CONCLUSION

The SNP, while sceptical of the entire thrust of the Executive's cultural policy since 1999 and critical of the seemingly endless process of consultation, recognises that a clear lead in cultural matters is urgently required.

Although we were critical of the way in which the Commission was established, we still hope to be able to support the final report of the Commission. Our stance will be determined by the degree to which the Commission recognises that deepening the nation's knowledge of its own culture is a pre-requisite to the building of national confidence, and by the means that the Commission proposes not just to undertake that task, but also to promote creativity for all as well as excellence above all.

It will also be determined by the attitude of the Commission to the structural underfunding of the arts in Scotland at present, and its suggestions for change in that regard.

Consequently what we seek is clear, accountable, well funded, timetabled and succinct programme for action, which must include the first pieces of cultural legislation for the Scottish Parliament. Such a programme must be inclusive and must be able to engage the cultural sector as well as the wider nation.

We look forward to hearing the Commission's recommendations and would be happy to enter into dialogue with the Commission, should that be regarded as helpful.

**Michael Matheson MSP**