

HIGHLAND COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CULTURAL COMMISSION STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION: PHASE 2

PAN-SECTORAL QUESTIONS

The Highland Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to Phase 2 of Stakeholder Consultation and hopes the following comments will be helpful in assisting the Cultural Commission in completing their work.

1. Rights, Entitlements & Responsibilities

- 1.1 Once developed, cultural rights and accompanying entitlements should be the foundation of cultural policy and provision in Scotland. These rights need to take into account the particular challenges of rurality. They must also recognise local cultural distinctions such as the distinct Gaelic culture in the Highlands.
- 1.2 Cultural rights should define everyone’s entitlement to express, engage and experience. It may prove beneficial and pragmatic to link the delivery of related entitlements to other areas of social policy, but cultural rights should be defined solely in terms of culture.
- 1.3 Cultural entitlements should be included in the Curriculum and clearly this would need to be aligned with the current Curriculum Review.
- 1.4 The Council can see no benefit to be gained by enshrining cultural rights in law. However, without this authority cultural rights would require strong guardianship. A new, empowered, national pan-sectoral organisation should be established to fulfil this role. This will be discussed further in the following section.
- 1.5 Ultimately the people of Scotland should have responsibility for the review and amendment of cultural rights, entitlement and responsibilities. That process should be aided by the proposed new cultural organisation through consultation and democratic representation within current decision making and governing structures.

2. Cultural Leadership, Pan-Sectoral Planning & Funding Arrangements

- 2.1 Consultation to date has raised the perceived lack of cultural leadership nationally. The Scottish Arts Council currently fulfils some of this role with regard to the arts but, since there is no like body charged with the development of museums and heritage sector, this perhaps perpetuates the common misassumption that culture equals arts, omitting the museums and heritage and other cultural sectors.
- 2.2 A national cultural organisation would be able to authoritatively develop and steer over arching national policy, rights and entitlements. This body should include representatives of local authorities and key cultural sector organisations. To ensure regard for regional differences and local accountability and appropriateness, this body should be part of a related structure with respective lead roles of those involved in cultural provision are clearly defined. For example local authorities are, we believe, best placed to provide access to community arts and provision to meet distinct local needs. Local authorities priorities are the instrumental benefits of cultural participation within communities rather than the

intrinsic development of the arts in culture, e.g. support for individual artists rights to experiment and develop work.

3. National and Regional Partnerships

- 3.1 A framework of regional cultural partnerships, led by local authorities and made up of key organisation and cultural sector representatives, should fulfil a regional planning and delivery role, ensuring over arching national policy is a line to local variation and need.
- 3.2 These partnerships would give artists and grass roots organisations a stronger voice in decision making. These regional partnerships could also influence and inform policy and implementation "upwards" to the national organisation. These regional partnerships should have funding allocation powers for regional institutions and organisations including between cultural sectors and within them.
- 3.3 The Scottish Executive should support and resource the development and implementation of cultural policy for Scotland rather than prescribe it and the arms length principle remains appropriate. A national cultural organisation would be ultimately responsible to the Scottish Executive in terms of governance and business management, but not in terms of policy and priorities. The national body should be responsible to the people of Scotland on these matters, via the regional partnerships and local democratic mechanisms.
- 3.4 The national body should have enforcement powers to address non compliance on cultural rights and entitlements and should steer the work of the National cultural companies and institutions.
- 3.5 It would be reasonable to expect UK cultural agencies that operate in Scotland to take cognisance of and strive to align with Scottish cultural agencies and organisations strategies and policies.

4. Funding

- 4.1 Where Local Authorities currently have responsibility for allocating funding to local organisations and companies that responsibility should be retained.
- 4.2 The national body should oversee the work of those companies and institutions to ensure that their cultural reach is truly national. However, it is suggested that funding for the National Companies, as with the National Library, National Galleries and National Museums comes directly from the Scottish Executive.
- 4.3 National companies and institutions should not have any influence on local authority spending decisions and the funding of locally or regionally based cultural organisations should be devolved to the local or regional level via the regional partnerships and local authorities.
- 4.4 Each of these components in the overall cultural infrastructure would be bound to make their respective policy, planning and funding decisions in order to discharge their responsibilities to deliver the nationally broadly defined cultural rights and entitlements.

4.5 Third sector providers (i.e. Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Fèis Rois) should be enabled to grow their cultural provision delivery capacities. Current methods of funding should be improved to allow funded organisations greater financial autonomy and the ability to plan for the medium and long term. They should include funding organisations with proven cultural value and sound management who can effectively deliver cultural entitlements being funded on three or five year funding agreements, linked to mutually owned Service Level Agreements. These Agreements would be drawn up and monitored by the appropriate awarding body at national, regional or local level.

4.6 On the issue of specific funding for traditional arts, rather than the traditional arts being preserved and promoted by a finite funding pot, specific cultural rights relating to the traditional and indigenous arts should be defined with funding thereafter allocated to delivering those entitlements within the mainstream mechanisms and quality criteria.

5. Standards and Evaluation/Operations and Administration

5.1 In usual circumstances, i.e. when performance management is not under scrutiny, it is of little instrumental benefit for funding bodies to impose overly prescriptive standards of outputs, processes etc. on organisations. Currently too much time is being spent by cultural providers measuring and gathering extraneous evidence rather than on developing their core business. It is particularly cumbersome to groups and organisations who receive funding from a variety of sources or are in receipt of a number of special initiative funds.

5.2 The DEMOS policy think tank is about to publish research which rethinks measuring public benefit from cultural product. The mind shift in their thinking is that cultural planners and funders “buy in” to companies and organisations own values and targets where they deem those appropriate to deliver on their priorities. This would considerably strengthen their proposal that cultural managers work with and empower the third sector to develop their cultural provider role. The cultural commission may wish to study the DEMOS research.

5.3 A need exists to devise meaningful and multi application tools for evaluation and quality appraisal across the cultural sector; it would be beneficial if this work were undertaken nationally with a shared ownership of outcomes across cultural sectors.

6. Local Authorities

6.1 The responsibilities of Local Authorities towards cultural provision within any new national cultural infrastructure needs to be defined and resourced. Local cultural strategies should be developed within the context of community planning and be able to respond to and encourage regional variations. This should be a statutory requirement. Any future Scottish Executive guidance on the development of cultural strategies at the local level needs to be sufficiently flexible to allow each strategy to respond to local need and circumstance with dynamic and creative policies and solutions.

6.2 Whilst the development of universal cultural rights is visionary this should not be interpreted operationally as national standards for the provision of cultural facilities and services. The latter approach would impede the development of creative local responses to particular local challenges and opportunities, particularly with regard to rurality.

- 6.3 An insistence that local authorities ring fence resources for cultural provision would similarly stifle creativity. For example, during Phase 1 of the consultation many stakeholders advocated putting cultural participation at the heart of formal learning for young people, including development within teacher training. Such cross cutting cultural investment, across services and agendas, will achieve maximum results and allow local authorities to identify how best and effectively to discharge their responsibilities in regard to cultural provision within their local context.

7. **Regional Bodies**

- 7.1 Highland Council supports the concept of regional partnerships which foster joint working. However these should not detract from the decision making powers of the individual partners. The Council would not support separately funded regional bodies for Culture. (See comments in Section 3).

8. **National**

- 8.1 Companies or institutions regarded as having "National" status should be required to have a truly national reach. This should include outreach/touring work that is not merely tokenistic, assisted dispersal of national collections and artefacts and provision of support and enhancement service for smaller like institutions nation wide.
- 8.2 Part of the remit should also be international advocacy of Scottish culture.
- 8.3 National companies and organisations should have a particular commitment to presenting and promoting Scottish works, talent and artefacts and should report to the National cultural organisation. Institutions and companies afforded National status should have particular responsibility for delivering cultural entitlements and should be sufficiently resourced to undertake their national responsibilities.
- 8.4 It is suggested that funding for the National Companies, as with the National Library, National Galleries and National Museums comes directly from the Scottish Executive. Their funding should be of the mid to long term agreement type previously discussed and they should be afforded a level of financial, processes and output setting autonomy.
- 8.5 Opportunities for national organisations to share some operational functions, i.e. facilities, backroom services etc. should be investigated and maximised where appropriate.

9. **Cross Cutting**

- 9.1 Artificial and unhelpful barriers have grown up between sectors, i.e. sport, cultural, education, particularly in regard to facilities and children and young people. How lottery funding is awarded has compounded this artificial distinction with capital developments being geared to truly suit one or other, despite decreasing resources for capital development.
- 9.2 The fact that dance is classified as a sport within the school curriculum has resulted in many more teenage girls participating in "sport", than might otherwise have done so.
- 9.3 "Out of the box" thinking should be developed whereby activity facilitators working with children and young people are free to work across the sport and cultural agenda, linked to a

Cultural Pledge to young people. This approach would result in citizens becoming more active, engaged and healthy in terms of physical and mental health and emotional intelligence.

- 9.4 The broadest view of culture must be adopted if future governance and planning frameworks for cultural development are to be effective at national and community level. Including sport within this is consistent with the definition adopted by Agenda 21 for Culture, agreed in 2004 in Barcelona by the Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion. It is also in line with the recent guidance issued by the Scottish Executive on Cultural Strategies which encompasses sport, parks and recreation within the remit for cultural strategy development (a position mirrored in England).

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